

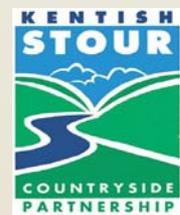
KENT COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS

ANNUAL REPORT

2012 - 13

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INTRODUCTION

Countryside Management Partnerships (CMPs) are a suite of individual conservation/community partnerships that collectively cover Kent and the London Borough of Bexley. This report is a compilation of achievements by cmps over the past year. It is impossible to represent all the great work going on across Kent and Bexley in one report, so this concentrates on some of the highlights. More information is available on the individual cmp websites which can be found through www.kentcountryside.org.uk

CMP Vision

'Engaging People and Communities to Manage, Enhance, Explore and Be Inspired by their Natural Environment'.

CMP Strategic Objectives

CMP's will;

- **Work in partnership to conserve and enhance Kent's landscape, countryside and coast through advice provision and direct countryside management.**
- **Improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike through improved accessibility and the promotion and development of sustainable countryside recreation.**
- **Provide opportunities for greater enjoyment, engagement and understanding of Kent's countryside, towns and coasts through volunteering, event and education programmes.**
- **Deliver local, county and national objectives in the maintenance and enhancement of the countryside working with local communities, businesses, statutory and non statutory organisations.**

The Vision and strategic objectives reflect the diversity of Kent's landscape and needs which through the CMP's, meets local, regional and national priorities.

Our regular activities are;

- Volunteering Practical Environmental Conservation task days, generally 6 a week.
- Provision of Countryside Management Advice and practical project delivery
- Site management and enhancement - conservation biodiversity
- Creation of new wildlife habitats and creation of wildlife corridors
- Delivery of environmental education programmes and events
- Delivery of community events.
- Delivery of community training and development and support to community groups looking after their local green spaces.
- Enhancement to the Public Rights of Way network to enable improved accessibility.
- Promotion of the natural environment, access to it and general understanding. m

Each partnership is an unincorporated not for profit organisation with a Memorandum of Agreement and a Steering Group made up of main funding partners. CMPs have a strategic co-ordinating group which comprises of the Chairs of each cmp and key strategic partner organisations.

Kent's Countryside Management Partnerships are;

Kent High Weald Countryside Partnership (KHWCP) covering Tunbridge Wells

Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP) covering Canterbury and Ashford

Medway Swale Estuary Partnership (MSEP) covering parts of Swale and Medway

Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership (MKD) covering the area from Lenham to Boxley across the Downs

Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP) covering Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling

North West Kent Countryside Partnership (NWKCP) covering Bexley, Dartford, Gravesham and Sevenoaks

Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership (RMCP) covering Romney Marsh area, Shepway

Thanet Coast Project (Not included in this report)

White Cliffs Countryside Partnership (WCCP) covering Dover and parts of Shepway

KENT COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS DELIVER KCC PRIORITIES

BOLD STEPS

To help the Kent economy to grow

- Supporting local businesses through local purchasing of materials and skills
- Working with partners across Europe through projects such as Interreg, to share and expand on Kent's role in business opportunities.
- Supporting skills training through volunteering, Government programmes and school / college placements. Placements provide on the job training for educational establishments to ensure Kent's future workforce have diverse skills. For example Hadlow undergraduate placements and Gap year students.
- Working in partnership with businesses and local authorities to provide the infrastructure to meet the growing needs of Kent's population and urban regeneration through the development of partnerships across statutory, private and third sector organisations. (*106 agreements with LA/ Kent Thameside*)
- Working with landowners and businesses to adapt to climate change through new product development for example woodland management and wood fuels diversifying the rural business sectors.
- Helping to manage coastal realignment and water management for communities living and working in Kent.
- Helping to conserve, enhance and promote Kent's natural environment, landscape and heritage - making Kent a great place visit, live and work

To put the citizen in control

- Empowering individuals and communities to actively manage, enhance and develop community decision making with regard to their local natural environment
- Helping to provide access and recreational opportunities for all, for example Chartham to Canterbury cycle path, welly walks and supporting Explore Kent

- Providing advice, resources and support to encourage people and groups to take active roles. For example management of Local Nature Reserves, Community tool kit loan scheme and supporting Friends of Groups
- Providing volunteering opportunities across Kent and Bexley in a variety of roles
- Directly represent and help communities meet their needs through involvement in forums, local boards and multi-agency groups.

To tackle disadvantage

- Using the local environment as a catalyst for greater community pride and action
- Providing opportunities for disadvantaged communities and groups to improve their mental, physical and social wellbeing using their local countryside and greenspace. Breaking down physical and perceived barriers.
- Providing environmental education and learning activities in and out of school settings, for example High Weald Hero's and Green Gang
- Promotion of lifelong learning opportunities through formal and informal events and activities programmes across Kent
- Providing skills training through a variety of programmes and volunteering

KENT COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS THEMES

COMMUNITY

2012/13 has been a busy year supporting site based community groups with advice and practical help managing their land, or land in their care. Over 50 voluntary and community groups have received support, with a number of them making use of the free to loan **community tool kit** to help with practical site management.



Tree guards constructed at Chilston for Heaths Countryside Corridor and River Dour community clean up.

Densole village green - The WCCP has been helping local residents, Hawkinge Parish Council and Acrise Parish Meeting, to create a new public open space and nature reserve on the village green at Densole, where the old village hall has been demolished.

Trees to Treasure provided 7852 free native trees to community groups and schools across Mid, North, West Kent and the London Borough of Bexley. Over 2350 volunteer days helped with their planting and management. Funded through the Big Tree Plant, Local authorities and Housing Associations the scheme is in its second and final year in 2013/14.

2012/13 saw KHWP's long-held ambition to lead two **volunteering** days per week come true. Projects with the Bridge Trust, Southborough Town Council, Town & Country Housing, and Food 4 Thought all helped to fill this extra day, and groups of volunteers from young unaccompanied asylum seekers, to corporate teams, helped to meet the need. Integral to KHWP's volunteering program is the chance to learn new skills. As well as on-task training, KHWP provided instruction in ecological survey techniques, hedgelaying, and environmental education during 2012/13.

Our events, activities and community work is a strength of the CMP Service, this is delivered through specific programmes and site based project work. CMPs have led on over 150 community and environmental projects this year. Our ability to deliver consistent quality and value has been recognised through the award of a 5 year contract by Swale Borough Council to manage the visitor centre and deliver the community engagement and environmental education programme at **Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park**, Faversham. This is the first formal tender process CMPs have been involved in and it is an exciting opportunity to be involved in the management of this Country Park, working with the Borough Council and the Friends of Oare Gunpowder Works Group.

“ There is great affection locally for KHWP. It has been an impressive organisation in those projects it has been involved with in Hawkhurst.

I have been a Hawkhurst resident for over 40 years and a Parish Councillor for 20 or so years. There is a continuing need for the sensitive and highly professional work by KHWP in helping to maintain traditional rural skills and maintenance of the natural environment for the benefit of wildlife and their habitat. “

ACCESS AND INTERPRETATION

CMPs encourage residents and visitors to access, enjoy and understand their natural environment through improving access and interpretation and delivering a variety of events to encourage individuals and families to get out and about.

Projects this year have included sculptured seats, public rights of way improvements and interpretation boards. Guided walks and events such as bat evenings have proved very popular.

In Tunbridge Wells work started to convert a large disused garden into a community wooded wildlife area in Sherwood and Rusthall Grange Gardens saw improvements for people and wildlife, with new surfaced pathways, wildflower and hedge planting, and a poster campaign to encourage people to pick up after their dogs. In Perry Wood, Selling steps to the viewing point were improved and a new 'Pulpit' built with carved interpretation to help people enjoy the views across the Kent Downs.



The new pulpit and entrance sign at Perry Wood, Selling

Whitfield project - Section 106 funding from a developer was used to improve educational and access opportunities in the parishes around the village of Whitfield. The WCCP consulted local people and organised a variety of training events including leading guided walks, landscape photography and first aid. In addition, events were organised to explore the wildlife and countryside around Whitfield. A series of circular walking routes around Whitfield have been devised and will be available to download from the WCCP web site. A new parish map is being produced to publicise the walks and the environment of Whitfield

RIVERS

2013 saw the announcement of the formation of the new **South East Rivers Trust** to help engage communities with conservation and restoration of their local rivers across Kent and south east England. The Rivers Trust, Wandle Trust and the Environment Agency have been exploring options to enable the formation of a trust that can complement and work alongside other existing local organisations delivering river conservation work. As part of the development of the South East Rivers Trust, the Wandle Trust will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Kent CMPs.

CMPs have been involved in hosting and developing **Catchment Improvement Groups** (CIGs). These consist of representatives from across river users, landowners, statutory organisations and the third sector with the aim to prioritise needs and develop actions to improve the river quality in the short and long-term through all partners. They look at the chemical water quality, physical structures, river flow dynamics, biodiversity, accessibility and recreation, abstraction, diffuse and point source pollution to name a few. Each CIG will draw up a Catchment Improvement Plan to deliver river improvements their area, and CMPs will be assisting in this and the delivery of projects. This will feed into the new SE River Trust and joint initiatives and projects.



Before and after at Lullingstone Castle



In river work around Bingley Island, Canterbury following production of a River Restoration Report.

EDUCATION

Staff and volunteers created fantastic new wetland habitats and wildlife gardens with local schools, and helped students learn and access their local greenspace.



Environmental Education in practice

KHWP's innovative Forest Schools program was rolled out in 2012 to great praise. Piloted at a number of hub sites across Tunbridge Wells, including Sherwood Woods and the Bedgebury Pinetum, schools have commented that this approach to learning has yielded academic, social and behavioural improvements amongst its participants.

"We thought the children really benefitted from being outside and needing to be cooperative with each other. They took a lot of what they did on board. It has influenced their play back at school."

Temple Grove Academy, Tunbridge Wells



Oak Tree Primary School from Ashford on a visit to No Man's Orchard, near Chartham Hatch, to learn about the importance of old orchards.

CMPs also provide excellent opportunities for **work placements and skill development**. This year the partnerships have accommodated over 12 work and skills placements (in addition to the practical task days) ranging for secondary school work experience to gap year and university dissertations. These opportunities allow people to gain experience in conservation work, both in and out of an office environment, and help them to demonstrate skills on their CV.

LANDSCAPE AND HABITAT

CMPs manage or support over 80 sites ranging in size and type. These include SSSI's (Sites of Special Scientific Interest), Local Nature Reserves and village greens. Partnerships give advice, write management, access and interpretation plans as well as give recommendations, carry out surveys and habitat management. They also help deliver the aims and objectives of the two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Kent.

The WCCP is a delivery partner in the **"Up on the Downs" White Cliffs Landscape Partnership** which was launched in December 2012. Up on the Downs is a £2.5m project to improve the landscape and heritage around Dover and Folkestone over the next five years, with the help of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. In 2013-14, there will be the building of the education shelter at Samphire Hoe to provide for better educational visits to Dover and Folkestone as well as Samphire Hoe.



Highland Cattle – conservation

grazing is essential to maintain the wildlife value of chalk grassland by stopping shrubs and trees shading out the smaller plants and the animals such as insects that depend on them.

In May 2012, MSEP secured a grant through Defra's Local Action Group funding stream, in order to increase bio-security and raise awareness of **Non-native Invasive Marine Species** amongst the marinas, clubs and ports on the Medway Swale Estuary. The primary focus of the project was around the 2012 London Olympics, given the potential for the high volume of expected visiting marine vessels to bring Non-native species to the estuary.



Carpet Sea Squirt; Bishopstone

The 'What's under your boat?' project chief outcomes were the production of a handy pocket guide, the creation of a network of 'Estuary Eyes' that are working alongside the marinas in order to raise awareness of invasive marine species and their potential to cause damage to the estuary, a managed online photographic database and specific pages on the MSEP website.

It is hoped that 2013/14 will bring two new Heritage Lottery funded projects, one focusing on traditional Kentish Orchards and the other a national £3.3m project to protect and enhance wildflower meadows.

FINANCIAL

In 2012-13 Countryside Management Partnerships had 0.6 fte core funded KCC staff and 24.6 fte externally or grant funded staff, this excludes WCCP and MSEP who are hosted by Dover District and Medway Council. The turnover was £1,970,009 of which approximately three quarters came from external and project funding. A further £357,000 of work has been delivered through the **CMP volunteers**, this is **equivalent to a further 27 full time staff**.

Kent County Council contributes £69,400 cash to this service; 3% and approximately £76,000 or 3.3% in in-kind support. This means that for every £1 of KCC cash invested in CMPs £33.53 is generated in cash and volunteer time.

CMP	TURNOVER	VOLUNTEER DAYS	VOLUNTEER VALUE/£ **
Kent High Weald	£407,771	1,620	£81,000
Kentish Stour	£269,035	984	£49,200
Medway Swale	£28,338	*	-
Mid Kent Downs	£123,000	*	-
Medway Valley	£360,999	442	£22,100
North West Kent	£366,969	568	£28,400
Romney Marsh & White Cliffs	£413,897	3,526	£176,300
TOTAL	£1,970,009	7140	£357,000

* These cmps do not have their own volunteer teams but they do help community groups and volunteers deliver practical improvements and events in their area.

** calculated at £50 per day per volunteer in line with Lottery guidelines.

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

"The project has been a major success with positive feedback from children and parents. The staff and volunteers from NWKCP were very helpful and imparted great advice and shared knowledge and skills with the staff. The areas they have developed on our behalf will be a great asset to our school for many years to come." Upton Primary School

"11 out of 10"

"Absolutely brilliant. We learnt a lot about animals + had a fantastic time in the fresh air. A wonderful way to spend a day without commercial pressures – good simple old-fashioned fun and childhood memories formed."

"I would like to thank the team for their commitment to this project."

"Please make an annual event."

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