



# Explore Your Colne Valley Regional Park

Newsletter  
Summer  
2020

FREE

The Colne Valley Regional Park is an area of 43 square miles, set up in 1965 to protect and enhance the local countryside and wildlife for the enjoyment of generations to come. With more than 70 beautiful lakes, 200kms of rivers, four wonderful country parks, lots of fantastic green spaces, nature reserves and much more, it is a treasured haven right on your doorstep. From Rickmansworth and the Chiltern Open Air Museum in the north, to Staines Moor and Staines in the south, Little Britain Lake, Cowley, and Harefield in the east, to Black Park Country Park and Slough in the west.



## Welcome to Summer in the Colne Valley

**A** lot has happened since our last newsletter in February. We hope you have still been able to enjoy exploring your favourite parts of the Colne Valley Regional Park.

Some of you have written to us and shared the wonderful positive ways in which this vibrant, but fragile landscape has helped you (there is more about this on Page 3). Our website – [www.colnevalleypark.org.uk](http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk) is a valuable source of information on places to go and things to do.

With the summer here and travel limited, there has never been a better time to explore and really get to know the Colne Valley Park. On Page 3 you will find lots of ways to have a great staycation, making the most of your local countryside.

We have more updates on some of our environmental projects on page two, which are all designed to conserve and enhance areas of the Colne Valley Park for both wildlife and people. Below we explain how we have been engaging with people during lockdown and on the back page we share our countryside code of conduct to help, keep the Colne Valley Park beautiful.

We are delighted that our conservation grazing project has settled over 20 cows into Denham Country Park, Staines Moor and Stocker's Lake (Rickmansworth) for the second year running. Introducing cows to these three sites increases their biodiversity and allows wildlife and flowers to flourish – we like to say this project is 'nature, simply helping nature'.

Despite the Park having so much to offer, and many positive developments in our work protecting and enhancing the park, we are extremely sad to see the continuing destruction caused by HS2. On the back page you can read an interview with our much loved and dedicated President, Lord Randall of Uxbridge, who gives his reaction to this colossal and highly controversial railway project, and to recent decisions affecting Heathrow's expansion plans.

This summer we hope you can find more time to explore the wealth of natural beauty the park has to offer. Being active outdoors has so many benefits for your wellbeing.

You can experience new adventures and build up wonderful memories to last you a lifetime. There is always something to discover and no day in the Park is the same, so now is the time to get out there and see for yourself.

**Have a look at our website and follow us on social media, where you will find lots of useful and interesting information on places to go, things to do, updates on our countryside projects, news of volunteering opportunities and general updates about the Park.**



Denham Country Park.

### Explore our hidden gems

**Thorney Country Park, Iver**, is a 50-acre former mineral extraction site, part water and part landscaped grassland. It's a good spot for walking, bird watching enjoying nature. The large lake and nearby pond are home to a wide range of birds which can be viewed from a bird hide. The park is a surprising haven for wildlife, considering, it's proximity to a motorway junction. If you prefer armchair traveling, we even have a virtual tour of the park on our website.

For more information on this and other wildlife havens and nature reserves, go to [www.colnevalleypark.org](http://www.colnevalleypark.org) and click on the 'Places to go' page, under 'Visit'.

Thorney Country Park is managed by Bucks Country Parks.

### Bringing the Colne Valley Park to you

Although we have not been able to run our usual events and school holiday activities, we extended our website instead with 'Bringing the Colne Valley to you' and 'Colne Valley Nature Explorers'. These new web pages helped us to keep connected with our countryside and nature while we had to stay at home. They are still available and include photo galleries, ideas for activities, videos and much more.

We have been fortunate with the weather and we hope our walks, activity sheets and videos of

places in the Park are inspiring you to explore further. Iver Environment Centre produced 12 nature video sessions to help with home-schooling. They are a great way to engage your



children with the natural world around them and include outdoor activities to get your children exploring. Search under 'Colne Valley Nature Explorers' to find them on our website. Please follow us on social media to keep in touch with our future events and activities (some of which are free) and if possible, we hope to run some activities in line with government guidelines in the summer holidays.

During the summer we continue to bring the Colne Valley to you, with an online exhibition of art and photographs from workshops held last September as part of our Walks Through a Changing Landscape project. You can view the exhibition, on the 'news' page on our website.

# Nature's Space Invaders

The watercourses are the blue veins of the Colne Valley Regional Park, providing a lifeline for all wildlife, encouraging a wide diversity of important species and giving a vital source of water, recreation and relaxation for us humans, too.

There are more than 200kms of rivers and canals and over 60 lakes, which continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the landscape, local communities and our way of life.

The Colne Valley Regional Park has five principal rivers including the Colne, Misbourne, Colne Brook, River Frays and Wraysbury River, as well as the Grand Union Canal and other water bodies. These waterways help to sustain a vital water source, as well as providing a haven for many birds and rarer wildlife species, such as water voles and kingfishers.

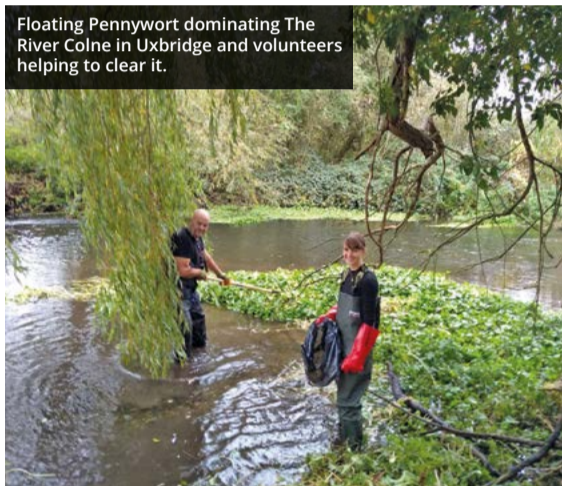
Floating Pennywort removal volunteer day on The River Colne at Willowbank in Uxbridge.



Riverfly monitoring at Staines Moor on the river Colne.



Floating Pennywort dominating The River Colne in Uxbridge and volunteers helping to clear it.



our eyes and ears ensuring we can report quickly on any problems in a river. The information they provide is a vital source of data for key organisations such as the Environment Agency. The volunteers also take part in practical days, battling through the mud, water and vegetation to remove the worst space invaders – Floating Pennywort and Himalayan Balsam. These sessions make a dramatic difference to the health of our rivers, and are a great chance for people to learn more about the importance of their local environment. The River Rangers are my heroes. We couldn't tackle this threat without the help of local people getting involved and caring about the rivers. Thank you!", says Chloe.

Chloe and the volunteers have cleared more than 2,115 sq. metres of rivers from these 'space invaders' in just over a year.

## Meet one of our first River Rangers

Anthony from Ruislip became a river ranger last year, and tells us more about why he wanted to get involved: "I've always been interested in wildlife and enjoyed being outdoors – in rivers if possible! "Since becoming a stay-at-home dad, I've become increasingly concerned with the environment, and had been looking for ways to switch my career path and make a difference. Volunteering has enabled me to make a tangible impact, whilst learning and meeting people that share the same passion. And as a result, it opened the opportunity to work with The Colne Valley Park. I would encourage anyone to get involved with the volunteering sessions; they give your brain and body a good workout, in some beautiful places. And they give you a great sense of purpose and achievement."

Follow us on social media or check our website regularly to keep in touch with developments and ways to support the Park through our 'get involved' page. All volunteer sessions have control measures in place to ensure everyone's safety.

Water consumption is also another major issue and our project, Keep The Rivers Flowing raises awareness about how this and over-abstraction affects local rivers. Everyone can help protect the rivers by reducing water consumption in their daily lives. Join us this summer for a free online Water Ambassador programme, where you can learn more about these threats and how you can help.



Anthony, removing Floating Pennywort on the River Colne, Harmondsworth Moor.

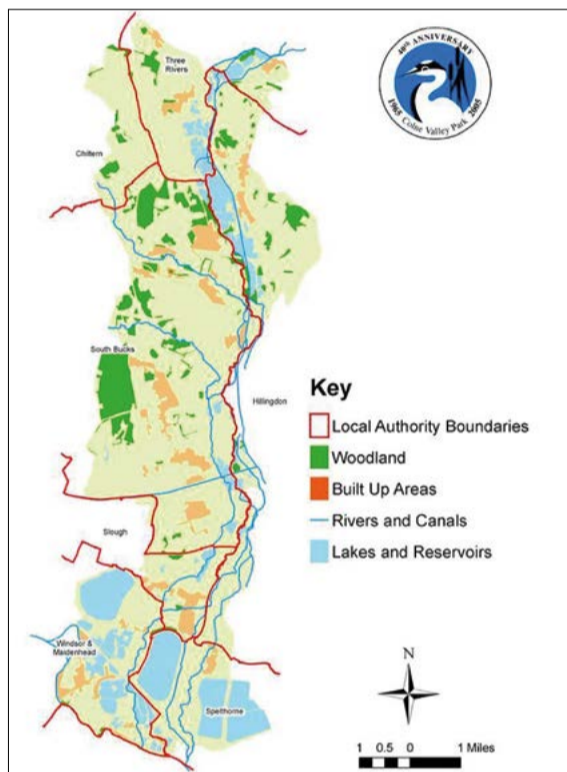


Illustration of an unhealthy river dominated with non-native invasive species, part of our education programme with communities.



Why do our rivers need our help? Sadly, they face many challenges. Only 14% of rivers in England are considered to be at Good Ecological Status (within the Water Framework Directive) \*so it is important to take the threats to our rivers in the Colne Valley Park very seriously. The main ones are over-abstraction, pollution, high water consumption and the widespread problem of non-native invasive species (NNIS) our 'space invaders' that are affecting both the health of our rivers and in some cases their very existence. Funding provided by the Heritage Lottery and other sponsors has allowed us to run several projects to help protect and enhance the rivers in The Colne Valley Park as part of The Landscape Partnership Project.

### How are we helping?

Meet Chloe, our rivers manager, or as we like to call her, our 'river heroine'. Chloe has brought lots of energy, experience and commitment



Chloe our Rivers Project Manager.

### Why are people keen to get involved?

"These 'Space Invaders' harm our rivers because they dominate large areas along riverbanks and water surfaces. They smother native species, increase riverbank erosion, reduce local biodiversity and degrade the habitat. The whole food chain is affected from the tiny invertebrates (which should be teaming in the rivers), up to native fish, birds and mammals. These invaders are such a problem because they spread so easily and quickly, and as they have no natural control agents here, they are found throughout the rivers in the park in varying degrees of severity. They are literally choking the life out of our rivers, and I have been blown away by the support and commitment of our dedicated volunteers who are helping us tackle this destructive problem", Chloe tells us.

### How are local people helping?

"Our River Ranger project involves workshops, training and volunteer sessions for a team of more than 70 people who keep a close eye on the state of their local river. The team protects our rivers by completing surveys from the bank monitoring health indicators, paddling into the shallows to survey river fly species, and also getting stuck in, often wet and muddy, on practical conservation days. "The River Rangers are literally

# Colne Valley Park making a difference

The Colne Valley Park enriches people's lives every day, providing a special place where they can relax, feed their creativity and learn more about some of the beautiful countryside so near their homes.

It has long been protected as an important recreational space, and personal wellbeing has never been more important than in recent times. Meet some of our Colne Valley locals who told us more about what the area means to them...



**Suzanne Munro is a local composer and piano teacher and, together with her students, has created some wonderful music.** A recent piece created with her pupils, two of her own recent compositions and some poetry, were all inspired by walks in the countryside of the Colne Valley. Suzanne has shared these pieces with us, born out of walks in Ruislip heathland and woods. When sharing her music Suzanne said: "I am sending these, as the Colne Valley has given me so much joy". You can find Suzanne's work and listen to her music on our website, under the news section.

**Meet Harry and his family from Ickenham. They have lived locally for 15 years, but have never had a chance to really explore the Colne Valley Park.** "We really can't believe we have so many beautiful countryside places and walks so close by. We've enjoyed the walks from the Colne Valley Park website, especially the Denham walks and the Grand Union Canal at Harefield, and we have created some lovely family memories. During the recent stressful



times, it has been such a pleasure to enjoy the views and nature, and spend more quality time together. We feel very lucky to live so close to all these beautiful, countryside places and we're looking forward to more adventures together from now on".

**This is Ellie, 11, from Hillingdon, who has been inspired to produce wildlife pictures following walks in the Colne Valley Park.**

Her Dad Colin tells us: "Ellie has found recent times quite stressful and needed an outlet. Taking walks in the countryside has helped



channel her energy and artistic talents, and she has created some great paintings. We always take lots of pictures now, so that we always have something to draw or paint." Ellie enjoys the wildlife at Little Britain Lake, Cowley, and bird watching on the Woodoaks farm walk in Maple Cross. The Colne Valley Park has many nature reserves and beautiful landscapes, have a look at our Visit page on the website for more ideas.

**Julie Dungey, is a local Doctor at Hillingdon Hospital and tells us how the Colne Valley Park plays an important role in her life.**

"The Park has always been an important place for my family and I, where we can escape the hassles of daily life. With the last three months being a particularly stressful time, it has provided much needed rest and relaxation. I've liked the walks so much that I have shared the map and details with my friends and colleagues in the NHS, who have also found they are great way to unwind and switch off. I would recommend the walks to everyone needing a breath of fresh air, as well as a special treat from one of the cafes or pubs on the routes".



**If you have enjoyed your time exploring the Colne Valley Park and would like to continue then let us help, simply stay in touch through our social media, website newsletter sign up or become a 'Friend' of the Park (see page 4).**

## ENJOY SUMMER WITH COLNE VALLEY PARK

We are hoping for a sunny, fun summer this year, and with so many of us having a staycation, it's a great time to make the most of where you live, get outdoor active and away from the technology screens.

There are lots of great places to visit in the Park for days out – canal activities, water sports, walking, cycling, sailing, golf, fishing, horse riding and much more. The **'Things to do'** and **'Places to go'** pages on our website under Visit will help you to make the most of this summer and include a new page featuring our recommendations for the **'Top 15 things to do in the park'**, as well as including information on **all** of the below.

Here are some ideas...

**1** Our **Visitor Guide**, will give you a taste of what you'll find in the park, with a map of the whole valley and descriptions of some key places to visit, as well as what the Colne Valley Park is all about. We're sure you'll find some great new places to explore.

**2** Our **18 circular walks** provide a great selection of different rural landscapes to try, and include various habitats: woodlands, wild meadows, farmland with crops and animals, and a beautiful selection of lakes, rivers and

canals. They include a description of the route, a map, places to pause for refreshment, parking and points of interest and history to look out for along the way. The walks vary in length and offer a great chance for people to share some pleasant quality time together.

**3 Water Sports:** With more than 70 lakes in the region there is a great selection of water-skiing, sailing, open water swimming and several water sport clubs within the park. Have you ever fancied giving one a try? **Hillingdon Outdoor Activity Centre (HOAC)** is a great place where you can try something new this summer. There is something for everyone.

**4 Days out:** With plenty of space and history to choose from, you will find a good selection of days out in the region. You may like to visit **Chiltern Open Air Museum** (Chalfont St.Giles) with its spacious grounds and more than 30 reconstructed historic buildings. Or you could visit **Batchworth Lock canal centre** (Rickmansworth) and learn about the history of these interesting waterways. You can find more details for days out and water sports on the website.



Toll house, Chiltern Open Air Museum.

# Lord Randall of Uxbridge, supporting the Colne Valley Park

**Lord John Randall has loved the Colne Valley and its surrounding countryside his entire life.**

He first became involved more than a decade ago, while MP for Uxbridge, becoming a trustee of the Colne Valley Community Interest Company and helping raise the profile of this fragile landscape.

John Randall's Parliamentary career has also involved serving as a Deputy Chief Whip, and a spell working as environmental adviser to former Prime Minister Theresa May.

His love for nature and a deep concern for the local area has driven much of his career and popularity.

## So how did the connection with the Colne Valley Park come about?

"I got involved while raising some local issues in parliament about the potential impact of HS2. I signed the environmental charter for the Park, and I've been trying to help ever since. I was delighted to commit to taking on the role of President.

"I have always pushed in Parliament for the Colne Valley Regional Park to have properly recognised status,

stressing just what an important but fragile landscape this is, not just for its environmental value, but for what it can do for the wellbeing of people."

"I am proud to be part of a movement that values the importance and benefits of being outdoors and spending time with nature".

## What do you think of the decisions on HS2 and Heathrow?

"I am deeply disappointed HS2 is going ahead. There's still a part of me which thinks it won't happen, but the devastation being wrought locally tells me otherwise. It's truly shocking to see.

"MPs, the Colne Valley Regional Park, local residents and other groups – we have all been fighting this since the beginning. What is happening really, really hurts me, and when people say 'it's just another railway line' or Heathrow is 'just another piece of tarmac' they don't realise the real devastation. Once people are shown the reality, the sheer destruction involved, only then do they begin to realise it is not 'just another railway line' with a couple of tracks on it.

"The recent legal decision against Heathrow expansion is far more positive. That's a plan that should be off the agenda for quite some



Lord Randall, with Chris Packham on a walk against HS2 in Denham.



time, even though the airport's owner has clearly not given up. The world is changing, and climate change is a big concern; it just felt like it wasn't sustainable. As we've always said, we need to make Heathrow better, not bigger".

Read more about our work defending the park here: [www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/whats-special/safeguardthecountryside/](http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/whats-special/safeguardthecountryside/)

## What are your future hopes for the Park?

"Firstly, ensuring it's protected for future generations to enjoy. I want as many people as possible to make the very most of it. Secondly, I'd like to see the Park becoming better known, and as one geographical entity. New people are coming into the area all the time, and we're keen to share all of the joys of this precious region, such a fabulous green resource right on their doorstep".

The full interview is available on our website, under 'news', and if you would like to support the park, please go to our 'get involved' page.

## Nature Snaps and competition time...

Here are a few of the recent sightings around the park.

To enter our competition,

please send an email to the address below with your photos or art creations or include #visitcolnevalley in your social media post. We would love to see them and will be awarding a prize of tea and cake for four at our

Riverside Café at the Colne Valley Visitor Centre in Denham Country Park for our favourite entry, sent in before the end of September 2020. Let nature inspire your creative side, enjoy!



Muntjac deer spotted at Maple Cross.



Mandarin duck, Black Park © Evie Easterbrook



Dragonfly © Keith Pursall.



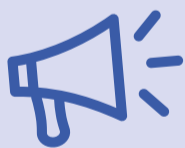
(Above) The winning entry from our last art competition, sent in by Willow age 8. What can you create this summer?

## Volunteer with us

Are you interested in helping to make a difference for nature and the countryside?

We have lots of river, woodland and nature reserve projects where help is really needed.

Come along and get outdoor active, closer to nature meet new people, learn new skills and help your local environment. For more details follow our social media pages, check our website or email us at [colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk)



## Become a Colne Valley Friend

Would you like to help us protect and enhance the Colne Valley Park?

Please consider joining the Friends of the Park to support our endeavors. Benefits include:

- Invitations to events and guided walks
- Opportunities to volunteer locally
- Regular newsletters and information

Please see our website: [colnevalleypark.org.uk/become-a-champion/](http://colnevalleypark.org.uk/become-a-champion/) or send us an email.

## Follow the Countryside Code

When visiting the countryside,, please ALWAYS follow the countryside code:

- Take all your rubbish home, leaving it next to bins causes harm to wildlife and rivers
- Stick to the public footpaths.
- Keep dogs under control at all times.
- Follow all government advice for social distancing
- Follow any guideline signs in a new area

For more details see our "news" page on the website and help us to share the code, thank you.

With thanks to our corporate supporters for their continued commitment to us: Lakeside Energy from Waste, Red Squirrel Brewing Co. and



The Colne Valley Park Community Interest Company represents more than 70 member organisations. Each of these organisations and our financial contributors support the six objectives of the Colne Valley Regional Park which revolve around improving and protecting the local:

- Landscape
- Countryside
- Biodiversity
- Countryside recreation
- Rural economy
- Community participation

With thanks to: Buckinghamshire Council, Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council, Denham Parish Council, Friends of the Colne Valley Park, Iver & District Countryside Association, Iver Parish Council, London Borough of Hillingdon, Slough Borough Council, and Wexham Parish Council, for their financial contributions.

Newsletter sponsors



**HS2 Mitigation Funds** Some readers have told us they were surprised to see we have received some mitigation funding from HS2, despite our opposition to the project. HS2 is obliged to provide funding to compensate for its considerable impact on the local countryside, and we make no apology for applying for those funds where applicable. You can find our position statement on HS2 on our website, in the Safeguarding the Countryside section. If you have any further questions, please email us at [colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk)