



T&MBC Projects. Medway Valley Countryside Partnership April 2014 - January 2015

The Partnership's Objectives:

- 1. Creating, sustaining and enhancing our landscape and biodiversity**
- 2. Developing, managing and supporting community-based environmental initiatives**
- 3. Developing, and promoting life-long outdoor learning**
- 4. Encouraging and enhancing greater access in the outdoors and the corresponding health benefits**
- 5. Ensuring the Partnership has the resources for effective development and operation**

Project work is delivered by the Partnership team; Mark Pritchard (MP), Mary Tate (MT), Derek Whitehead (DW), Simon Ginnaw (SG), Louise Smith (LS) and Andrea Griffiths (AG) supported by the Manager Kim Richards (CD). Seasonal staff are recruited as stewards for Oare Gunpowder works managed by MVCP as part of the Kent Countryside Management Partnership's contract with Swale Borough Council. A separate "Orchards for All Project" run by Pippa Palmar (PP) also operates across all boroughs.

The majority of projects are funded through a number of partners thereby leveraging the value for each partner.

A Steering Group of representatives from Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (Mike Harris), Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council steer the Partnership through quarterly meetings and following a MoA.

Creating, sustaining and enhancing our landscape & biodiversity

Giant Hogweed Control Programme (AG)

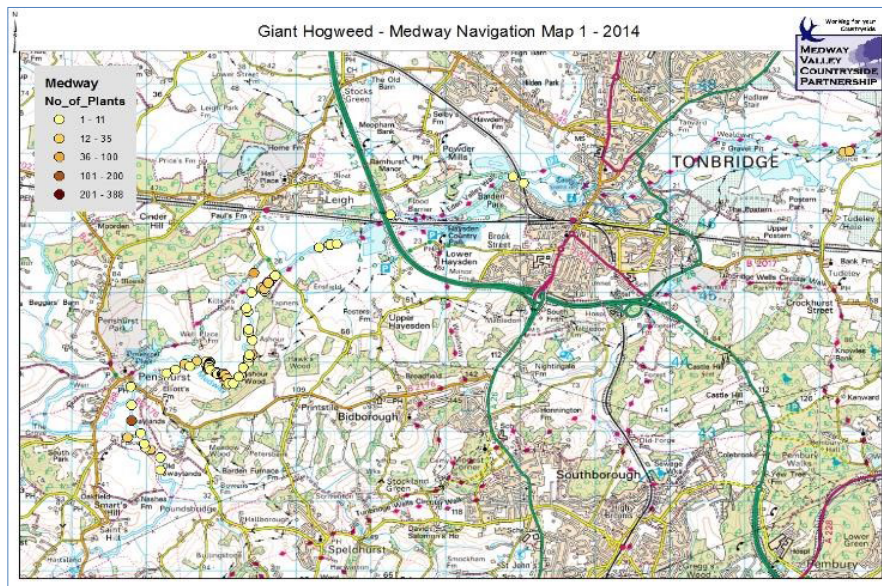
In 2014 the project has again covered 200+km of riparian habitat through liaising with landowners and organisations to deliver a coordinated control of Giant Hogweed. More than 9000 individual plants were sprayed across the whole catchment. The Scheme covers the Medway catchment and the River Cray in the London Borough of Bexley. In specific areas Himalayan Balsam (for flood defence purposes) and Japanese Knotweed are also controlled.

Over 400 landowners participate in the scheme (some carrying out their own control). The scheme provides advice and, where needed, practical support in the control of the non-native species in a coordinated catchment based approach. The latest annual report can be provided upon request.

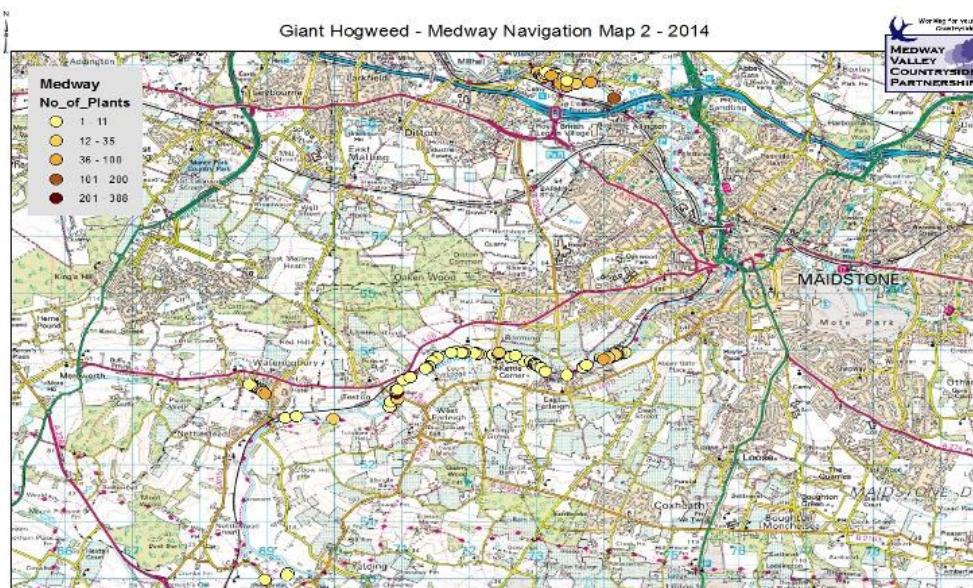
We have now extended our coverage of invasive species to deal with some riparian infestations of Japanese Knotweed, control of Floating Pennywort in the Yalding area and we are monitoring the situation for Azolla water fern throughout the catchment.

GIS maps have been compiled along with landowner invoices and the annual report for detailed updates on this work. The following maps are indicative of the scale of the project in the T&MBC area.

Map 1 – Medway navigation sites/no. of plants treated



Map 2 – Medway navigation sites/no. of plants treated



Rivers Work (MP/LS)

The European Water Framework Directive (WFD) came into force in December 2000 and became part of UK law in December 2003. It provides an opportunity to plan and deliver a better water environment, focusing on ecology. It commits European Union member states to achieve good qualitative and quantitative status of all water bodies in the long-term. To achieve 'good status' both the ecological and the chemical status of a surface water body need to be at least 'good'. Ecological status refers to the quality of the structure and functioning of aquatic ecosystems of the surface waters.

The Partnership continues to work with the South East Rivers Trust to secure project delivery funding in the future for the water-bodies in the catchment. Detailed Catchment Action Plans have been written for all the major tributaries to the River Medway within the borough of TMBC. These include:

- The River Bourne
- Ditton Stream
- Mereworth Stream
- Leybourne Stream
- Hilden Brook

These action plans have evolved from community engagement events which have sought to gain public engagement and approval for the proposed works, and elicit projects and priorities from landowners and the public alike. Projects have been prioritised and a variety of catchment funding sources are being investigated to try and make some of the aspirational projects reality.

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/33362.aspx>

Dene Park (MP)

Survey and training work continues at Dene Park with MVCP staff, Explore Kent Volunteers and the engagement of students from the nearby Hadlow College. MVCP has led a number of educational walks for Hadlow students from both the animal management and landscape disciplines. Current surveys:

- Dormice surveys
- Amphibian survey
- GCN assessment

Rhododendron clearance is scheduled for Thursday 22nd January with a large team of volunteers.

MVCP is working in partnership with Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT) towards a funding bid to Biffaward's "Rebuilding biodiversity" strand for proposed coppicing and habitat linkage work in winter 2015/16. This aims to enhance the site, and adjacent ancient woodland local wildlife sites, specifically for the Kent BAP species the pearl bordered fritillary but it will have much wider biodiversity benefits. This project is to be entitled "A String of Pearls".

Clare Lake Enhancement Project (MP/SG/LS)

A total of £32k of funding to carry out restoration at this site has now been secured. Permissions to de-fish and de-silt the lake have been sought from the EA, and detailed planning working is now underway to achieve the goals of the project. The primary objectives are:

- De-silt c. 3000m³ and establish 400m² of new marginal reed-bed habitat (early spring 2015)
- Establish 3 floating reed-bed islands (summer 2015)
- Build dipping platform (spring 2015)
- Use school children to assist in design and build of 2 new interpretation panels
- Hold multiple education/survey sessions (spring/summer 2015)
- De-fish the lake of non-native and omnivorous carp (winter 2015)
- Establish sensitive grassland management regime in adjacent habitat (spring 2015).

Work is underway and is due for completion in October 2015 when a launch event will be held. We are working in partnership with the school, the EA, East Malling and Larkfield Parish Council and local residents.

Church Farm (MP)

Ongoing woodland thinning and meadow establishment on the site owned by East Malling and Larkfield PC is planned for this site in February/March 2015.

Save our Magnificent Meadows (MT)

Mary Tate is now in place as the project officer for the SOMM project. Many new landowners have been engaged and planned meadow creation is underway at 6 sites inside the borough (plus many outside). Events are being held and planned for spring/summer 2015 with a comprehensive series of training launched to create 'Meadows Champions'. See our dedicated web-page at <http://www.medwayvalley.org/save-our-magnificent-meadows/> for more details.

Developing, managing and supporting community-based environmental initiatives

Beat Project East Malling (AG)

MVCP has been working with Beat Project staff at the St James Centre, East Malling for a number of years to improve their woodland and increase access opportunities and use. This has resulted in 2014 in a major new installation of play equipment and additional woodland paths at the centre.

Kent Woodland Employment Scheme (MP)

MVCP has helped the above scheme with initial site meetings and recommendations for site management, plus discussing the logistics and practicalities of implementing such a scheme within some of the council's woodland.

Thursday Action Group (DW/AG/MP)

MVCP has delivered numerous TAG days in the TMBC area many at T&MBC owned sites as described below. In total there have been 17 'TAG' days in the reporting period so far amounting to 204 volunteer man days.

Examples:

- Beat Project East Malling – establishing wildlife garden - 3 days
- Tinkers Island (TMBC owned site) – vegetation control - 1 day
- Haysden Country Park (TMBC) – Himalayan balsam control & vegetation clearance - 2 days
- Priory Wood (TMBC) – Coppicing, pond works, hedge laying -4 days
- Woods Meadow (TMBC) – vegetation control – 1 day
- Brungers Pond (TMBC) – rubbish and vegetation clearance – day
- Ditton Quarry – ragwort control, meadow creation – 1 day
- Leybourne Lakes Country Park (TMBC) – vegetation control – 1 day
- Woodland walk (TMBC) – coppicing – 3 days

Kent Orchards for Everyone Project (PP)

Pippa Palmar (our new part time Kent Orchards for Everyone Orchards Officer is delivering the HLF project (4 years) focussing on priority orchards across the Faversham and Greensand fruit belt). Macey's Meadow and Plaxtol are two within the Borough alongside New Ash Green receiving training, support for orchard restoration and advice.

Developing, and promoting life-long outdoor learning

Snodland Wildlife Garden (MT and MP)

No work in this project period.

TMBC Play scheme (SG)

MVCP delivered a series of wildlife themed activities in 2014 as part of the T&MBC Summer Play-scheme. MVCP delivered Mini Beast workshops at 11 play-scheme venues. 432 children attended the workshops in total at 11 different schools. Staff have expressed their appreciation and explained

how MVCP's Mini Beast Workshop was the most popular aspect of all the activities provide during the scheme.

Encouraging and enhancing greater access in the outdoors and the corresponding health benefits

Haysden and Leybourne Lakes Country Park events (SG)

MVCP led three events at Haysden Country Park this year. A Bug Hunt was held on June 29th to celebrate National Insect Week, where we had 18 people attend and take part. Two further events took place, the Night-time Walk on 16th August, and an Eel Fun Day on 28th August.

At Leybourne Lakes Country Park, one member of staff attended and helped out on the Wildlife Day. No other events are planned for the country park.

A significant role of the Partnership Manager and Senior Partnership Officer is to develop projects and subsequently secure funding for them to meet community needs in the coming year/s. The finances are managed on a day to day basis by both with forecasting and budget management by the Partnership Manager.

The partnership is supported by Kent County Council's HR and Finance teams.