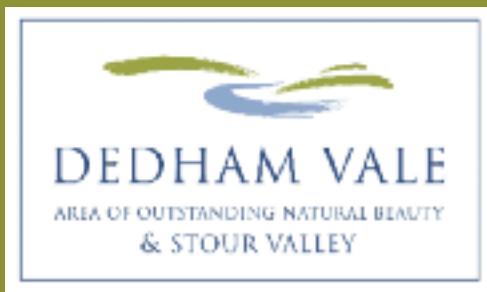


# DEDHAM VALE & STOUR VALLEY NEWS



News and Visitor Information for the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley

Free

Autumn/Winter 2018/19

## Enjoy our Outstanding Landscape and Help Us Care for It

Learn about conservation and community projects, plus Undergrounding electricity cables p7, State of the AONBs p8, future of farming p9 and River Stour Festival updates p12



Dedham Vale Youth Rangers enjoying blackberry pancakes after a busy work party



Griff Rhys Jones opens the newly restored lock at Stratford St. Mary

River Stour Trust celebrates its 50th anniversary

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Meadow at Long Melford Green, painting for a new information board © Vernon Lever

Getting Involved with Magnificent Meadows and River Enhancement Pages 4 & 13



Robert Erith cuts the 80th birthday cake

Dedham Vale Society celebrates its 80th anniversary

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## Messages from the Chairmen



### Robert Erith TD DL

Chairman, Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Partnership

Since the last News was published, the Government has announced the first full-blown review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty since the original legislation was passed some 50 years ago. This review of designated landscapes is being led by the journalist and writer Julian Glover, and will make recommendations on the existing statutory purposes of AONBs and National Parks and how effectively they are being met. Amongst other aspects the review will also take advice from Natural England on the process of designating AONBs and extending boundary areas with a view to improving and expediting the process. We will make full use of our opportunities to influence this report. I have invited Julian Glover and members of the review panel to visit the Dedham Vale. We are told the report will be delivered to the Defra Secretary of State in 2019 for his assessment and implementation.

Meanwhile planning pressures continue with a further application by Konings, the National Grid 400kV power line from Bramford to Twinstead likely to be considered again soon, and the Bures housing application being appealed by the developers. Planning is a real challenge for us and we are encouraged by the significant changes that have been published in the revised National Planning Policy Framework, which we hope will strengthen the ability of our local authorities to resist development in, and adjacent to, the AONB.

On a more positive note, the Forum in June was well attended with some excellent speakers and glorious weather. We have celebrated the 80th anniversary of the Dedham Vale Society which has battled with considerable success to keep the Vale free of inappropriate developments for all of that time and whose campaigning was largely responsible for the area being made an AONB nearly 50 years ago. We also look forward to hosting the 2019 National Association for AONBs conference in Essex.

Championing the work of the AONB and its Partnership will be an important part of our 50th anniversary since AONB designation in 2020. We are already thinking about how we should celebrate this landmark by doing something that could be in place for another 50 years – ideas welcome!



### Cllr Nigel Chapman

Chairman, Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

After this glorious summer we are relaxing into the joys of autumn and, if you are like me, taking stock of what has been achieved over the last few months.

Some of our visitors will have noticed the new footpath signs guiding them from Manningtree Railway Station to Flatford and Dedham; one of the Project's recent initiatives to help the tourism industry in the area. We are always striving to support local sustainable visitor businesses and to find ways to explain to their customers what is so special about the Stour valley, and why this landscape must be conserved for future generations.

The economic value of the AONB was underlined by the recent data from Destination Research that puts the total value of tourism at £62m for 2017 up 13.3% compared to two years earlier. Jobs are up by a similar figure! We are all proud of our special landscape and its ability to refresh 'body and soul' of all those who live, work and play in it.

An interesting dichotomy that always intrigues me is the fact that, although it is called an 'area of outstanding natural beauty', a fair amount of management is required to sustain so much that this wonderful valley offers. As I say so often, we are incredibly fortunate to have a marvellous team, indeed teams, of volunteers that do so much practical work throughout the valley – and in the office too! I was talking recently with the manager of the volunteer team in Colchester's country parks and we both agreed that modesty is almost a prerequisite of being a volunteer! The amount of work they undertake is not to be underestimated. We thank them all.

We are also indebted to our core staff team which we have recently tweaked, and we welcome Beverley McClean as Planning Officer and Claire Cadman as Projects Officer; they are fitting in very well! Meet them on page 7.

I trust that many of you will have enjoyed various events in the first year-long River Stour Festival. This is a marvellous innovation that publicises and supports interesting, stimulating and fun events, with something for everyone. I know that the second year will be equally exciting!

I hope you will enjoy all that the Stour Valley has to offer throughout the coming autumn and winter.

## 2018 Dedham Vale Forum

Outstanding Landscapes and Natural Beauty was the theme of the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Forum held on Friday 15 June 2018. The speakers were David Barker (Chair of Suffolk's Greenest County and a Higher Level Stewardship farmer), Fiona Cairns (Director of Suffolk Preservation Society), Ruth Philo (River Stour Festival director), Rob Wise (Environment Advisor, National Farmers Union), Robert Erith, Nigel Chapman, Simon Amstutz.

We have two options, climb under a duvet and bemoan or we can engage with it. By working together, we can mitigate the worst excesses of the development that is coming." (Fiona Cairns)

"We recognise that delivering for landscape, delivering for biodiversity, delivering for productive farm food producing business can be one and the same thing". (Rob Wise)

Download the full report from the AONB website/About Us.

Sound bites of the day:

"Balancing food production with sustainable farming is not rocket science. We need sensible people working with government to give a post-Brexit agricultural support scheme that delivers for food and wildlife and ensure the benefits for people to enjoy the countryside". (David Barker)

"We are living through an incredibly hostile development climate. The pro-development agenda has never been more overwhelming.



## Planting Footsteps Across Constable Country

The AONB has upgraded the signage on Public Rights of Way and other access routes between Manningtree, Dedham and Flatford in the heart of the AONB. These routes take in amazing marshes, farmland, grazing meadows, woodland and the lovely banks of the River Stour. 24 new oak finger posts have been placed at key points to assure users that they are heading in the right direction and clearly show destinations and distances.

Some of the signs are on the Stour Valley Path to improve the experience of people using this sixty-mile regional route from Newmarket along the River Stour to Cattawade, where the river joins the estuary. Making the routes easier to follow will bring benefits to the local economy. Evidence shows that walking is the most popular activity in the Vale and when we spend more time on a visit, we generally spend more money.

Councillor Nigel Chapman believes "The network of access routes in this area is a fabulous legacy left by our ancestors and showcase Dedham Vale's varied scenery, from



historic towns and villages to stunning wildlife and beautiful rivers. We recognise that the population of the area will continue to increase, and some of those people will want to enjoy, exercise and relax in the AONB and the wider Valley. The new signs are part of our efforts to welcome residents and visitors".

Download the Walk Explorer guides to Constable Country and Dedham from the AONB website.

Neil Lister, AONB Countryside Projects Officer

## Assington Anne

For our natural and historic environment to be conserved it needs advocates, and Anne Holden was one such champion. Working in the natural and historic environment is about enhancement and I have watched in awe over the years how Anne lived that principle.

The love with which Anne restored and indeed, that word again, enhanced Assington Mill has always been a joy to watch and was an education in sustainable buildings. The programme at the Mill put rural crafts and skills at its heart. One special thing that Anne did was to help to create wildlife corridors between Assington Mill and Arger Fen ancient woodland.

Many people will remember 'Assington Anne' because of the Forest School Camps she and Bob hosted at the Mill. Because of Anne's generosity 100s of children, many from urban areas, have been lucky enough to camp at Assington Mill. If we are to continue to protect and enhance our historic natural environment we need new and younger champions. Anne opened our minds and helped so many people, including myself, to think a little differently, and that will be her enduring legacy.

Anne Marain Denise Cowlin  
10 March 1940 – 3 June 2018.

Bryn Griffiths, Suffolk County Council

## Celebrating 50 Years

The River Stour Trust has been celebrating its 50th Anniversary with a wide range of events on the river. The Trust was formed in 1968 to fight plans to extinguish the right of navigation on the 25 miles of the river from Sudbury to Cattawade, and since then has worked to preserve and restore the beautiful Stour for use and enjoyment by everyone.

Successes have included restoring the historic Granary at Sudbury, building a Visitor and Education Centre at Great Cornard, restoring or rebuilding four of the 13 derelict locks, securing public access and slipways at Sudbury, Cornard, Stratford St Mary, Flatford and Cattawade, and restoring a 150 year old Stour lighter to working use. The annual Sudbury to the Sea canoe event attracts 500 entrants, while the Trust trip boats have carried over a quarter of a million passengers who come from all over the world to enjoy the river made famous by artist John Constable in his much-loved masterpieces.

The high point of the year was the re-opening of the lock at Stratford St Mary. The culmination of a 12 year project, the lock was renamed the Roger Brown Lock after the Trust member who lead the restoration. 15,000 hours of labour by Trust volunteers, and £85,000 of grants from the Enover Community Fund and the Inland Waterways Association were celebrated at an official opening by Trust Vice President Griff Rhys Jones, who lives alongside the lower river.



Griff Rhys Jones opens the newly-restored lock at Stratford St. Mary

© Linda Barrell

VIPs at the opening included leaders of local councils from both banks of the Stour, and MP James Cartledge.

We completed a £50,000 refurbishment of the waterside Granary at Sudbury, which has become popular as an affordable wedding venue for local couples. The Walk 'n' Water event, part of the Suffolk Walking Festival, had people walk alongside the river from Sudbury to Cornard, then return in the historic Stour lighter.

An open day at Bures allowed residents to enjoy a new view of the river that runs through their village. More than 120 people took to the water in a fleet of silent, non-polluting electric boats, with all of them expressing their delight at how beautiful the river was, seen from this aspect. The event, held with the support of the

Environment Agency which manages the Stour, is part of a campaign by the Trust to highlight the anomaly of a historic byelaw that prohibits craft such as this from using the 22 miles of the river from Henny to the sea, and is gathering support from local people and councils alongside the river to allow small, environmentally-friendly electric boats to use appropriate stretches of the waterway. The event received extensive coverage on local TV news, radio and newspapers.

The Trust is always looking for new members and volunteers of all ages and abilities, to help it preserve the Stour for the enjoyment of generations to come. For more information visit its website: [www.riverstourtrust.org](http://www.riverstourtrust.org) or call 01787 313199.

Emrhy's Barrell



Walk 'n' Water participants returning on John Constable

© Catherine Burrows

## River Themed Educational Visits

We are pleased to welcome groups of all ages and abilities to our Visitor Education Centre to learn about the history and modern day use of the River Stour Navigation. We can recommend a structure for the day with activities tailored to suit the audience. The VEC is also suitable as a base for Scouts, Guides, Canoe Groups and Duke of Edinburgh courses. Overnight camping on the grounds is possible with access to toilets and shower facilities. We have been extremely grateful for the efforts of our volunteers who are vital to make these school visits successful. The children are always keen to let us know their enthusiasm.

The advantages of this purpose-built venue are the ability to offer activities inside and outside as well as on and off the river. The usual activity schedule covers: talk about the River Stour Navigation; on site I Spy Stour quiz to test their memory, eyes and ears; river dipping; trips aboard our boats; Operation of Great Cornard Lock; John Constable floating classroom – our restored River Stour Lighter; The working river – paintings by John Constable; sketching of the wildlife and surroundings; and boat making.

Emrhy's Barrell

[Editor: As we go to print the RST are assessing fire damage at the Centre while activities continue.]



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## Lavenham's Meadows

For over twenty years members of the Lavenham Natural History Group have earmarked Mondays and Wednesdays, between April and September, for plant hunting expeditions along the border between Suffolk and Essex. Identification skills have improved over time allowing the group to participate in churchyard surveys for the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, the recording of arable weeds on an organic farm and contributing records to "The Flora of Suffolk", Martin Sanford's indispensable volume containing distribution maps of Suffolk's wild plant communities.



Long Melford Green

The group was, therefore, delighted to be asked to survey sites for the Dedham Vale/Stour Valley Project scheme, entitled "Magnificent Meadows". Members were allocated five "County Wildlife Sites" between Stoke-by-Nayland and Haverhill, four of which had never previously been visited by the group. The rediscovery of Greater Dodder, a "Nationally Scarce" species (a plant found in less than one hundred 10 km Ordnance Survey squares), was the highlight of the season. In Suffolk this plant, a parasite of Common Nettle, is restricted to the banksides of the rivers Stour and Brett.

The survey season ended in early September and then attention is drawn to organising a series of lectures on wildlife related subjects. From October the group meets in the Lavenham Guildhall, on the first Wednesday of the month, to listen to topics as varied as Nature Reserve management and Bumblebee identification. Both Summer and Winter meetings are open to all. Please contact me on 01787 281631 for further information.

Robin Ford

## Magnificent Meadows: Training, Surveying and National Meadows Day

In Spring 2018 twelve volunteers spent an enjoyable training day at Abbots Hall, the Essex Wildlife Trust HQ, under the guidance of plant expert Stephen Clarkson, who went through basic plant ID skills. John More, from Essex Wildlife Trust, and I were on hand to talk about the aims of the scheme, we demonstrated how to use the survey forms, gave out health and safety advice, and details of Suffolk County Wildlife Sites (CWS) / Essex Local Wildlife Sites.

Over the summer ten sites were surveyed either by individual volunteers, or by the Lavenham Natural History Group as part of their summer survey programme. Ross Bentley, from the East Anglian Daily Times, came out to one of the evening surveys at Kedington Churchyard and wrote a great article about the project and Lavenham Natural History Group.

Pupils from Long Melford Primary School have been investigating meadows during the summer term and celebrated what they had learnt by having a creative day of meadow themed art and poetry. Suffolk Wildlife Trust also ran several minibeast related activities with several of the classes. Starting in September the school are growing patches of wildflowers to create their own meadows.

To promote the wonders of meadows to a wider audience, various organisations ran activities at Melford Green CWS on Saturday 7 July, which is National Meadows Day. There were wildflower surveys, run by Lavenham Natural History Group;

minibeast hunts organised by Sarah White, a local environmental education expert; meadow art and craft activities by Dedham Vale AONB and Daws Hall Education Centre; a gallery of historic pictures of the Green, provided by Melford Heritage Centre; and wonderful art and poetry creations made from pupils at Long Melford Primary School.

Look out for a new information board on Melford Green which is being produced to explain County Wildlife Sites and why they are so important. The CWS at Melford Green is obvious, as the rest of the Green is regularly cut short, compared to the CWS which only gets an annual cut.

To find out more about being involved with Magnificent Meadows please contact us.

Emma Black, AONB Countryside Projects Officer



Long Melford School stand at National Meadows Day

## Hedgehog Street

At the June 'Wild in the Stour Valley' event in Sudbury, we asked young children if they had seen a Hedgehog. On the plus side, virtually all the children had seen a live Hedgehog in various suburban places across Sudbury and Cornard, and in local villages. On the other hand, some parents and particularly grandparents commented the Hedgehogs are nothing like as common a sight as they were in past times.

There are definitely Hedgehogs about, so it's not too late for the population to start re-building, if habitat loss and destruction can be slowed down. We featured a strimmer as one of the 'dangers' on our stall.

Children enthusiastically launched into our Hedgehog activities: a quiz to name Hedgehog dangers; make a Hedgehog nose mask (from egg box and elastic); and build a Hedgehog house or feeding station from wood offcuts. These Hedgehog habitations all had tunnel entrances, so our mascot pink Hedgehog could come and go safely without being noticed by dogs or cats.

We encourage people to enrol for Hedgehog Street at [www.hedgehogstreet.org](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org), a national campaign. This project inspires and gives information to people wanting to help Hedgehogs, such as making or leaving gaps in newer fences, and linking gardens in a street, as Hogs need a large territory to forage.

Nick Miller



Learning about hedgehogs at Flatford Nature Day

## Nature's Lost Words: A Wild Quiz

Did you know that around 50 words connected with countryside and nature have been removed from the Oxford Junior Dictionary? Words including Acorn, Buttercup and Conker ... we were stunned! Our friends at the Stour Valley Education Network have created a short quiz to help children in recognising some of the words which are starting to disappear in this way and we thought it would be great to share it with you. Download it from bottom of the Bulletin Board page of [www.essexchildrensuniuersity.co.uk](http://www.essexchildrensuniuersity.co.uk).

On completion of the Quiz send it to us at [admin@essexchildrensuniuersity.co.uk](mailto:admin@essexchildrensuniuersity.co.uk) and we will award one hour of Children's University Learning for the Passport to Learning. For an additional hour of CU Learning, encourage your child to write a short story or a poem which include all these words too. Submit them to us and we will also share with the Stour Valley Education Network people too! We are really excited to be working with them. At the Wild in the Stour Valley event there was a Lost Words quiz which Lucas Martin won.

The Nature's Lost Words Quiz project is based on the book 'The Lost Words' by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris.

Sample questions!

- What tree does an acorn come from?  
A: Oak B: Birch C: Alder
- What colour is a raven?  
A: White B: Grey C: Black
- Where does a kingfisher hunt its prey?  
A: Forests B: Rivers C: Rocky cliffs

Debbie Bird



Lucas Martin, winner of the Lost Words Quiz at Wild in the Stour Valley

Answers: A, C, B

## Get Involved in Wildlife and Conservation

Providing opportunities to get involved with wildlife, conservation and the environment is so important whatever age. Luckily in the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley there are many organisations running activities which enable this to happen.

Enabling children, young people and those wanting a career in conservation chances to access some of these opportunities is important to us and recently the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley team have:

- Provided work experience placements for two year 10 students - Alex Laker from Kesgrave High School and Saffron Taylor from Ipswich High School for Girls. This placement has given them an idea about the world of work and its different disciplines and processes.
- Provided student degree placements for Will Eden from the University of the South West and Steph Poole who has just joined us from Harper Adams University.
- Coordinated and run outdoor learning and practical tasks for the

Dedham Vale Youth Rangers, one of whom has just got onto the Young Darwin Scholarship Programme run by the Field Studies Council. A recruitment drive organised by Steph Poole has boosted numbers to 9, which is fantastic.

- Coordinated the 'Wild in the Stour Valley' event in Sudbury as part of the River Stour Festival. Over 400 people attended this wonderful event where lots of SVEN (Stour Valley Education Network) outdoor learning providers ran free activities for children.

- Run activities at two Flatford Nature Days. Look out for the next one on 23rd October, and more in 2019. We'll be making spoons and doing hibernation activities.

- Produced a SVEN activity programme for families with over 21 events provided by partners.

- Provided Volunteer Officers, Holly Wilkins and Charlotte Norrbom with six months of work experience in the conservation sector which will hopefully aid them getting jobs in the future.

- Provided grants to community

groups to engage with families in environmental activities such as the pond restoration project at Stoke by Nayland school.

Visit the AONB website to download our 'Volunteering Opportunities' document and the Stour Valley Education Network (SVEN) 'Directory of Outdoor Learning Providers'.

Emma Black



Alex Laker, Kesgrave High School, checking Scattered Orchard trees

## Park Progress with HLF Support

The Clare Castle Country Park project, funded with c£1.5m by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is progressing well. A two week Community Archaeology programme took place in September (there will be further digs in 2019 and 2020) with the moat being de-silted immediately afterwards. The renovation of the Clare Park Centre (the old Goods Shed) and the station platforms are planned to be completed by mid 2019. With a full-time Volunteer and Community Engagement Officer and a part-time Administrator in place a wide range of ongoing activities for families and those with specific interests will be developed in the coming months.

In the last 12 months the Trust, in conjunction with others, have introduced a weekly Parkrun (an average of over 100 runners each week), fortnightly 'Health Walks', monthly walks in the beautiful countryside around Clare, Nordic Walking sessions and a 'Boot Camp'. The Heritage Lottery funded project will include a 'trim trail' (a number of fitness installations around the Park) for those who wish to improve their fitness whenever it is most convenient for them to do so.

See [www.clarecastlecountrypark.co.uk](http://www.clarecastlecountrypark.co.uk) or Facebook for more details.

Geoffrey Bray



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## Going Underground

With thanks to UK Power Networks and landowners in the two AONBs an impressive 22 miles of overhead power lines and their poles have been removed in the last ten years. Through a process called 'undergrounding' 10 miles have been removed from Dedham Vale AONB and 12 miles from the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB protected landscape – and more is planned!

In 2005 Ofgem, the electricity regulator, began granting electricity network operators a special allowance to replace overhead lines with underground cables where possible, to enhance the appearance of protected landscapes in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks.

UK Power Networks, which operates the electricity networks in both AONBs, has been working in partnership with local landowners and the AONB team on 11 schemes: six schemes totalling £2.24m have been delivered in Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB whilst five schemes totalling £1.88m were delivered in Dedham Vale AONB. UK Power Networks is the country's



biggest electricity distributor, keeping the lights on for more than eight million homes and businesses across London, the East and South East of England.

The AONB team is now working with AONB based landowners and UK Power Networks to deliver seven further potential schemes totalling over £3.2m, assuming full landowner support. See map for locations: red is complete and green is in progress.

### How does Undergrounding Work?

Although proposals to underground overhead lines can originate from parish councils, community groups or private individuals all are scored and assessed by the AONB team. Highest scores are afforded where electricity lines impact on landscape character, landscape features and visual amenity and/or where undergrounding could benefit the setting of historic features and biodiversity. The feasibility of the proposal is then assessed by UK Power Networks and, if viable, the AONB present the scheme to a regional steering group chaired by Natural England to decide which proceed to the next stage.

If approved the AONB then work with all affected local landowners to get in-principle support, as well as consulting

with wider stakeholders such as the local authority, Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency. Assuming full landowner support has been achieved and no insurmountable constraints have been identified by stakeholders the AONB return to the regional steering group for further scrutiny and a decision. Once approved, the AONB pass the scheme to UK Power Networks to progress. This includes negotiating wayleaves with each landowner and obtaining all required consents. Once everything is in place UK Power Networks then provides the manpower and expertise to carry out the work.

Shaun Barrell from UK Power Networks, oversees the undergrounding projects. He said: "Our power lines are needed to deliver electricity to homes and businesses, and they are often visible from public viewpoints and rights of way. Replacing the overhead lines with underground cables makes such an immediate and permanent improvement to these protected landscapes. It helps restore uncluttered open views that will be enjoyed by visitors and residents alike. We are pleased to be playing our role in enhancing the local landscape for future generations."

**Simon Buckland, UK Power Networks and Claire Cadman, AONB Projects Officer**

## Claire Cadman AONB Projects Officer

I was very pleased and excited to join the AONB Team in July. I have always viewed the AONB as people delivering great projects in genuine partnerships – and I really want to be part of that. First impressions haven't disappointed. People are friendly and welcoming, our partners are positive and our landscapes are... outstanding!

A few highlights so far have been: working alongside the Stour Valley Volunteers; walking along the historic Sailors Path through flowering heathland; and, attending a national gathering of AONB representatives to share our experiences and look to the future.

In the immediate future I am picking up the delivery on a few existing projects, such as working with local landowners and UK Power Networks to improve our visual landscape by undergrounding electricity cables in both Dedham Vale AONB and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. After visiting several sites I'm eager to get things moving and make a difference.

Over the longer term I'm looking forward to getting more familiar with the two AONBs – learning about the places and their people. By listening to those who live in, work in or care for these areas I hope to make connections with the aims and ambitions of the AONB - looking to see how we can work together with partners on some super projects that really deliver.



## Beverley McClean AONB Planning Officer

I was delighted when I was offered the AONB Planning Officer job as I felt that the new role would enable me to make use of not only my planning skills but also the other experience I had built over the years. After joining Colchester Borough Council's Local Plan team in 2006, I qualified as a Chartered Planner in 2008 after completing an MSc in Town & Country Planning. Prior to retraining, I had worked on an EU Coastal Management Project and before that I worked in Countryside Management at Essex County Council for 14 years.

These first few months have been pretty busy but it has been a great privilege to meet the various project and partnership members all helping to conserve and enhance the AONBs.

I was and still am a little surprised about the sheer level of and diversity of development pressures within the AONBs, from National Infrastructure Projects to single dwellings in the countryside.

As well as responding to planning applications I provide comments on emerging Local Plans and Waste and Mineral Plans. For example, with Waveney District Council we are preparing a Statement of Common Ground covering AONB related issues which will be presented to the Planning Inspector during the Waveney Local Plan Examination in October 2018.

It isn't all just about responding to planning applications though. At the time of writing I am finalising arrangements for an exciting AONB Planning Event on Friday 25 January and starting on a briefing paper on the Stour Valley as a Valued Landscape to help support decision making related to planning applications in the Project area.



## Climate is What You Expect, Weather is What You Get

The difference between weather and climate is generally agreed to be a measure of time. Weather is what atmospheric conditions are over a short period of time, and climate is how the atmosphere behaves over relatively longer periods of time. If seasons consistently seem hotter, colder, wetter, drier, windier, then the recent climate may have changed.

The AONB Management Plan recognises the evidence suggesting there are changes to global climate. The Plan seeks to highlight the potential impact of climate change on the area and how negative impacts can be reduced or mitigated against.

Among the changes due to climate change listed in Natural England's National Character Area Profile for Dedham Vale (No 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland) and (No 82) for the Suffolk Coast are:

- Changes to rainfall patterns and timings, higher temperatures and prolonged periods of drought, will impact on wetland features and habitats such as grazing marsh, fen type habitats and ponds, and impacting species diversity.
- River valleys prevented from naturally evolving may have increased flood risks if climate change increases rainfall and subsequent flow volumes in rivers.
- Historic woodlands and native species may not be the most resilient and therefore unable to survive reduced soil moisture

or extreme events.

- Coastal change will see further erosion and reshaping of sections of this coast will inevitably occur over time.
- Every year during the last ten has been hotter (or almost hotter) than the previous one. Plants, animals etc. in the AONBs have evolved in a temperate climate and generally are adapted to a higher level of rainfall and cooler temperatures throughout the summer than we experienced this year. Drought can be extremely challenging. Organisms race ahead in development if the water supply holds out.

Although difficult to predict, as ecological interactions are complex, the dry spell is likely to leave wildlife winners and losers. Barrow, near Bury St Edmunds was touted as the driest place in UK this summer. It did not rain for 50 days. For insects, the general view is that the hot weather has been a boon. However, there is evidence that some insect populations have still not recovered from the drought of 1976, so the higher numbers of some insects we have seen on the wing this summer, may be misleading. Nevertheless, it has been a treat to see lots of dragonflies and damselflies on the wing!

Our grasslands were brown and 'sere' by the time the rains came in August. It has been interesting to note that only certain plants 'regenerated' and some seem to have put in an incredible spurt to flower and seed before it gets too cold.



Migrant Hawker Dragonfly

Among these 'regenerators', the ferny leaves and pink and white flower heads of Yarrow have been prominent.

We advise you to do what you can personally to limit your personal impact on climate change whilst enjoying the natural sights and sounds of the AONBs.

**Neil Lister, AONB Countryside Project Officer**

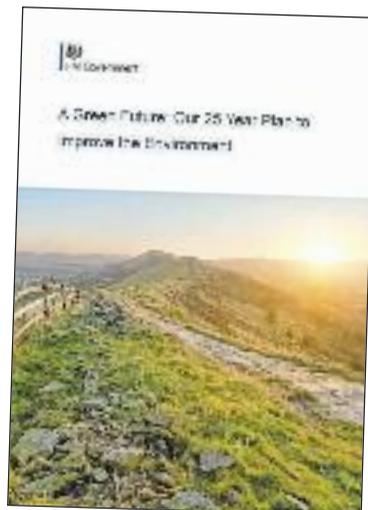
## The State of the AONBs

In a speech in 1966, Robert F Kennedy said: There is a Chinese curse which says, 'May he live in interesting times.' It is certainly interesting times for the nationally designated AONBs. There is an unprecedented national review of designated landscapes, revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework and the launch of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. That is before you might consider what the impacts of Brexit may be on the land management of AONBs.

At a local level we are seeing previously unseen levels of development pressures on the Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONBs. This includes proposals relating to the 'Suffolk Energy Coast' that includes a new nuclear power station, massive offshore wind energy production with associated on shore and off shore infrastructure and proposals for at least two interconnectors to connect Great Britain with continental Europe. If delivered the proposals for Suffolk's Energy Coast will lead to a requirement to strengthen National Grid's infrastructure across the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley.

With these proposals hovering over the nationally designated AONBs, the importance of the AONB management plans have never been so great. This statutory document, along with national policies contained within the revised National Planning Policy Framework and the soon to be revised

National Policy Statements and local policy should influence development decisions to ensure the purposes of the nationally designated AONBs are not overlooked.



With many of the issues above in mind, the AONBs have commissioned reports into the State of the AONBs. This report will give baseline environmental information on the AONBs that will help improve understanding of them. It will also be a useful indicator of what significant decisions that will be made over the coming months and years have on the state of the AONBs.

The AONBs themselves have never been so important in terms of their economic and health contributions. The volume and value of tourism are up in both AONBs, creating more jobs and promotion of healthy lifestyles. However, the AONB team and its associated Partnerships are acutely aware of the need to retain the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB and not look to promote mass tourism. We continue to promote low impact tourism and visits outside the peak season.

We live in interesting times and I urge you all to support the aims of the AONB in whatever way you can.

**Simon Amstutz, AONB Manager**



Nigel Chapman (Chair Dedham Vale AONB JAC), David Wood (Chair Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership), Simon Amstutz (AONB staff team manager) at Cattwade, where the two AONBs meet



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## Farming and Landscape at a Policy Crossroads



Of all parts of our society it's unlikely that there is any other sector as dramatically affected by Brexit as farming. Policy has been made at an EU level in Brussels for the last forty years, and in the last twenty years this has expanded from just covering production agriculture to policies marrying the needs of food production and the environment.

The environment covers many things including water, air and soil quality and biodiversity; but also, most importantly for our AONBs, landscape. The landscape that we love and cherish - and for which the Dedham Vale and the Suffolk Coasts & Heaths gained their AONB designation - has largely been shaped by centuries of agricultural practices.

Coming on top of Brexit the government has now announced that it wishes to review and take stock of the current farmed and designation landscapes.

Here in East Anglia, the National Farmers Union (NFU) has been focused for some time on certain specific inadequacies in current policies. This is particularly true for the support available to lowland grazing - a key feature of the Dedham Vale and the river valleys of the coast and heaths. For years farmers were encouraged to protect this vital component of landscape-maintaining practices by the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) scheme. This scheme started as pilot in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads and expanded nationwide.

However, in the last two sets of updated agri-environment schemes - first ELS and HLS and now mid-tier and higher-tier - the focus and appropriate options available for extensive lowland grazing have all but disappeared. With no scheme to turn to, farmers are on a cliff edge of potentially intensifying their livestock production or reverting grassland back to arable to maintain viable businesses. This could have major consequences for our AONB landscapes.



Rob Wise (third from right) and speakers at the Dedham Vale Forum June 2018

We have been working with the Broads Authority and other interested environmental NGOs to develop a new fit for the future version of the old ESA scheme. This has been offered to Defra to pick up as one of their 'tests, trials and pilots' to design a new agri-environment scheme for when we leave the EU. If picked up by Defra, we'd hope to be able to roll it out into the AONB areas as well.

On the wider stage the NFU continues to stress to government the need to design policies that support both viable farm business, and maintenance and enhancement of the environment. What has been uplifting in the debates of the recent past is the amount of common cause there is between the farming and environmental communities. While we bemoan the lack of an appropriate current national scheme, we mustn't forget the contribution the AONBs make themselves. Through their own Sustainable Development Funds, Stour Valley Environment Fund and other conservation funds, the AONBs have been playing an important part in helping fund smaller scale projects that directly affect landscape quality.

**Rob Wise, National Farmers Union (NFU)**

## New Use of Colour Guides for the AONBs

The AONB team recently commissioned Jem Waygood, of Waygood Colour, to complete a Use of Colour study for the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley and the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB.



Sample colour chart in the Use Of Colour Guides

The study was commissioned to provide guidance for developers, landowners, planners and architects about the sympathetic use of colour in new developments within the AONBs. The document will help those who value and care about the AONBs, to ensure that potential negative impacts of development on the character of the AONBs are minimised and a sense the place enhanced.

The colour palettes of soils, water bodies, and vegetation typical of each of the landscape character types across both AONBs were recorded, analysed and mapped. This work was carried out in winter to capture the truest array of colours found within each landscape character area. Information about 'existing palettes' - the dominant colours, tones, and colour associations - found in the two AONBs and the range of colours against which new development is viewed, were assessed. Using the existing palettes, a developed colour palette was prepared, which demonstrates the range of related colours that can be used harmoniously with the existing recorded colour palettes within the AONBs.

The Use of Colour Guides for the AONBs, as well as being very beautiful documents to look at, include useful and practical information on the use of colour in new developments, and aim to conserve and enhance the character of the AONBs.

The Use of Colour Guides will be formally launched at a Planning Event being organised by the AONB team on Friday 25 January 2019.

**Beverley McClean, AONB Planning Officer**

## Barn Owls Suffer at the Hands of "The Beast"

Suffolk is bracing itself as this year's breeding season is likely to be the worst for Barn Owls since the founding of the Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project in 2005. In the past six years, an average of 450 of our specially-designed boxes has played host to nesting Barn Owls, a ten-fold increase on the 45 occupied nests that was recorded in the late-1980s. Another bumper year was witnessed in 2017 with 379 broods being reared from 469 occupied nests. However, Barn Owls rely heavily on good short-tailed vole populations, which peak and trough on a three to four-year cycle and, by the end of the year, there was a decline in vole numbers, resulting in high mortality amongst late broods.



© Gavin Dunnett

The vole population could well have recovered quickly if last winter had remained mild, but this was not the case as Britain was hit firstly by "The Beast from the East" and then "The Mini-beast". Female Barn Owls need to attain a weight of 340-360g to be in a condition to breed, and she makes a judgement on the amount of food brought to her nesting chamber by the male. With a shortage of voles, food was hard to find, so most pairs appear to have skipped a breeding year. Most adults are present in the boxes, but sadly few have produced broods.

**Steve Piotrowski**

## ActivLives CommuniBees

After finishing my volunteer placement with the AONB and joining the ActivGardens Team in April 2017 little did I know that I would become a beekeeper. Sixteen months ago I vividly remember visiting our bees for the first time, donning the bee suit and armed with the smoker, feeling the bees knees (!). Once the lid was lifted and the bees took flight, I couldn't believe the hum of the bees flying past my visor. I gradually became familiar with what to record and look out for, and to understand bee jargon. I also remember the multiple stings I received whilst delivering a session at our Big Garden Party.

My highlights are holding a frame covered in bees for the first time, spotting the elusive queen bee, harvesting and sampling the glorious honey (a pooh bear moment), creating a shallow pond for the bees, observing people's reactions whilst offloading facts about our honey bees, seeing first-hand how our bees have built confidence in so many of our visitors, and being successful in placing a queen cell into a nuclei. The joys are endless.

Our yield of honey rose from forty-eight jars last summer to one hundred and five jars this season. As our five hives quieten down for the winter, we are creating a wild flower meadow bordered by a hedge adjacent to our apiary, and repairing our fire damaged



site. A huge thank you goes to my mentor Betsy Reid (Ipswich & East Suffolk Bee Keepers Association), whose calm nature, knowledge and delivery style has given me the confidence to really enjoy our bees.

ActivLives have had schools, colleges, pupil referral units, prison services, community groups, corporate groups, individuals from the community as well as regular volunteers, visit our apiary. We have some great ideas to further develop our apiary as a real 'CommuniBee' education and wellbeing resource. I feel very privileged to be able to share the ActivLives apiary with all walks of life from our local community and witness the benefits that it brings: [activlives.org.uk](http://activlives.org.uk).

**Danny Thorington, ActivLives**

## Working Hard to Tackle Rural Crime in Suffolk



Suffolk Constabulary has a small but dedicated team determined to help rural communities tackle wildlife and rural crimes. Rural crime is defined as any crime of an agricultural, livestock, wildlife or heritage nature.

The team has an Inspector, a Sergeant, two Police Constables and three Special Constables. In addition there are seven police officers on the force who have also been trained to tackle wildlife crime. We use 4x4 vehicles, which are marked up in rural crime livery, as well as a small all-terrain vehicle (ATV). If needed we have access to drones (small unmanned surveillance aircrafts) to help with intelligence gathering and operational policing.

The team's current priorities include rural thefts (machinery / plant / diesel and technology such as GPS equipment), hare coursing, poaching, raptor persecution, damage to habitat, policing of hunts and heritage crime, including theft of lead from churches. We also deal with badger baiting, stag hunting with dogs and other unlawful activities which can cause damage to fields, property and vehicles. The team are also trained in CITES (Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species) offences, such as illegal ivory, Rhino horn etc, as well as live specimens of illegal animals. We find there is a clear link between the aforementioned crimes and serious organised crime groups who are involved with other criminal activity such as drugs, trafficking and slavery.

Tackling theft of oil, diesel, metals, fertiliser, plant and equipment from agricultural land and buildings and keeping a watchful eye on isolated farm properties with older residents. Offering crime prevention advice where we can is also a significant element of our work. In addition we work with a multiagency task force to try to clamp down on fly-tipping, theft of agricultural equipment and plant.

Given the large area of land the team cover it is essential that they receive good intelligence from the local community. Please help us.



When to report: If you have been a victim of rural crime, or if you see rural or wildlife crime taking place.

What to report:

- Date, Time, Location
- Are the suspect/s alone or in a group?
- Are they trespassing?
- Do they have equipment with them?
- Do they have dogs or firearms with them?
- Where are they going?
- Where have they been?
- What do they look like?
- Have they any vehicles?
- What are the number plates and vehicle models?
- Can you safely get a photograph?

Who to report to: If it is not happening at the time of reporting and is not urgent call 101 or via [www.suffolk.police.uk/contact-us/report-something/report-crime](http://www.suffolk.police.uk/contact-us/report-something/report-crime). If it is happening at the time of reporting or is urgent call 999.

Kevin Stollery, Suffolk Rural & Wildlife Crime Unit

## AONBs Planning Event 2019

The aim of the Planning Event is to re-emphasise and highlight the legal responsibilities organisations have who work within the AONBs, to remind people about why about the AONBs have been designated and to promote new guidance that the AONB team has commissioned.

The half day event, at the University of Suffolk will take place on Friday 25 January 2019, and will look at various themes across both AONBs:

- Duty of Regard
- Natural Beauty & Special Qualities
- Tranquillity
- Use of Colour in new developments (see article p9)

The event is aimed at planners, elected Members, Parish Council's and organisations with responsibilities within the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley and the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. It will be Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) accredited so those attending can count it as Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Event details are on the AONB website or contact the office.

## Getting Active in Suffolk's AONBs

Suffolk has witnessed a huge growth over the past few years in the number of free to attend weekly running events taking place across the county, consistently attracting more than 3,000 participants every week. Supported by Suffolk's Most Active County, Parkrun and Great Run Local, events have been established by local communities and volunteers who come together each week to give participants the opportunity to walk, jog and run through and along some of Suffolk's finest parks, countryside and coasts.



Inaugural Parkrun on Sizewell Beach

The AONBs currently play host to six such events with the most recent one being launched in August at Sizewell near Leiston in partnership with RSPB Minsmere. Other events include: Haverhill, Clare, Great Cornard, Holbrook and Southwold. Details of all the runs can be found at [www.parkrun.co.uk](http://www.parkrun.co.uk) and [www.greatrunlocal.org](http://www.greatrunlocal.org).

As well as providing a fantastic opportunity for people of all ages and abilities to come together to do some regular weekly exercise, the events provide a reason for communities to meet and socialise providing far reaching benefits. If your community is interested in establishing a run please contact me: [colin.grogan@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:colin.grogan@suffolk.gov.uk) or 07515 188309.

Colin Grogan, Suffolk County Council

## Making Suffolk Happier, Fitter and Richer



Walkers came from as far afield as North Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cornwall to this year's Suffolk Walking Festival (May-June 2018), making it the most successful event in its 11-year history. Over 2,000 people attended 125 walks and events that spanned the whole county with everything from a Dawn Chorus Walk to a Twilight Safari. And those who came spent as well. The Festival pulled in a whopping £176,000 to the local economy, benefitting shops, restaurants, cafes, and accommodation.

It's great that the Festival has grown and grown over the last decade and is not only well established here in Suffolk but is now well known beyond our county. The festival is well loved by all who take part and it seems to have inspired them too. People loved discovering and learning about new places or places they thought they knew. "We discovered parts of Lavenham we never knew existed" said a walker on the Lavenham Blue walk, which explored the town's medieval heritage. "The most relaxed and friendly walk I've been on to date!", one walker commented.



Challenge Walkers 2018 at Orangerie Holywells Park with Lady Mayor

Plans are now in hand for the 2019 Suffolk Walking Festival. New for 2019 will be a link up with the Orwell Challenge, more Fringe Festival events, and more family events throughout half-term. Next year's Suffolk Walking Festival and Fringe will be mid-May to early June. [www.suffolkwalkingfestival.co.uk](http://www.suffolkwalkingfestival.co.uk).

David Falk, Suffolk County Council

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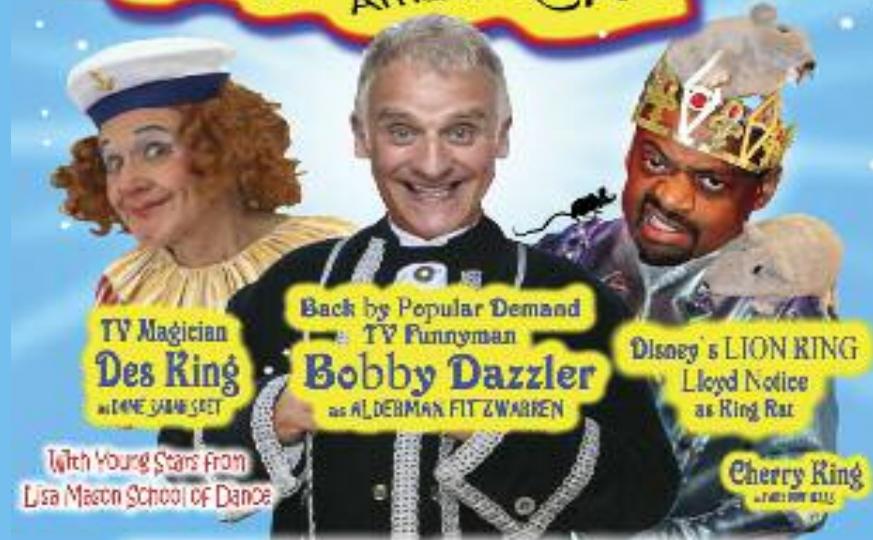
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## The River Runs Through Us

On the 30 June 2018 Stuart Bowditch and I celebrated the culmination of all of our research, recording, filming and conversations with many people on the River Stour with the launch of *The River Runs Through Us*, an exhibition and film screening at the Boat House Gallery at Flatford NT. Alongside a collection of paintings and photographs by local artists curated by Sarah Milne, were two text pieces: on the wall a map of the river made with text relating to significant people and places in the valley, and on the floor the forty or so edible plants we found on a foraging walk in 2017 with Matthew Rooney. A sound installation was also discreetly tucked away near the rafters playing back field recordings made during the project. The evening also saw the launch of a new publication *Stour*, with contributions from 13 authors and painters connected to the project.



This screening marked the first in a series of events throughout the summer in which the film, along with two shorts, was screened in pubs and galleries alongside the river. There was a great turn out to the launch with nearly 100 people in attendance and standing room only during the screening. The exhibition ran to 26 August with a great number of visitors.

## River Stour Festival

The River Stour Festival has had a very successful year so far with events being well supported. It will continue next year and already plans for the 2019 programme are taking shape. Each month sees a range of events including walks, swims, boating, exhibitions, talks, film screening and music, with more information on the website [www.riverstourfestival.com](http://www.riverstourfestival.com).



The festival has also launched 'Stour' an anthology of nature writing connected with the River and the Stour Valley at the events on 30 June that included the exhibitions 'Estuary' at North House Gallery, Manningtree, 'The River Runs Through Us' exhibition and film screening at the Boat House Gallery, Flatford and a talk by Professor Jules Pretty 'The East Country: Tales of Valley and Shore' at the Constable Hall, East Bergholt.

## Stour

*Stour* is an A5 publication of writing and illustrations on culture, wildlife and place, celebrating the Stour Valley and providing a legacy artefact for the River Stour Festival and *The River Runs Through Us* project. It features new and previously published works by Ronald Blythe CBE, Stuart Bowditch, James Canton, Simon Carter, Justin Hopper, Hilary Owers, Ruth Philo, Jules Pretty OBE, Susannah Robirosa, Matthew Rooney, Alison Rowlands, Darren Tansley and John Thornes. The book was published by Estuarine Press on 15 June 2018 in a limited edition of 500 copies and is available for £5 at various bookshops in the area, including Red Lion Books, Colchester and the Open Road Bookshop, Stoke by Nayland as well as online at [www.riverstourfestival.com/stour-book](http://www.riverstourfestival.com/stour-book).

The River Stour Festival is grateful to the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley for their generous support through a Sustainable Development Fund Grant and 25% of the profits of the *Stour* publication will be donated to the Stour Valley Environment Fund, for tree planting and conservation in the AONB.

Ruth Philo



## Building the Future for Gainsborough's House

Gainsborough's House is delighted to be awarded the Heritage Lottery Grant of £4.5 million so that it can begin the three-year expansion plan to build the New National Centre for Gainsborough in late 2018. Funds are still needed and with our 'Buy a Brick' campaign everyone can have the opportunity of investing in a piece of the new building and the garden's planned new crinkle crinkle wall.



The handmade bricks will be made at Bulmer Brick and Tile just near Sudbury where brick making dates back to the mid-15th Century. This family-run brickworks still uses traditional methods to hand-make bricks.

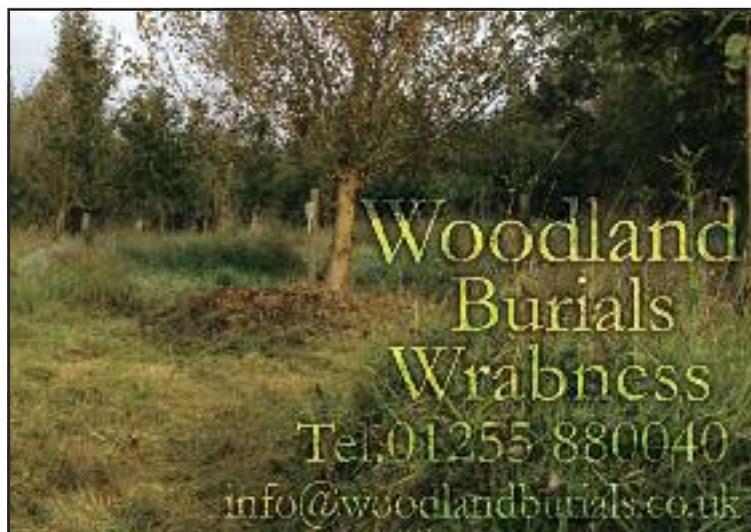
Architect for the project, Adam Zombory-Moldovan of ZMMA says 'Specially hand-made brick for this project will ensure that this nationally significant contemporary gallery building complements the local context, increasing the

projects' sustainability and supporting the local economy. We are also using these bricks in a crinkle-crinkle garden wall inspired by this idiosyncratic East Anglian feature." This will make a very attractive new boundary for the garden. Some of the bricks will be made by prisoners at HMP Hollesley Bay as part of their skills training, offered by Gainsborough's House.

Thousands of bricks will be needed, and we are inviting everyone to consider buying a brick. At £20 a brick this is a truly accessible way for local supporters to invest in an extraordinary opportunity for Suffolk. Details on [www.gainsborough.org](http://www.gainsborough.org).



Arabella McKessar



## Backwater Creation at Wiston

Fantastic new habitat for fish and other wildlife has been created on the River Stour at Wiston. The backwater excavation is another example of the River Stour Enhancement Project delivering tangible benefits for fish and other wildlife. This kind of habitat is virtually non-existent. The project will contribute to delivering Water Framework Directive objectives and help to enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB. The project has been made possible due to funds secured through the Essex and Suffolk Water Branch Out Fund.



Backwaters that are connected to the main river are a habitat in short supply on the River Stour. In the past straightening and deepening of the river for milling, navigation and land drainage have meant that much of the river is disconnected from the floodplain. Backwaters can increase the overall area of wetland habitat, but more importantly they provide areas of shallow water, which can be of great benefit to fish fry, as well as refuge areas where fish can escape from the main flow in the channel during flood events.



At Wiston a 30m long dog-legged refuge set within an area of land planted with cricket bat willows has been created. The backwater which is narrower at the river end opens out into a wider basin at the landward end, where there is an existing low-lying area associated with an old ditch-line. The ditch currently only holds water during wetter periods of the year. It is hoped that floodwater from the backwater will spill over into the ditch to keep the ditch wetter for longer. The backwater will also provide a refuge for waterfowl. We had a swan checking it out just five minutes after the river bank was breached.

Locally sourced Alder trees (*Alnus glutinosa*) will be planted on top of the spoil redistribution sites to help to enhance the biodiversity of the site further. Local school children will be invited to plant the trees and will also be given the rare opportunity to learn about backwaters and river restoration.

The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project (in partnership with the Environment Agency), would very much like to hear from landowners in the Stour Valley that would like their land to be considered for tree planting / river restoration.

Alex Moore da Luz, River Stour Project Officer  
alex.mooredaluz@suffolk.gov.uk

## Non-Native Invasive Plants in the Stour Valley

The Stour Valley Volunteers have been instrumental in the fight against the troublesome Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam again this year. Manual removal of Giant Hogweed has occurred at 40 sites on the Rivers Stour, Glem and Brett. A big thanks to Stephen Perkins (pictured) who helped to dig up Giant Hogweed early in the growing season (when its safe to do so) on the River Glem.



Alex Moore da Luz

## Dedham Vale Society 80th Anniversary

It has been a wonderful anniversary year. The Society is in rude health and up for the next challenge, as it needs to be. The potential threats from large scale housing to our borders and our villages have not gone away and the Konings site is unfinished business. On the positive side, Julian Glover's nationally designated landscapes review presents us with opportunities that must be grasped, and our campaign for a Dark Sky park needs to come to fulfilment before any more inappropriate lighting developments can happen in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that we exist to defend.

Meditating on what the Society has done over the past 80 years to protect this area and on the realities of the vale today (beautifully captured by Rachel

Sloane in the special anniversary edition of the DVSS newsletter), I was struck by a thought. When the Society was founded it was to protect the traditional buildings and landscapes of the vale which were disappearing fast. It has succeeded magnificently, but in the process it has created a public asset – the AONB – that is of great value not only to those who live in the vale but to those in the fast-growing towns and villages around its borders. The vale is their green lung, their cultural heritage and recreational space as much as that of the vale's residents. In future, I believe we should be seeking to further expand our membership outside our borders in order better to defend the place we all love.

Charles Clover, Chair of the Dedham Vale Society



**1**930s The Society was set up at a public meeting held in the Hewitt Hall in Dedham on 23rd April 1938. The catalyst for its establishment was the public outrage at proposals to pull down the coaching archway of the Sun Inn in Dedham. Mr (later Sir) Alfred Munnings became the Society's first President and the distinguished architect Mr Raymond Erith the first Chairman.

1950s During this decade the aims and objectives of the Society were formally defined, "to maintain, protect and enhance the natural, architectural and other amenities of the Vale, made famous by John Constable", and in 1959 the Constitution of the Society was drafted.



Current President, Robert Erith (also Chair of the AONB Partnership) first encountered the founding President of the Dedham Vale Society, Sir Alfred Munnings PRA, when he was a young boy. He was playing football with some friends in the road outside Spearings, the grocers, in Dedham when, he recalls, "A cantankerous old man came over to us, waving his stick and shouting at us to clear off!" As for Sir Alfred's widow, Lady Munnings, Robert remembers her even more clearly: "She had a poodle called Black Knight and when it died she had it stuffed and continued to carry it around." Not something a little boy forgets in a hurry!

So, in some shape or form, the Dedham Vale Society has been part of Robert Erith's life for as long as he can remember. And when, in 2002, he was asked to take on the Presidency, he didn't hesitate: "I felt very honoured to carry the torch." Sixty-four years previously, in 1938, his architect uncle, Raymond Erith RA, had been the Society's first chairman. The Society, run entirely by volunteers, remains committed to help safeguard the heritage of the Dedham Vale.

Georgie Russell

Extracts were taken from the special anniversary edition of the Dedham Vale Society newsletter, available at [www.dedhamvalesociety.org.uk/newsletters](http://www.dedhamvalesociety.org.uk/newsletters).

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## Boxted Fingerpost Restored

The rusty Boxted parish fingerpost standing forlornly in the vegetable garden behind the brick wall facing Boxted Bridge has recently been repainted and sympathetically restored by Boxted builder Mark Graves, after grants being awarded by the AONB Sustainable Development Fund and Colchester Borough Council.

The half-moon or semi-circular parish plate finial on the sign is a type unique to Essex and this one is a fine example as it retains all original parts. Dating from the early to mid-1920s the ironwork company's mark is just visible and reads 'Maldon Iron Works' on all three arms and on the base of the pillar.



simply uprooted and taken away. Most iron posts in Essex were reassembled late in and immediately after the war. Less than 130 1920s and 1930s cast iron fingerposts survive in Essex.

Traditional road signs add to the character and identity of villages and are part of our highway heritage. Maintaining and restoring these signs will protect them for many years to come and ensure our rural communities retain a link to the past. To read more about cast iron posts the book 'Pointing the Ways' by John V Nicholls is available [waymarkers.co.uk/essexintro.htm](http://www.waymarkers.co.uk/essexintro.htm) or see [www.milestonesociety.co.uk](http://www.milestonesociety.co.uk).

This charming signpost compliments its older neighbour, Boxted Bridge spanning the River Stour, a steel girder bridge built in 1900 by Lexden and Winstree Union although sadly this is showing signs of age and neglect.

Lucinda da Jasay

## Canoe Trail News

Steve Timms, a committee member of Sudbury Canoe Club (SCC) has produced his first 'Canoe Trail' for a section of the River Stour from Sudbury to Henny. This has been accepted by 'British Canoeing' and will appear with other trails on the 'Places to Paddle' page of their web site. The document contains comprehensive information about where to park, launch a canoe or kayak, directions for travel, features to look out for along the route and suggestions for places to eat as well as a route map and photographs. [www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/go-canoeing/places-to-paddle/canoe-trails](http://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/go-canoeing/places-to-paddle/canoe-trails).

Members of SCC regularly paddle this charming length of the Stour on their Saturday morning club meetings. Non-members can attend two taster sessions without joining the club, and hire boats and equipment for a paddle. See [www.sudburycanoeclub.org.uk](http://www.sudburycanoeclub.org.uk).

Steve's next trail will be from Henny to Bures and he will be selecting photos of this section of the river to include on the document. If club members or any interested paddlers want to submit a photo for consideration they can enter it on the SCC Facebook page.

Sarah White



## SVP100

In August close to 300 runners took part in the SVP100 and SVP50. The SVP100 is a 100k race along the Stour Valley Path from Newmarket to Brantham, whilst the SVP50 is a new event following the second half of the footpath from Sudbury to Brantham. Details at [www.SVP100.co.uk](http://www.SVP100.co.uk).

We saw some fantastic running including a new course record on the 100k set by Michael Taylor from St Neots Riverside Runners, in 8hrs 58mins. We also had an exciting race in the inaugural 50k with a superb course record set by Ged McMillan from Colchester Harriers in just over 4hrs. If you've ever walked that route you'll know that it's particularly hilly in places, so that was an incredible

achievement. In total nearly 60% of the entrants in this race were women.

The event attracted runners from all over the country and even quite a few from overseas, with one travelling all the way from Japan. A competitor from Switzerland said that she thought "the route was tough but beautiful."

Matthew Hearne



SVP100 runners reach Flatford

© ACS Photography

## Sudbury Events are Spectacular

Autumn and Winter are a great time of year to be in Sudbury, as the Town Council run lots of free events for residents and visitors to enjoy. On Sunday 4 November is the elaborate and magical firework display with entertainment from the local Phoenix Community Marchers, plus a range of local food and drinks.

Sudbury also goes to town for Christmas, starting with the 'switch on' and fair on Friday 23 November, wonderful window displays and festive activities. They follow this on

Saturday 2 March with Sudbury on Show, a unique exhibition where all the local organisations, charity groups and clubs from Sudbury and the surrounding areas are on display.

For further information about Sudbury events call 01787 372331 or see [www.sudburytowncouncil.co.uk/culture-tourism](http://www.sudburytowncouncil.co.uk/culture-tourism).

Ami Birrell



© Clare Westley



© Rick Vonk

Simon and Susie from Cobnuts Co-operative, Adam Rowlands, Nigel Chapman, David Alborough, Clare Westley, Shirley Sampson

## RSPB Flatford Garden

The Wildlife garden's newest area, named the Sisters' Garden in memory of Sylvia and Margaret Richardson who kindly left us the land at Flatford, is nearly completed, and was officially opened on 11 September 2018. The garden has been specially designed with nature and wildlife in mind, with plants providing a long season of nectar to help bees, butterflies and other pollinators, a large pond, and a water harvesting system assist future sustainability.

The pond has already been colonised by a fantastic array of wildlife, including newts, several species of diving beetles, water boatmen, and mayfly and dragonfly nymphs, and the adjacent boardwalk has delighted visitors with great viewing into the pond.

The centrepiece to the garden is The Peoples' Wall for Wildlife, built by Cobnuts Co-operative alongside local community groups. It has been built with traditional building materials, and the pottery sculptures incorporated into the structure provide homes for insects, which have already attracted plenty of 6 legged and 8 legged guests!

We have also made good use of our underground water tank during this dry weather. It has a capacity of 7500l, and collects rainwater from the adjacent barn, which has allowed us to keep watering the garden using harvested rain water during the summer months.

We are grateful to our funders, Essex and Suffolk Water and the Dedham Vale AONB Sustainable Development Fund, and to our amazing volunteers who have dug in (often quite literally!) and helped us to create this great new space for wildlife and people. We look forward to welcoming you at the garden.

Clare Westley

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## Contacting the Team

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 Twitter: @DedhamValeSVP

### The AONB team:

Simon Amstutz - AONB Manager  
 Alex Moore da Luz - River Stour Project Officer  
 Beverley McClean - Planning Officer  
 Cathy Smith - Communications, Funding and Development Officer  
 Claire Cadman - Projects Officer  
 Emma Black - Countryside Project Officer Dedham Vale  
 Lucy Oldham - Partnership Officer  
 Lynn Allen - Countryside Project Officer Suffolk Coast & Heaths  
 Neil Lister - Countryside Project Officer Dedham Vale/Suffolk Coast & Heaths  
 Paula Booth - AONB Officer  
 Pete Cosgrove - Marine Pioneer Manager  
 Steph Poole - Voluntary Placement Student



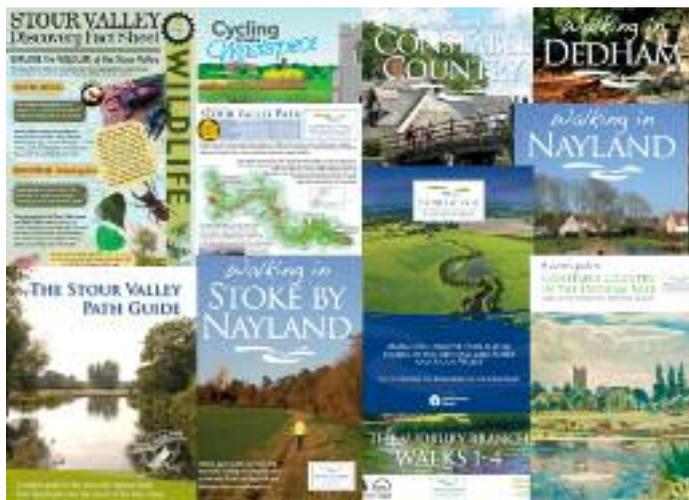
## Exploring Constable Country and the Stour Valley

The Stour Valley is fantastic at all times of year, and experiencing the changing seasons and discovering different landscapes and villages are more than enough reasons to return again and again.

Four new walking guides join the 'family' of guides produced by the AONB team to encourage people to explore Constable Country and all along the Stour Valley! With thanks to Discover Suffolk for supporting these guides.

If cycling is your preferred outdoor experience, then we also have seven Cycling Through a Masterpiece guides exploring the full length of the Stour Valley. They range in distance from about 10 to 20 miles, with some short cuts for a more leisurely ride or can be joined together to take you further.

The AONB guides are free to download from the AONB website. Make this your year to Explore the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley. You'll feel healthier and you'll open your eyes to our Outstanding Landscape!



## Volunteers Free the Trees!

During the summer at a volunteer task at Foxearth Meadows Nature Reserve volunteers removed hundreds of tree guards from trees which had outgrown them. Fortunately, many of the trees had survived but some showed signs of stress and scarring. The volunteers filled one huge dumpy bag and several other sacks which will be recycled by the staff at the reserve.



*Do you own a piece of land with old tree guards, plastic tubes and mulch mats which need removing?*

*Are you involved with community-owned land that could benefit from the clearing of these plastics?*

*We would love to hear from you to discuss if your land is suitable for this or other conservation projects.*



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