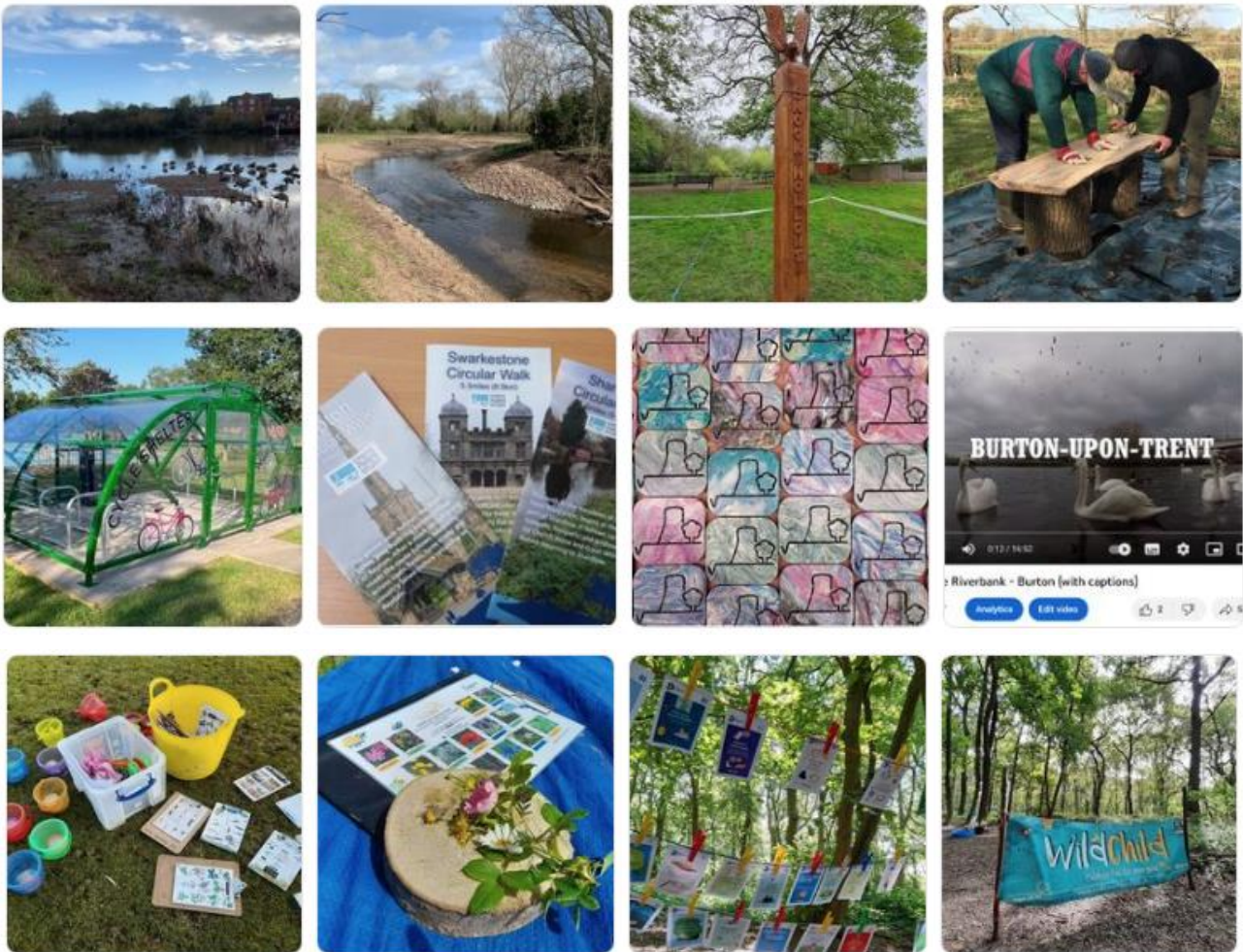




Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme

End of Scheme Evaluation



Selected project images from Transforming the Trent Valley Facebook page during 2023.

Final version ~ March 2024

Simon Lees

Countryside Training Partnership

www.countrysidettraining.co.uk

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Summary ~ Transforming the Trent Valley at a glance | 3 |
| 1. What is a Landscape Partnership? | 4 |
| 2. What did Transforming the Trent Valley set out to achieve? | 7 |
| 3. The purpose and approach taken to this evaluation | 17 |
| 4. How the resources were spent | 18 |
| 5. Principal achievements: what was delivered on the ground | 20 |
| 6. Programme achievements and outcomes | 32 |
| 7. Programme learning: key ingredients for future activity | 68 |
| 8. Legacy ~ what next for Transforming the Trent Valley as a Partnership? | 77 |
| 9. Observations and next steps | 81 |
| Appendix 1: Transforming the Trent Valley landscape character | 88 |

Summary ~ Transforming the Trent Valley at a glance

Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) has delivered a range of heritage activity over 4¾ years between April 2019 and December 2023. From information collected throughout the project period and presented in the final evaluation Transforming the Trent Valley has delivered and can celebrate the following key achievements:

16 projects delivering a **£3.9 million investment** within the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership area

For natural and cultural heritage

- **135 ha of biodiversity and landscape** enhanced and maintained
- **2km of river restoration** benefitting 72km of river catchment
- **17,996 survey records** generated for local Ecological Records Centres
- **£562K additional income** identified through **biodiversity net gain**
- **113 heritage assets** recorded and monitored and **94 military heritage assets** surveyed and monitored to increase understanding

For participation and engagement

- **7,929 participants** engaged through **452 activities, talks, walks and events**
- **2,594 school children** involved in **education and learning activity**
- **1,785 days or 8 full time working years** from **458 volunteers**
- **Engaging with 197 local community groups and schools**
- **121 people** benefitting from **342 training and skills workshops**
- Creation of **112 new interpretation features** and digital products created **to increase understanding and awareness**
- **54 community groups** benefiting from grants totalling £100,000 to **enhance and raise awareness of the heritage of the Trent Valley**
- Opportunities for **10 trainees to gain experience** and move on to **further employment within the natural and cultural heritage sector**

For increasing access to heritage

- **71 km of towpath, trails and cycle routes** created and with **1,092 way markers or signs** installed to improve access for **local communities**
- **64 access points and sites improved** to increase access to local rivers **to connect people to nature**
- **11 new routes and trails** created to **improve enjoyment and wellbeing**

1. What is a Landscape Partnership?

Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership programme

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), renamed in January 2019 as The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), distributes money raised by the National Lottery to support projects involving the national, regional and local heritage of the United Kingdom. Landscape Partnerships grew out of 14 Area Schemes that were introduced in 1999.

In 2004 HLF's second Strategic Plan (SP2) saw the replacement of Area Schemes by Landscape Partnerships. From 2008 to 2012, Landscape Partnerships were part of HLF's third Strategic Plan (SP3) while HLF's Strategic Framework (SP4), covering the period 2013-2018, was launched in October 2012. Landscape Partnerships were the only HLF programme to focus primarily on rural areas, and offer grants of between £250,000 and £2 million. Schemes aim to conserve the heritage within areas of distinctive landscape character.

Landscape Partnerships are complex grant programmes. They are delivered through a partnership of bodies, normally including statutory agencies, local authorities, voluntary and community organisations. One of the goals of the programme is that schemes should actively engage local communities, while also meeting local social, environmental and economic needs.

Landscape Partnership Schemes need to address the conservation of the natural, built and cultural heritage. They are comprised of a number of discrete projects that include heritage conservation and restoration, access, education and training delivering evenly across all of the following of the nine programme outcomes:

| Heritage will be: | People will have: | For communities: |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better managed• In better condition• Identified and recorded | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed skills• Volunteered time• Learnt about heritage | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The local area will be better to work, live or visit• Negative environmental impacts will be reduced• More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage |

Landscape Partnership working in Trent Valley

Transforming the Trent Valley (TTTV) has its origins in the late 1990s, with the establishment of the Central Rivers Initiative (CRI) in November 1997. This broad based partnership represented key interests in shaping and guiding the restoration and revitalisation of sand and gravel extraction sites in the Trent Valley, and to integrate the sites into landscape scale management of the river valleys. The partners included Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, The National Forest Company, RSPB, Sport Across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, quarrying companies and local authorities.

In 2014, an Assessment of Landscape Character and Opportunities for Landscape Enhancement report demonstrated that a number of opportunities would require a landscape approach beyond the scope of the CRI. A wider consultation showed that other parts of the Trent valley network and its tributaries faced similar challenges.

In November 2016, the Central Rivers Initiative partnership successfully secured a grant from The National Lottery Heritage Lottery Fund to develop an ambitious scheme focussing on the River Trent and its tributaries the Tame and the Dove. The partnership area was expanded to encompass an area significantly larger than the original CRI area, and new partners joined to establish a new Trent Valley project board.

An 18 month development phase commenced in March 2017 leading to the submission of a second-round application in August 2018. Transforming the Trent Valley secured a grant of £2.7 million from NLHF in December 2018, with a proposed five year delivery phase from April 2019 to March 2024. The date of the initial application meant that the scheme was subject to HLF's application and implementation process during SP4.

Landscape

Landscape Partnerships contribute significantly to the UK's commitment to implementation of the European Landscape Convention. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) sees 'landscape' as multifaceted, multi-purpose and multifunctional, the product of the action and interaction of humans and nature over time. Landscape is the place where people live and work, and which people visit. Landscape provides vital benefits such as food, water and other 'ecosystem services'. Landscape is valued by people for many different reasons and is 'used' in many different ways.

The ELC's definition of 'Landscape' as '*an area as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and /or human factors*' is a rich concept that encompasses but goes beyond the traditional (geomorphological, ecological, archaeological, or aesthetic) approaches. The ELC makes it clear that people are at the heart of all landscapes (the commonplace and 'degraded' as well as the well-known) each of which has its distinctive character and meaning to those who inhabit or visit it. The ELC approach defines landscape as:

- The result of the complex interaction of natural (e.g. geology, soils, biodiversity), cultural (settlement, land use), the perceptual and aesthetic (experience, associations, tranquillity, colour);
- Linking past, present and future as the dynamic manifestation of physical processes and human intervention (has always changed and will continue to do so)
- Important to people, multiple and sometimes contested values, including tangible and intangible dimensions;
- Existing at any scale from large tracts of land such as mountain ranges, to small locally important spaces such as parks and streetscapes.

There is a considerable overlap between the provisions of the ELC and the objectives of HLF's landscape partnership programme, which is the only national grant programme whose objectives largely coincide with the ELC philosophy.



Map showing the location of Landscape Partnerships that were awarded funds by HLF from 2004 to 2018

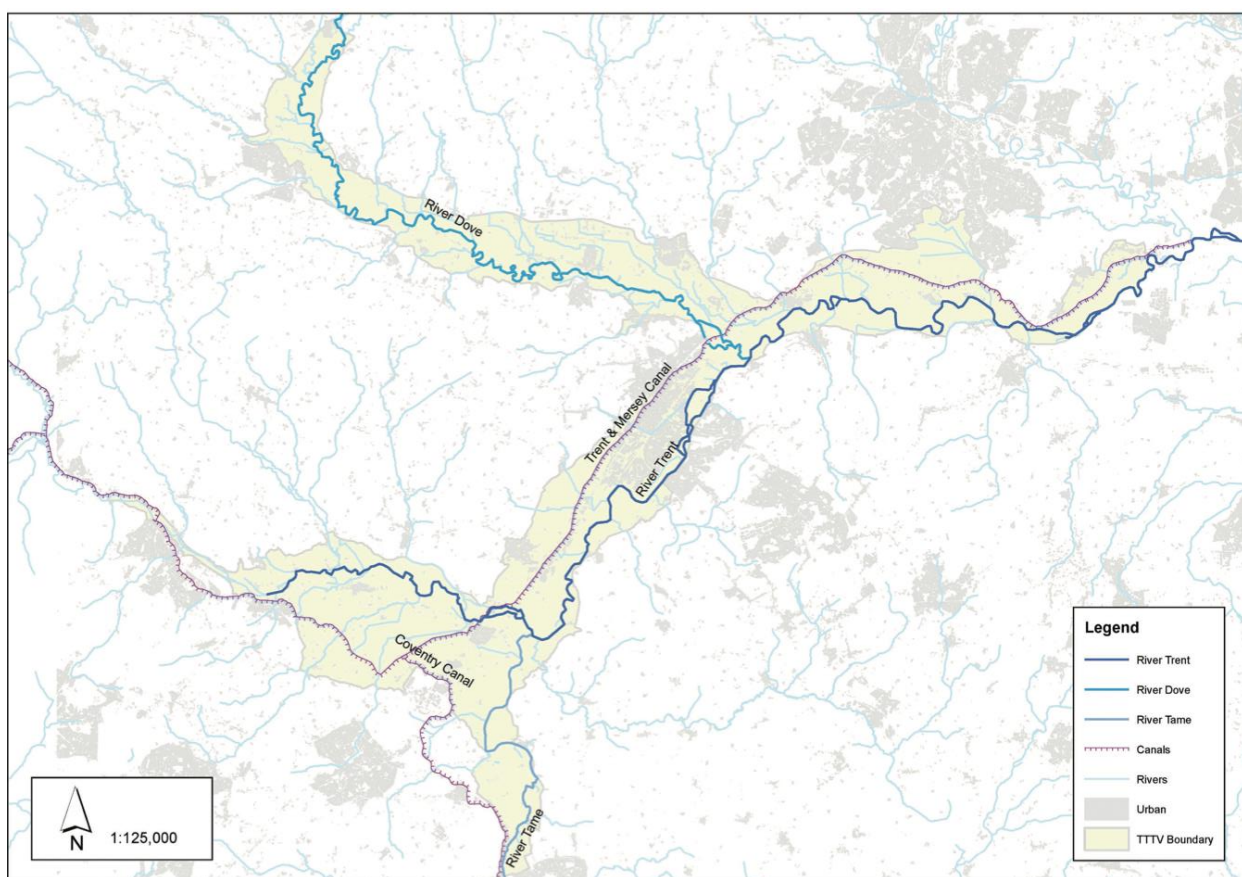
2. What did Transforming the Trent Valley set out to achieve?

“Transforming the Trent Valley’ celebrates the waterways, industries and the communities that are the life-force of this rapidly evolving river valley landscape and which have shaped and continue to influence its form and use. Wildlife-rich rivers, waterways and wetlands are at the heart of a revitalised, resilient and beautiful landscape that is connected and accessible for local communities and visitors to enjoy and explore as well as providing opportunities to inspire and re-connect people to the river valley by revealing its cultural, industrial and natural heritage.”

Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Conservation Action Plan ~ project purpose

Background and strategic context

The Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership covers a 200 km² area through a mix of landscape character types and collection of communities with different needs located at the heart of England. It is the river corridors of the Trent, Tame and Dove that forms the golden thread that ties these communities in a single, distinct landscape that is facing similar social, environmental and economic challenges.



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Location of the *Transforming the Trent Valley* landscape showing the principal rivers and canals

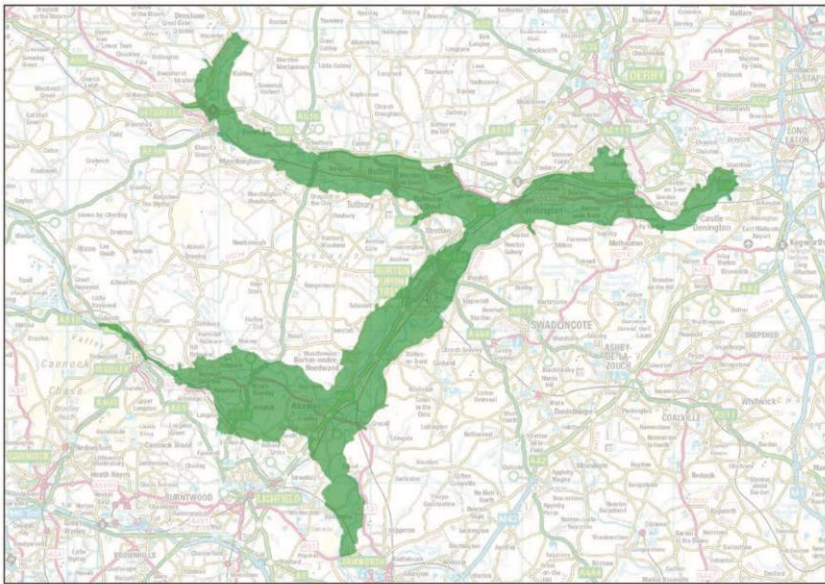
Transforming the Trent Valley is an evolution of the Central Rivers Initiative, a partnership of Staffordshire-based organisations with an interest in the Trent Valley. This former partnership expanded to include those parts of Derbyshire with similar issues and encompass a wider partnership base focusing on the River Trent and its tributaries between Rugeley, Tamworth, Uttoxeter and Shardlow. Following the successful award of a first round pass from NLHF,

Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership embarked on a development phase to better understand the significance, challenges and opportunities facing the landscape and heritage.

The key component of the development phase was the production of a Landscape Conservation Action Plan (LCAP) that formed the basis of the second round application and subsequent project delivery. Key extracts taken from the LCAP describing some of the heritage features of the area includes the following headlines:

- Evidence for Neolithic period post-built houses has been found at Willington.
- Evidence for pagan activity during the Anglo Saxon period has been found in grave goods associated with cemeteries, whilst probable Viking burials have been recovered from an over-wintering camp at Repton.
- The Trent and Mersey Canal was the first of the major inland waterways, linking the ports of Hull and Liverpool. It opened between Shardlow and Shugborough in June 1770 and was fully completed by 1777.
- The 23 ha River Mease Special Area of Conservation is notified for a significant species assemblage of European importance, including Otter, White-clawed Crayfish, Spined Loach and Bullhead. The site is also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- The most widespread priority habitat within the landscape is Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh, however there are also small areas of Lowland Meadow, Reedbed, Ponds and Wet Woodland.
- The network of ponds sited on Pulverised Fuel Ash at Branston are man-made in recent times and now support a diverse species assemblage.
- The Washlands in Burton-upon-Trent have great potential as multi- functional urban green space, by utilising the current infrastructure and nature conservation potential while providing flood resilience.
- There are forty Local Wildlife Sites and 26 Biodiversity Alert Sites throughout the project area in Staffordshire.
- Willington Quarry Nature Reserve is a former sand and gravel quarry that has been transformed as a haven for wildlife in the Trent Valley. In early spring, curlew gather on the wet grassland before they head north to their breeding grounds. During spring and autumn up to 20 species of wader pass through with large flocks of wildfowl gathering in the winter including wigeon, teal, pochard and shoveler. In recent winters, bittern has been seen at the reserve.
- Burton Washlands, on the floodplain of the River Trent, were a key resource for Burton's Medieval Benedictine Abbey and a significant pilgrimage destination, with a shrine dedicated to the seventh-century St. Modwen. Now, they are designated as a Local Wildlife Site and are managed as a recreational open space, including sports facilities

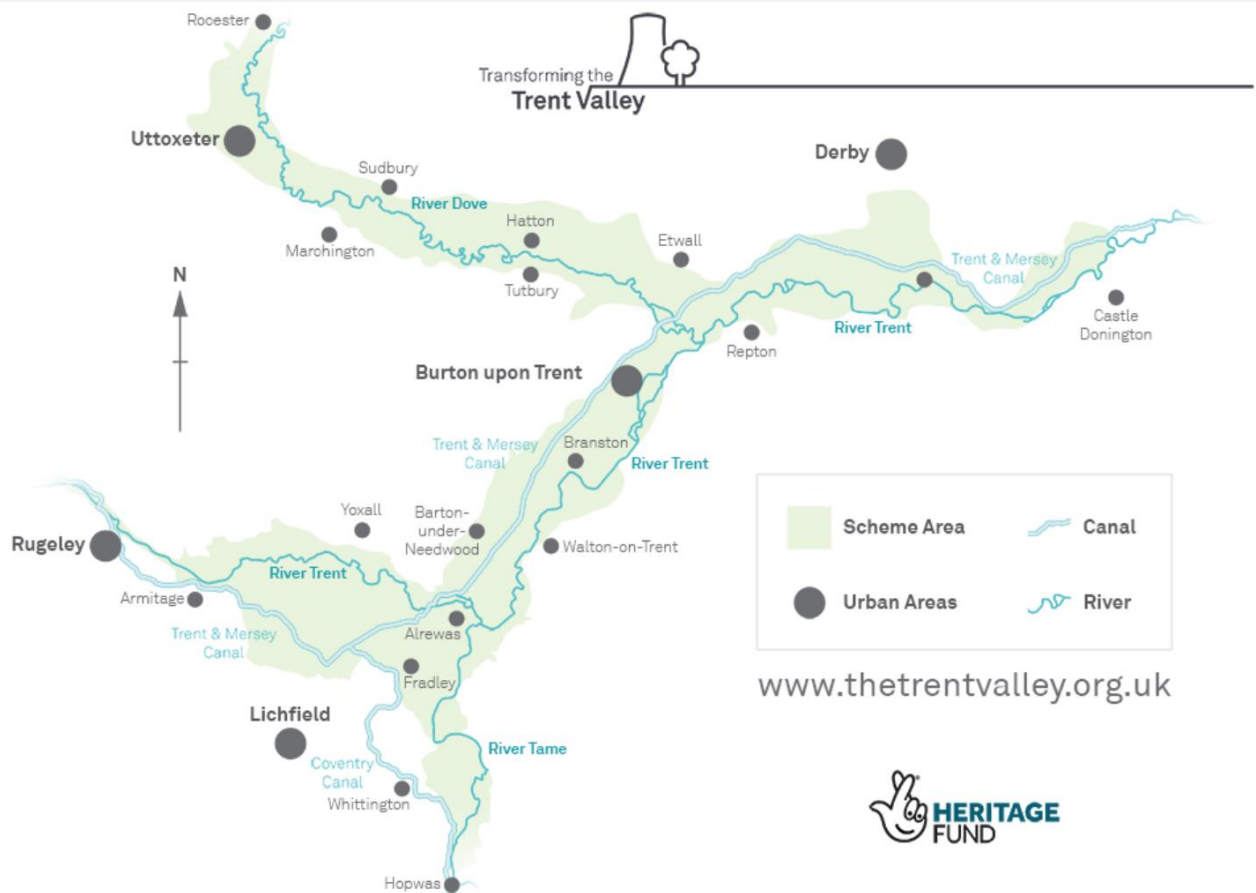
It was recognised in the LCAP that it is the combination of all of these many heritage assets, sharing a rich history of adaptation and change, shaped by the landscape, and linked by the river network, that makes the Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership area a significant and unique place.



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Transforming the Trent Valley Scheme Area and its location in the United Kingdom



Map of the Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership Area

The scheme vision and aims

Our vision is for “wildlife-rich waterways and wetlands at the heart of a resilient, accessible, beautiful and culturally rich landscape. Creating a brighter future for people, business and wildlife in the Trent Valley.”

Taken from the Landscape Conservation Action Plan:

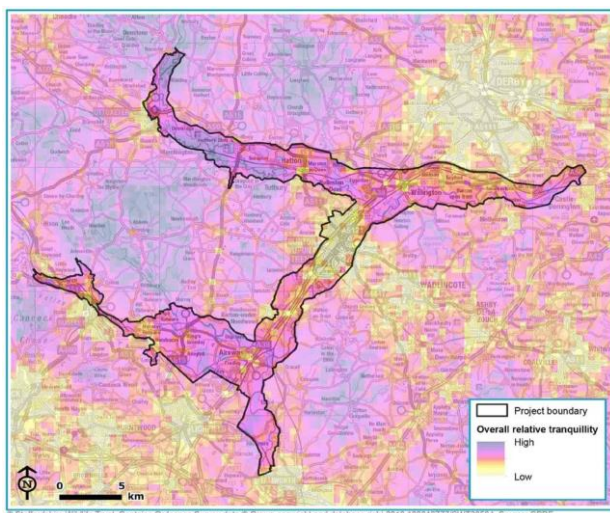
The purpose of this Landscape Partnership is to recognise the challenges and opportunities that are presented by this fluvial landscape. We will celebrate the waterways, industries and the communities that are the life-force of this rapidly evolving river valley landscape and which have shaped and continue to influence its form and use. Wildlife-rich rivers, waterways and wetlands will be at the heart of a revitalised, resilient, and beautiful landscape that is connected and accessible for local communities and visitors to enjoy and explore as well as providing many opportunities to inspire and re-connect people to the river valley by revealing its cultural, industrial, and natural heritage.

Over an 18-month development period, the partnership worked closely to better improve its understanding of the cultural and natural heritage of the landscape, the physical and perceived barriers to access, and the opportunities for visitors and local people. The partnership engaged with communities that live and work in the landscape, spoke to people and encouraged ideas and opinions, to better understand local need. Through this process, the partners produced a series of audits and development documents (available on the [Action Plans, Audits and Assessments](#) part of the TTTV website) that identified 16 different yet interrelated projects around three strategic objectives that would help to work towards the Vision for the Transforming the Trent Valley area.

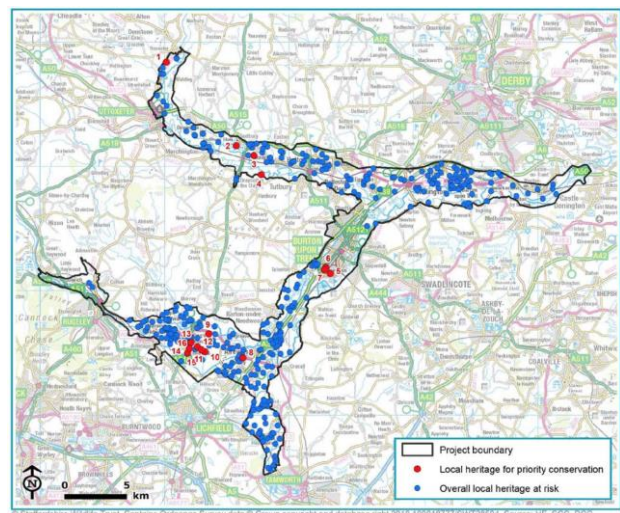
Objective 1 ~ Connecting Communities through Action

Objective 2 ~ River Valley Connections

Objective 3 ~ Transforming the Landscape



Map of Overall Relative Tranquillity



Map of Cultural Heritage at Risk

The *Landscape Character Assessment* divided the TTTV area into 6 broad zones: River Meadowlands, River Terrace Farmlands, Lowland Village Farmlands, Settled Heathlands, Wet Pasture Meadows, and Urban. A summary map highlighting the main landscape character types, with a brief description of the five landscape types omitting the urban areas, can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

Programme themes and project delivery

From the work undertaken in identifying the programme objectives during the development phase, three strategic themes emerged, to bring together all of the identified project delivery. These were:

| |
|---|
| Connecting Communities through Action The projects under this theme focus on community engagement through volunteering, education, training, participation activities and community action. |
| River Valley Connections The projects under this theme provide access improvements across the River Valley for a variety of users including walkers, cyclists, boaters and canoeists. |
| Transforming the Landscape The projects under this theme deliver improvements to cultural and natural heritage across the river valley helping us to protect and enhance our heritage assets into the future. |

TTTV themes from Landscape Conservation Action Plan

In addition to the themed projects, there were two scheme-wide programmes that encompassed the individual projects: The **Interpretation Programme (TTTV2)** capitalised on opportunities across the landscape through traditional and modern interpretation techniques, utilising modern technology and low-key approaches to engage and enthral a wide and varied audience; the **Management and Delivery (TTTV1)** of the scheme included communications to publicise the projects and the work delivered in the valley. This included the use of social media, websites, newsletters, media activities and celebration events to reach the audience in and around the landscape.

The programme themes were aligned to the HLF/NLHF objectives for landscape partnerships that were awarded funding from 2014 onwards. As well as conservation or restoration of the natural and cultural heritage there was a need for successful schemes to have an emphasis on community participation, and on providing opportunities for individual participation and training in heritage skills. At the outset, the Partnership intended to deliver a programme of 16 discrete yet inter-related projects taking place within the TTTV area, as demonstrated in the following mix of project activity.

THEME 1 ~ CONNECTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH ACTION

6 projects contributed to this theme made up of:

| Project | Lead partner |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| CCA 01: Community Engagement | Support Staffordshire |
| CCA 02: Wildchild | Staffordshire Wildlife Trust |
| CCA 03: Big Washlands Watch | Support Staffordshire/ Staffordshire Wildlife Trust |
| CCA 04: Transforming Lives | Derbyshire Wildlife Trust |
| CCA 05: Connecting with Nature | Derbyshire Wildlife Trust |
| CCA 06: Tales from the River Bank | Support Staffordshire |



Big Washlands Watch ~ Call for Citizen Scientists

THEME 2 ~ RIVER VALLEY CONNECTIONS

6 projects contributed to this theme made up of:

| Project | Lead partner |
|--|------------------------------------|
| RVC 01: Trent Valley Way | Trent Rivers Trust |
| RVC 02: Canal Access | Canal and River Trust |
| RVC 03: Canoe Discovery | British Canoeing |
| RVC 04: Gateway to the Trent Valley cycleway | Staffordshire County Council |
| RVC 05: Way Marking of Cycle Routes | East Staffordshire Borough Council |
| TTTV 02: Interpretation Programme | Staffordshire Wildlife Trust |



Canal towpath works, Willington

THEME 3 ~ TRANSFORMING THE LANDSCAPE

4 projects contributed to this theme made up of:

Project

TL 01: Living Floodplains

TL 02: Rolleston Brook Hollows

TL 03: Transforming the Trent Valley's Heritage

TL 04: Stop! The Military Heritage of the Trent Valley

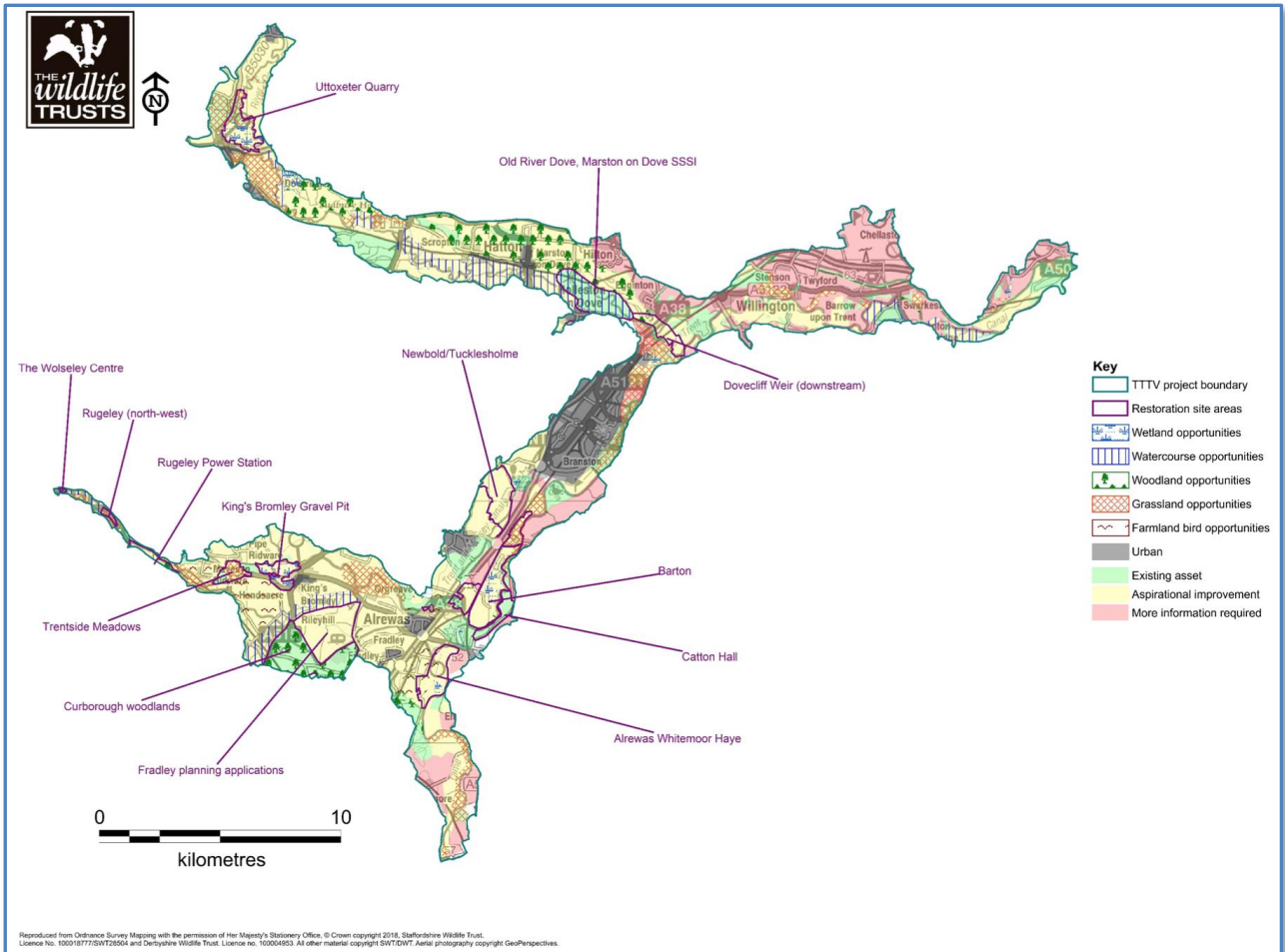
Lead Partner

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (SWT)

East Staffordshire Borough Council

Staffordshire County Council/ SWT

Staffordshire County Council/ SWT



Biodiversity opportunity map ~ from 2018 Natural Heritage Audit



Pillbox on the Clay Mills aqueduct ~ from 2017 Cultural Heritage Audit

Project changes and additions

As with any complex multi-year programme, a number of changes and opportunities emerged during the delivery phase of the Landscape Partnership Scheme. Some of the major project changes agreed with the National Lottery Heritage included:

THEME 1 ~ CONNECTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH ACTION

CCA 04 ~ Transforming Lives and **CCA05 ~ Connecting with Nature** were both projects delivered by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust as lead partner. A combination of factors such as national policy changes to training programmes making match funding difficult to obtain, and the impact of pandemic restrictions resulted in several changes of approach for these two projects.

A projected project underspend resulted in the creation of a further related project **CCA07 ~ Feasibility and Course Development**, with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust exploring how the training programmes delivered as part of TTTV can be incorporated into self-sustaining training package for young people, local groups and trainees looking to enter the natural heritage sector.

THEME 2 ~ RIVER VALLEY CONNECTIONS

RCV04 Gateway to the Trent Valley ~ improving access for walking and cycling

This project altered from the original design as the intended cycleway was dropped during the technical design phase due to significantly increased costs of delivering the proposed access work. To maintain the focus of improving access for walking and cycling around the Trent Valley, the TTTV team worked with Staffordshire County Council and the Canal and River Trust to support two towpath improvement schemes.

Fradley Junction to Kings Bromley ~ upgrading the towpath to a standard suitable for walking and cycling. The contribution from Transforming the Trent Valley ensured that the entire length was upgraded to a suitable standard with approximately 3km of towpath improved.

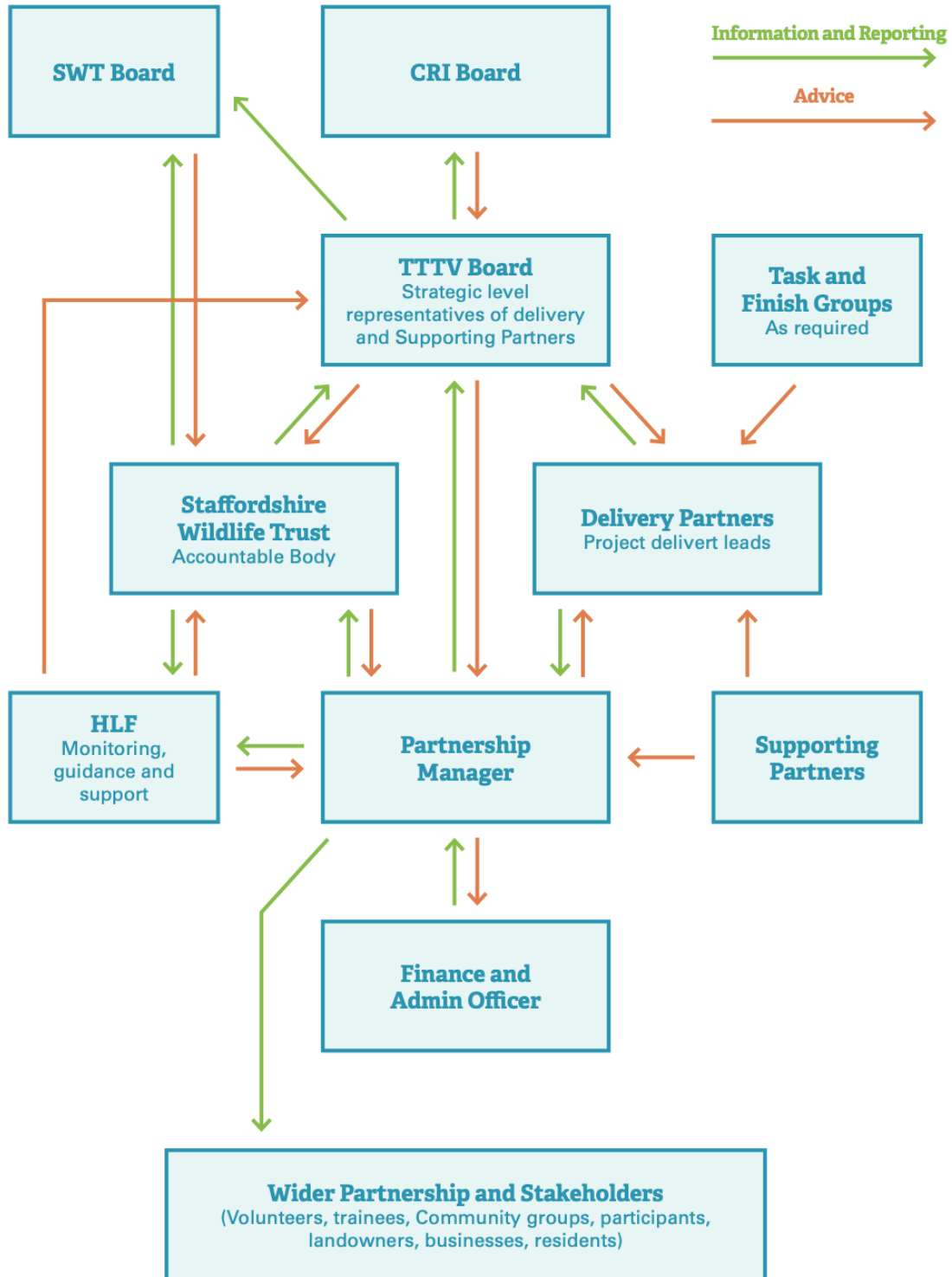
Burton-upon-Trent ~ Canal and River Trust upgraded close to 9km of towpath through Burton-upon-Trent. Transforming the Trent Valley contributed towards the biodiversity improvements associated with the resurfacing.

The additional 12km of towpath upgrade can be added to the 5.7km of upgraded towpath completed through RCV02 Canal Access bringing total towpath improvements to nearly 18km.

Taking account of project change and the one addition identified above, **a total of 17 projects were delivered through the duration of the Landscape Partnership Scheme.** For the purposes of this evaluation any of the outputs and outcomes from this additional project, **CCA07 ~ Feasibility and Course Development**, have not been included in this report as activity was ongoing and still to be completed at the time of gathering evidence and writing.

Who has been involved?

The Transforming the Trent Valley Board (“TTTV Board”) was established as the partnership to oversee the delivery of all activity as identified in the Landscape Conservation Action Plan and Stage 2 submission to NLHF. During the development phase the following governance and organisational structure for the delivery of the scheme was established showing the key stakeholder, their connections, and how information and advice was to be disseminated.



Organisational and governance structure for the Scheme delivery from the LCAP

The lead partner and accountable body for the project was Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. It is through the accountable body that the **Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership Team** were appointed to co-ordinate and deliver the scheme. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust received and managed the NLHF grant and financial contributions from partner organisations and other sources, and ensured procurement processes were in line with those advised by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. They had responsibility for ensuring the activities and projects were delivered in accordance with the National Lottery Heritage Fund grant conditions.

The **Partnership Board** had responsibility for:

- Guiding and supporting the overall delivery of the Scheme and the Scheme's staff team.
- Representing the views of national, regional, local and community partners. Members ensured a balanced approach was followed and that a good cross-section of projects was included, addressing (as equally as possible) all key outcomes of the Scheme.
- Decision-making and setting the strategy and direction for the Scheme.
- Acting as ambassadors for the Scheme and Partnership.

Individual **Delivery Partners** were responsible for delivery, or overseeing delivery, of the 16 projects within the scheme. The roles of the Delivery Partners were defined as:

- Implement their individual Projects according to the terms of the Project Plans, and in accordance with the Standard Terms of Grant.
- Ensure that the Project conforms to the Project Plans, and ensure that any anticipated or actual variance in the cost, timescale or quality of agreed Project outputs is reported to the Accountable Body immediately.
- Ensure all claims for payment against eligible Project expenditure are submitted to the Accountable Body by specified quarterly deadlines, supported by the prescribed documentation.
- Work collaboratively to achieve the actions set out in the LCAP and properly and diligently manage its Project Plan in accordance with the LCAP, (including variations to the LCAP agreed by the Board).
- Be responsible for procuring and securing Match Funding for projects as set out in Project Plans.
- Ensure Safeguarding policies and procedures covering good practice with working with children and vulnerable adults.

The project established a **Delivery Team**, of three core staff, employed by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust: Scheme Manager, Finance & Admin Officer, Interpretation and Communications Officer. In addition **6 Project-based Roles** were appointed, and employed by the Project Leads: Wildchild Officer (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust), Cultural Heritage Officer (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust), Living Floodplains Officer (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust), Community Engagement Officer (Support Staffordshire), Trent Valley Way Officer (Trent Rivers Trust), Training and Wellbeing Officer (Derbyshire Wildlife Trust).

Each project had a nominated **Project Lead** (an organisation or individual), responsible for the delivery of their project according to the terms and conditions specified in formally signed **Partnership Agreements**. Project Leads operated independently to deliver their projects, with support from the Project Core Team. However, they worked in partnership with other elements of TTTV to enable mutual support, promote a landscape-scale approach and ensure the programme was greater than the sum of its parts.

3. The purpose and approach taken to this evaluation

It is a condition of NLHF funding that recipients carry out an end-of-scheme evaluation. NLHF have published specific guidance on evaluation for Landscape Partnerships which advises on how best to approach the evaluation of a complex, multi-project scheme, with an emphasis on the need to look across the whole range of activity, to identify how these have complemented one another, hopefully demonstrating that the scheme as a whole has delivered more than the sum of the individual projects.

While there is inevitably an element of judgement and criticism in any evaluation process, for those involved in a scheme it can provide a lot of positive feedback. The NLHF guidance states the aims of an evaluation as being able to “prove” (that resources have been well spent, ambitions achieved) and “improve” (capturing lessons learnt through experience of programme delivery).

With this recommended approach in mind, Transforming the Trent Valley sought to make the most of the process by implementing a longitudinal approach to monitoring and evaluation, with an ethos of constructive reflection, aiming to draw out the learning from this project for the core team and partners to transfer to NLHF and other similar grant schemes. In order to achieve this, the following methodology was adopted.

- **Inception and development** ~ working with the project team and partners to develop the monitoring and evaluation framework building on work completed in the development phase, to help guide the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data and specifically help with bringing together all the known outputs, outcomes and indicators into one place.
- **Mid-term review** ~ key elements of this review included a project update meeting with the Scheme Manager, a facilitated discussion at meetings with the TTTV team, project delivery lead staff and Partnership Board, a review of the scheme documentation, plus reporting and presentation of findings.
- **Ongoing coaching and project completion templates** ~ online meetings with the project team members to give an overview of the evaluation approach and information needed to populate a final report. Producing individual project completion templates to help guide collection of evaluation data, information and learning.
- **TTTV celebration evening** ~ attending TTTV celebration event in September 2023 to gather further insights.
- **End of scheme evaluation** ~ the information collected from the project completion reports by the project team and partners throughout the duration of the project has helped to feed into and shape this end-of-scheme evaluation.



Extracts from TTTV celebration film ~ September 2023

4. How the resources were spent

16 projects delivering a **£3.92 million investment** to improve the natural and cultural heritage of the Trent Valley Landscape

Financial summary

By December 2023, Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership had evidenced a cash spend totalling £3,730,793 or 95% of the anticipated total cash value of £3,920,273, from 19 quarterly financial claims. Information from the project manager in February 2024 shows remaining project activity to be totalling just under £190K to be claimed by Scheme completion in March 2024, making up the total cash investment of £3.92 million.

Overall expenditure profile

The following table summarises the figures presented in the quarterly financial claims to NLHF. Yearly totals have been included to help give a sense of how project delivery has unfolded over the duration of Scheme delivery.

| Claim | Date | Actual | Cumulative | Yearly | Yearly total as % of overall |
|-------|--------|----------|------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | Jun-19 | £41,140 | £41,140 | £276,013 | 7% of total |
| 2. | Sep-19 | £57,482 | £98,622 | | |
| 3. | Dec-19 | £67,847 | £166,469 | | |
| 4. | Mar-20 | £109,544 | £276,013 | | |
| 5. | Jun-20 | £45,177 | £321,190 | £1,070,077 | 27% |
| 6. | Sep-20 | £450,576 | £771,766 | | |
| 7. | Dec-20 | £484,482 | £1,256,248 | | |
| 8. | Mar-21 | £89,842 | £1,346,090 | | |
| 9. | Jun-21 | £94,742 | £1,440,832 | £484,301 | 12% |
| 10. | Sep-21 | £119,320 | £1,560,152 | | |
| 11. | Dec-21 | £145,452 | £1,705,604 | | |
| 12. | Mar-22 | £124,787 | £1,830,391 | | |
| 13. | Jun-22 | £135,550 | £1,965,941 | £1,030,835 | 26% |
| 14. | Sep-22 | £423,326 | £2,389,267 | | |
| 15. | Dec-22 | £148,516 | £2,537,783 | | |
| 16. | Mar-23 | £323,443 | £2,861,226 | | |
| 17. | Jun-23 | £204,681 | £3,065,907 | £1,059,047 | 27% |
| 18. | Sep-23 | £307,769 | £3,373,676 | | |
| 19. | Dec-23 | £357,117 | £3,730,793 | | |
| Final | Mar-24 | £189,480 | £3,920,273 | | |

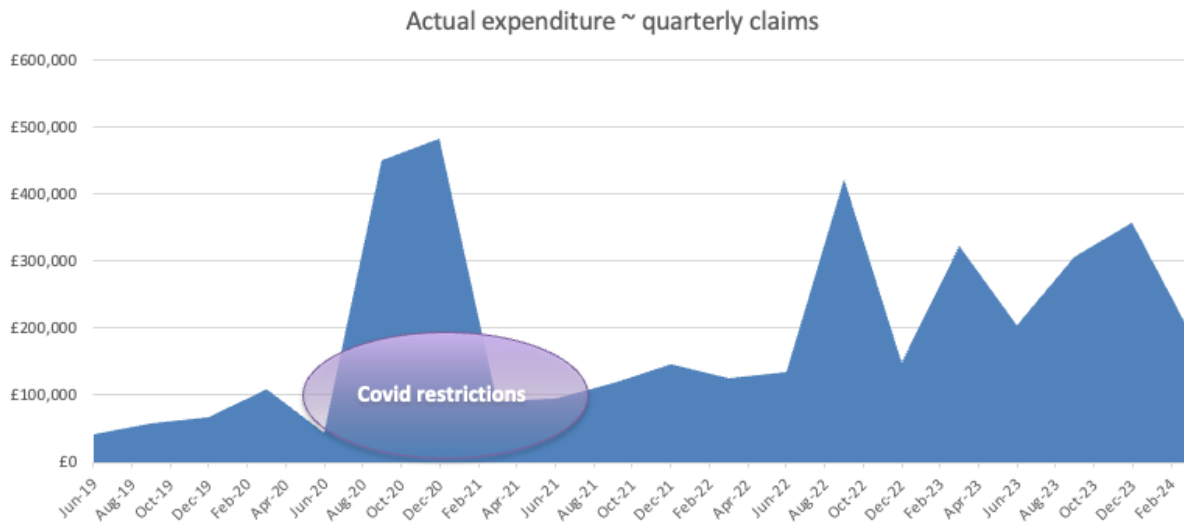
Key points to note are:

- The slow start for Year One with £276,013 or just 7% of total expenditure by March 2020.
- The disruptions in Years Two and Three between June 2020 and June 2022, when the main coronavirus restrictions were in place. Without two major claims of £450K in September 2020 and £484K in December 2020¹, just £619K (or 16% of overall budget) was spent over

¹ Both claims included major capital expenditure for work that was already in delivery before March 2020.

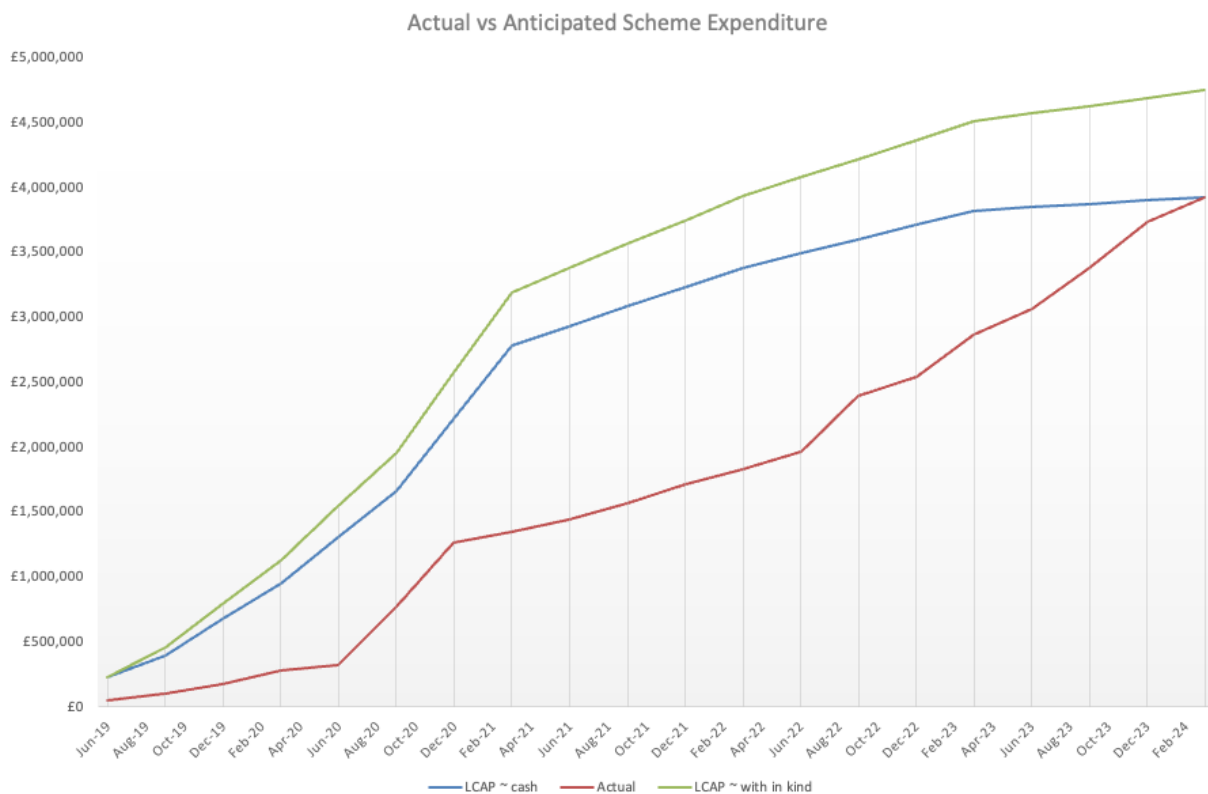
the remaining eighteen month period, indicating the level of disruption caused through following the necessary national government guidelines.

- From June 2022 to March 2024, the consistent levels of annual claims across the programme with figures of just over £1 million being claimed in years four and five.
- The small remaining claim of £189,480 to draw down all the grant award from NLHF.



TTTV quarterly NLHF claims

Information taken from the quarterly claims shows a Scheme that has been well managed from a financial perspective with good liaison with NLHF through programme delivery. It is important to note that in spite of the restrictions and disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic, TTTV has not requested a timetable extension and delivered a programme of activity that has adapted to the many changes by society experienced over the last five years.



Expenditure profile to March 2024

5. Principal achievements: what was delivered on the ground

In order to develop the headline achievements for the Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership “as a whole”, the outputs from each individual project have been sorted, aggregated and presented according to headline output categories developed by the Heritage Lottery Fund to support early monitoring of their Landscape Partnership programme.

Following the transition to NLHF it is no longer a requirement for Landscape Partnerships Schemes to report against these headings, yet from an evaluation perspective they are a very useful starting point and an opportunity to look at collective achievements and a mechanism to present data “in the round” rather than on a project by project basis. To get a picture of the overall achievements for Transforming the Trent Valley, the anticipated outputs from the LCAP have been presented along with actual outputs achieved against the following seven key indicators:

- Access; Advice; Biodiversity & Landscape; Employment; Participation & Learning; Training & Skills and Volunteering

A review of all intended outputs was undertaken in May 2021 by the project team pre-empting concerns around the many changes experienced due to the coronavirus pandemic. This proactive process allowed the team to look critically at the intended outputs and allow for a more creative response to delivering intended project activity, with the full agreement and approval of NLHF. The collated outputs for TTTV as a whole are presented below, with observations giving the main headlines of actual outputs achieved.

Access

Access improvements totalling 71 km has been delivered with 64 access points and sites improved to increase access to local rivers and connect people to nature.

| What we said to NLHF in the LCAP | Actual outputs achieved to September 2023 |
|--|--|
| 33km of towpath, accessible trails and cycle routes created with 1,325 way markers or signs to improve access ~ May 2021 review reduced improved access to a total of 11km with 1,225 way markers | 44km of towpath, accessible trails and cycle routes created with 1,092 way markers or signs to improve access ~ May 2021 review reduced improved access to a total of 11km with 1,225 way markers |
| 20km of cycle routes promoted with 500 discover cycling booklets printed for cyclists and families | 25km of cycle routes promoted with 1 discover cycling webpage created |
| 45 access points and sites improved to increase access to local rivers or work at locations to connect people to nature | 50 access points and sites improved to increase access to local rivers or work at locations to connect people to nature |
| 35 new finger posts, stiles and totem poles to improve access within the Trent Valley landscape | 27 new finger posts, stiles and totem poles to improve access within the Trent Valley landscape |
| 5 new routes and trails improving access | 4 new routes and trails improving access |

Additional outputs achieved over and above original LCAP figures and September 2023 totals:

- **Trent Valley Way** ~ 7 circular walks created
- **Canoe Discovery** ~ 17 miles (27km) of canoe trail created
- **Gateway to the Trent Valley** ~ 13 access points and 1 towpath entrance improved

Final evaluation ~ February 2024

Access outputs have been exceeded

It can be demonstrated that Transforming the Trent Valley has exceeded original intentions for improving access with a flexible approach to project delivery and additional outputs that includes:

- An extra 38 km of access routes that have been improved, including the creation of a 27km canoe trail. This increase represents a 115% increase in access compared to the LCAP.
- Increased infrastructure and information to improve access and enjoyment of the environment through improving 64 access points and sites to increase access to local rivers or work at locations to connect people to nature.
- 11 new routes and trails created.

Access work faced challenges due to increased costs for one project in particular (see p.14) with activity pivoting to deliver the additional 12km of towpath improvements. This work benefitted from larger match funding in place and helped contribute to the additional outputs delivered.



Efflinch bridge ~ before and after access improvements



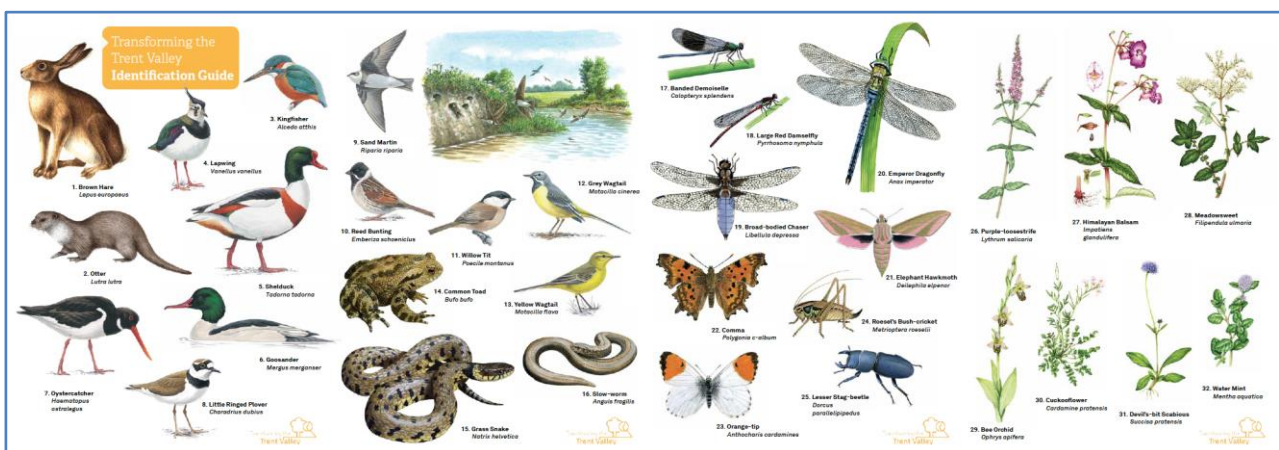
Croxall launch platform and Riverside Inn, Branston ~ improving river access

Advice and records

| What we said to NLHF in the LCAP | Actual outputs achieved to September 2023 |
|---|---|
| 10,000 survey record generated for local Ecological Records Centres | 17,996 survey record generated for local Ecological Records Centres |
| 20 species surveys to capture baseline data | 12 species surveys to capture baseline data |
| £100,000 of biodiversity offsetting secured | £562,119 of biodiversity offsetting secured |
| 100 heritage assets recorded and monitored ~ May 2021 review added the incorporation of heritage assets onto the Historic Environment Record | 113 heritage assets recorded and monitored ~ May 2021 review added the incorporation of heritage assets onto the Historic Environment Record |
| 82 military heritage assets surveyed, monitored and added to the Historic Environment Record | 94 military heritage assets surveyed, monitored and added to the Historic Environment Record |
| 50 advisory visits made | 54 advisory visits made |
| 30 landowners given advice on positive management of assets | 32 landowners given advice on positive management of assets |
| 8 heritage assets identified for designation review | 8 heritage assets identified for designation review |
| 3 digital information records and design guidance for heritage features available online | 3 digital information records and design guidance for heritage features available online |

Additional outputs achieved over and above original LCAP figures and September 2023 totals:

- **Living Floodplains** ~ 69 Biodiversity Units created at Rugeley Power Station and ready for sale
- **Scheme Management** ~ 1 Natural Capital talk given with advice given to 29 people
- **Stop! The military legacy of the Trent Valley** ~ 13 landowners engaged with advice given about heritage assets and their positive management



Big Washlands Watch ~ fold out identification guide

Final evaluation ~ February 2024

Advice outputs have been exceeded.

Of note is the:

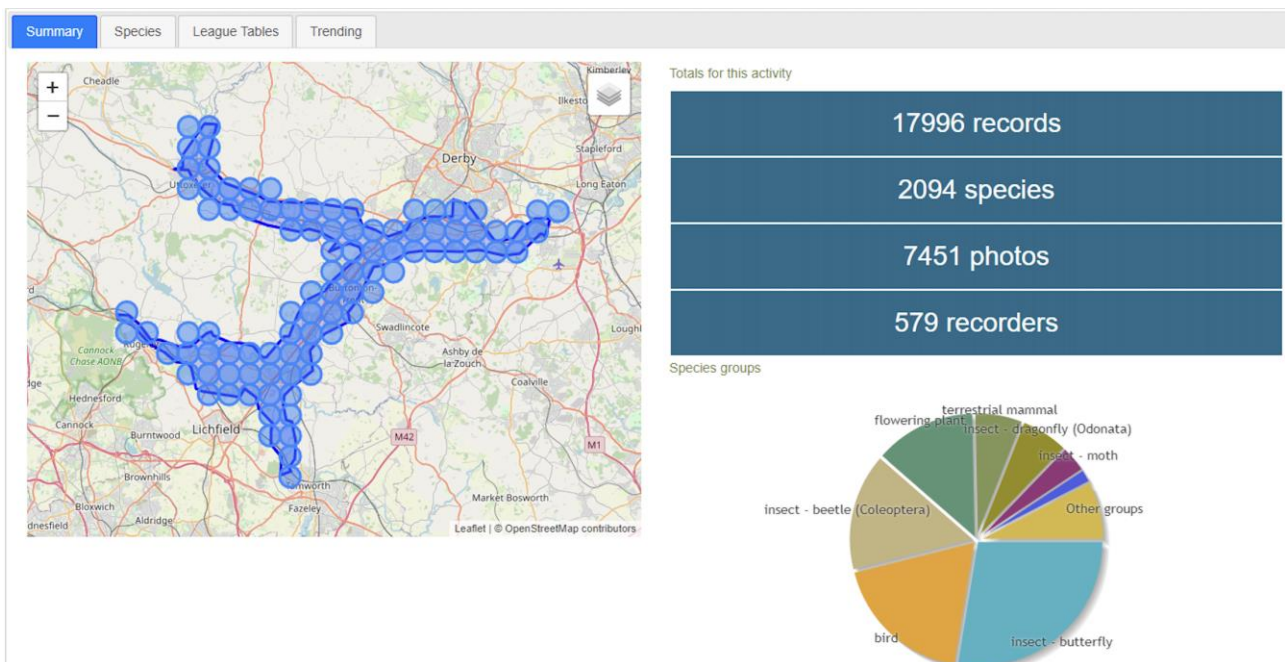
£462K additional income identified through biodiversity net gain at three sites, Cherryholme, Rugeley Power Station and Croxall. The total of £562K secured for biodiversity offsetting “allows for 30 years of management on the Rugeley Power Station and Croxall sites.”

Wildlife recording exceeding intended activity with an additional 8,000 biological records. One element of Big Washlands Watch was all about giving local people the skills, tools and confidence to become a ‘citizen scientist’ and contribute records to increase understanding of wildlife in the Trent Valley landscape. Significant outputs delivered through iRecord included:

- 17,996 biological records
- 2,094 different species recorded with 7,451 photos
- 579 local recorders



Rugeley cooling tower demolition ~ June 2021. Credit Paul L.G. Morris



Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership ~ iRecord activity summary

Biodiversity and Landscape

A landscape impact over 135 ha to enhance natural heritage and biodiversity with 2 km of river restoration that benefits an additional 72 km of river catchment

Paleochannel reconnection at Cherry Holme

This was delivered as part of a biodiversity net gain project with Network Rail through Siemens Mobility. The project has resulted in the largest river island re-creation in Europe and is the first Wildlife Trust project in the movement to use Biodiversity Metric 2.0 to secure funding. The site is being used as an example in Wildlife Training in using Biodiversity Metric 2.0.

Cherry Holme facts and figures:

- 11,550 cubic metres of soil removed to restore the paleochannel
- A total area of 500m² has been excavated over two phases of restoration works
- Almost 1km of the River Trent restored for wildlife

Cherry Holme Video Gallery



"Paleochannel ~ a channel that was once an active part of the river and has since been infilled"

| What we said to NLHF in the LCAP | Actual outputs achieved to September 2023 |
|--|---|
| 90 ha+ of biodiversity and landscape restoration improvement work on priority habitat types ~ May 2021 review added 5ha of habitat improvements | 123 ha+ of biodiversity and landscape restoration improvement work on priority habitat types ~ May 2021 review added 5ha of habitat improvements |
| 1.4 ha of lake restoration | 1.4 ha of lake restoration |
| 1 ha of woodland improved | 1 ha of woodland improved |
| 50 ponds and scrapes created or restored | 31 ponds and scrapes created or restored |
| 10 mini nature areas created in the local area | 5 mini nature areas created in the local area |
| 3 km of river restoration ~ May 2021 review added 100 km of river catchment benefitting from restoration | 2 km of river restoration with 72km of river catchment benefitting |
| 2 km of connected habitat created or restored | 1.5 km of connected habitat created or restored |

Additional outputs achieved over and above original LCAP figures and September 2023 totals:

- **Living Floodplains** ~ 7ha of biodiversity and habitat enhancement due to reinstatement work at Cherryholme river island



Rolleston Brook Hollows ~ woodland management

Final evaluation ~ February 2024

The biodiversity and landscape outputs have been exceeded with an additional 43 ha of landscape restoration and improvements

Total biodiversity and landscape works have covered 135 ha of the Trent Valley landscape area, contributed through:

- 130 ha of priority habitat created or restored through Living Floodplains
- 1.4 ha of lake restoration and 1 ha of woodland improvements at Rolleston Brook Hollows
- 3.5 ha of habitat improvements delivered through Transforming Lives in the Trent Valley

The other key output delivered for biodiversity and landscape has been the 2 km of river restoration that has had a positive impact on an additional 72km of river catchment using the methodology adopted by the Environment Agency for calculating overall catchment benefits from river restoration activity.



River reprofiling and floodplain lowering at Tucklesholme

Employment

| What we said to NLHF in the LCAP | Actual outputs achieved to September 2023 |
|---|---|
| <p>4 staff (2.4 FTE) making up the Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership core team</p> <p>6 project based roles (5.4 FTE) employed by project partners</p> | <p>3 staff making up the Transforming the Trent Landscape Partnership core team:</p> <p>Scheme Manager, Communications and Interpretation Officer (combined role), Finance and Admin Officer</p> <p>Project partners employ:</p> <p>Cultural Heritage Officer, Living Floodplains Officer, Community Engagement Officer, Wildchild Officer, Training and Wellbeing Officer, Trent Valley Way Officer</p> |

Final evaluation ~ February 2024

Employment outputs have been exceeded

An additional Living Floodplains Officer was appointed due to TTTV securing an agreement to deliver extra landscape improvement work over and above that originally envisaged during the development phase.

The core team worked closely with all other staff employed by project partners to help with the integration of overall project delivery. As with any time limited project there has been a change in personnel throughout the programme, as the nature of fixed term contracts has meant that some staff have found other employment.

High Sherriff's Tour of the Trent Valley

In 2020, we were approached by Jamie Friend who discovered TTTV through a talk given by Nicola Lynes. During his shrieval year he wanted to walk along the River Trent to raise money for charity. It coincided with our mid-term celebrations, so we joined the ideas and designed a route over 2 months that would walk, cycle and paddle the River Trent in Staffordshire.

"I'm supporting the Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme by walking, and on occasion paddling and cycling, the Staffordshire length of the proposed new Trent Valley Way footpath to promote a wider appreciation of Staffordshire's wonderful wetland sites along the River Trent."

James Friend, High Sherriff of Staffordshire

A 60 mile tour in June and July 2021 along the River Trent from Biddulph to Burton that included:

Cycling ~ 23 miles

Walking ~ 34 miles

Paddling ~ 3 miles

Visiting ~ TTTV projects such as the Cherry Holme river island restoration and Rugeley towpath upgrade

Supporting ~ a volunteer thank you event and Family Fun day



Programme management completion report extract

Participation and Learning

| What we said to NLHF in the LCAP | Actual outputs achieved to September 2023 |
|--|---|
| <p>c. 4,185 people participating and engaged through 380 activities, talks, walks and events May 2021 review increased total participation to 5,435 and reduced total activities to 277</p> <p>3,600 school children engaged pupils through education activity ~ May 2021 review reduced children engaged to 1,865</p> <p>50 community groups benefitting from local grants totalling £100,000</p> <p>173 local community groups and schools engaged</p> <p>40 parish and town councils engaged</p> <p>88 new interpretation features and digital products created to improve awareness ~ May 2021 review added 5 interpretation products to make 93 in total</p> <p>30+ education resource packs developed with 1,600 packs printed and distributed</p> | <p>c. 7,929 people participating and engaged through 452 activities, talks, walks and events May 2021 review increased total participation to 5,435 and reduced total activities to 277</p> <p>2,345 school children engaged pupils through education activity ~ May 2021 review reduced children engaged to 1,865</p> <p>54 community groups benefitting from local grants totalling £100,000+</p> <p>687 local community groups and schools engaged</p> <p>35 parish and town councils engaged</p> <p>111 new interpretation features and digital products created to improve awareness ~ May 2021 review added 5 interpretation products to make 93 in total</p> <p>83 education resource packs developed with 4,856 packs printed, distributed and/or downloaded</p> <p>150,759 people participating through online talks and digital engagement</p> |

| Additional outputs achieved over and above original LCAP figures and September 2023 totals: |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rolleston Brook Hollows ~ 18 school visits with 249 children engaged • Wildchild ~ 852 Nature Packs distributed to lower socio-economic families through foodbanks and charities plus 2,000 people engaged through Safe and Sound KS2 broadcast • Rolleston Brook Hollows ~ 3 educational programmes and materials developed for schools • Connecting with Nature ~ 1 wellbeing video created |

Final evaluation ~ February 2024

Participation and learning outputs have been exceeded. Total direct participation figures over 7,900 people represents a 90% increase compared to the LCAP.

Activities, walks, talks and events have been held with great success despite the restrictions faced by the COVID 19 pandemic, with a move to online activity helping to reach different audiences. Total digital engagement was not estimated at the outset but was being recorded projects as additional outputs with 150,759 people reached

Direct school engagement of 2,594 children was 28% less than anticipated due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. This was compensated by an increase in the number of education resources developed, distributed and downloaded.

Interpretation has improved awareness and promotion of different parts of the Trent valley area and is helping to spread impact and activity across the whole landscape.



Family fun day ~ July 2021



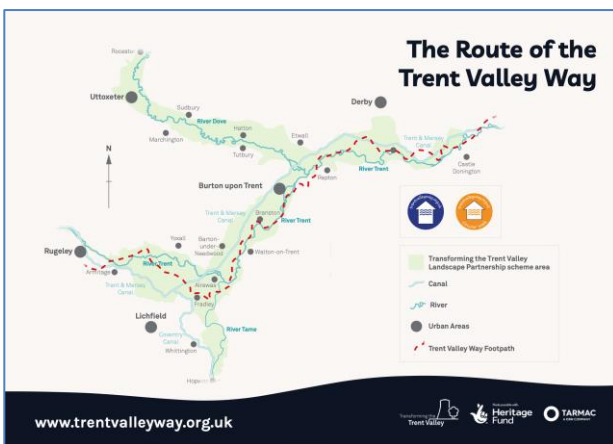
Celebration event ~ September 2023

Connecting with nature

The project has targeted people from hard to reach groups across the Trent Valley landscape to help reconnect them with nature. They have been introduced to their local natural and cultural heritage through a programme of ‘forest school’ type engagement, including community gardening, guided walks and bushcraft within a safe environment. By sharing stories within the groups, they have connected with each other, improved physical and mental health and have boosted social wellbeing.

“I have been inspired, there is so much I’m taking away with me. I feel it’s important to take time out without any expectation. Just let nature talk to you. I feel more connected to nature.”

“By taking small steps to meeting people and taking part in activities helped my confidence. I now feel like myself again and want to explore more personally and professionally.”



Promotional postcards for the Trent Valley Way (left), and for Geocache activities (right)

Volunteers

| What we said to NLHF in the LCAP | Actual outputs achieved to September 2023 |
|--|--|
| <p>108 volunteers engaged in activity across the Trent Valley Landscape area ~ May 2021 review added 40 volunteers bringing total to 148.</p> <p>634 volunteer days anticipated to be delivered, following project review ~ May 2021 review increased total volunteer days to 1,184.</p> | <p>427 volunteers engaged in activity across the Trent Valley Landscape area ~ May 2021 review added 40 volunteers bringing total to 148.</p> <p>1,738 volunteer days anticipated to be delivered, following project review ~ May 2021 review increased total volunteer days to 1,184.</p> |

Additional outputs achieved over and above original LCAP figures and September 2023 totals:

- **Living Floodplains** ~ 29 volunteers engaged through the Willington Beaver project
- **Connecting with Nature** ~ 47 additional volunteer days delivered

Final evaluation ~ February 2024

Volunteer outputs have been exceeded

Aggregating the additional outputs, overall volunteer activity totals are:

458 volunteers contributing 1,785 days or the equivalent of 8 full time working years

The number of volunteers engaged is quadruple the number anticipated although this figure should be treated with caution as some volunteers may have contributed across a number of projects so there may be an element of double counting when aggregating these final outputs.

The 1,785 days contributed is just over 8 full time working years (allowing for 220 work days per year) and works out as an additional resource of **two extra full time staff members as part of the TTTV team.**



Beans Covert volunteers ~ uncovering a Roman Road

Training and Skills

| What we said to NLHF in the LCAP | Actual outputs achieved to September 2023 |
|---|---|
| <p>A programme of 138 heritage skills training, workshops and courses ~ May 2021 review added 21 workshops and courses bringing total to 159.</p> <p>99+ people involved in heritage skills training, workshops and courses (numbers t.b.c)</p> <p>60 people benefitting from the John Muir award with 30 awards achieved</p> | <p>A programme of 332 heritage skills training, workshops and courses ~ May 2021 review added 21 workshops and courses bringing total to 159.</p> <p>107 people involved in heritage skills training, workshops and courses (numbers t.b.c)</p> <p>39 people benefitting from the John Muir award with 31 awards and 15 City and Guilds Diplomas achieved</p> |

Additional outputs achieved over and above original LCAP figures and September 2023 totals:

- **Transforming Lives in the Trent Valley** ~ 14 participants on external training courses
- **Waymarking of Cycle Routes** ~ 10 cycle training courses
- **Rolleston Brook Hollows** ~ 1 training certificate in Arboriculture

Final evaluation ~ February 2024

Training and skills outputs have been delivered in line with original intentions with an increase in the number of training workshops and courses

Aggregating the additional outputs, the training and skills activity totals are:

A programme of 342 skills training workshops and courses

121 people involved in training workshops and courses.

The high number of workshops and courses includes a comprehensive skills and development programme offered across 3 cohorts to the trainees.



Trainees with certificates ~ September 2023

Overall picture

From the information presented in the final project completion reports, **the Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership can demonstrate that it has achieved and surpassed many of the original ambitions** as anticipated within the LCAP and stage 2 submission with inevitable variations and changes to individual projects as problems arose at a local level during the delivery period, along with the restrictions faced with the implementation of certain activity due to the coronavirus pandemic from March 2020 onwards.

The biggest achievements to note and celebrate for nature recovery are:

- The landscape impact over 135 ha to enhance natural heritage and biodiversity, an increase of 47% compared to the LCAP.
- 2 km of river restoration that benefits an additional 72 km of river catchment
- Securing £562,000 total additional funding through biodiversity net gain
- The success of the wildlife recording activity with 17,996 biological records and 2,094 different species recorded.

For local engagement and participation:

The delivery of an awareness and engagement programme at a community level has been an effective part of TTTV as demonstrated by:

- 7,929 people participating in the 452 different events and learning activities throughout the scheme,
- The delivery of 322 skills workshops and training opportunities benefitting 107 participants
- Recruiting and engaging 458 volunteers contributing 1,785 days or the equivalent of 8 full time working years

What does the river mean to you?

As part of the launch event for the Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme, the Eco Group from Burton Fields School in Burton, were invited to write poems about their local river. The children visited the River Trent and came up with a series of verbs and adjectives that they felt described the river. They returned to school and composed their poems using their chosen words.

Mother Nature by Qasim

Nature harmed by human waste,
Wild life near to extinction.
Water becoming dirty and polluted,
Animals becoming endangered.

Trees barely surviving,
Boats floating amongst the waste.
Ducks try protecting their young from the toxic trash,
Lots of natural things disappear from our view.

But, in the darkness there is light.
Heroes making a safe zone for endangered animals.
People recycling their waste.
Litter in the bin.
Helping Mother Nature to protect the defenceless once more.



<https://www.thetrentvalley.org.uk/discover/poems/>

6. Programme achievements and outcomes

What has been collectively achieved

Collecting qualitative evidence relates to the change and outcomes that have been delivered by a project or scheme. This is important in relation to ‘people’ goals such as engagement, learning and skills training, where numbers often miss the main story about how people’s perceptions of their heritage, and their aspirations, have been changed.

Measuring outcomes are often more difficult to measure than quantitative outputs due to a number of complex factors such as:

- landscape change taking place over a longer period of time than delivery of the scheme and/or
- attributing individual change within people to one particular moment or activity...

The source material for the programme achievements and outcomes came from information collected by the project team and the individual project reports that were produced on conclusion of programme delivery that provided many of the rich examples of project achievements, outputs, outcomes and legacy plans.

Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme Outcomes

As part of developing the approach to monitoring and evaluation to support the stage two submission, four strategic “Scheme Outcomes” were identified and agreed with project partners. These four programme outcomes were linked to the three themes and 16 identified projects, with evidence collected accordingly, recognising that some projects would deliver against more than one outcome and across a number of theme areas.

| TTTV Scheme Outcomes | Key projects |
|--|---|
| <p>A. Transforming the Landscape ~ improving management to restore the natural and cultural heritage</p> <p>The key natural and significant cultural heritage features of the Trent Valley Landscape will be improved and better understood with a fit for purpose system in place to ensure the benefits are sustained. Where appropriate the connectivity and diversity of selected habitats and cultural heritage features will be mapped.</p> | <p>TL01. Living Floodplains TL02. Rolleston Brook Hollows TL03. Transforming the Landscape TL04 Stop! The military legacy of the Trent Valley</p> |
| <p>B. River Valley Connections ~ improving access</p> <p>Increased access infrastructure at key strategic locations enabling people to become more aware of and enjoy experiencing the natural and cultural heritage of the Trent Valley.</p> <p>There will be increased opportunities for informal recreation that promotes health and well-being benefits.</p> | <p>RVC01. Trent Valley Way RVC02. Canal Access RVC03. Canoe Discovery RVC04. Gateway to the Trent Valley RVC05. Waymarking of Cycle Routes</p> <p>Cross Cutting Theme TTTV2. Interpretation Programme</p> |

| TTTV Scheme Outcomes | Key projects |
|--|---|
| <p>C. Connecting Communities ~ increased awareness and engagement of the natural and cultural heritage</p> <p>More and different types of individuals and local groups will become positively engaged with the unique landscape of the River Trent, to understand the threats to the heritage and will be empowered to take further future actions.</p> | <p>CCA01. Community Engagement, CCA02. Wildchild CCA05. Connecting with Nature, CCA06. Tales from the Riverbank</p> |
| <p>D. Connecting Communities ~ people will have new skills and secured new employment</p> <p>People will have gained new and transferable skills in researching, restoring, conserving and understanding their heritage. Where possible people will be using these skills in the Trent Valley.</p> | <p>CCA03. Big Washland Watch CCA04. Transforming Lives in the Trent Valley</p> |

Using the four scheme outcomes and the final project completion reports as evidence, the TTTV Landscape Partnership team and partners were able to supply many examples of programme achievements and outcomes.

The following pages illustrate some of the project activity (but not all) providing evidence of qualitative information that delivered against the scheme outcomes.



Creating a Transforming the Trent Valley coaster

Outcome A ~ Improving management to restore the natural and cultural heritage

“A culturally significant lake and spinney has been enhanced and brought into better condition. The woodland has entered into regular management and invasive species are under closer control and access through the woodland has been improved, preventing the establishment of footpath creep and desire lines during wet periods.”

Project manager, Rolleston Brook Hollows

Scheme Outcome ~ Improving land management to restore the natural and cultural heritage

The key natural and significant cultural heritage features of the Trent Valley Landscape will be improved and better understood with a fit for purpose system in place to ensure the benefits are sustained. Where appropriate the connectivity and diversity of selected habitats and cultural heritage features will be mapped.

Can we evidence working towards or achieving this outcome?

Living Floodplains

Looking back ~ what is the one thing that you’re most proud of that has come from your project being part of Transforming the Trent Valley?

“The Living Floodplains project model proved a major catalyst to expand its approach and delivery beyond the original project scope. It provided a successful example of partnership working to deliver its vision for a connected floodplain landscape which is extremely attractive to funders, and the project more than doubled its original available budget.

Beyond the National Lottery Funded Project timeline, Living Floodplains is already continuing delivery within and outside of the TTV project boundary with several organisations.”

Some of the impacts on the natural heritage include:

- The natural heritage has directly improved in condition because of the interventions within the floodplain. 130 hectares of floodplain habitats, including rivers, grasslands, woodland, wetland, and ponds have benefitted from enhancement.
- The improvements within the floodplain will help to restore natural processes, promoting the continuation of a diverse wetland mosaic. Four sites have new management plans to provide guidance on a more active approach to management, particularly for grassland habitats.
- All the sites had baseline habitat surveys carried out to improve understanding of the Trent valley floodplain environment. Some sites had species recording activities, such as two years of invertebrate survey monitoring at Cherry Holme.
- Drone footage and stills were particularly useful for recording the change in landscape in our large-scale earth works projects, and demonstrated our floodplain enhancements holding water during influential flood events.

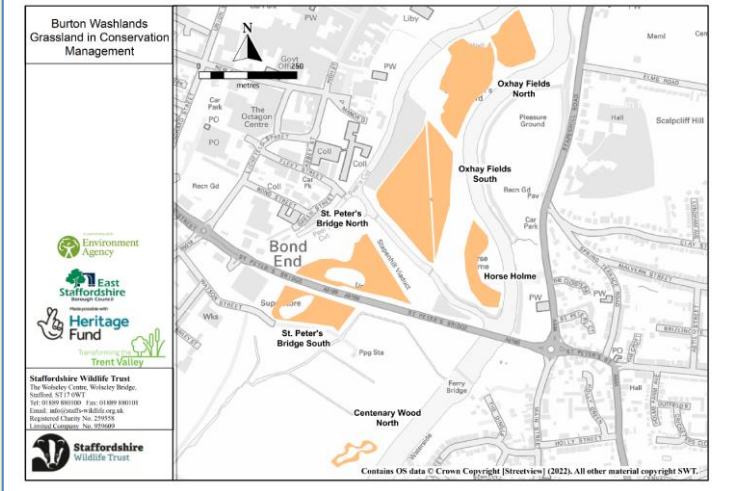
Burton Washlands Grassland Enhancement Areas – Management Guidance V2



Staffordshire Wildlife Trust October 2022



2. Map showing grassland areas to be managed under conservation cutting regime



Burton Washland Grassland Management Plan



Tucklesholme floodplain reconnection. Credit Jenny France

What difference has Living Floodplains made to people?

“*Living Floodplains* seeks to ensure the public understand and are enthused by the very important subject of floodplain restoration. This has never been more urgent in the face of climate change causing more frequent flood events and droughts, for which a healthy functioning floodplain plays a huge role in mitigating the effects on wildlife and people - in both the countryside and urban landscapes through which rivers pass.”

“We worked with the other TTTV projects to promote *Living Floodplains* through events, social media and press releases, as well as interactive learning material and *Living Floodplains* case studies on our website.”

Project officer reflections

What difference has Living Floodplains made to communities?

“Most of our projects have been delivered on publicly accessible land which gives local communities and visitors a great opportunity to experience the enhancements to wildlife happening in their back-yard.”

Burton Washlands

Burton Washlands is a heavily used site with a wide range of user groups which regularly interact with the floodplain on local authority land in central Burton. We engaged directly with site visitors and users to get their input on proposals and create a scheme which would be mutually beneficial to people and wildlife. Here in a formerly ‘sterile’ amenity grassland landscape we now have a thriving pond-scape with grassland which has a more relaxed management regime supporting pollinators which the public can enjoy via a network of mown pathways. The banks of the river have been lowered providing fish refuge and the opportunity for people to interact more than ever with the River Trent

Project officer reflections



Burton Washlands

Rugeley Power Station ~ a new riverside park



At **Rugeley Power Station Riverside Park** a 26 hectare site is being developed and opening up an area which has never been accessible to the general public. The site will become one of Staffordshire Wildlife Trust’s nature reserves with access routes, boardwalks and interpretation to help local communities learn about and engage with their natural environment.

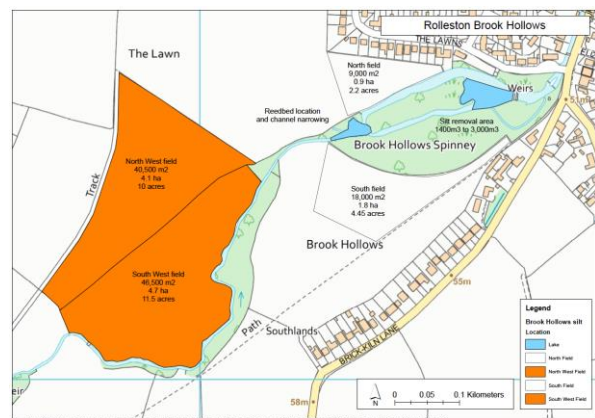
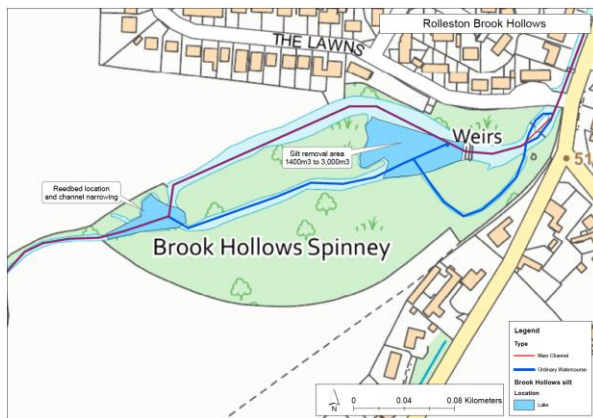
Rolleston Brook Hollows

“Thank you for all the support we have received through TTTV. The transformation at Brook Hollows has received many favourable comments”

Editor of *The Rollestonian* community newsletter

A successful project that has delivered additional natural heritage benefits:

- A culturally significant lake and spinney has been enhanced and brought into a better condition. The woodland has entered into regular management and invasive species are under closer control and access through the woodland has been improved, preventing the establishment of footpath creep and desire lines during wet periods.
- Silt has been removed from the lake increasing capacity and preventing the lake from being silted up and turning into a bog. This will keep the culturally important waterfall flowing for a few more years whilst attention turns to a catchment based solution to prevent silt accumulation.



Maps showing areas of silt removal from Brook Hollows lake and fields for silt spreading

- School children and volunteers have been on site identifying species providing a baseline understanding of the species in the area.
- The project has attracted further funding with finance from local benefactors who wish to add further value to the site. This has included mending, cleaning and repointing the bridge over the waterfall, landscaping and planting.

Friends of Brook Hollows

Rolleston is a very proactive village with active volunteer groups. When it became clear that the proposed works on site would be more challenging than expected and that the timeline would be a lot longer, coupled with delays from lockdowns, it was decided in mid-2021 that it would be worth trying to form a new volunteer group to begin small-scale work on the site so that there was a visible sign that the project had started.

The enthusiasm with which this idea was picked up in the community was overwhelming, a clear lead was established and with the provision of tools and training the volunteer group began with immense pride and enthusiasm. With little involvement from the project the volunteers have found work to undertake, have made beneficial suggestions for the project and helped to progress its elements and have not diminished in proactivity or enthusiasm over the 2½ years they have been running to date.

Project manager reflections

What difference has this project made to people?

The local community is more engaged in their local greenspace. Volunteer opportunities are offered and Brook Hollows is a more pleasant place to visit. The site is cared for with the improved footpaths and access receiving many positive comments from the community. Interpretation panels are interesting and informative and enhance the site whilst the artwork interprets the identity of the site, which is part of its cultural significance.

A regular volunteer group known as the Friends of Brook Hollows has established and will continue beyond the life of the scheme. There is a sense of local ownership of, and pride in, the site.



Friends of Brook Hollows volunteer group

One volunteer from the Friends of Brook Hollows requested to supplement their experience with further training that would benefit the Friends and has completed a Royal Forestry Society Level 2 Certificate in Arboriculture.

“The course has been of a high standard learning techniques of tree surgery; the course has been intense and enjoyable. I will have the knowledge and understanding of woodland management to enhance the biodiversity of flora and fauna in Brook Hollows Spinney. My experience in the topics learned can be handed on to members of the Friends of Brook Hollows to enhance their knowledge... enhancing the amenity value of the site for future years.”

Graham ~ Friends of Brook Hollows



Brook Hollows ~ silt removal, handling and spreading

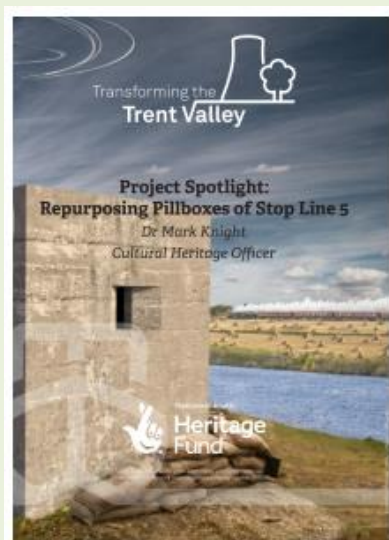
Transforming the Trent Valley Heritage and Stop! The military legacy of the Trent Valley

“Volunteer enthusiasm has been remarkable, as has been the engagement of the wider public with the work we have undertaken. Once people are engaged it is wonderful to see how keen they are to become involved in uncovering and understanding their own history.”

Project Officer reflections

Notable achievements included:

- 204 condition surveys of heritage assets
- 50 advisory visits made with advice given on 32 heritage assets
- 14 pillboxes converted for wildlife or interpretation
- 22 heritage conservation tasks undertaken
- 137 volunteers engaged contributing 315 days of volunteer time
- Pillbox design guidance created.



Pillbox project spotlight, conversion guide and COSMIC+ training

What has been the impact, benefit or change to the natural and cultural heritage?

Natural heritage has benefitted through the raising of awareness of cultural heritage. An example of this is the conversion of WWII pillboxes for bat hibernation and bird nesting sites. This generated interest in the local media along with a feature on BBC Countryfile. The pillbox display has been on tour across the Trent Valley for almost two years and has proved popular with older people telling past stories and younger people interested in the wildlife conversions.

Volunteers have been trained in the use of conservation techniques on cultural heritage sites, connecting them with both their natural and cultural heritage. Geocaching sites adjacent to cultural heritage sites has had a similar effect, people are out in the landscape and are aware of both their natural and cultural surroundings.

This has impacted positively on people's enjoyment of both natural and cultural heritage assets, creating a positive feedback loop.



Pillboxes conversion display and BBC Countryfile feature

Heritage will be better managed

Through our condition survey work we now have a better understanding of our heritage assets and their condition, informing conservation activities. Having undertaken geophysics surveys, we have been able to demonstrate the survival and condition of significant below-ground monuments. We have used this information to present designation reviews to Historic England and help inform the landowners of the heritage assets they have on their land. In two of the cases these were previously unrecognised.

Project officer reflections

Heritage will be in better identified and recorded

Condition surveys and geophysics work have recorded known and previously unrecognised heritage assets, with over 200 condition surveys conducted. Prime examples include the 3D scanning work on the Anglo-Saxon crypt and St Wystan's church in Repton and the Old Chancel in Rugeley. The geophysics team identified below ground remains of a previously disputed Roman fort and Roman road. The condition surveys will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record officers in Staffordshire and Derbyshire."

Project officer reflections



Geophysics results on the Roman fort and from the National Memorial Arboretum

Heritage will be in better condition

A new webpage provides links to good quality advice and guidance about management of heritage assets. A leaflet with information and links to Historic England has been produced and advice given to landowners. The COSMIC+ work we facilitated provided on-site training for landowner representatives, curators and contractors. This enabled us to help landowners, and demonstrate how best-practice policies can help protect heritage assets. Conservation work on heritage assets has improved, sometimes dramatically, the condition of the assets.

Project officer reflections

Bean's Covert ~ uncovering a Roman Road

“One memorable morning we arranged for a training and activity session on the road and 86 volunteers arrived! Utilising their help, we were able to pull bramble roots and clear up growth from the surface of the road.”

Volunteers have managed to reduce the bramble growth on the road almost to nothing, and this, if sensitively managed, will allow celandine and other woodland wildflowers to carpet and protect the site.



Anchor Church ~ unmasking the caves

The response to our work at Anchor Church made regional news headlines and resulted in visits from the wider area beyond the project boundary. One notable visit was by a men's group from the Nottingham area, who, having seen the BBC TV news report came to visit, sing, and litter pick in and around the monument.



End of project report

Outcome B ~ Improving access

“Very impressed with the locations for the markers and the directions they gave me. Just when I was puzzled where to go next, I would see a blue marker. The paths were clear and the stiles all in very good condition”.

Trent Valley Way project feedback

Scheme Outcome ~ Improving access

Increased access infrastructure at key strategic locations enabling people to become more aware of and enjoy experiencing the natural and cultural heritage of the Trent Valley.

There will be increased opportunities for volunteering and informal recreation that promotes health and wellbeing.

Can we evidence working towards or achieving this outcome?

Trent Valley Way

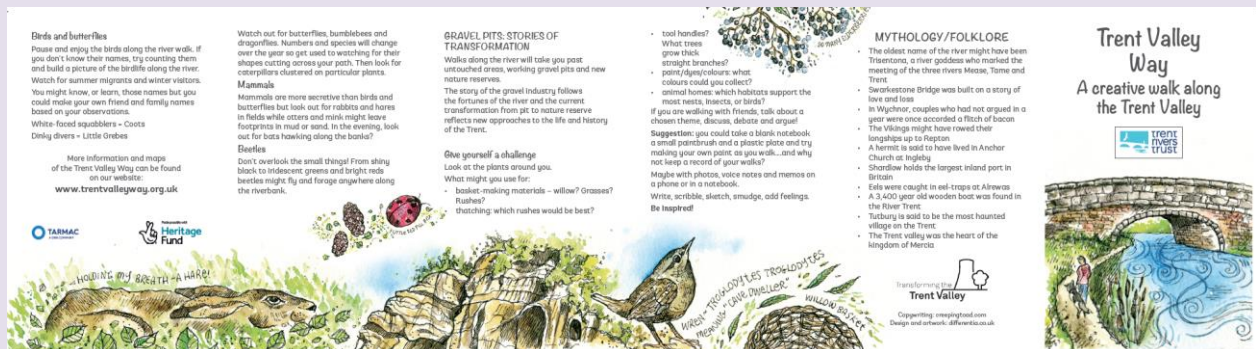
“Burton upon Trent has had its problems in recent years but the new Trent Valley Way carves a beautiful route through the town. Until the route was launched there was no public right of way alongside the river which gives the town its full name.”

A new 43mile (69km) section of the Trent Valley Way (TVW) footpath is now open from Rugeley to Shardlow. The walking route will act as a spine along the river valley, connecting heritage, places and communities. Following public rights of way, the path has seen improvements in the infrastructure. Stiles, bridges and paths have been repaired, improved, or replaced. 70 Way marker posts and over 500 discs have been installed along the route and maps have been produced in an App and are available on websites.

Interpretation structures have been installed at 16 locations along the route. These range from engraved waymarker posts, to totem and bench structures and lecterns.

The route links up with other access routes (footpaths, cycle ways and the National Forest Way) and heritage projects. Along its length there is series of seven circular walking routes enabling local communities to explore their area.

On project completion, a celebration event took place in September at four locations to provide information and guided walks enabling people to find out more about the Trent Valley Way.



Trent Valley Way ~ interpretation leaflet extract

People will have volunteered time

15 volunteers have contributed 350 hours or 50 days' time to the Trent Valley Way

The Trent Valley Way volunteers have learnt skills in surveying routes, installing and repairing stiles and writing scripts for circular route leaflets. They have helped with the planning and delivery of the launch events held in September. They provided information about the TVW and led guided walks along the route.

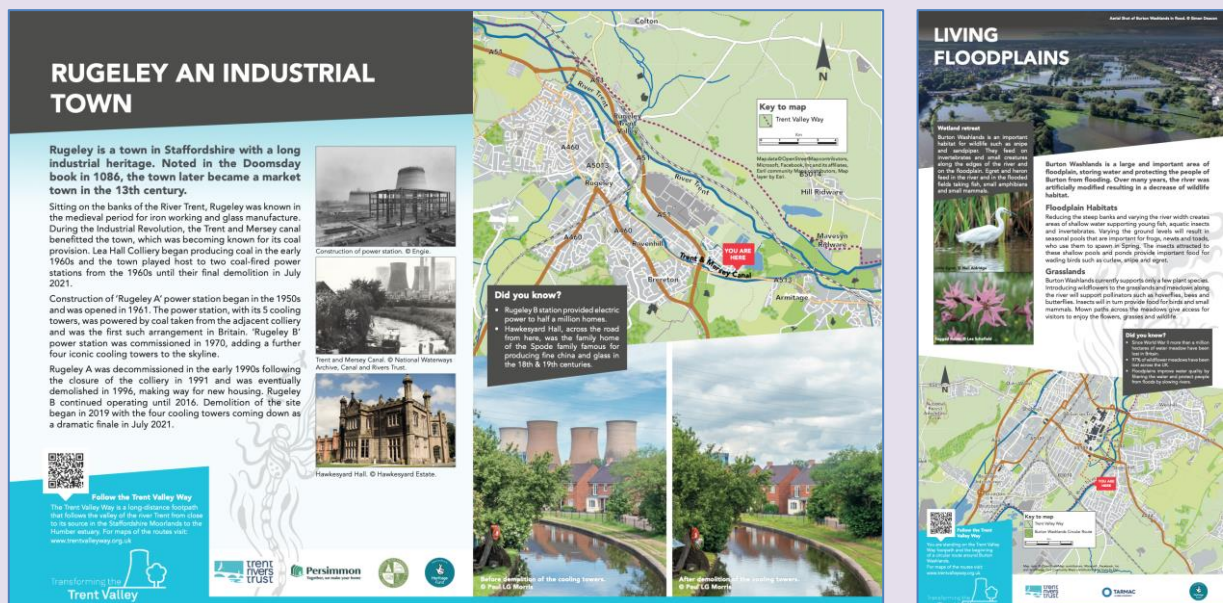
What has been the most enjoyable part of being involved in the TVW project?

- *"Using my skills to offer advice for the route. Meeting new people who enjoy walking, biodiversity and the outdoors."* ~ Dot
- *"I enjoyed finding out about the TVW route; being involved in helping to check & launch the route; meeting others as well as the processes involved."* ~ Marie
- *"Leading a group of 20 walkers on a dawn to dusk 30 mile walk along the route, with people from all walks of life but with a common love of the great outdoors."* ~ Simon

Why do you think the TVW is important for people?

- *"Until the TVW was launched there was no public right of way alongside the river which gives the town its full name."* ~ Simon
- *"It is useful for local people to know what walks are in their area, especially near the rivers. There is a diverse landscape that people can enjoy & rivers have wildlife to look out for."* ~ Marie
- *"The circular routes offer people the opportunity to walk back to their transport. It is an easy trail for anyone not used to trail walking. It is a good taster before tackling something more challenging."* ~ Dot

Trent Valley Way volunteer feedback



Interpretation panel examples ~ Trent Valley Way

Canal access

Increasing Access Opportunities along the Trent and Mersey canal

The project has helped to reconnect communities and visitors with the historic environment and the wider landscape. Access improvements have been made for walkers, cyclists, canoeists and boaters. The focus of the project has been to upgrade and improve access onto and along sections of the towpath highlighted in the Access Audit.

Notable achievements included:

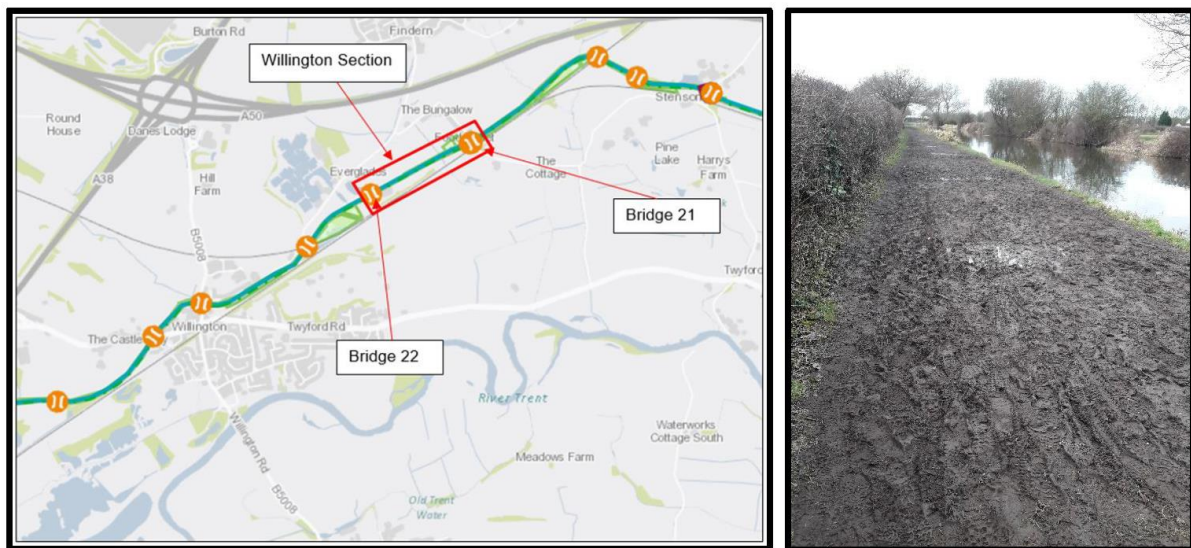
- 5.7km of towpath resurfacing at five locations
- 17 access points improvements at five locations
- Interpretation Panels installed at three locations



Towpath improvements at Fradley Junction ~ credit. Steven Cheshire

Willington

The work on resurfacing 700m of towpath between at Willington is now complete. This section is well used and in particularly bad condition, it is a section where there was strong interest for improvements and identified on our surveys as a priority. It's a popular destination for people to walk and make circular routes between Willington and a Mercia Merina, a private marina offering lots of recreational facilities.



Detailed work examples ~ section by section

Through making improvements to the towpaths, people have better access to the natural and built heritage that the waterways offer, making the Trent Valley a better place to live, work and visit. The Improvements to the towpaths were made before the pandemic and it was acknowledged that when faced with the many restrictions imposed on society at the time; *“the towpath has provided a vital lifeline for so many people, giving them a place to clear their heads and stretch their legs.”*



Towpath improvements at Rugeley and Brereton ~ credit. Alan Leather

“I’ve just been on a call with a group from Burton, and one of the ladies said she has been using the canal and finds it wonderful. She thinks it’s brilliant that it is now wider so that people can social distance more, it’s easier to walk on and she was just very positive, it has been a really great thing to have done! Her comment also encouraged another member of the group (a wheelchair user) to go and explore it as well, who said she would not be able to visit the canal otherwise.”

Partner feedback

Interpretation panel examples

Canoe Discovery

“I can’t go for too long without being on the river, near the river, or having connections with the river...I get on my boat, and your life is your own. Every time you go out there’s a new adventure. And it just clears your head of everything. Everybody should do it!”

Volunteer feedback

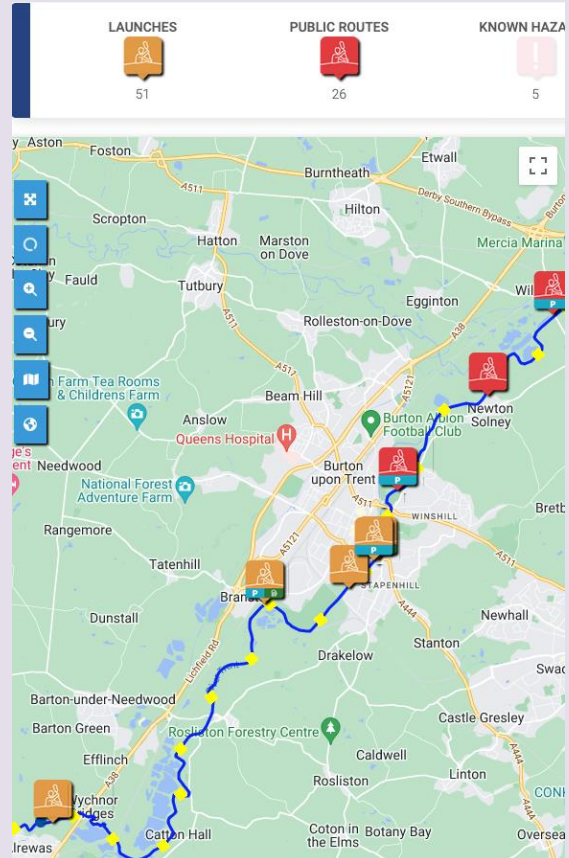
A new 17 mile (27 km) paddle trail along the River Tame and River Trent has been created through the project connecting the canal with the rivers, along with improved access including small infrastructure works.

The trail enables communities to enjoy the natural and built environment, experiencing the native wildlife in the area as well as the historical heritage on offer. The project links into other opportunities to get people out and enjoying the rivers.

The *Trent Valley Paddle Trail Guide* provides information on paddling routes in the Trent Valley, and includes distance, time, access points, toilets, and points of interest, as well as highlighting the *Paddlers’ Code* which sets out the sorts of things that we as paddlers do to protect our environment, respect other users, and safely enjoy being on the water.

Looking back ~ what is the one thing that you’re most proud of that has come from your project being part of Transforming the Trent Valley?

“It’s been great to offer a paddle trail, which highlights both the historical importance and special wildlife in the area, which can be seen whilst paddling on the water, giving recreational users an ‘on the water’ experience.”



Trent Valley Paddle Guide extract and the Trent Valley Paddle Trail on the Go Paddling website

Fradley to Kings Bromley Towpath

“Improving the towpath alongside this historic canal route has provided a much-needed maintenance uplift and ensured this location is in significantly improved condition for safe and attractive use by walkers and cyclists.”

This project delivered a 3 km canal towpath improvement on the Trent and Mersey Canal between Kings Bromley Marina and just south of Fradley Junction. The improved surface forms a multi-user route for walking, wheeling and cycling and integrates with completed towpath works between Fradley Junction and Alrewas and further proposed improvements to the north of the route led by the Canal and River Trust running for a further 9km between Branston Water Park and Dove Aqueduct through Burton-on-Trent.



Fradley to Kings Bromley Towpath Upgrade ~ final surfacing

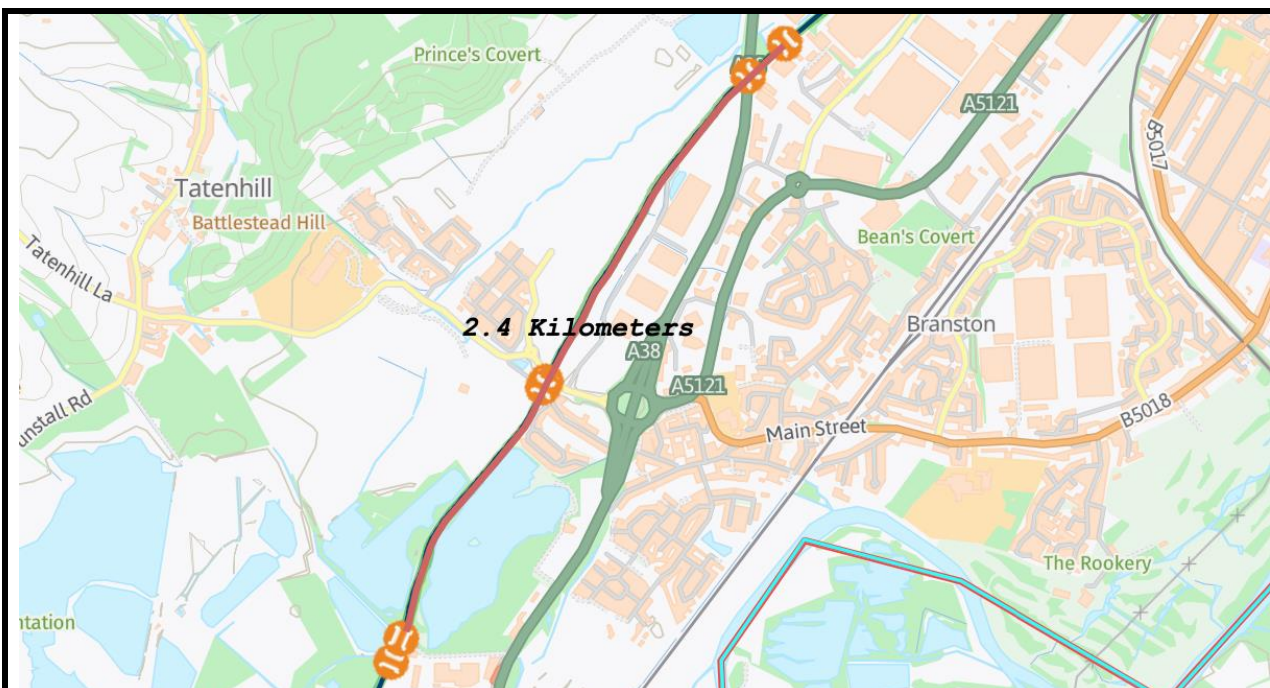
Burton Towpath Upgrade

The project has resurfaced approximately 2.4 km of towpath on the Trent and Mersey Canal to the south of Burton running from Branston waterpark to the outskirts of the town. The project is part of a larger scheme £2 million that will see 9 km of towpath upgraded by Spring 2024.

TTTV contributed to phase 1, that ran from Bridge 35 (<https://what3words.com/port.desire.workbench>) to the “pipe bridge” access point (<https://what3words.com/bumping.rigs.cadet>).



Local publicity and communication of towpath improvements



Burton upgrade section map

Impact of towpath improvements

In December 2023, Canal and River Trust produced a Towpath User Survey undertaken by 56 Degree Insight that evaluated the improvements made to the Rowley Regis Towpath in Sandwell, West Midlands. Whilst this work is outside of the TTTV area, the similar urban environment and demographics can give an indication of the type of personal and community benefits from undertaking this type of access infrastructure improvements to natural and cultural heritage assets.

Selected survey results:

Summary of key benefits resulting from towpath improvements



- **Increased usage** ~ 50% of current users have **increased their frequency of use**. 87% report visiting at least weekly, compared with 67% before changes.
- **Physical health benefits** ~ 68% of users are motivated to use the towpath for **physical health** reasons.
- **Wellbeing** ~ 78% of users strongly agreed that they **felt cheerful and in good spirits** after visiting the towpath and 80% felt calm and relaxed.
- **Nature Connection** ~ 76% of users strongly agreed that they felt **closer to nature** after visiting the towpath.

Waymarking of Cycle Routes

“I have felt much better. I have got some of exercise as part of my weekly plan and I am able to do a few circuits on the bike now.”

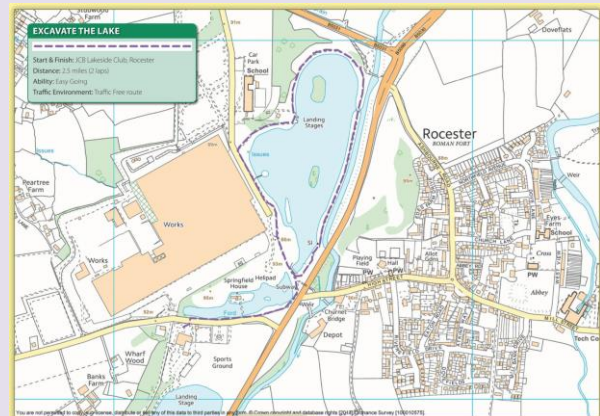
Participant feedback

What difference has this project made to people?

This project has enabled cycle training for people, particularly women, to increase confidence in cycling. This training was targeted at new cyclists or those who have not cycled for a long time and need confidence to get back in the saddle and enjoy the activity. 197 people have benefitted from skills training, including children (3 to 10 years) and women. 5 children and 7 adults have learnt to ride a bike thanks to these courses.

Some of the positive comments received from participants on the cycle training include:

- *“Catherine’s approach has been very individual focused, meeting your specific needs. She listens to what you would like to do and how you best want to try it. Very supportive.”*
- *“Catherine is amazing she supported me and talked me through everything while helping me to learn. It has been great, with a supportive and flexible teacher. Can’t ask for more. Thank you”*
- *“Absolutely amazing! He was good and kind and helped me. He took my stabilisers off when I was done learning on them and I was scared but he made me brave.”*



Bike shelter launch event and downloadable cycle maps

Integrating with other access opportunities

The cycle hub is a lit and covered cycle shelter with provision for 12 bikes. It also has a pump and bike repair stand complete with tools to aid with basic bike maintenance.

“The new cycle hub is located within the industrial centre of Burton, close to the river, the canal networks and the brewing industry. It is the ideal location for people and families to start and end their cycle journey. Routes from Shobnall extend across town to the Burton Washlands and north and south along the historic Trent and Mersey Canal, which is being upgraded with funding from TTTV.”

Waymarking of Cycle Routes ~ end of project report

Interpretation

Interpretation and communication activity has been integrated into different project delivery working across the Landscape Partnership Scheme and helping to facilitate and deliver:

Physical interpretation

- 22 interpretation panels have been created for 16 different locations
- 10 unique accessible benches, including 2 listening benches
- 4 circular walks, with over 10km of accessible trail
- 3 types of leaflet and a series of postcards to share TTTV's achievements and new opportunities for people to engage with the landscape
- 2 site specific sculptures
- 1 community garden and experiential features have been added to a wetland viewing platform.

In person events

- 20 photography volunteers have donated well over 150 days of work and expanded their skills through 3 training sessions
- 9 guided walks were attended by 112 members of the public
- 4 large and high profile events held to celebrate the project, attended by approximately 765 people, including over 40 professionals

Digital interpretation

- The project has produced 1 website and 3 virtual tours
- Over 14 videos have been produced to show the impact the scheme has had in the area
- A mix of interactive software has used to demonstrate how the landscape has changed in 9 different locations
- 5 different mobile exhibitions have been presented on a variety of topics.

Transforming the Trent Valley is a landscape partnership scheme focussed on delivering landscape-scale change across the Trent Valley in Staffordshire and Derbyshire.

We are a partnership of 18 enthusiastic and diverse organisations with a shared vision for the Trent Valley landscape.

The scheme is led by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and supported by a number of funders including The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

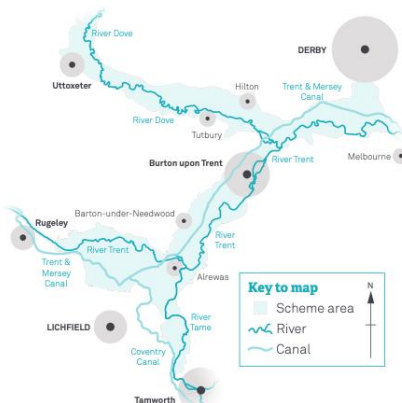
Our vision is for

Wildlife-rich waterways and wetlands at the heart of a resilient, accessible, beautiful and culturally rich landscape. Creating a brighter future for people, business and wildlife in the Trent Valley.

For more information, visit our website or follow us on social media.

www.thetrentvalley.org.uk

[t](#) [f](#) [i](#) [o](#)
thetrentvalley



Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme boundary area.
Contains OS data © Crown Copyright 2020



19 Lower Brook Street
Rugeley, Staffordshire, WS15 2BZ

01889 588150

tttv@staffs-wildlife.org.uk



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Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. Registered charity number 259558



Transforming the Trent Valley leaflet

Outcome C ~ Increased awareness and engagement of the natural and cultural heritage

Scheme Outcome ~ Increased awareness and engagement

More and different types of individuals and local groups will become positively engaged with the unique landscape of the River Trent, to understand the threats to the heritage and will be empowered to take further future actions.

Can we evidence working towards or achieving this outcome?

Community Engagement

“54 projects have successfully been delivered, distributing £100,000 and securing £167,521.87 in additional match funding.”

This project involved the facilitation of a Community Grants Scheme, distributing £100,000 to 54 different projects in the Trent Valley landscape. This included promoting the grants, recruiting a volunteer panel to review the grant applications, supporting groups with their application, hosting online information sessions, ensuring the correct paperwork was received for each application, organising and hosting panel meetings, distributing paperwork for successful grants, and ensuring correct payment of grants once work had been completed.

“The Community Grants Panel, brought great skills to the project, a strong knowledge of the local area and took the responsibility of assessing the projects very seriously.”



“Vast improvements were made to the environment of the Fishpond, benefitting wildlife, fish stocks, anglers and local residents. The bank edges of the pond has been strengthened, replacing rotten railway sleepers with gabions.

The nooks and crannies within the stones have created the perfect habitat for invertebrates, amphibians and young fish to shelter, planting native water edge plants further enhances the scene. A new island has been created in the pond to create a refuge and breeding site for birds.”

“The installation of a new fishing platform for disabled anglers has provided much needed space for those with previously limited access to the fishing pegs. The aerator has been replaced and is doing its job.”

Barton under Needwood Parish Council

Community Grant Feedback

WELLIES in the Trent Valley

This project provided 12 days in which groups of up to 20 participants with mental ill health could experience their local natural environment, from Health and Wellbeing walks, encouraging positive habits to the creation and installation of 20 vandal proof bat and bird boxes.

This project will continue to benefit local Trent Valley communities through an increased awareness of and confidence to independently explore and enjoy local walks and woodland. Bird and bat box provision will help support nature into the future.

Staffordshire Care Farming Development CIC

Community Grant recipient



Rugeley Power Station Angling Club

Provided formal coaching, mentoring and training in angling skills. The opportunity to meet with like-minded individuals made a big difference to participants outlook and general mental health. The ability to access the environment and see the ever-changing landscape was seen to have a contemplative and educational benefit to everyone engaged through the programme.

*“Since the course both welcomed and encouraged participants, I became involved in acquiring new interests and skills alongside making new friends through the communal activities. There has been considerable improvement in the social dimension of my life and **my self-confidence has, I think, been transformed. I feel happier, healthier and much less isolated.**”*

Rugeley Power Station Angling Club participant feedback



“We have seen increased participation from the ethnic minority population of Burton, to our Forest Friends playgroup, and at our special seasonal events.

This is vitally important to us, we want to make Sinai Park House and Forest School a resource for the whole community, and a welcoming place for all. The fact that this is happening organically is very encouraging.”

Sinai Park House

Community Grant Feedback

Creative content volunteers

We hosted a number of university students as 'Creative Content Volunteers', supporting with digital content and social media scheduling. This was not a part of the original project plan, but provided additional added value to the scheme, particularly increasing capacity for our social media presence which helps us reach a wide audience. We have built close relationships with local universities as a result of this.

Tean Valley Meadow Nature Trust



"It was obvious from the first course how pleased the young people were to be outside and working on the reserve. We found them very willing to learn and participate in the crafts which will carry them forward throughout their lives. It is in no doubt all our volunteers have been lifted by the enthusiasm of the young people to learn and participate. The grant funding has been a win-win situation for everyone involved"

The project offered craft-based courses for young people aged 8-16, filled by local Girlguiding groups from Uttoxeter, Rocester and Hilton. Organised through the local district Girlguiding commissioner, sixty guides plus leaders attended the courses, resulting in eighty people taking part in total. With the guidance of fourteen volunteers, the young people were taught new skills, aspects of design, the use of sustainable materials and the value of various facets of habitat for the surrounding wildlife. The Guide groups have had seven further meetings at the reserve since the courses finished with seventy guides and twenty-nine leaders present.

Due to the involvement of the families of attendees, there have been offers of help to plan and run future courses and Trust membership has significantly increased.

Awarded £1938.66 towards a total project cost of £3877.32



Community Grant Case Study example ~ Creative Content Volunteers



Climate Expo September 2023 ~ engaging Chris Packham

Wildchild ~ connecting children and families with the natural environment through play

“We have brought nature to children and families through events, workshops, YouTube videos, downloadable resources, nature packs, school clubs and trips.”

Throughout the TTV scheme area our Wildchild project has delivered 246 events over the past four years.

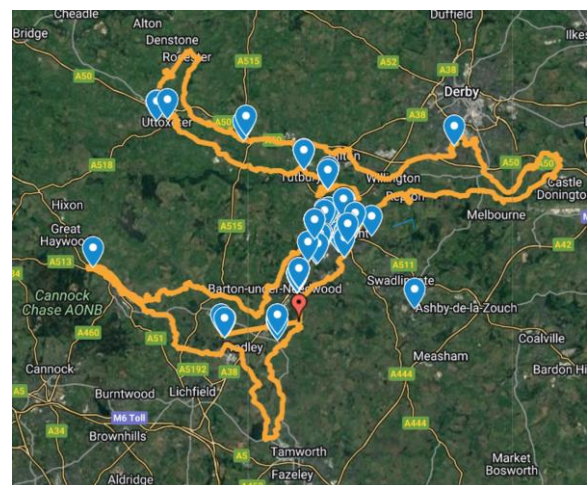
Set with peaceful riverside views, under woodland canopies and in grassy meadows, we’ve uncovered all of the natural resources available to local families and schools. Our events used play to encourage children's interest in wildlife, building their knowledge of the natural world.

During the pandemic we adapted, providing a range of online resources; blogs, videos, spotters, and self-led treks all helped bring a little bit of nature to the families of East Staffordshire. We also worked with local food banks and community groups to distribute fun free nature packs to families.



Our wildlings have grown independent and confident. Families have visited new locations, which are now regular favourites. Children have created amazing clay models, dens and crafts. School children have expressed joy while searching for bugs or designing a floodplain. Parents have been inspired to try activities at home. We truly hope the benefits of our Wildchild activities will be felt for years to come.

Wildchild ~ end of project report



Wildchild event banner and map showing location of project activities

“We've learnt so much through the groups ~ the team know so much and are so welcoming and friendly. The activities are wonderful and always bring out a new side of creativity in my son. He always comes away talking about what we've done that day and definitely helps him care more about the world we live in.”

Participant feedback ~ August 2023

Adopting a flexible approach to delivering engagement activity

Wildchild was particularly successful in meeting them many different external challenges faced by the project that were not envisaged as part of the development phase and original application as evidenced in the following comments:

- *“The river is a big symbol of the landscape and its natural processes have big impacts in the local communities. After seeing the impact of flooding in 2019/20, our Wildchild officer included activities, videos and resources into events to help educate about flooding. While also linking and promoting the floodplain work the TTV scheme was working on.”*
- *“We were always responding to the impacts that affected local families’ such as the pandemic, fuel costs and cost of living increases. From 2021/23 we distributed nature packs to local families using food banks and community groups. Our methods of engagement pivoted from face to face to downloadable resources, zoom events, videos, and Instagram stories. If families were unable to meet us at a location, we would bring the natural world to them.”*
- *“The events we offered as part of the project promoted greenspaces for leisure and recreation, as nature is an important resource that improves health and wellbeing. Our sessions were friendly, fun and relaxed to ensure all our attendees (adults and children) ultimately benefited from time outside in nature.”*



Bug hunt schools visit preparation and birds online Family Trent Talk

“Through the project we recruited three volunteers, two to assist with delivery of events and one to help with resources in the office. Our first delivery volunteer was successful in gaining employment and mentioned that the work with Wildchild was helpful in the interview process.”

Learn and Discover

A rich collection of learning resources targeted at a wider range of people and abilities that includes nature spotter guides, videos of nature activities, crafts and activities to try at home, schools packs plus reflective questions as prompts to help think about nature can be found at:

<https://www.thetrentvalley.org.uk/discover/learn-and-discover-page/>



Butterfly spotter guide and How to make a robin lantern

Connecting with Nature

A programme using a variety of 'forest school' type methods such as community gardening, guided walks and bushcraft activities to enable more people to connect with nature, improve their mental wellbeing and begin to understand the river, wetlands and heritage of the Trent Valley area.

From an external perspective, the work undertaken by TTTV on wellbeing and connecting people to nature is worth highlighting with a range of different delivery techniques employed that have generated many different resources and positive outcomes. These resources and impact reports should be summarised and disseminated amongst the TTTV partnership and wider networks to help demonstrate the positive impact of this type of environmental activity on local communities and people participating.



Walking at Tucklesholme ~ credit. Steven Cheshire

What are you most proud of that has come from your project being part of Transforming the Trent Valley?

"Being able to show people that being outdoors in nature can improve your mental and physical health. I am hopeful that some of the participants on this programme will continue to use the tools they have been shown and will continue to take steps to improve their own health. I am also hopeful that they will share these tools with others and help to make a difference to others."

Connecting with Nature ~ end of project report



Feature

One foot forward

Taking steps towards improving your mental and physical wellbeing

Nature at Home: Welcome video



Nature at Home: Mindful moments



Walking and Wellbeing ~ digital resources from the TTTV website

Wild Wellbeing at Mercia Marina and The Dumbles ~ case study

An excellent example of the impact from the Connecting with Nature programme is the summary report from an 8 week programme that was able to demonstrate a positive improvements to participants sense of wellbeing and level of nature connectedness.

The use of the following evaluation technique was a very effective method to gather the quantitative and qualitative data that informed the content of the case study report.

Wellbeing Outcomes

Measuring sense of wellbeing and connectedness to nature.

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's internal session evaluation form was used at the start and end of each session to measure participants' changing sense of wellbeing and connectedness to nature. 15 steps on the wellbeing ladder are converted to wellbeing scores out of 15 (with 15 being happiest), 15 footsteps on the nature connection pathway convert to nature connection scores out of 15 (with 15 being the most connected to nature).

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust

Name _____ Date _____

Describe how you feel right now in one word

What are you looking forward to in today's session?

How do you feel right now?
Draw yourself on the wellbeing ladder.

How close to nature do you feel right now?
Draw yourself on the path.
Closer towards the tree means that you feel closer to nature.



8 week Wild Wellbeing programme
 23 participants
 55 individual engagements
 88% improved their sense of wellbeing
 87% improved their level of nature connectedness



Wild Wellbeing summary achievements

“I have been inspired, there is so much I’m taking away with me. I feel it’s important to take time out without any expectation. Just let nature talk to you. I feel more connected to nature.”

“By taking small steps to meeting people and taking part in activities helped my confidence. I now feel like myself again and want to explore more personally and professionally.”

What difference has this project made to people?

People have developed skills, not only in a practical point of view, but more importantly they have developed skills in how to help themselves and other people use nature to improve their mental well-being.

One of the participants early on said:

“I love being outdoors but don’t do it as often as I would like because I am not always able to push myself to get up or out.”

This person then attended 8 out of the 9 sessions as they always had a reason to get up and out.

Connecting with Nature ~ end of project report

Walk and Draw ~ case study

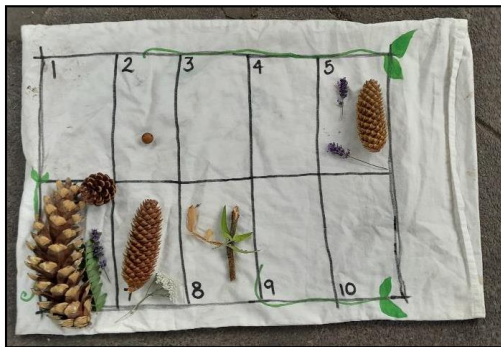
A further example of the impact from the Connecting with Nature programme is the information gathered from the Walk and Draw programme that was able to demonstrate a positive improvements to participants sense of wellbeing using simple visual techniques and collecting participant feedback as shown in the images and graphics below.

TTTV - Connecting with Nature

Walk & Draws, Stapenhill Gardens – Q2 in review

Participants asked to set a natural object on a number that represents their general wellbeing/comfort level at the start and end of session (1 being low, 10 high).

28 July, 15 participants (20 bookings):



before



after

18 August, 4 participants (11 bookings):

Walk & Draws
Stapenhill Gardens, Stapenhill Rd.,
Burton upon Trent, DE15 9AP

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
@staffswildlife @stafffoot

We'll creatively record our discoveries through sketching, painting and writing. No experience necessary; all art materials provided. Suitable for ages 8 to 106.

Friday 31st March, 10am-12pm
Friday 28th April, 10am-12pm
Friday 26th May, 10am-12pm
Friday 30th June, 10am-12pm
Friday 28th July, 10am-12pm
Friday 18th August, 10am-12pm

Booking Essential:
www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/events
For more details contact Alexis at:
getwild@staffs-wildlife.org.uk

Transforming the Trent Valley
Heritage Fund



Wild Wellbeing summary achievements

“Joining Alexis on her sessions has been an amazing journey for all of us as a family, we feel extremely lucky to have found her and her wonderful sessions, as far as wellbeing goes, we don't think there's is anything better.”

“I'm an artist, and the session enabled me to explore new techniques and break my own artistic rules!! I wrote my feelings down which I rarely do. It felt good to respond to my feelings in the moment, I'm keen to join another session.”

Walk and Draw participant feedback

Tales of the Riverbank

A creative oral history project that explored people's enthusiasm for, and connection with rivers. Working with specialists in oral history and storytelling and engaging with local young people, Tales from the Riverbank gathered people's memories and thoughts about the past, present and future of the Trent Valley.

"Hearing the reflections of the young people and the observations of the youth leaders, was very rewarding. These youth groups do not tend to engage with the outdoors on a regular basis... to hear how much they enjoyed the opportunity to spend time outdoors exploring natural spaces near the river, looking at wildlife, learning how to use the equipment, then seeing their work on a big screen at the private screening launch, was a real highlight for me."

Project officer reflections

What difference has this project made to people?

People developed skills ~ demonstrated through the following observations and feedback

"Some young people had used still and video cameras before using the hydrophones, GoPro and endoscope were new experiences for them. Capturing recordings underneath the water was introduced as an experiment, with no right or wrong method. This enabled the process to be accessible and freeing and was taken on enthusiastically by those participating."

"The two youth club leaders were particularly surprised by how well the young people engaged in taking on new things, and said that they were "buzzing" when they got back from the river."

Project officer feedback

"Hosting a Keele placement student to work on the promotion and marketing of the project enabled the student to learn about social media, using Canva and digital platforms, and how to create graphics using text and supplied images."

"Her confidence visibly increased after working with you, which was great to see."

University supervisor feedback



Recording the river and Rugeley exhibition group

What difference has this project made to people?

People have learnt new things about heritage and their local area

The project took young people to new local places and introduced them to new people that had a range of personal, professional, historical and nature related stories to share with them about the River Trent where they live.

“We found out about stone age spear heads, the pottery, beavers at the wetlands, that the Trent has moved and it is getting straighter.”

Some of the learning from Willington Scout

“With everything being so digital these days they realised that life wasn’t boring before in the past that people enjoyed themselves, had fun and got up to mischief, just as they do. They’ve realised that it’s not just a bank by the river but that there’s things to see, there’s nature to explore and there’s changes happening that they’re noticing too.”

Group organiser following oral history interviews



Oral history interviews ~ Winshill Youth Club and Willington Scouts

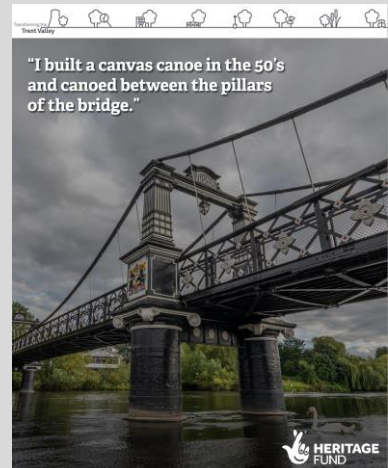


Sharing stories of Rugeley Power Station

What difference has this project made to people?

People have volunteered time and shared their knowledge

Another aspect of gathering material was interviewing older members of the community, devising questions and learning how to interview others. Some interviews were carried out by the river, meeting people who were able to share information about the landscape, the natural heritage and social history.



Recollections of the river ~ credit. Chris Mason

"I think the important thing about this all was that it involved young people and that is important because the river is going to be there for a long time - and they are the future, and will hopefully go on to look after it."

Outcome D ~ People will have new skills and secured new employment

Scheme Outcome ~ People will have new skills and secured new employment

People will have gained new and transferable skills in researching, restoring, conserving and understanding their heritage. Where possible people will be using these skills in the Trent Valley.

Can we evidence working towards or achieving this outcome?

Big Washlands Watch

“I've got a lot out of the group. It's been great to have the walks, occasional bits of training or have an expert lead a walk on a particular species group. Meeting people with similar interests and drive to do something positive for wildlife has been great as well. The occasional social gathering has also been nice.”

Wildlife Recording Volunteer feedback

Looking back ~ what is the one thing that you're most proud of that has come from your project being part of Transforming the Trent Valley?

*“This group really began properly during lockdown. Lots of people were looking for activities they could do in their local area due to limited travel allowed. I met interested volunteers online and introduced *iRecord* so volunteers could begin recording in their gardens and on walks. Once restrictions were lifted, we began monthly walks on different sites so volunteers could learn from each other and explore different areas of the Trent Valley. This quickly became the highlight for some volunteers. The group were recognised in the 2022 East Staffordshire STAR awards as highly commended ‘New Volunteer Group’.”*



TTTV Wildlife Recording Volunteers at East Staffordshire STAR awards

“Since April 2019 (and the start of TTTV), wildlife records have increased by 372% in the scheme area, compared to the previous 4 years.”

Trent Talks

28 Trent Talks delivered with 668 people attending

“The Trent Talks were set up in response to the Covid lockdowns, as a way to continue engaging people with the scheme, and bring nature to people’s homes during winter evenings. We improved the online accessibility of these events by ensuring the captions were enabled for those who wanted them, recording the talks for later viewing, and hiring BSL interpreters for the talks.”

“These online events were not ever planned into the initial project plans, but the positive feedback received for the Trent Talks shows how we were able to respond creatively and meet a need during the Covid pandemic.”

Project officer reflections

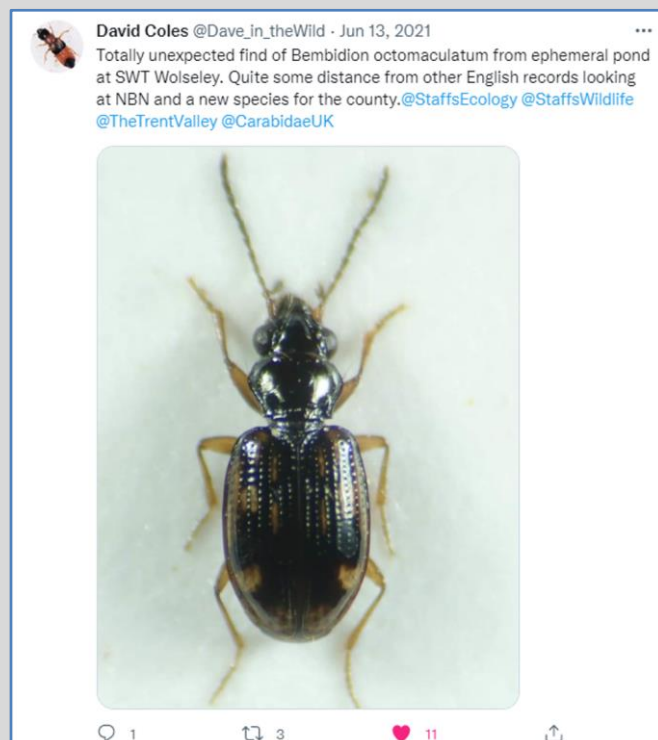


What has been the impact, benefit or change to the natural and cultural heritage?

40 species of beetle recorded which are new for Staffordshire

Dave Coles ~ Wildlife Recording Volunteer

An example of how biodiversity knowledge has been increased is in the work of David Coles, one of the TTTV wildlife recording volunteers. He has a particular interest in ground beetles, and through surveying on different sites has found beetles that have never been recorded in Staffordshire before. Some of these ‘Staffordshire first’ records came directly as a result of group volunteer walks to different sites.



Social media post celebrating an important find


The natural heritage of the Trent Valley is more widely recorded, and there is a better understanding of what species live in the Trent Valley, and how their populations are faring. Data analysis of wildlife records completed in 2022 by a student placement showed that the creation and distribution of the wildlife fold out guide and survey booklet **increased natural heritage records for 30 of the 31 named target species.**

Staffordshire Ecological Record
Transforming the Trent Valley

Transforming the Trent Valley's Big Washlands Watch - Key Findings

Introduction

The Big Washlands Watch Project is a citizen science programme which encourages families, schools and local communities to engage with Trent Valley's biodiversity. Volunteers are introduced to the iRecord app and field guides are provided by Transforming the Trent Valley, created by the Field Studies Council Publications.


Heritage Fund

Key Findings

- Records have increased by 372% in the scheme area on iRecord.
- Animalia was consistently the most recorded Kingdom (fig 5).
- Butterfly was consistently the most recorded Insect Group, perhaps due to TTTV's butterfly transects.
- Despite only representing 5% of the recorders on iRecord, TTTV's volunteers have provided 41% of the records in the scheme area from 2019 to 2023 (fig 4).

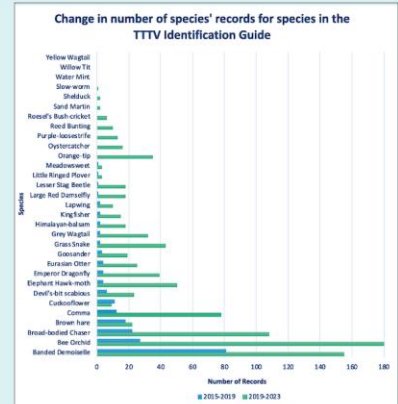


Fig 2. A graph showing the change in number of species' records for species featured on Transforming the Trent Valley's ID Guide.

Statistical Parameters

Statistical analysis was mostly undertaken on Microsoft Excel, with ecological data provided by iRecord and Staffordshire Ecological Records. BirdTrack and other similar recording apps were removed, in order to avoid duplicate submissions and qualitative data.

For all statistical analysis, the time periods were defined as: 01/04/2015 - 31/03/2019 - before Big Washlands Watch Project
01/04/2019 - 09/01/2023 - during Big Washlands Watch Project




Fig 1. Scheme area map. Contains OS data © Crown Copyright 2020




Fig 3. Survey Booklet © Transforming the Trent Valley

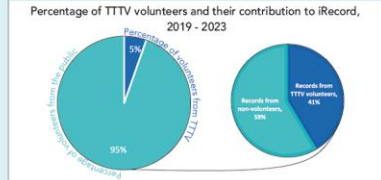


Fig 4. TTTV volunteers' contributions to iRecord, 2019-2023

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SURVEYED IN EACH KINGDOM ON IRECORD

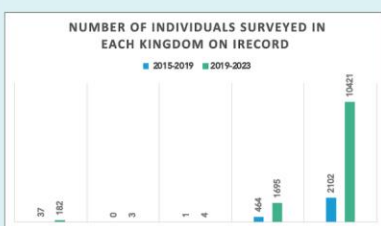


Fig 5. A graph depicting the breakdown of individuals recorded per Kingdom on iRecord, in the TTTV Scheme Area, 2015-2019 and 2019-2023.

More information can be found on the Transforming the Trent Valley website and the 'Transforming the Trent Valley's Big Washlands Watch data analytics, 2019-2023' booklet.



Scan to access the TTTV website

Keeley Beeston

Big Washland Watch summary poster ~ credit. Keeley Beeston

What difference has this project made to communities?

By using local providers, community rooms, refreshment suppliers and local businesses for equipment, the project supported the local economy in the Trent Valley through delivery activity. Attendees enjoyed the training so much that they would often book the trainer for activities that they were running on their own sites. This knock-on effect and building of community connections will continue to support Trent Valley communities and small businesses beyond completion of the scheme.

"I am very grateful to TTTV for funding these sessions. This support enabled me to design sessions that are specifically aimed at SEND and SEMH needs. Through these I was invited to present at last year's Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties Conference, to highlight how Outdoor Learning could be used to help students with these educational needs."



Supporting local business ~ Feral Science specialise in teaching science outdoors using bushcraft techniques

Transforming Lives in the Trent Valley

“The conservation/environment sector can be notoriously difficult to get into, so the fact that (at the time of writing) 50% of the people that did the training course, whether they completed or not, have found employment is excellent.”

Project officer reflections

What difference has this project made to people?

The project collected many different and positive comments from the trainees involved in the programme. The overall impact and difference made through offering such opportunities to gain relevant experience and increase skills in the natural heritage sector is best summed up in the following quote:

“Simply put, I would say that this experience has been a changing point in my life that I sorely needed and had once thought out of my reach. I would like to thank Simon and the team at Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and their partnership with Transforming The Trent Valley as, without this traineeship and the time I have spent here I would not be the version of myself I am today.

My mental health would be suffering and my ability to believe in and act out change would be none existent. My husband and my children have seen a lighter and less stressed side of me since doing this course and volunteering.

Thank you for giving me hope in these very hard days of financial crisis and climate crisis that we all face. I shall be making sure my children and family stay connected to nature and hope they can also carry the skills forward.”

Jen S

The trainees have developed a range of skills, both practical and theoretical during their time on the course. These skills include heritage skills such as hedgelaying and coppicing and also include other woodland management skills such as thinning, felling and pruning.

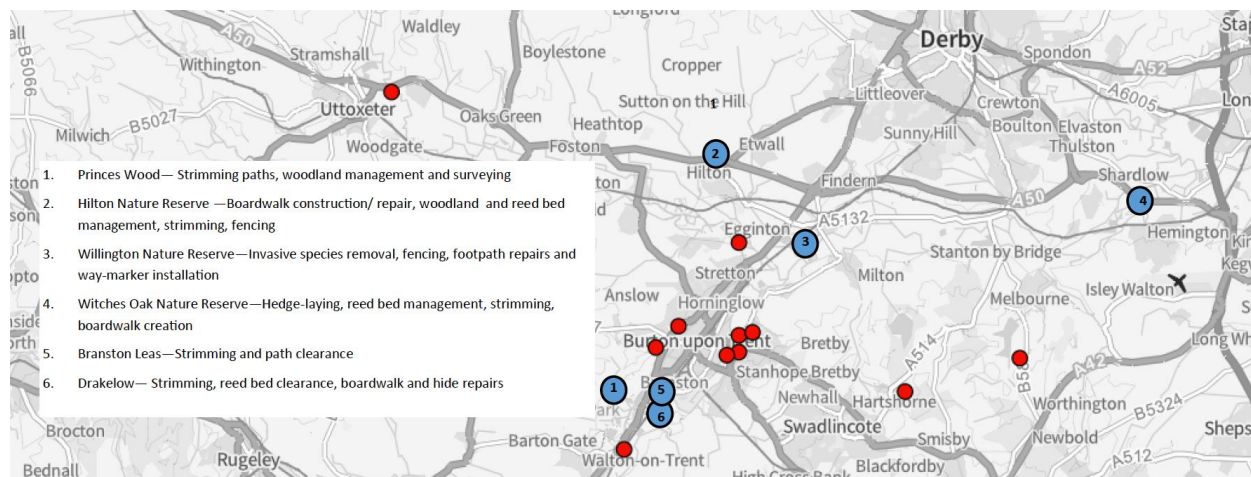
Three trainees returned to volunteer time as leaders. The community learning days have given the local community the skills they need to be able to manage the woodland in the future.



Trainees bringing woodlands into active management

A direct benefit of Transforming Lives in the Trent Valley is **10 trainees moving onto employment in the conservation and natural heritage sector.**

- Sam ~ Apprenticeship, Tutbury Castle
- Mandi ~ Sessional, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
- Morgan ~ Grounds Maintenance, St George’s Park
- Venkatesh ~ Research Assistant Entomology, Forestry Commission
- Emma ~ People Engagement, Bumblebee Conservation Trust
- Elisabeth ~ River and Catchment Restoration Assistant, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust
- Amy ~ Development Woodland Officer apprenticeship, Forestry England
- Jane ~ Sessional, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
- Miles ~ Ranger, Severn Trent Water
- Bathilda ~ Farming Advisor, Natural Resource Wales



Location of trainees’ skills activity

“The diploma has made a real difference in my life. I knew I wanted a career change from accountancy, but I had no idea how to get into the conservation sector. This course gave me the confidence and skill-set to apply for, and obtain, a job with my local Wildlife Trust, which I’m really enjoying.”

Liz L

7. Programme learning: some key ingredients for future activity

As part of the final evaluation of the Landscape Partnership Scheme, all the projects supported through the Transforming the Trent Valley LPS produced individual project completion reports. In addition to capturing the output and outcome information, the report format provided an opportunity for individual reflection, the chance to capture some lessons learnt and **think about how to improve** on the wide range of activities delivered.

Many of the lessons learnt reflect the different complex elements of successful project management, communication and delivery and have been grouped into nine key areas. By far the biggest learning relates to the breadth of experience gained from project delivery or “learning from doing”. To help refine this, these experiences have been grouped into four themes; project management, managing external shocks, communication and learning from doing.

All nine areas identified should be considered and serve as reference points and **list of key ingredients**, or form a checklist, for all project partners to integrate into project planning and thinking for future programmes of activity.

1. Project management ~ being realistic with resources and timetable

Living Floodplains ~ It is important to focus on the bigger picture in terms of outcomes. This allows project officers to focus on what the project is trying to achieve as a whole, rather than getting mired in the detail of potentially less impactful targets, and gives them the opportunity to work flexibly with partners. Given the time taken to set up large floodplain restoration projects (and the growing interest by partners and opportunities for funding following this scheme) **schemes should provide for a longer-term project timeline of 10 years instead of 5.**

Interpretation Programme ~ I would have included a visitor experience consultant (or similar) to help shape the work plans and targets for TTTV2, as there was confusion over terms (e.g. augmented reality) and how realistic the outputs were against the budget (e.g. 10 new locations to connect people with nature).

Living Floodplains ~ Additional funding presented new opportunities, meaning the project grew. When identifying opportunities we had a choice of high output, low-cost projects (like grass seeding) and low output, high-cost projects (like channel restoration). We worked on having a mix of these to deliver broad outcomes. We could have achieved our outputs well in budget by selecting more of the low-cost-high-output opportunities, but our aim has always been to prioritise the right habitat in the right location. Low-output-high-cost projects are arguably more valuable as we create priority habitat of high ecological value, but a smaller area is impacted for the cost.

“Outputs measured by ‘land area’ only give part of the picture. We measure our work on cost-to-output ratios; a better measure is cost-to-benefit. Measuring benefit, however, is difficult to achieve in short-term (5-year) projects.”

Community Engagement ~ This project (and job role) ended up being much broader than just delivering the grants scheme. The Community Engagement Officer took on the majority of social media management, gave the majority of public talks about the TTTV scheme, attended events on behalf of the scheme, and took the lead on organising large public events on behalf of the whole scheme such as ‘Celebration in the Park’ as well as scheme-wide volunteer events such as the Volunteer Winter Party. This was difficult to capture in the outputs.

Project Management ~ We needed more hours for the Communications Officer role. Everything is pretty much digital/promoted via Social Media, therefore, as a team, we need more support in this area. Project Officers aren't trained/skilled in this area nor have the time.

Wildchild ~ Bookings and attendance have been lower than expected for events throughout the project. Discussions with families suggest it was a result of low promotion. The time and budget required for this was not considered in the project plan. For future projects, it is important to include promotional time and costs for creating and distributing posters, attending networking events, social media scheduling, Instagram stories, creating social media posts with local groups, updating webpages, creating newsletters, and boosting posts.

Big Washland Watch ~ Staff time was not included in budget. As an estimate across the scheme, at least 2 days per week of staff time were needed to deliver the project, with more time spent during summer months to deliver school activity and attend events.

Tales from the Riverbank ~ We decided to commission an external contractor to deliver the bulk of the project, rather than have it delivered by the Community Engagement Officer. The quality of the contractors' engagement with the youth groups, expertise of using film and audio equipment, and quality of film produced demonstrated that this was absolutely the correct decision to have made. The contract was delivered on time, with all outputs reached, and within the agreed budget. This sort of project with a creative output needed to be delivered by people with creative and design skills. The original budget contained hire of equipment, but not hire of external artists to deliver the project and creation of the exhibition.

Canoe Discovery ~ Delivery Partners (and contractors who also do work for councils) may have other urgent works they have to attend to due to health and safety reasons, so the project may not always be the priority.

Trent Valley Way ~ Allow more time for interpretation writing and research as this took up more time than originally considered. Also, more lead in time to the event launch to enable more widespread publicity and communication.

Living Floodplains ~ All work had to comply with various wildlife breeding calendars which often restricted delivery windows to short stretches of the summer before waiting another year for another opportunity. We worked with our partners to gain as much flexibility as possible and streamlining our preparation activities. This improved as our relationships with various organisations became stronger throughout the length of the scheme.

Project Management ~ We undervalued communications and one day per week is not sufficient – we are readdressing this in future projects. Combining communications and interpretation didn't work as a job role so when the Communications and Interpretation Officer left, we split this into two roles.

Project Management ~ A contingency of time is essential – the year at the end of the scheme has been invaluable as most projects delivered up to the end. For us, flooding has been a major impactor to the scheme, alongside COVID.



Landscape change following demolition of Rugeley Power Station Cooling Towers ~ TTTV video tour 2021

2. Project management ~ managing risk and uncertainty, adopting a flexible approach

Living Floodplains ~ The lead project officer had periods where they were on maternity leave which required cover. As the project expanded beyond its original scope this gave the opportunity to train up a second project officer who has now become a permanent member of staff at Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

The original project scope underestimated the staff time needed for preparation and delivery of such a large scheme, particularly in light of constraints by floods/Covid. Having a second officer has had a positive impact on meeting the project's original aims, and on project legacy.

Community Engagement ~ We hosted several university students as 'Creative Content Volunteers', supporting with digital content and social media scheduling. This was not a part of the original project plan, but provided additional added value to the scheme, particularly increasing capacity for our social media presence which helps us reach a wide audience. We have built close relationships with local universities as a result of this.

Community Engagement ~ Emerging from the Covid pandemic, it became apparent about half way through we were developing an underspend on the community grants scheme. To address this we increased the maximum grant to applicants and allowed groups to reapply for funding if they had successfully completed their first project. Having this flexibility meant we delivered the grant scheme on target.

Wildchild ~ Covid lockdowns meant that face-to-face events were stopped for five months, so the project adapted and pivoted to:

- Create engagement videos, aired weekly in Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's #getwild TV Facebook posts
- Create downloadable resources and content for the TTTV website
- Trialled zoom workshops for families; this wasn't as impactful as outdoor events

As lockdown lifted in stages, the project:

- Organised outdoor events were set up with socially distanced zones for families, and with individual kit that was cleaned before and after sessions
- Created self-led treks, so families could visit their local nature reserves and greenspaces
- Created three booklets focused on the *Role of the River*, *Cultural heritage*, and *Using Greenspaces*

"After the pandemic the project worked with food banks and community groups to distribute Nature Packs to local families."

Big Washland Watch ~ Widening the range of specialist groups to deliver training worked very well with 30 groups engaged compared to a target of 6. Professional fees originally earmarked for partners' time were spent mainly on external trainers and courses for volunteers. This meant a wider range of expertise was utilised, and the money for the project was distributed more fairly among a wider range of groups, boosting their income and impact.

Interpretation Programme ~ Providing scope in the work plan to be creative within clear parameters worked really well, as it meant we could seek out alternative ideas while still making sure targets and outputs were met.

Waymarking of Cycle Routes ~ We experienced changes in staff and partner capacity and availability in the partnership. A learning outcome from this is identifying the risk of project partners failing to deliver on their commitments and having a contingency plan within the partnership on how to cover those commitments and how risk and liability should be balanced.

Project Management ~ Projects have evolved, and the scheme has needed to support the project leads and partners through changes. A couple of projects didn't go ahead as planned and so pre-empting issues early and working together has been crucial to ensure something appropriate is delivered.

“The success of the scheme has come in part from great partnership working at times where projects have struggled and new partners stepping in with shovel-ready projects or strong project ideas.”

Project Management ~ Large schemes like TTTV mean there is time for trial and error – projects need to be able to try and fail and try again – failure is not a problem, it is a learning opportunity and should be viewed as such. Not everything we tried was immediately successful and we faced many challenges. Despite this, TTTV is considered by the partnership, the lead partner, the team, the volunteers and the public generally to be extremely successful.



Promoting the Egg Box Challenge ~ Lockdown 1 April 2020

3. Project management ~ establishing a good information base and communication before project commencement

Living Floodplains ~ It is important to consider project officer time spent on initiatives that were not pursued due to becoming unfeasible or due to external factors out of our control. Two projects turned out to be impossible or difficult to deliver, one because the project would have had a significant impact on utilities, and another because ground investigations exposed potential soil contamination, increasing costs. *Living Floodplains* managed to achieve its objectives for NLHF, and we were able to do this by bringing in additional funding as costs increased.

Waymarking of Cycle Routes ~ We struggled to deliver the project due to changes in the town making waymarking of the various cycle routes redundant, complex or time consuming:

- 'Swan Around the Washlands' became dependent on the delivery of the new ESBC 'Washlands Landscape Vision' which wasn't expected to start for a couple of years.
- 'We're Not Tyred Yet' had been waymarked to a highways standard and further signage was discouraged as adding 'clutter' to the highway infrastructure.
- 'Branston without the Pickle' was interrupted by a housing development and the developer was unwilling to engage in conversation about routes.
- 'Two Counties Ring' was found to be largely highway focussed and presented concerns about promoting such a route for families.

Trent Valley Way ~ Contact Parish Councils right at the beginning of a similar project as their knowledge and support can be really useful.



Images taken by volunteers from 2020 and 2021 combined into the TTTV video tour

4. Managing external shocks ~ climate change, the pandemic and inflation

Living Floodplains ~ Two events combined to impact the delivery of the project: the flood event of winter 2019 delayed initial delivery of the first project at Cherryholme, and the Covid pandemic impacted the project from March 2020 and delayed all planned works for 2020 into 2021. Covid affected staff availability, and prices of contractors, which increased from original estimates. Flood events within a floodplain are inevitable and we had anticipated and planned for disruption as part of the project development, with several delivery window options identified.

Wildchild ~ The original aim was to gradually increase the cost of events sustainably, so families would get used to an event fee and help towards project legacy. Due to the pandemic, fuel and economic crises, we kept our event fees low. We applied for other external grants to offer more free events.

Interpretation Programme ~ Covid obviously had a huge impact on the timings of the project, and it shifted the balance of priorities. This meant that a disproportionate amount of time was spent on lockdown-friendly outputs (such as digital/design) compared to outputs that required face-to-face activity or travel.

Canoe Discovery ~ From project development to actual delivery takes time so allow more contingency in case of higher inflation and to cover potential low initial quotes. Allow longer lead in, as procurement took much longer due to a lack of interest and unforeseen events such as Covid and flooding.

5. Communication ~ partnership working and building local relationships

Living Floodplains ~ Working in partnership we had to adhere to jointly agreed solutions which was time consuming in itself. This is more beneficial in the long run however, as it paves the way for stronger working relationships in the future, enabling new opportunities. It also allows for much wider investment in the scheme ensuring that the project aims are carried on beyond the scheme timeline.

Wildchild ~ Having a community arm of the scheme was a valuable asset as it allowed us to work in tandem with each other. The community grants provided an introduction to the Wildchild project allowing community groups to showcase the work they do with families, and by bring the activities to the groups it improved our reach in the landscape.

Big Washland Watch ~ The original project report did not have any reference to hosting student placements. Through building relationships there has been a mutual benefit for everyone involved. We gained increased volunteer hours and in addition they gained relevant work experience for their courses. I would recommend projects consider hosting student placements from a range of departments.

Canoe Discovery ~ Following the initial audit, follow up surveying by a volunteer with local knowledge and experience of paddling provided a high level of confidence that the trail route and stop offs would meet the needs of paddlers.

Transforming the Trent Valley Heritage and Stop! The military legacy of the Trent Valley ~ Landowner engagement events were part of the original plan, but no landowners came when invited to an event. In future I would not recommend engagement events but focus on individual engagement at a personal level.

6. Learning from doing ~ building effective systems and processes

Project Management ~ When writing funding bids there should be someone in the organisation who understands project finance to look at the financial side of the bid across all the individual projects and scheme as a whole. Also, Full Cost Recovery should use more realistic figures, and include back office staff.

Big Washland Watch ~ The original project plan assumed we would submit records directly to local Records Centres, but we discovered the iRecord website was a better platform. Some volunteers were already familiar with it; the app adds ease of record submission; the website was more interactive and engaging, allowing volunteers to immediately see where their records were located in the scheme area on interactive maps, and we could easily track record numbers and distribution, and recorders. I recommend other projects use iRecord as their main platform for collecting wildlife records.

Big Washland Watch ~ Using a high quality, recognised supplier for production and printing of resource pack (Field Studies Council) was very successful. We printed 4,600 compared to the original target of 1,600, as they were so popular among the public at external events and with schools.

Connecting with Nature ~ At the start of the project it was decided that we should do a survey at the start and end of the course to gauge impact on individuals. This only really works if the person completed all 9 weeks and was there on the last week. It was also mentioned that the questionnaire was quite long and not that easy to understand. Initially, we reduced the length of the course to five weeks and also created some shorter questionnaires.

Ultimately, we stopped insisting that people attended a block of sessions and instead offered standalone sessions, that people could attend as a one off or they could attend them as a series. We also opened them to families to try to remove a potential barrier. As a result, more people attended the sessions, and attended more than one. We also developed methods to determine the impact of one session on how people felt.

Transforming Lives ~ I would class the trainees as volunteers, as that is what they were, rather than participants as the vast number of hours that they contributed seems to have been lost and doesn't currently have a monetary value to the project.

Trent Valley Way ~ Planning better at start of the project for methods of capturing figures for use of the TVW. Would consider putting a fixed-point counter at points along the route to enable better counting of walkers on the TVW. This might have been possible if a site could be identified and is more cost effective. To get more meaningful data needs more time and perhaps staff involved rather than volunteers.

Project Management ~ 5 years to complete the scheme is okay, however time at the end for core staff (Project Manager and Finance Officer) to complete the paperwork would be beneficial. An additional quarter to tie up loose ends, and for reporting to the funder, would be valuable - as the evaluation report, final claim and other info is being completed, whilst the team are still in post.

7. Learning from doing ~ habitat restoration practicalities

Living Floodplains ~ All work had to comply with various wildlife breeding calendars which often restricted delivery windows to short stretches of the summer before waiting another year for another opportunity. We worked with our partners to gain as much flexibility within these windows as possible, and streamlined our preparation activities. This streamlining improved as our relationships with various organisations became stronger throughout the length of the scheme.

Transforming Lives ~ Whilst having a central base to store the tools, equipment and vehicle worked well, I would have liked to have an area which was more easily accessible so that the trainees could have helped with the loading and unloading of the tools as this is a valuable part of the experience. They were not able to do this due to the store being sited at an active quarry with limited parking. A space to utilise as a classroom would have been beneficial as the theory sessions held over Zoom were not ideal for everyone.

Rolleston Brook Hollows ~ The project was not designed from the outset to be delivered how it eventually was. The project should have been designed as a silt removal project from the outset. This would have given us more time to deliver the final project. With more time, we would have been able to remove more silt, fit with seasonal windows for bird nesting, fish breeding, crop planting and found the optimal time to undertake the desilting.

8. Learning from doing ~ people engagement

Wildchild ~ Summer holiday sessions were popular but as we approached autumn, bookings and attendees decreased - a clear impact of unfavourable weather, and an implication that winter events needed more shelter to encourage attendance therefore a room hire budget would have been beneficial.

Wildchild ~ Conversations with teachers identified that trips were limited by affordable coach travel. This was something not considered in the Wildchild budget. We learnt from the travel issue and included costs for school transport.

Big Washland Watch ~ Our response to Covid lockdowns meant the creation of the *Trent Talks*, which ended up being a significant output for this project. For future projects I would suggest that some events can be delivered online – more theory and information-based talks rather than interactive sessions. Asking external speakers to give the talks ensured a wide range of topics to attract a diverse audience.

Big Washland Watch ~ Early on, I changed my use of language to ‘wildlife recording’ rather than biological recording as referenced in the original project plan. This increased engagement with the project almost immediately, and I realised that ‘biological recording’ was too scientific. ‘Wildlife recording’ is much more descriptive and meaningful, everyone knows something about wildlife! I have since noticed many more projects across the UK referring to ‘wildlife recording’ as well.

“For our, ‘Wildlife Recorders’, the social aspect of the volunteer project ~ walks, WhatsApp group and social activities ~ was just as valuable and enjoyable as learning identification and recording skills.”

Connecting with Nature ~ We assumed this this would be an easy win, given the positive effects that nature can have, coupled with coming out of a period of lockdown. This was not the case. Despite working with social services, referrals and uptake were extremely low. We were asking people with mental health issues, some with social anxiety, to leave the house and meet up with new people for 9 weeks, which may have caused people to decline. Instead, I did some outreach sessions where I went to meet and talk to groups at *Mind*. This resulted in 7 people starting on the course but only 3 did anywhere close to the full nine sessions.

Interpretation Programme ~ As technology develops so rapidly, digital forms of interpretation are not always sustainable, cost effective, or accessible, so I would not prescribe this in the future unless there was a clear and specific imperative to do so.

Transforming the Trent Valley Heritage and Stop! The military legacy of the Trent Valley ~ conversion of pillboxes for walker's refuges and for bird hides didn't work; unfortunately, pillboxes are used for all sorts of unpleasant and antisocial activities, making them unusable for refuges or hides.

Project Management ~ A combined digital and physical approach to interpretation, engagement, and education has been great. Being able to transition to this approach due to COVID has been invaluable. Being adaptable and flexible in how a project is delivered (i.e. aiming for the outcome without being too specific on the outputs) is important.

“Not being too prescriptive at the outset means projects can evolve, taking on new opportunities as they arise, particularly expertise from volunteers and communities.”

9. Learning from doing ~ effective skills development

Transforming Lives ~ It was decided to change the qualification from John Muir Awards to City and Guilds Diplomas, enabling more people to undertake the course and showing that people over 30 may still want to change career, and this course enabled them to do this. City and Guilds also added a bit more weight to the offer as it is a more widely recognised qualification and is also of a higher level.

Transforming Lives ~ Close working relationships with the Living Landscape Officer from DWT in the Trent Valley has ensured that there has been plenty of opportunity to work alongside the Trent Valley volunteer group which gave them experience of working with different people, as well as developing communication skills. The range of training experiences, sites and habitats that the trainees were able to experience meant that they are well prepared to enter employment within the sector.

Waymarking of Cycle Routes ~ *Everyone Active* has offered individual training for people who are inexperienced cyclists and want friendly support to build skills and confidence. This was achieved through leisure centre staff, and, in particular, was offered to women who have been identified as less confident in cycling, or less willing to engage for cultural reasons.

“Women from minority groups have particularly benefitted from friendly one to one cycle learning support offered by a female member of staff. The feedback demonstrates that there is a genuine and ongoing need.”

8. Legacy ~ what next for Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership?

Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership legacy activity

In parallel with the delivery of the Landscape Partnership Scheme, the programme team and partners have considered the legacy of the Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership from an individual project and scheme perspective. All the TTTV Partners have committed to the legacy of the Landscape Partnership Scheme through a programme of continued partnership working plus overseeing management and maintenance activity that will help protect many of the physical changes to the natural and cultural heritage in addition to the digital assets that have been created.

Scheme Legacy

A small legacy sub group was formed in July 2022 to consider legacy from a partnership perspective, to support the Scheme Manager and identify how best to take many of the best elements and learning from the TTTV experience forward on completion of all project delivery.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust as lead partner and accountable body for TTTV had a varied experience and involvement with legacy from other local landscape partnership schemes. The legacy planning process established a commitment to maintain the benefits delivered through Transforming the Trent Valley for as long as possible keeping the brand and the partnership going.

“Transforming the Trent Valley is a strategic priority for the Trust. The Trustees are on board, committed to the partnership approach and there is a move to maintain future activity by making team members permanent staff.”

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Senior Management Team ~ October 2022

Following completion of Landscape Partnership activity, the partnership will remain in place and become known as the **Transforming the Trent Valley Partnership, replacing the old Central Rivers Initiative**. The new partnership will have an expanded area of interest along the length of the Trent Valley towards the headwaters, a draft terms of reference is in place and the first meeting of the new styled partnership will be held in May 2024.

Early thinking about the continuation of partnership activity has been very helpful with a number of possible projects and activities being developed to take forward through the new partnership including the following two active examples:

- **Transforming the Trent Headwaters** ~ a £250K grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund through the Resilience and Recovery Fund. This project, focused on Stoke-on-Trent and the headwaters, will establish a new local partnership and undertake consultation, audits and networking to identify the needs and opportunities in this area for future projects. Using the model of TTTV and learning from the Landscape Partnership Scheme it is the intention to apply for a development grant to develop projects that will make up a landscape scale heritage restoration scheme. It is expected that the partnership will evolve with new partners will be brought into the new TTTVP.
- **Trent ReNEW** ~ Funding is available from the Environment Agency to undertake capital work in Stoke (and Stafford) connected to specific watercourses. This is being aligned to Trent Headwaters and very similar partners are involved. The funding will not pay for

consultation and so the consultation in Trent Headwaters will benefit Trent ReNEW as it is anticipated that work through this project will help discussions in Trent Headwaters as people will see positive action on the ground.

Individual Project Legacy

Intended project legacies as identified within individual project plans from the LCAP, have been updated within the final project reports ensuring an ongoing legacy of activity from the Landscape Partnership Scheme. From these and to be noted is the individual partner commitment to develop the legacy from Transforming the Trent Valley around four key themes:

- Maintaining habitat and access improvements
- Continuing volunteer activity
- Further partnership working
- Building capacity and sharing resources

The intended individual project legacies have been summarised as follows.

Maintaining habitat and access improvements

Living Floodplains ~ Further work is planned at Tatenhill Brook and Branston Leas with opportunities at Claymills and Tucklesholme southern lake identified. Rugeley Power Station Riverside Park opens to the public September 2025.

Transforming Lives ~ The Rural Community Council are working to establish a 'Friends of' group to continue the management of Prince's Wood in Tatenhill. Several of the group attended the community learning days gathering some of the skills needed. They are being supported by the National Forest Company.

Trent Valley Way ~ TVW volunteers will adopt sections of the route to identify work needed, and report these to Council rights of way departments. Sections are split between the volunteers and range from 0.4km to 19km in length. There is ambition to get funding for completion of the long-distance footpath by working on the Rugeley to Biddulph section of the route, already a line on a map.

Canal Access ~ There are active volunteer groups on Trent & Mersey which maintain the towpaths and waterway. During winter months there are 2 work sessions a week undertaking tidying and maintenance. There are sessions every Friday during boating season.

Canoe Discovery ~ The Trent Valley Paddle Trail will continue to be promoted through the British Canoeing Channels, particularly over summer 2024 (this will be its first summer season open). The local canoe club at Burton on Trent is seeking funding to improve their launch platforms. The project will be used as a case study by the Canoe Foundation, who have supported the project.

Gateway to the Trent Valley ~ Fradley to Kings Bromley Towpath Upgrade - We will continue to support the Canal and River Trust in the delivery of a route further north, running for a further 9km. This will provide increased connectivity to enable further opportunities for sustainable travel into the TTTV area.

Gateway to the Trent Valley ~ Gateway to the Trent Valley Burton Towpath upgrade - will have a life expectancy of 15+ years, potentially longer if well maintained. Our long term aspiration is to upgrade the towpath throughout the Trent & Mersey canal.

Rolleston Brook Hollows ~ The site is maintained by East Staffordshire Borough Council who will continue to work with the Friends of Brook Hollows with added value enhancements. This project has shown that a catchment-scale solution is required to combat the silting of the watercourse and the project has proved the local support and need. Future work includes improvements on the lower channel and a new reedbed. Funding has been attracted in the form of a legacy from a local benefactor.

Continuing volunteer activity

Big Washland Watch ~ A wildlife recording volunteer group is now well established and will continue. Some of the group organise their own walks and surveys, and invite others to join them (e.g. WEBS survey at Croxall Lakes). The group will support future Trent Valley projects. The wildlife recording model created through this project has been replicated in other SWT projects (Wild about Tamworth, Roving Rangers in Stoke), and other organisations have asked for support in setting up similar schemes. Other volunteer groups will continue, managed by Support Staffordshire, through Trent Valley legacy projects. Volunteers are already empowered to organise their own social activities and sessions via other groups they are engaged with.

Transforming the Trent Valley Heritage and Stop! The military legacy of the Trent Valley ~ A small but dedicated and effective team of volunteers has been built up over the last two years who intend to keep engaged in heritage work. A Cultural Heritage grant will be applied for that will allow continuing engagement with heritage groups in the area.

Further partnership working

Community Engagement ~ Community engagement and the network of relationships with community groups in the Trent Valley area has developed into the creation of the Staffordshire Green Network. This will be a network for the community and voluntary sector, to support collaboration between organisations working on sustainability and climate action, use existing networks to reach a wider range of groups. Initial Green Conversation events have been held to inform the development of the Green Network

Trent Valley Way ~ Long term maintenance will be the responsibility for the landowner under the guidance of the Rights of Way departments at Staffordshire and Derbyshire County Councils. A meeting took place between Rights of Way officers and TRT staff to discuss ongoing maintenance and support for completing the full length of the TVW. Maintenance of the interpretation will be taken on by the landowners or in some cases the Parish Councils.

Transforming the Trent Valley Heritage and Stop! The military legacy of the Trent Valley ~ It is hoped to see cultural heritage at the heart of Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's plans for future environmental enhancement and improved ecology, broadening engagement with both the general public. The work of TTTV and the wider Trust in this sector should stand as an exemplar of what can be achieved.

Waymarking of Cycle Routes ~ The webpage promotes cycling and provides links to other resources. These external pages will continue to grow and so the TTTV resource will help to direct traffic. The cycle hub is a free resource and an asset that will be maintained by Everyone Active. Individuals who have benefitted from the cycling skills and confidence sessions will be able to utilise their new skills and experience to be able to choose cycling as a future travel option.

"I would like to thank you for your support and funding to make the new cycling hub at Shobnall possible. It is a great asset for East Staffordshire cyclists, and we are extremely appreciative of everything you have done."

Dan McLean, Everyone Active

Rolleston Brook Hollows ~ Community engagement will continue through the Friends of Brook Hollows.

Project Management ~ The partnership will remain and will be known as the *Transforming the Trent Valley Partnership* with the Staffordshire Trent Valley through to Shardlow in Derbyshire being the focus area. We are planning to replicate the successes of TTTV across the Trent Valley.

Building capacity and sharing resources created

Big Washland Watch ~ Equipment bought through the scheme will form a 'lending library' for community groups in the area, who can borrow specialist equipment to support wildlife monitoring on different sites. These are mainly low-cost items; if they are damaged or lost, they will not be replaced. The use of the lending library will be monitored, and, if successful, will be supported by other partners.

Transforming Lives ~ Are going to be developing the offer for delivery of long courses in order to move away from a reliance on funding pots and look at ways of making this delivery self-sustainable. Taster sessions for local groups will be run to gauge the interest in developing a range of "paid for" practical courses which could be offered to 'Friends-of' groups and other volunteer groups.

Transforming Lives ~ The new skills, experience and qualifications that the trainees have gained will set them in good stead to find employment within the sector and has shown them that they can gain new knowledge and help continue to develop their skillset.



Trainee celebration event and creating a new boardwalk

9. Observations and next steps

9.1 ~ An excellent scheme that met and exceeded intended outputs

The information collected and presented within this evaluation demonstrates that Transforming the Trent Valley has been a very successful Landscape Partnership Scheme that has faced many disruptions and challenges, yet has delivered some significant natural and cultural heritage improvements throughout the programme area within the original intended five year timeframe.

As noted in Section 5, the intended outputs have been achieved and exceeded for all the areas of activity that have been reviewed with any variations agreed and incorporated into a revised programme of delivery. Highlights of the outputs achieved are:

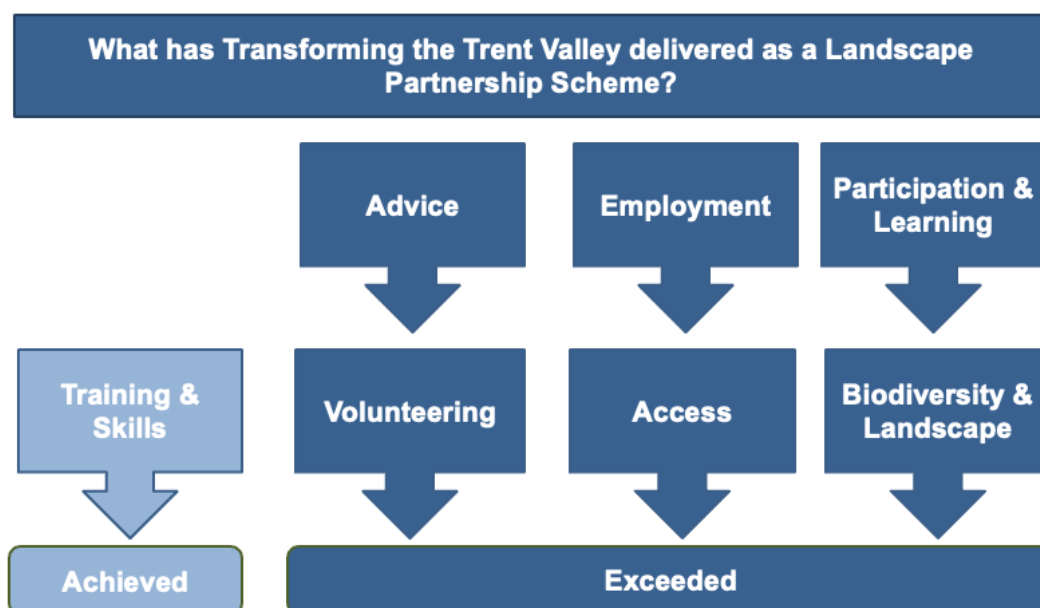
For nature recovery

- The landscape impact over 135 ha to enhance natural heritage and biodiversity, an increase of 47% compared to the LCAP.
- 2 km of river restoration that benefits an additional 72 km of river catchment
- Securing £562,000 total additional funding through biodiversity net gain
- The success of the wildlife recording activity with 17,996 biological records and 2,094 different species recorded.

For local engagement and participation

- 7,929 people participating in the 452 different events and learning activities throughout the scheme,
- The delivery of 322 skills workshops and training opportunities benefitting 107 participants
- Recruiting and engaging 458 volunteers contributing 1,785 days or the equivalent of 9 full time working years

In building up the picture of what Transforming the Trent Valley has delivered as a Landscape Partnership Scheme it can be demonstrated that outputs have been exceeded against six of the key indicator areas and achieved against the other indicator as summarised in the diagram below.



9.2 ~ Demonstrating delivery of significant outcomes

Combined with the delivery of outputs, information collected through the external evaluation process can evidence delivery of significant achievements against the four scheme outcomes, whilst demonstrating a range of improvements against the NLHF outcomes: for heritage; for people and for local communities.

To help summarise all this significant project activity the following table identifies a series of notable programme achievements that has been collated following a review of all the project documentation collected as part of this final evaluation.

| Scheme outcomes | Notable programme achievements |
|---|--|
| <p>Outcome A ~ Improving land management to restore the natural and cultural heritage</p> <p>The key natural and significant cultural heritage features of the Trent Valley Landscape will be improved and better understood with a fit for purpose system in place to ensure the benefits are sustained. Where appropriate the connectivity and diversity of selected habitats and cultural heritage features will be mapped.</p> | <p>A programme of ambitious habitat restoration projects, from pond silt removal (and novel disposal), to post-industrial landscape enhancement, and river channel realignment – some major engineering projects, requiring significant planning and expertise.</p> <p>A substantial and transformative series of projects to safeguard and enhance cultural heritage features, informed by experts in their fields, and undertaken by a combination of volunteers, contractors and academics. These included pillbox conservation and conversion, removing graffiti from an important ‘church’ feature, uncovering a ‘lost’ Roman Road, and using archaeological techniques to investigate other Roman sites.</p> |
| <p>Outcome B ~ Improving access</p> <p>Increased access infrastructure at key strategic locations enabling people to become more aware of and enjoy experiencing the natural and cultural heritage of the Trent Valley.</p> <p>There will be increased opportunities for volunteering and informal recreation that promotes health and wellbeing.</p> | <p>A hugely impressive programme of integrated visitor infrastructure improvement and development, including towpath repair, and general path repair, as well as steps, gates, bridges, stiles, fishing platforms, waterside access, bike shelter and cycle hub.</p> <p>A very successful programme of cycling skills and confidence-building events, achieved through leisure centre staff, and, in particular, was offered to women who have been identified as less confident in cycling, or less willing to engage for cultural reasons. Sessions also encouraged cycling as a family activity. Overall a very effective way to build confidence, improve health and encourage people to enjoy the outdoors.</p> |
| <p>Outcome C ~ Increased awareness and engagement</p> <p>More and different types of individuals and local groups will become positively engaged with the unique landscape of the River Trent, to understand the threats to the heritage and will be empowered to take further future actions.</p> | <p>The Community Engagement Panel Involving local people in decision-making to award funds to community projects. Empowered local people; made use of their local knowledge; made links within communities. Strong basis for continuation of this approach if and when funds are available.</p> <p>Very impressive diversity of people engagement, with examples of: retired people, school groups, scout groups, minority ethnic groups, people with mobility support needs, and people recovering from mental ill-health.</p> |

| Scheme outcomes | Notable programme achievements |
|---|--|
| | <p>Excellent range of people engagement products and support materials, for use on-line, and in the field, e.g. Wildchild Nature Pack, School Packs, spotter sheets, self-guided trail sheets, circular walk leaflets, Trent Valley Way guide, sheets for recording connections with nature, TTTV fold-out identification guide, the TTTV Big Washlands Watch Survey Booklet, the Trent Valley Paddle Guide, carefully designed and engaging interpretive panels.</p> <p>A really well thought out and implemented well-being element – including walks, events, on-line videos and discussions; encouragement to use all senses, to take time for oneself, and to be mindful. All of this demonstrated great understanding of the challenges that individuals may face engaging with the outdoors, but emphasising the benefits of doing so. Some great examples of non-intrusive ways of gathering helpful information on how the programme of activities has supported a greater sense of wellbeing.</p> <p>An excellent example of using the local area, its environment and history, to connect young people with older people – a genuine engagement, which seemed to captivate both young and old participants, who were each impressed with what the other brought to the connection.</p> |
| <p>Outcome D ~ People will have new skills and secured new employment</p> <p>People will have gained new and transferable skills in researching, restoring, conserving and understanding their heritage. Where possible people will be using these skills in the Trent Valley.</p> | <p>A strong sense of genuine thanks, celebration and reward for volunteers and others engaged with the project. Celebratory parties, cakes, thank-you breakfast, a celebration event, awards and certificates for success, opportunities to feature in videos and magazine articles.</p> <p>Very successful and beneficial engagement with students, who brought very beneficial skills from sciences, through to creative-writing and design, in a way that boosted the skills base of the project, and benefitted the students by providing opportunities for them to showcase their skills.</p> |

Further observations and strengths identified through this final programme evaluation include:

A partnership that created the right culture ~ Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership was a genuine community of partners that wanted to work collaboratively, was not afraid to challenge yet was flexible enough and creative in responding to ambiguity and change as this arose. Project activity was not separated into different silos but allowed to merge between the different theme areas.

Having a number of the project staff roles hosted by partner organisations contributed to creating a positive culture. The leadership provided by the core programme team and in particular the dedicated and thoughtful approach of the Scheme Manager needs to be acknowledged in helping to achieve the many programme successes.

Focussing on a clear landscape feature ~ The Landscape Partnership was able to use the River Trent, the key tributaries and all of its heritage assets to deliver an integrated programme that helped to bring many different elements of the project together.

Achieving external recognition ~ Evidence of the effectiveness and achievements of the Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership was the recognition achieved through winning the Outdoor Project Green Heart Hero award co-ordinated by the Climate Coalition.

Members of the TTTV team received the award at a ceremony in the Palace of Westminster in March 2023. The award recognised the TTTV team and partners for their approach in combining river restoration and wetland creation with heritage, communities and access in the Trent Valley.



OUTDOOR PROJECT GREEN HERO

Outdoor projects that are transforming our land use to help tackle climate change and protect nature.

WINNER - TRANSFORMING THE TRENT VALLEY

Transforming the Trent Valley (TTTV) is a partnership scheme; 18 organisations are delivering 16 projects focused on the River Trent in Staffordshire and Derbyshire. After securing a large grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund in December 2018 the project is working to deliver a multi-million-pound scheme in the Trent Valley across 200 km.

Climate Coalition website extract

9.3 ~ The importance of project closure reports

Project completion reports have been produced for each project and provided much of the quantitative and qualitative information contained within this evaluation document. The templates have been a successful model to complete the project management cycle and proved to be a helpful way of capturing impact to leave a further legacy in terms of recording individual project achievements. Significant outcomes have been delivered particularly in relation to impacts on people and communities through increasing awareness and engagement with the natural and cultural heritage. **It would be recommended that, once edited, the project closure reports are uploaded to the project website to create an additional digital legacy.**

9.4 ~ Many lessons learned, going above and beyond

The project completion reports contain a rich source of lessons learned, with signposts and evidence to help support future project activity and funding applications. Information collected from these reports highlighted the many different complex elements that relate to successful project development and delivery and included:

Project management

- Being realistic with resources and timetable
- Managing risk and uncertainty, adopting a flexible approach
- Establishing a good information base and communication before project commencement

Managing external shocks

- Climate change, the pandemic and inflation

Communication

- Partnership working and building local relationships

Learning from doing

- Building effective systems and processes
- Habitat restoration practicalities
- People engagement
- Effective skills development

In parallel with the final evaluation, the TTTV team have gone above and beyond usual practice and produced an additional short film with a set of lessons to help project managers with the delivery of future landscape restoration and cultural heritage projects. The lessons learnt from the film and evaluation report should be used to evidence future funding applications and partnership working beyond completion of the TTTV scheme.



Screen shots from lessons learnt film

9.5 ~ Simplifying data collection and presentation of project information

For all the many example of outputs, outcomes, best practice and learning collected for the final evaluation, for future activity to be delivered through the Transforming the Trent Valley Partnership it is recommended that developing a simplified set of indicators and outcome measures would be helpful to streamline project reporting and reduce the amount of project information collected and communicated. A starting point for output indicators could be the seven output areas used to collate and present the quantitative information as presented in Section Five.

In addition, the individual project completion reports that provided the outcome, best practice and learning were (in many cases) too detailed and if presenting as part of the Scheme legacy would need to be edited down to 6 to 8 pages maximum.

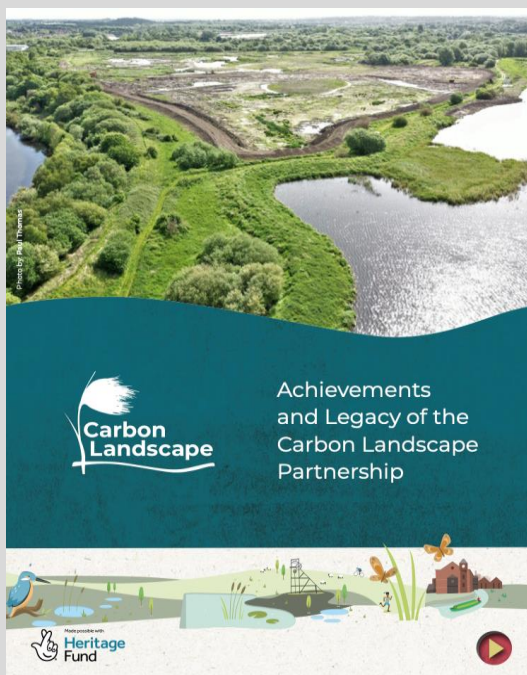
9.6 ~ Strategic Communication and promotion

To celebrate the achievements of the scheme it is recommended that some of the headlines and findings and in particular the headline project outcomes from this evaluation are captured and a dedicated web page of what has actually happened is created leaving an additional legacy.

Examples of best practice communications from other landscape partnerships are infographics that bring together the headline achievements in digital or print form which, when combined together with the case study documents and lessons learned would act as a prospectus to help secure additional legacy funding and future partner support.

Two case study examples from other landscape partnerships are:

- the digital booklet produced by the Carbon Landscape highlighting partnership achievements and legacy
See: https://www.carbonlandscape.org.uk/sites/default/files/CLPartnership_Achievements_Legacy.pdf
- the final webpage produced by the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership that pivoted away from current activity and helped tell the story of what had been achieved
See: <https://www.pendlehillproject.com>



9.7 Evaluation recommendations

This report attempts to bring together and present the many achievements and impact of all the Transforming the Trent Valley project activities in one place. The Landscape Partnership has delivered a wide range of heritage activity that has met the NLHF approved purposes and in many instances exceeded what was intended at the outset. It can be demonstrated that significant heritage outcomes have been delivered and that behind the headlines there have been many different internal and external factors that have impacted on the delivery of a complex programme of work.

Legacy planning has been proportionate to the scale of future proposed activity with appropriate governance arrangements put in place to oversee management and maintenance liabilities and a commitment to future partnership working within the Trent Valley.

Transforming the Trent Valley has been an excellent scheme that has delivered very good value for money and that the key recommendations emerging from this evaluation would be:

- That time is taken by staff within Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and project partners to **reflect and appreciate what has actually been achieved** looking at the scheme as a whole, the lessons learnt, the final evaluation observations and how these can be applied to the development of further projects through continued partnership working.
- That as the partnership moves beyond completion of the scheme and as resources allow, the TTTV **website should be amended and edited** so that **the story and achievements** of the Landscape Partnership Scheme are consolidated and elements of good practice as identified within this evaluation, with necessary signposting to other digital media, are found in one place.

Combining these two recommendations along with dissemination of suggested infographics would bring together the headline achievements in digital or print format which would act as an additional prospectus to help secure funding and future partner support for continued heritage activity within the wider Trent Valley area.

For future partnership working a final recommendation would be:

- **To develop a simplified set of output indicators and outcome measures** to help streamline project reporting and reduce the amount of project information needed to be collected and communicated.

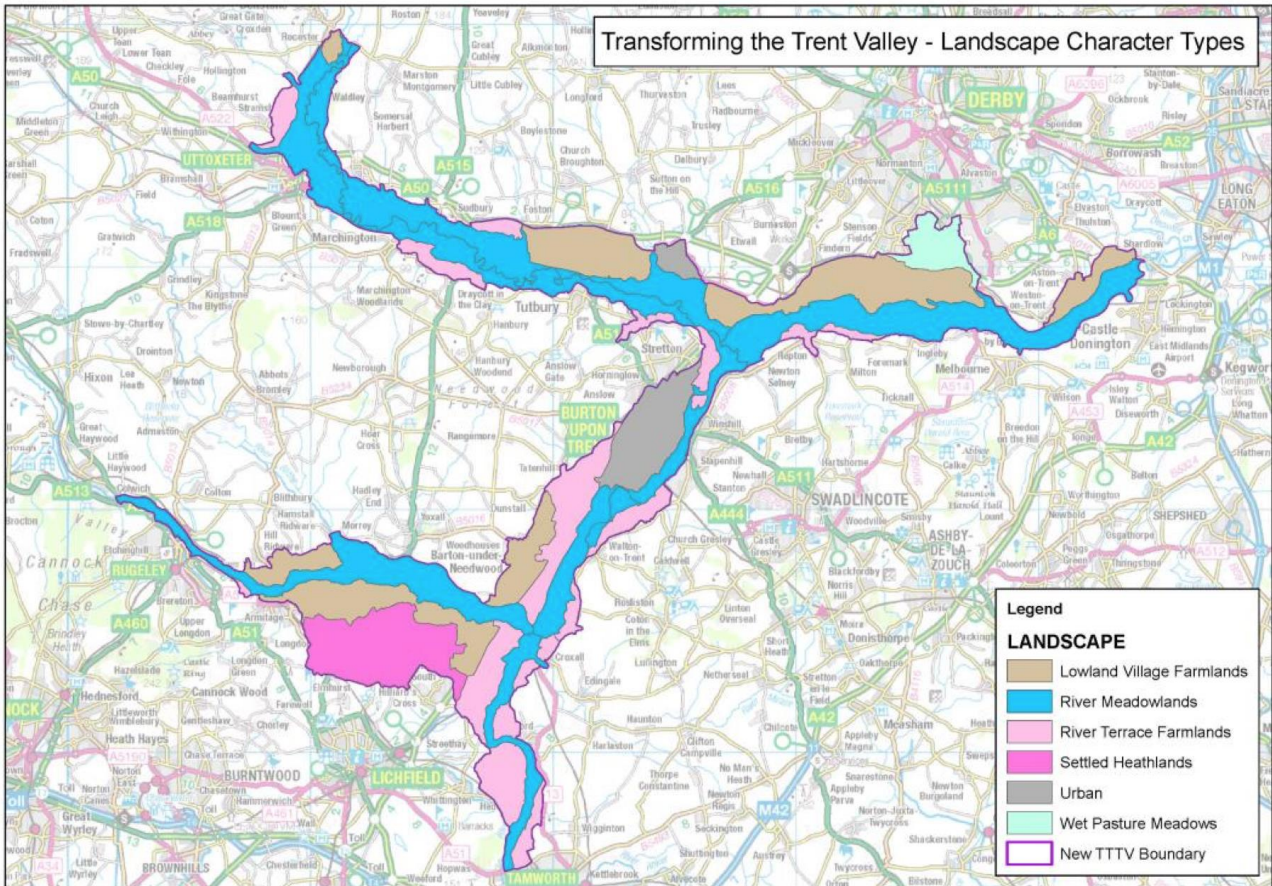
Acknowledgements

I would like to offer my thanks to Louise Morris and all the other members of the Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership, who I have worked with over the last five years and have provided the information and insight that enabled this evaluation to be completed. Collection of much of the information contained within the report has been conducted remotely between January and March 2024, so any errors and misinterpretations are in good faith and remain my responsibility.

Simon Lees, Countryside Training Partnership, March 2024

Appendix 1 ~ The Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership area landscape character

From the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) commissioned as part of the development phase, the landscape of the Transforming the Trent Valley Area, is divided into six broad zones ~ River Meadowlands, River Terrace Farmlands, Lowland Village Farmlands, Settled Heathlands, and Wet Pasture Meadows, Urban.



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Map showing the five landscape zones in the Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership area

The LCA describes five of the landscape types (omitting 'Urban'). These are summarised briefly as follows:

A. River Meadowlands

A secluded pastoral landscape, characterised by meandering, tree-lined rivers, flanked by alluvial meadows with grazing animals.

Flat valley landform and floodplain; river channel with meanders, shallows and marginal vegetation; canals following the river valley contours; waterside tree species; drainage channels and ditches; hedgerow oaks; narrow lanes; poplar planting and small woodlands; red brick buildings; flood pasture and hedged fields; arable farming.



B. River Terrace Farmlands

A flat, low-lying, predominantly arable landscape associated with the broad river terraces of major river valleys; a large scale, intensively farmed landscape defined by large rectilinear fields. Scattered hedgerow trees, small plantations and lines of willows and alders along streams and ditches often provide a sense of enclosure in this flat landscape. Intensive mixed pasture and arable farming; large fields; lush improved pasture; scattered brick farmsteads; straight roads and small winding lanes; traditional village character; canal.



C. Lowland Village Farmlands

A well-ordered agricultural landscape. Nucleated villages, and estate farms; lowland mixed farming. Gently rolling landform; productive arable farming with pockets of pasture around villages; planned enclosure pattern of large, hedged fields; small, regularly shaped game coverts; tree lined stream corridors; large country houses, often set in mature grounds; discrete rural villages; narrow country lanes bounded by wide grass verges.



D. Settled Heathlands

A flat, low-lying landscape associated with impoverished, sandy soils derived from an old river terrace. Reasonably well wooded, with scattered hedgerow trees, creating a strong sense of visual enclosure. Poor soils with a relic heathy character; mixed farmland with extensive areas of grazing and paddocks; discrete blocks of ancient and secondary mixed woodland; dispersed settlement pattern with scattered roadside dwellings; Straight, late enclosure highway network with uniform verges; place names reflect presence of former commons.



E. Wet Pasture Meadows

A flat, low-lying landscape, defined by irregular shaped basins, fringed by low hills and slopes. Waterlogged soils; mixed farming with patches of unimproved grassland; scattered trees along hedgerows and ditches; prominent willow pollards; medium to large regular or geometric shaped fields with hawthorn hedgerows; largely uninhabited with very occasional, large, red brick farmsteads.



For each landscape type, the LCA also identifies *Incongruous landscape features* (specific, uncharacteristic, and usually intrusive, features), *Factors critical to landscape character and quality*, and *Opportunities for Landscape Enhancement* (actions that would re-establish or reinforce typical landscape character).