



Colne Valley Park- Landscape on the Edge



View of Broadwater Lake from the Old Orchard
Canal between the lake and orchard

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Colne Valley Landscape on the Edge As we reach the end of this project I will take you on a quick tour of what we have achieved.



Quick Overview of the Park

43 square miles

>3M people within 16km

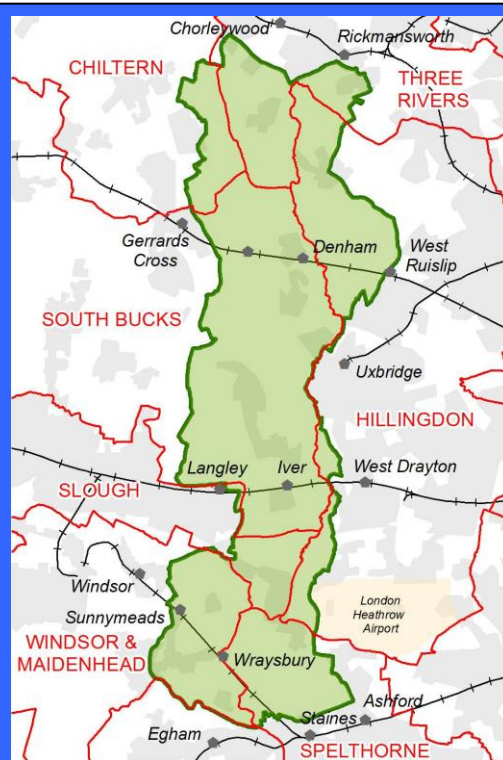
70 lakes

200km rivers and canals

100's of Green Spaces

(including 5 Country Parks, 20 Nature Reserves, 13 SSSI's)

270km of public rights of way



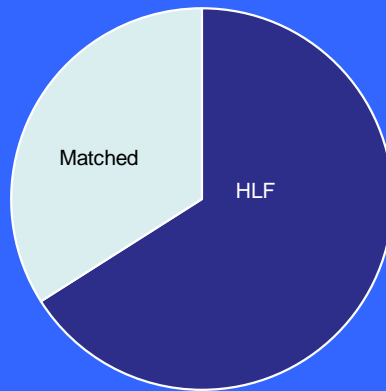
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A quick reminder of the Regional Park's Boundaries and stats



Colne Valley Park- The Lottery Landscape Partnership

£2.5m Funding



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2.5m funding £1.6 from the Lottery and the rest from matched funding



Colne Valley Park- The Lottery Landscape Partnership

3 years – extended to 4



3 years extended to almost 4

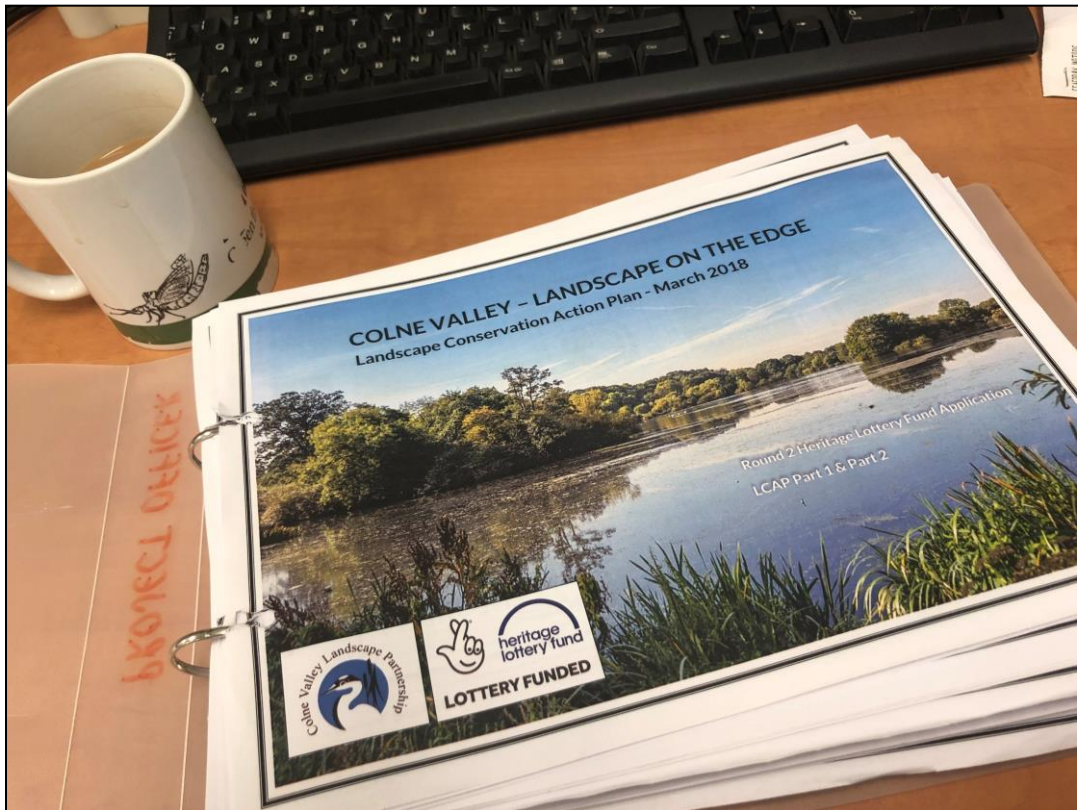


19 Projects



19 Projects

So what did I think on day one?



First, I had to read the brief – 10 days later and several jugs of coffee I took stock;

I did wonder whether the Trades Description act applied to interviews: 19 projects they said, (sounded manageable), but actually, each project had within it several projects large enough to be considered projects in their own right! - there were in fact over 60 projects to manage.



On the plus side we had assembled a crack team of staff.



And it was a partnership project.

We had 17 partners in the partnership and that included some who would be taking on substantial parts of the project.

I was unsure how the partnership would work long term but I needn't have worried.

I had not previously worked with the water companies and was unaware that they had such knowledgeable and dedicated bio diversity staff. The councils and the country parks embraced the projects in their areas and were adaptable when things changed.

Also the Wildlife Trusts had responsibility for some projects and that was a great relief. You will hear more about the success of these projects from Herts and

Middlesex Wildlife Trust and the Colne Valley Fisheries
Consultative projects after me.



And we made some new “Friends” along the way...

Soil association, Maydencroft, Rickmansworth Museum, Friends of Harmondsworth Barn and many more..



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Along the way we made new friends, and I would hope that some of these would become partners in projects if we have future opportunities.



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Black Park Sheds were an amazing and positive addition to our procurement, they made most of our wooden signs. It was great to be able to buy local from such an efficient and talented bunch of people. We also met Rose from the Soil Association at Woodoaks Farm and Sam from Maydencroft and our party was starting to rock.

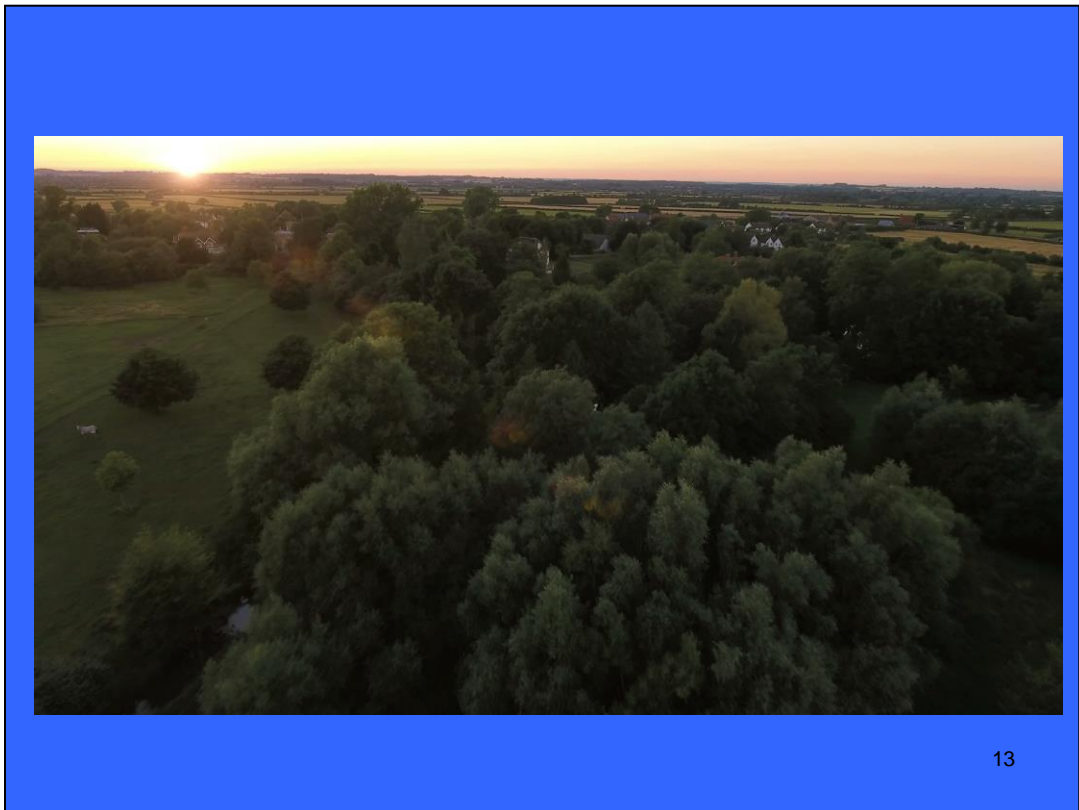


So, What did we start with?

At first read through, I could see that some projects would be a bigger headache than others and some if I am honest, I thought some were impossible.



At the first opportunity the team proved me wrong about that. The Drip Drop summer school was a week-long event where we had to persuade 30 or so children to spend a week with us learning about water saving. (Really?!) I was not hopeful! But Chloe and Fiona thought out of the box and it turned out to be a great success, parents and children embraced the idea, the lottery loved the outcomes and the children produced an endearing video about water saving. It was just the start of the Water saving initiatives which saw us producing water saving literature in 13 different languages. These are not languishing on our website but are being used by the refugee team at Groundwork and our Blue Doctors.



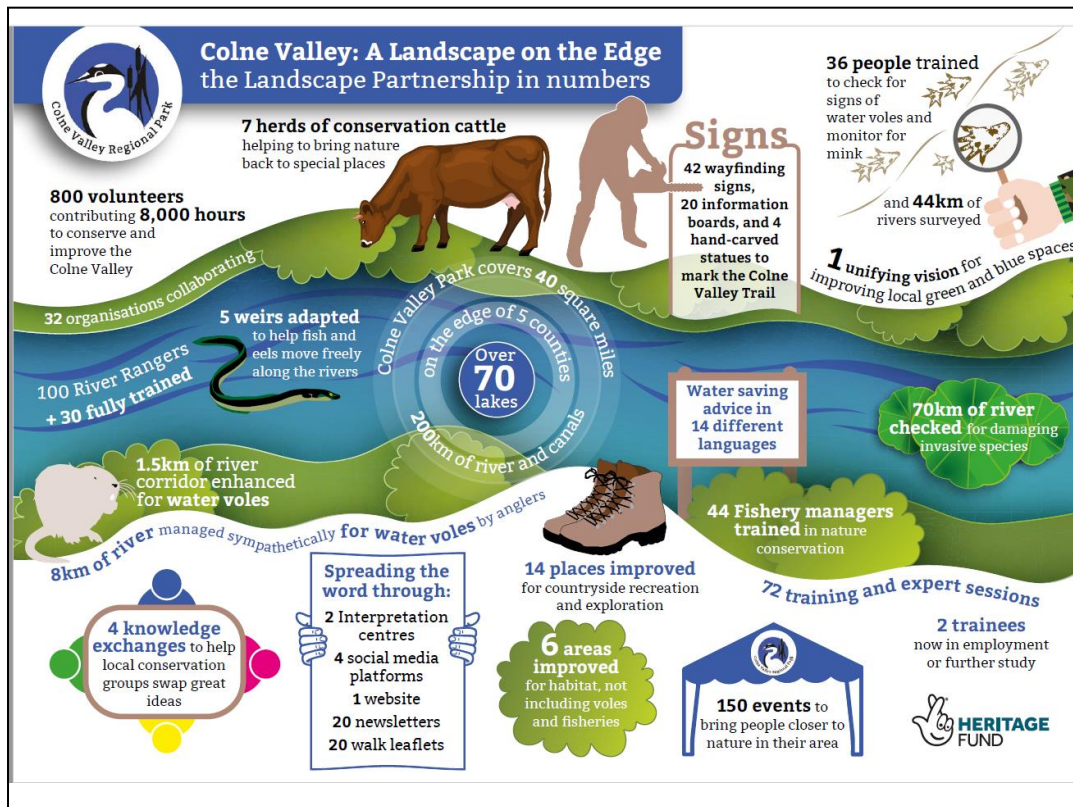
The video made by the Drip Drop Summer School children:
<https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/can-you-save-water-and-save-your-local-rivers/>



What did we achieve?

So we were well and truly off the starting line:

Everytime I talk about this project it becomes a list – so I am going to get the list out there straight off :



You can see a slightly earlier version of this slide in our newsletter and read about what each of us thought was the most rewarding part of the project.

<https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/explore-your-colne-valley-park-summer-2022-edition-is-ready/>

Volunteering 800 volunteers 8000 hours



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One of the highlights was our volunteering programme. Over the course of the project we have had 800 volunteers doing everything from administration to surveying to pulling out pennywort. They have contributed 8000 hours of their time, that would be 5 full time workers for a year or you could take the train from London to Birmingham 6000 times. Of course we are told that will rise to 9000 times on HS2 but then who wants to go to Birmingham 9000 times?

Hopefully it was and is a two way relationship with our volunteers and to that end we have held 72 training sessions, trained 30 in riverfly monitoring and 36 to survey for signs of voles



We also had the opportunity to host three trainees, they contributed hugely to the projects, especially during lock down and one went on to further education in conservation and the other was offered full time employment with Maydencroft.. The start of other collaboration with Groundwork regarding employment and trainees.

Sadly Covid got in the way for our third trainee and he had to re-think his career change



There were also a lot of elements of the project involved with protecting and preserving habitat

You will hear more about two of the most successful projects, the Angling and Nature Project and the Water Vole project from Tim and Tony after me but we have also: We have enabled conservation grazing at three sites and supported it over the 4 summers,

Yes the cows in these photos are lovely but the real story is the improvement to the land in the photos at the top of the slide. This was Stanwell Moor before and after. The cows can't take the credit for all of it but their efficient mowing will have had benefits for the flora of the moor and thus the invertebrates. We have had the area surveyed and are just waiting for the results.



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We have (will have) adapted 5 weirs for fish passage, done all the design for a sixth and helped to re-naturalise a section of the River Ash.

We have also checked 70km of river for damaging invasive species and improved 6 areas (in addition to the voles project) specifically for improved habitat.

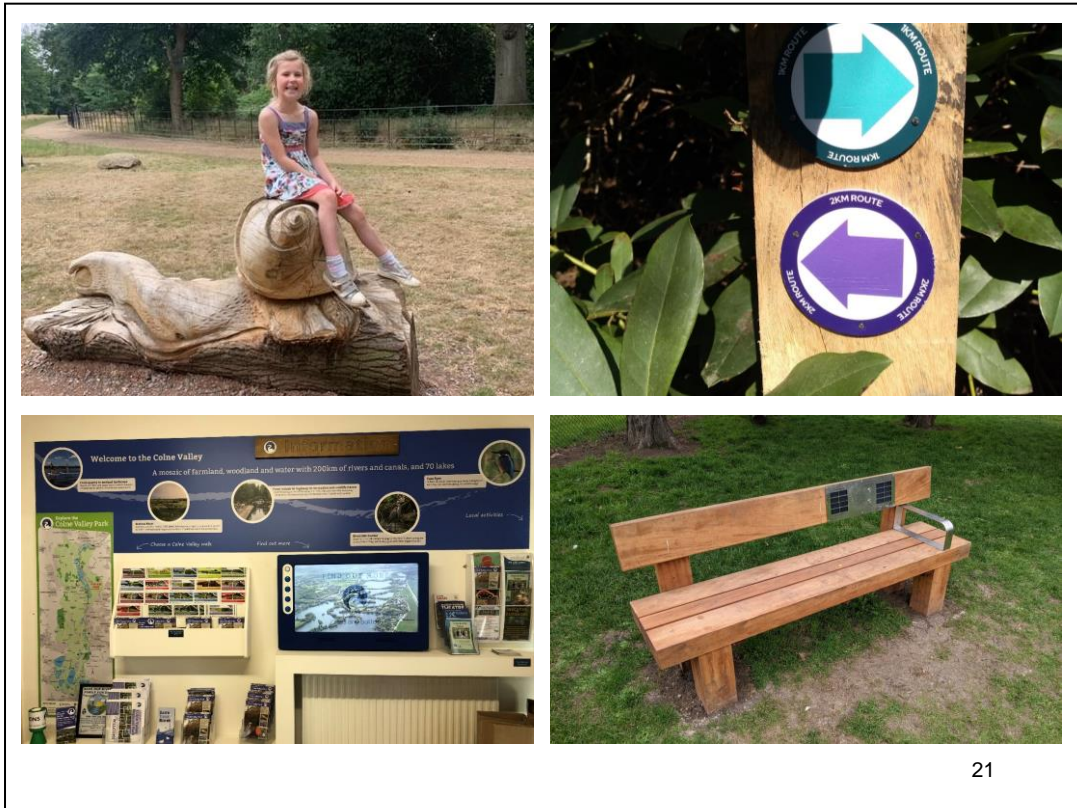
Conducted surveys flora surveys at 5 sites



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Access to the Countryside

There are now more wayfinding signs, information boards, new kissing gates and stiles and updated walks leaflets to help people explore the Colne Valley with confidence.



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There is more information at 5 local sites spread out across the Colne Valley like Langley Park, and Batchworth Lock and Lammas Park. And we have added additional features to those sites like the deadwood play area in Langley park and revamped the brass rubbing trail at Denham Country Park. We have also put in two interactive interpretation centres, at the Colne Valley Park Visitor Centre at Denham and at the Woodland Centre at Ruislip Woods



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Spreading the word:

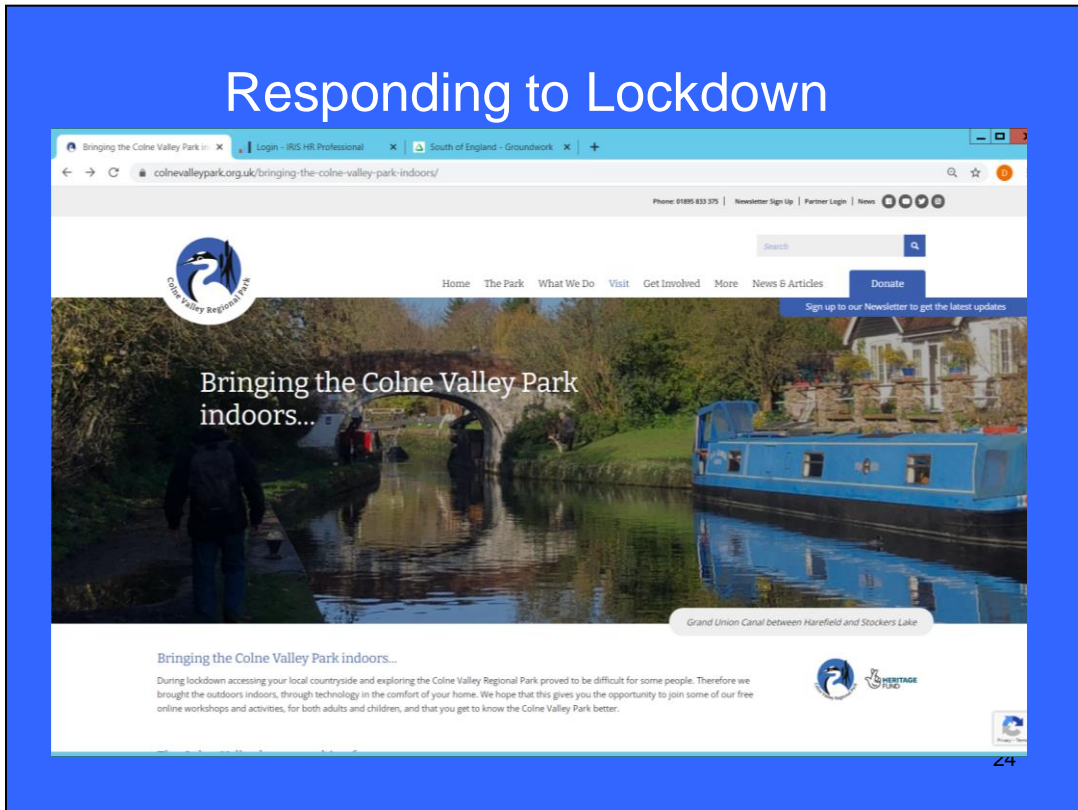
Of course one of the main objectives for the Colne Valley Park was to raise awareness of the park both amongst communities and amongst the decision makers. To this end we produced a new website, 8 Broadsheet newspapers circulating 15000 copies of each



and Fiona talked her way through over 150 engagement events from online talks to guided walks and appearances at Festivals.

Any one of these would have won her a Blue Peter badge but the one that I was most impressed by was a talk to a partially sighted group where she made a tactile map of the Colne Valley and a model of a fish pass so they could trace the route for the fish with their hands

Responding to Lockdown



In the middle of this project the Lockdown hit and we had to bring the Colne Valley indoors. We did this with a variety of on line information from recorded walks to online training and short talks and nature exploration to do in your own garden or from your window. Including a particularly popular talk on parakeets



**What are the my most
memorable moments?**



Getting the stunning Colne Valley Trail statues installed, thanks to meticulous planning and negotiation by Maydencroft

There are four of them to find along the Colne Valley Trail, made by a local artist.



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Getting on BBC's Countryfile is something I had an ambition to achieve for the Colne Valley for a long time and thanks to a considerable effort by Chloe we managed this during lock down. Our website hits surged to an all time high of 5000 hits in one day

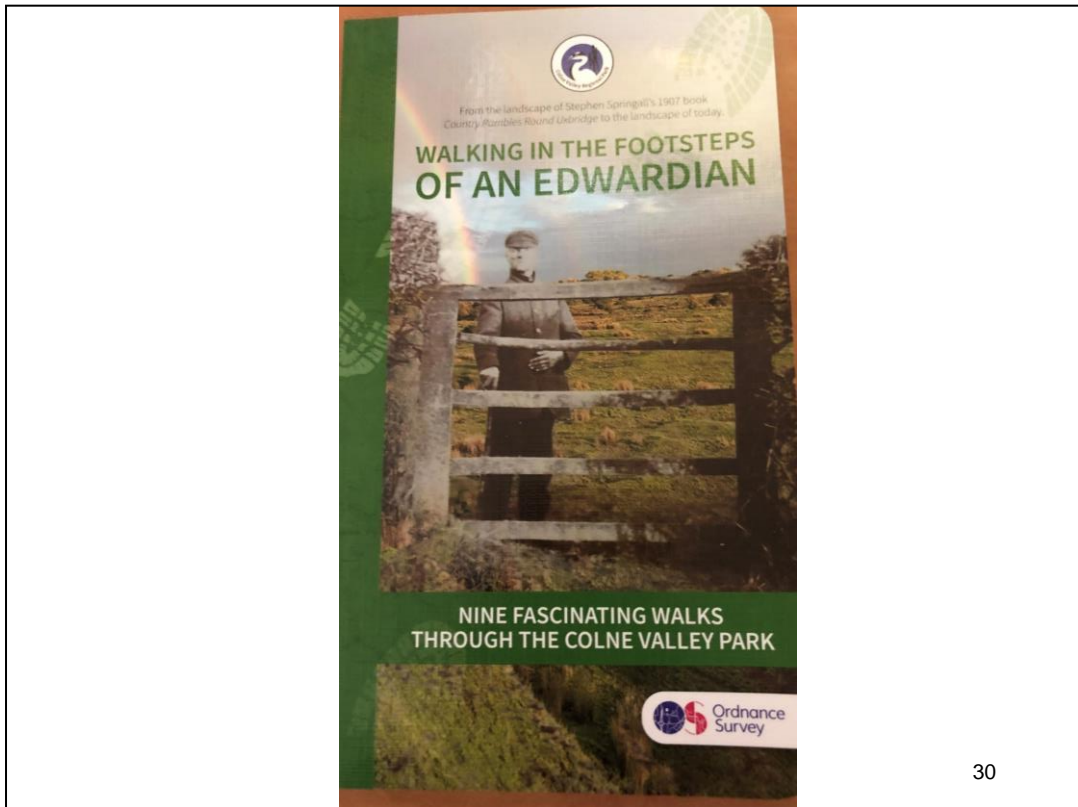


The success of the River projects not least the River Rangers who really stepped up to the mark and made this such a success.

You will hear more about the Angling project and the voles shortly.



Three weir removals were originally part of the project but due to planning issues at two other countryside/access projects we decided to include 3 fish passes in the project. These have been big projects not only in terms of planning but also in the size of the machinery and the undertaking. Lets hope the eels appreciate it.



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The publication of the Walks with an Edwardian book – this was described as an 80 page pamphlet in our brief and I think you will agree that the final product exceeds this expectation by a long way. We must thank Fiona and Paul Graham for their considerable hard work on this project, even wading through a flood to finish a trial walk! You can purchase a copy of this book later this evening.



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Staff development: At Groundwork we did have some churn in staff but for the right reasons, Chloe won a well earned promotion internally, Adam left us to a job in Surrey Wildlife Trust, and we recruited two of our River Rangers, Josh and Laura into full time roles with us. The lottery funding covered training and all the staff have taken full advantage of that.

We are pleased to say that all of our staff have been offered ongoing roles at Groundwork. A great relief to me as it would have been devastating to loose such experience.

What has hindsight taught us?

We should have had a couple of contingency projects planned in from the start

More staff resources for River Rangers

Landscape Partnerships are VERY complicated, especially the financial planning

Some partners inevitably are more intensely involved than others - would have been lovely to have brought them all along at the same speed.

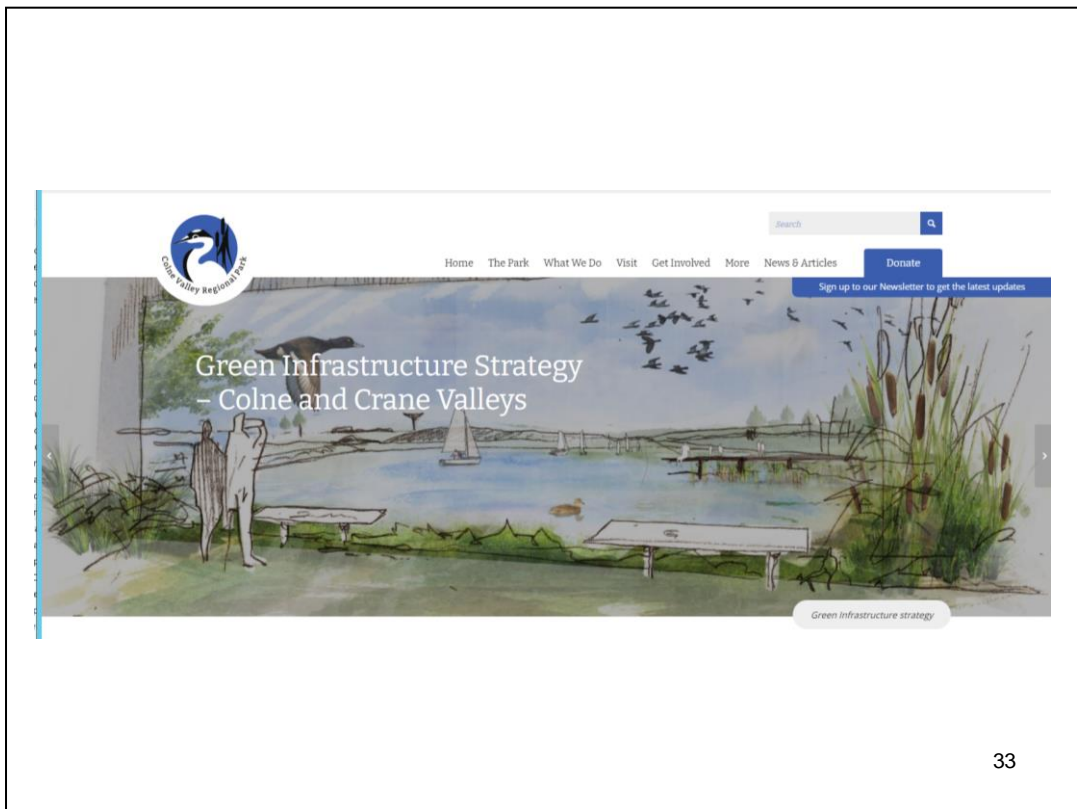
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We should have had more contingency projects from the start. We did have some but it would have helped to have more of a choice.

More staff for river rangers, this having been a successful project that would have benefited from more staff time to ensure more legacy

Landscape partnership projects can be very complicated especially the finances!

Some partners are inevitably more involved than others, it would have been nice to have brought them all along at the same speed.



The Green Infrastructure Strategy creates a vision for the park, and it has been a feature of many a discussion with those of influence and with planning departments, however despite this project being easily the best thing to happen to the Colne Valley in 40 years we find, as Gerry said, this area is more under threat than ever.

The Lottery has recognized this and has allowed us to propose a use for some of the remaining funds to help us get the message across more strongly to those of influence that this is an area that it is essential to protect. It will enable us to work with planning departments to imbed the Green Infrastructure into their local plans. We have commissioned a wetland survey to enable us to

quantify the value of the wetlands that form the backbone of the park and it will give us the resources to produce more illustrative maps of both the value of our green spaces and the threats to them.



Thank you to everyone who has worked or volunteered on these projects, our partners, the landowners and associations who have been so welcoming. It amazed me that so many people were willing to put nature first despite the impacts that might have had to their workloads. We look forward to continuing to partner with you on future projects.