



# Explore Your Colne Valley Regional Park



## FESTIVAL FORTNIGHT RETURNS

19TH JULY - 2ND AUGUST 2024

We are now taking bookings for Festival Fortnight 2024. Featuring a new and diverse range of walks, talks, family events, exhibitions and more, see <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/festival-fortnight/> for details and to book your tickets.



## Walk Like an Edwardian

**Our walking guide, *Walking in the Footsteps of an Edwardian*, based on Stephen Springall's 1907 Country Rambles Round Uxbridge is available to purchase on line.**

This book reflects on the changes in this much-loved landscape over the past 120 years – from gravel extraction, motorways, and housing development – Springall's landscape has changed beyond recognition in some places, but is reassuringly familiar in others. See <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/shop/> to purchase your copy.



The Colne Valley is at a crossroads

## A Call to Action

**W**elcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. We have launched a campaign to protect the Colne Valley Regional Park in the face of overwhelming development pressure now threatening its very future. Its mission is to:

**“Persuade decision-makers to act now to protect the special landscape of the Colne Valley Regional Park, specifically safeguarding it for future generations and enabling it to realise its full potential for the benefit of people and wildlife.”**

We are pressing for implementation of a five-point plan:

1. Influence Local Planning
2. Restore the Landscape
3. Reform National Planning
4. Establish Status (specific protection for regional parks)
5. Protect Nature

Our aim is to ensure that all change leads to better connectivity for people and wildlife, with generous green corridors to maintain future access to the countryside for our communities and wherever possible protect and improve our natural landscape.

Our campaign has already been hugely successful in reaching politicians and decision-makers. We are grateful to those local authorities, MPs and others who have already been in touch with us to discuss how they can help, and we will be talking to more key contacts in the coming weeks and months. You can read more about the campaign at <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/your-countryside-in-crisis-campaign-update/>

**Read on** to learn more about our projects and activities and **how you can help** us to protect, enhance and promote the **countryside on your doorstep**.

# RIVER WATCH

The Colne Valley Regional Park is at the centre of the national debate about the state of the UK's rivers. Flooding is reported in villages and towns across our landscape with infrastructure unable to cope and our waterways deluged with sewage and other pollutants.

## Invasive Species Management

We manage a range of invasive species; focusing on removing pennywort from our rivers and Himalayan balsam from their banks. These invaders threaten local biodiversity, overwhelm local species and spread alarmingly fast. We survey and monitor areas affected, carry out physical removal and work in partnership with CABI (Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux International) to introduce long term bio-controls.

## Riverfly Monitoring

For Riverfly surveys, we gather samples from a riverbed and count the types and numbers of tiny invertebrates. Riverflies are crucial biological indicators for monitoring



Our Rivers team is working with landowners, communities and other charities to enhance and promote our blue landscape.

water quality as they are sensitive to pollution, fairly localised and live long lives as larvae on the riverbed. Data is used to monitor pollution, provides long term information on the health of our rivers, and informs measures that can be taken to deter polluters.

## Water Quality Project

We are monitoring and mapping sources of water pollution to develop a publicly accessible interactive GIS Map. This helps shape our future strategy to stop pollution from entering our rivers.

## Interested in Rivers?

Become a volunteer River Ranger to help conserve, survey and champion your local watercourses. River Rangers play a key role in monitoring and reporting on a small stretch of river. You can choose how often you volunteer and all levels of expertise are welcome, with no previous experience required and training provided.

Please see <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/job/colne-valley-river-rangers/> for further details.

## Nationally Important for Wildlife

Assessment of the Wetland Resource of the Colne Valley, with special reference to Water Birds.

Following an initial assessment in 2008, Colne Valley Regional Park secured funding in 2023 to repeat this important report which was then commissioned by Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust. The report revealed that **rare Shoveler and Pochard numbers exceed levels of National Significance** and that Broadwater & Stocker's Lake are the key refuges. The report also assessed how environmental changes have affected waterbird communities and made recommendations for future habitat management.

"We need funding for more studies, to continue work with four wildlife trusts to prove the importance of the Park as a vitally important habitat. Only by having categoric proof can we make the case to government and Natural England for more of the Colne Valley to be protected." S Pomeroy, CVRP Managing Agent

You can read about the report here: <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/ducking-and-diving-in-the-colne-valley/>



Shoveler in the Colne Valley are of National Significance

## Countryside Connections

We have been improving path networks around the Park so it is easier and more attractive for our local communities to access the countryside.

With the hard work of volunteers and our contractor, Maydencroft, the path running under the A40 near Denham Country Park linking Denham with Aldergrade Nature Reserve (and ultimately Uxbridge), was cleared and resurfaced with new sleepers and fencing added. Corporate volunteers from Grundon Waste Management helped clear and dispose of litter.

A second stage, funded by Grundon Waste Management, is underway to improve a further section that links to the Grand Union Canal.

We hope that this significant investment, will mean the path is maintained regularly in partnership with Buckinghamshire and Hillingdon Councils, so people from Uxbridge (and beyond) can enjoy better access to the countryside.



# Help out at Hardings Row



Join us for some fresh air, hard work and good company and help make a positive impact on this precious green space in Iver Heath.

Located off Hardings Row (SLO 0HH), it offers a lovely walk through various habitats, including a small reedbed, ponds, meadow and woodland. Ant mounds can be found in the meadow and frogs spawn in the ponds on site. Various species of deer can be seen here. There is also access to a large meadow adjacent to the reserve that benefits from wildflowers, butterflies, and grasshoppers. Volunteering events are held monthly. All tools provided, all welcome and no experience necessary. Please contact Steve Finn for details [steve.finn@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:steve.finn@groundwork.org.uk)

# 125 years celebration

Iver Environment Centre and Colne Valley Regional Park were delighted to host visitors from Bosch UK last month to carry out tree surveys and maintenance on some of our new saplings.

As part of Bosch UK's celebration of its 125th anniversary, the local company donated 125 trees to the Iver-based Education Centre. Three Multistem Birch and two Rowan saplings were planted to provide interest and shade to the accessible playground area, along with 120 native whips which have been carefully planted to provide a new maze to enhance the play area.

Members of Bosch UK learning about their newly planted trees



Bosch UK are among a host of companies who are Members of the Colne Valley Regional Park or who bring their teams out to volunteer to help support their local countryside. We have recently hosted groups from Heathrow, Coca-Cola, Cemex, Centrica, Tesco Mobile, British Airways, Mace, Irwin & Colton, Iesis Group, Sun Pharma and many more. If you would like to offer your team the chance to volunteer see <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/become-a-champion/corporate-supporter/> to find out more about Corporate Volunteering and Memberships.

# Go Green Team

Introducing the Groundwork South Green Team – Jaqui, Jess, Steve and Simon. This team has been set up to make improvements to the environment and to help local people gain valuable skills and future job opportunities via a programme called Green Skills.



The Green Skills programme offers 12 weeks of paid employment for three local people, giving them on-the-job training in a wide variety of green skills.

Our latest Green Skills Team has been working in Hillingdon and South Bucks, supported by a new partnership between Groundwork South and Affinity Water. The team has visited Iver Lakes to carry out path maintenance and pick up litter, improving the access and appearance for walkers. The team has also been to a field owned by Affinity Water at Ruislip Lido to collect litter and maintain the scrub-like landscape for wildlife.

We are running more Green Skills Teams - for further information and contact details, go to <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/project/green-teams/>



## CAPS WOOD UPDATE

The Green Team and local walkers are delighted with the recently installed steps at the bottom of Caps Woods from the A413 layby, improving access to the woods. This project was completed in partnership with Rees Jeffreys Road Fund; a grant making charity supporting projects and education relating to road improvement.

# Joined-up thinking required



Jerry Unsworth

JERRY UNSWORTH is a planning consultant who has spent almost five decades working on every aspect of planning. Here, he makes the case for joined-up thinking when it comes to planning for the countryside and around cities.

**The Colne Valley Regional Park faces uniquely intense development pressure. Most people assume that Green Belt status means it is protected from development. The reality is not that simple.**

Local Communities across the Park from Rickmansworth to Staines are experiencing unprecedented fragmentation of their natural environment, and this has intensified dramatically in the last five years.



Staines Moor SSSI

When it comes to planning, the area now needs to be seen as a whole, extending collective thinking across local authority boundaries.

There are various factors at play, but the abolition of plan-making and co-ordination at a regional level, with councils told to just plan within their own boundaries, has undoubtedly contributed to the crisis we now face. More recently still, a **plethora of development proposals** has emerged. Some big ones have been approved, despite being in the Green Belt.

The problem is that each proposal is looked at in isolation. Without a plan to get the most out of this 'inner' part of the Green Belt, opportunities

to improve connectivity of walking and cycling routes, and wildlife corridors, are being missed.

**“The nine local authorities overseeing the CVRP need to create an overall vision – a masterplan. Genuinely joined-up thinking, with each development that Councils approve leading to incremental countryside improvement and better connectivity for people and wildlife, not gradual worsening of our local countryside.”**

**It is time for urgent, full scale Joined Up Thinking. Otherwise, we will sleepwalk into losing what this stretch of countryside can offer future generations, right on the doorstep of our capital city.**

**STOP PRESS: We are concerned about the new term ‘greybelt’. This will result in ‘planning by dereliction’ where landowners deliberately allow landscape quality to decline.**

## Help us to protect the Park

To help us safeguard the Colne Valley Park for the future, please:

- Write to your MP to highlight the importance of conserving the Park
- Sign up to our newsletter via our website to stay up to date
- Follow us on our social media pages listed below, and help us to speak up for the Park
- Volunteer with us via our website



## Become a Colne Valley Friend

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

Please join 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
- Special offers with our Riverside café

Please see our website:

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

## Donate to the Colne Valley Park

Your gift could help us:

- In our weekly conservation tasks in parks, meadows and wetlands
- Maintain woods and wetland for the benefit of people and wildlife.
- Respond to development proposals including motorway services etc.

Please see our website:

[colnevalleypark.org.uk/donate](http://colnevalleypark.org.uk/donate) or send us an email.



With thanks to our corporate supporters for their continued commitment to us: Lakeside Energy from Waste, and

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The Colne Valley Regional Park is supported by nearly 100 member organisations. Each of these organisations 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, Batchworth Community Council, Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council, Denham Parish Council, Friends of the Colne Valley Park, Gerrards Cross Town Council, Horton Parish Council, Iver & District Countryside Association, Iver Parish Council, London Borough of Hillingdon, Spelthorne Borough Council and Wexham Parish Council, for their financial contributions.