

Section 2:

Statement of Significance



SECTION 2: Statement of Significance

2.1 Introduction

This section describes what is important about the heritage of the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership scheme area and why it is significant at a regional and national level.

2.2 Landscape

The River Tame runs through the landscape, forming the spine of the rich mosaic of wetland habitats created by sand and gravel extraction. The river valley is flat and broad with gentle slopes. Formerly the rich mineral content of the valley provided a living for the valley's inhabitants but now, empty of minerals but full of water, the extraction pits and quarries provide a rich habitat for wetland species.

The rural parts of the valley around Middleton and Curdworth are mainly farmland whereas the eastern edge has some remaining common and heath. Some small areas of woodland remain but this would have been more extensive in previous centuries. The towns and villages have grown up alongside the river close to broad shallow crossing points.



Kingsbury Village and the River Tame © 2013 EA

The need to transport the minerals resulted in an ever increasing network of criss crossing transport routes across the valley, separating communities, but leaving a rich legacy of engineering heritage, and highlighting the Tame Valley's involvement with key moments in history like the industrial revolution. It is man's usage of the resources within the Tame Valley that have shaped the landscape that we see today.



*...Noisier yet than ever Heaven meant
Beset by the traffic's constant roar
Thou'rt now a green island trapped, triangled,
Strangled, within the noisy nexus of the nation's motorways...*

Spencer Lucas 'Noises from Water Orton'.

The interconnected wetlands now provide a vital north south migratory route for species. Some of these areas have been designated and are protected and maintained for the benefit of people and wildlife by local people. Others are degraded and are in need of conservation and restoration.



We support the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme because Curdworth Parish Council is very much in favour of a project which seeks to create environmental enhancement in its area, which although Green Belt, has been described as degraded in the North Warwickshire Local Plan.

Our area has been heavily dissected by transport infrastructure (M42, M6Toll) in recent years with the probability of more to come (HS2) and we welcome a landscape enhancement scheme which attempts to offset this.

Being on the edge of the Birmingham Conurbation and incorporating Tamworth, will make the TVWLP particularly valuable in providing extra opportunities for the enjoyment of countryside and leisure activities and creating greater biodiversity.

Louise Baudet, Clerk, Curdworth Parish Council.

Likewise some of the ancient sites, buildings and industrial heritage such as canals have been designated and protected and maintained and can be used by local people and visitors as well as providing habitats for wildlife. Other sites are in need of restoration.

“

Our Society fully supports the application as it is in line with our own aims. Encouragement in the preservation of our listed buildings, some of which are in imminent danger, will be a great asset and help us to generate even more local interest in planning to preserve the best of the past whilst sensibly developing for the future.

Peter Rafferty, Chairman, Coleshill and District Civic Society.

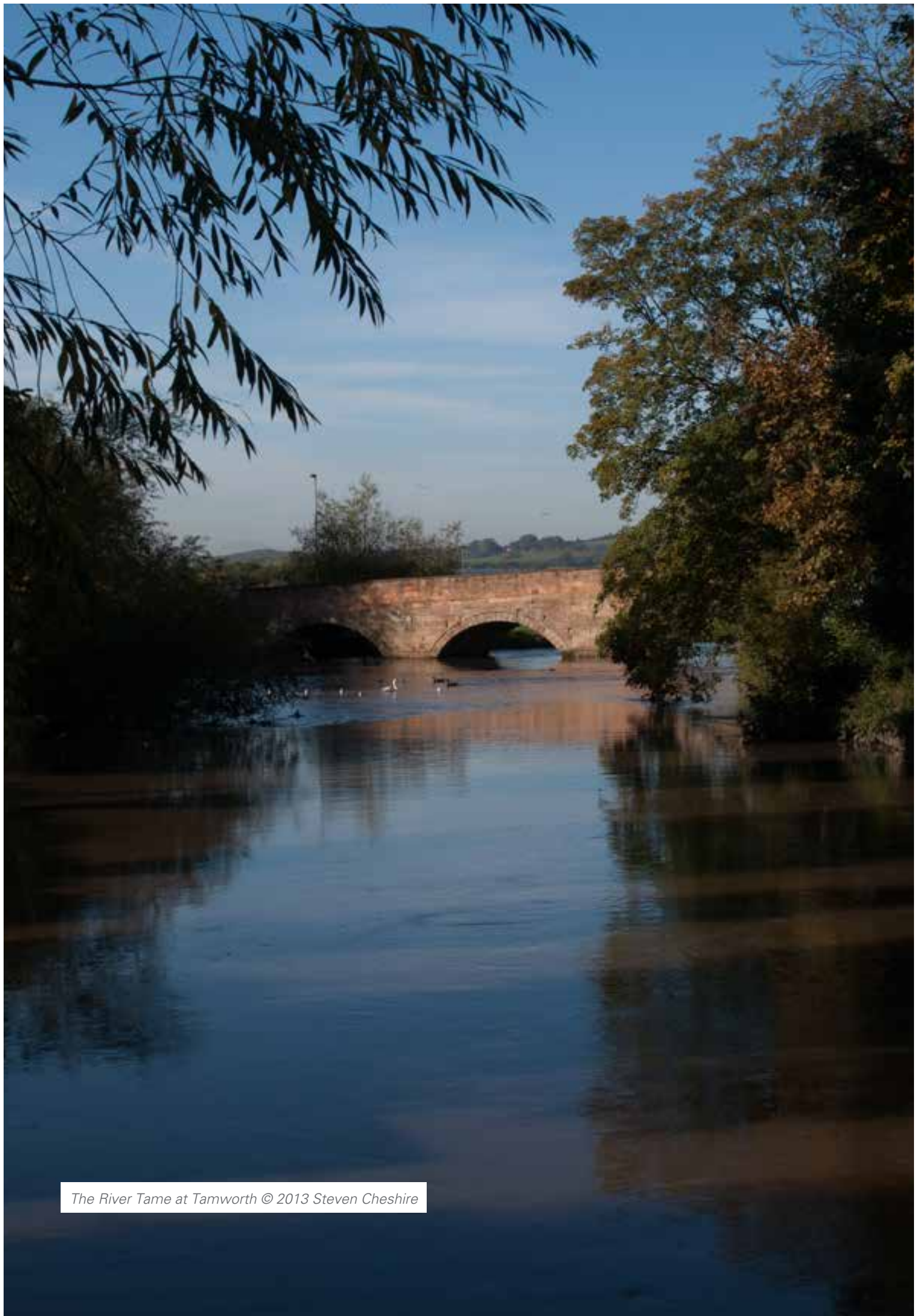
“

The Tame Valley is a landscape of importance for UK biodiversity with wildlife rich marshes, reedbeds and pastures supporting breeding wildfowl and overwintering populations of migrating birds and waders. The area is facing key challenges around how to protect and enhance these unique natural assets while accommodating the pressure for modern growth and development. There is great scope, within this project, to work in partnership to make this area more resilient to the pressures it is facing.

Glenys Tucker, Natural England Area Manager for Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull.



Tameside LNR © 2013 Mandy Austin



The River Tame at Tamworth © 2013 Steven Cheshire

2.3 Built Heritage

Buildings

The TWWLPS area is rich in archaeological finds, archaeological sites and important historical buildings, including 11 Conservation Areas, 657 monuments (289 in Staffordshire, 368 in Warwickshire) and 559 listed buildings (408 Staffordshire, 151 Warwickshire).

Maps showing this data are located in Appendices 5 and 6.

Coleshill's conservation area broadly corresponds with the built development as it existed in the late 19th / early 20th Century. Colehill is a small, linear, former market town built on a major route from London to the north west, which then crosses the Birmingham to Nuneaton and Atherstone Road. It has a typical medieval 'single-street town' plan comprising of a meandering High Street, a back lane (Parkfield Road), and market place (Church Hill), together with a large Medieval church.

Historic buildings can be found along the High Street especially at the commercial hub around the junction with Church Hill, and a couple of particularly grand houses (Devereux House and Old Bank House) by the church. Outwardly most buildings appear to date from the 18th Century and early 19th Century, but many hide parts of earlier timber-framed buildings behind their red brick and stucco street facades.

However, some of the heritage of the Tame Valley is now lost such as the chalybeate and brine spas marked on old maps of Dosthill and George Skey's ceramic works at Wilnecote in Tamworth.



The Old Bank House, Colehill © 2013 NWBC



Middleton Hall, with its moat and deer park, was built in medieval times and is now grade II listed. The deer park was first recorded in 1247 and continued to act as a deer park until the nineteenth Century © 2013 RSPB*



Medieval Teacher's House in Kingsbury © 2013 NWBC



*Coleshill Medieval Bridge at Cole End Park LNR courtesy of Coleshill and District Civil Society 2013
(see page 38 for a modern view)*



Pill box near Broad Meadow. Remains of the 28,000 pill boxes, built as stop lines during the second World War, can be seen within the Tame Valley, positioned to protect bridges, the canal and the river, as well as around Tamworth © 2013 WWT

Canals

The once important freight transport network of canals from the north west to London includes the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal which runs along the western edge of the scheme boundary, meeting the Coventry Canal at Fazeley Junction in Tamworth. There has been a great deal of rebuilding of the 18th Century structures but a large number of historically important sites along the canals can still be seen today. A greater number of older brick bridges survive in the more rural lengths from Minworth Locks onwards towards Fazeley and there are several lock cottages of heritage value.

Curdworth Tunnel has red brick facing on natural stone, with the portals consisting of semi circular arches with plain low parapets and retaining walls. The tunnel incorporates a towpath with ridged brick "horse treads" to reduce slipping and wrought iron safety rail and is a relatively early example of canal tunnel engineering which is now in need of repair.

Drayton Turret footbridge was built in the late 18th Century of red brick, painted white externally with a stone parapet. A pair of cylindrical stair turrets flank the canal and are linked by a footbridge, each turret has a pointed arch doorway and a crenellated parapet.



Birmingham and Fazeley canal bridge © 2013 Kate Sugden



Curdworth Tunnel © 2013 NWBC



Drayton Turret footbridge during the 1920's © 2013 Canal and River Trust

Railways

The railways provided a faster freight route than the canals and allowed coal to be taken straight from the collieries to the main line, with the Kingsbury Branch serving the collieries at Kingsbury, Birch Coppice, Hall End and Baxterley Park (Baddesley), allowing connection with the Birmingham and Derby main line and the Trent Valley line at Atherstone.

2.4 Natural Heritage

The Tame Valley has five designated Local Geological Sites (LGS), five Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), five Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and 39 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). The map opposite highlights these natural heritage assets (see Appendix 7).

The geology of the Tame Valley is integral to how the area has been shaped by humans, the river landscape and the use of locally sourced materials in the built heritage. Sand and gravel extraction in the Tame Valley has contributed to the formation of a number of large wetland areas throughout the valley. These wetlands are now nationally recognised as a key migration route for wetland birds. Key important species include snipe, lapwing and bittern. The valley is also home to otters, bats and barn owls.

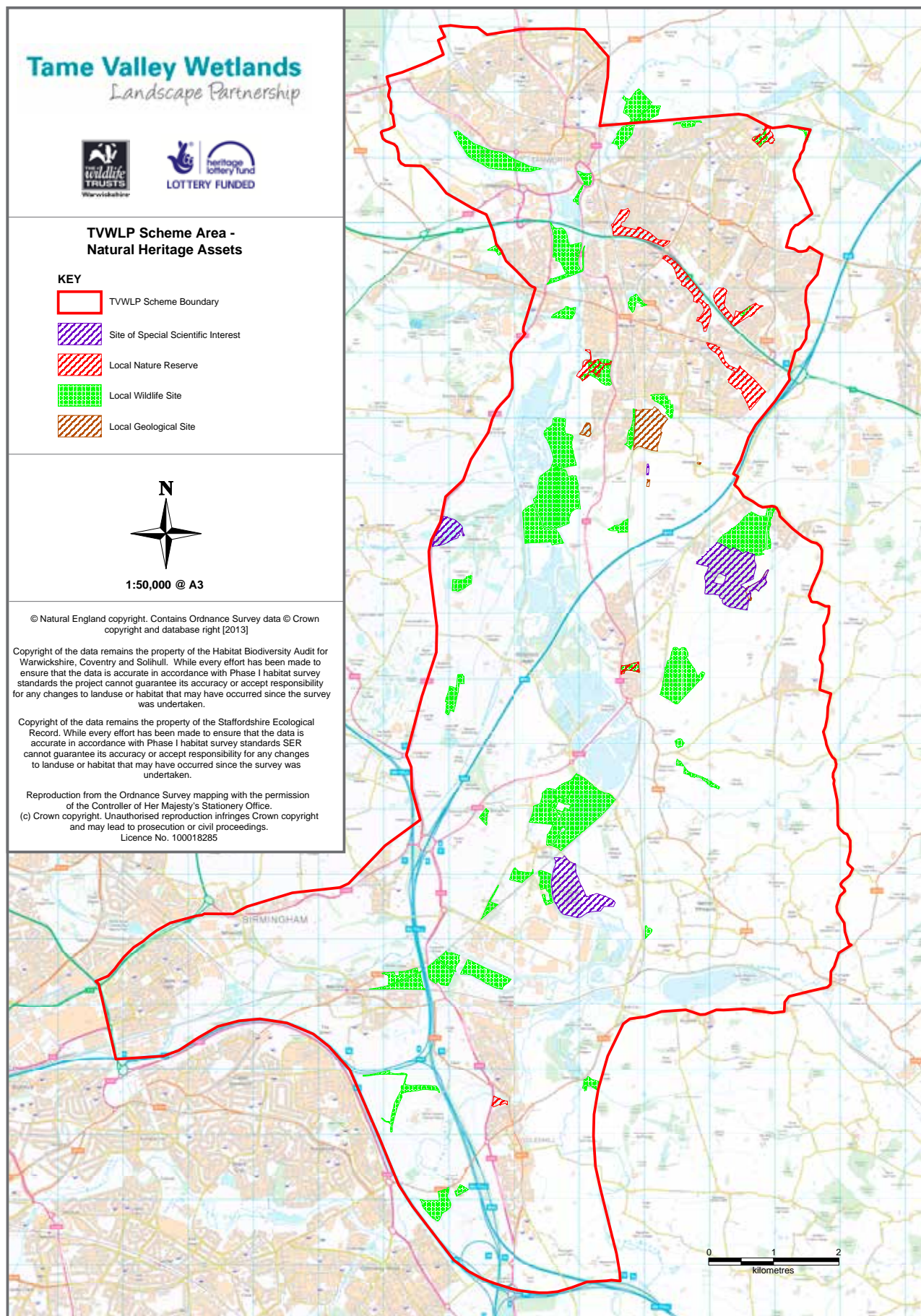
The Tame Valley is also an important large area for wildlife when taking into account climate change and the predicted south north migration that will be required for many species to find suitable habitats once their current habitats become unsuitable due to rising temperatures and more extreme weather events. These wetland areas in combination with the river, the land on which it floods, the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal running parallel to the River Tame and the Coventry Canal running north east, as well as the reservoir at Shustoke, are a key element of this landscape's character, but one that is in need of restoration and enhancement to link these wetland areas together. The river itself is the life blood of the area, but its urban origins are reflected in the poor water quality.



Whitacre Heath SSSI contains wetland habitat created by gravel extraction. Today it is an important site for wetland breeding birds. Many birdwatchers visit the area each year to see the migratory species. © 2013 John Ball



Little Grebe © 2013 Steven Cheshire



In past centuries, the native black poplar, *Populus nigra betulifolia*, appears to have been numerous within England's flood plains and, to a lesser extent, its wider agricultural landscape. Over the past 200 years, however, it has gradually been replaced by hybrid black poplars and balsam poplars of various sorts. About a third of our trees are within floodplains, and important concentrations of mature trees occur along parts of the Blythe and Tame.



Black Poplar at Whitacre Heath © 2013 Steven Falk

The otter (*Lutra lutra*) suffered a major decline in numbers from the 1950s to the 1970s, and was lost from much of the Midlands. However, following the introduction of legal protection, bans on toxic organochlorine chemicals, and positive habitat enhancements, the decline now appears to have reversed and the species is re-colonising former haunts. Surveys indicate a trend in otter recolonisation from west to east through both the Severn and Trent catchments.

Otters are now present in the Tame catchment, although populations are still small. Otters are indicators of a healthy river system, where the water is relatively unpolluted, with good fish stocks and bankside vegetation. We can protect otters by safeguarding the habitats they rely on, including rivers, reedbeds and ponds, and thus in turn protect other species which are dependent on these wetlands.



Otter © 2013 Darin Smith



Tree Planting © 2013 Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

The natural heritage is also used as an education resource, for example at Kingsbury Country Park, where visiting children are able to do bug hunts and pond dipping. The consultation work carried out by Barker Langham has shown that the main motivating force for 52% of people to visit the countryside was to spend time with their friends and family. The natural heritage is also important to many local people who volunteer to look after their local environment, either through the Wildlife Trusts or RSPB or as part of a Friends of group, such as at Tameside Nature Reserve.



Volunteers constructing a bench at Tameside Nature Reserve © 2013 Staffordshire Wildlife Trust



Church of St Peter and St Paul, Kingsbury - dating from 12th Century © 2013 Steven Cheshire

2.5 Historical Significance

Prehistoric times

The Tame Valley has a long history of settlement with archaeological finds dating back to prehistoric flints found at Coleshill and a prehistoric pit and gully discovered at Middleton. Palaeolithic or old stone age hand axes were found at Middleton and Water Orton, left behind by the family groups who would roam the thickly wooded area in search of food.

There are no traces of humans in the Tame Valley during the Ice Age that followed, but a late Neolithic mace head found at Nether Whitacre indicates the presence of humans in the area, this time, clearing woods and raising animals and crops. There is also indication of a Neolithic or bronze age ring ditch at Nether Whitacre and at Lea Marston, although this was destroyed when gravel was extracted from the area. Bronze age axeheads were found at Middleton and Curdworth, showing the increase in the use of metal for tools.

Roman road

Following the discovery of the remains of an ancient settlement at Grimstock Hill, Coleshill, an archaeological dig revealed evidence of a Romano-Celtic settlement on the site from the middle of the 1st Century to the 4th Century AD. The sites of huts dating from the late Iron Age or early years of Roman occupation were found, as well as evidence of field systems and a smithing hearth for iron working. Loom weights and spindle whorls found at the site implied weaving took place whilst the quern stones that were unearthed would have been used for milling corn. Other artefacts such as an iron age grinding stone and a torc, a gold necklace or armband, have also been found near Middleton Hall.

Archaeologists are reasonably certain that a temple was built at Grimstock Hill in the 2nd Century and wall foundations were found during the dig as well as pottery and coins. The remains of a bath house were also found south of the temple. At the other end of the Tame Valley, the course of the Roman road Watling Street runs east west just below Tamworth, known today as the A5. This would have allowed the Romans to march from London through to Wales as well as providing an important route for traders.

Angles, Saxons and Christianity – the seat of Kings

After the Roman Legions left Britain in the latter part of the 4th Century, much of the land cleared for farming would have reverted to heath and scrub. The clay soils made paths impassable in winter but the river would have provided a permanent route from the coast. It is believed that tribes of Angles colonised the area around Colehill in the 6th and 7th Centuries, travelling from the north via the rivers Trent and Tame. Other invaders followed and seven kingdoms were formed, the area of the Tame Valley lying within the Kingdom of Mercia.

Tamworth was the principal royal and administrative centre for the Mercian kings from the 7th to 9th Centuries including the reign of King Offa (c 757 – 796 AD). It was destroyed by Vikings in 874 but rebuilt and fortified in 913 by Aethelfleda. No traces of the royal palace survive today. The town's street pattern demonstrates active planning and follows the grid pattern model of other Saxon burhs.

Many place names date from this period, for example, Curdworth evolved from Credeword 'Creda's Settlement'. The original settlement was a Saxon clearing near the river Tame. The Saxons cleared many of the settlements we know today, setting the boundaries of many of the villages. Christianity became widespread and churches were built. In the 10th Century the land was organised into 'hundreds' for the purposes of local government and law giving, the term 'hundred' relating the 100 hides of land, a hide being between 60 and 120 acres, deemed sufficient to support a family.



Coleshill High Street © 2013 NWBC

Medieval and post medieval times

Following the Norman conquest in 1066, the majority of land was taken over by Norman lords and their Saxon owners dispossessed. A few Saxon Lords kept their land if it was known that they had not fought at the Battle of Hastings. A number of towns and villages in the Tame Valley are medieval in origin (c 1066 - 1500 AD).

Traces of these settlements survive in the form of earthworks, historic boundary and street patterns and occasionally as standing buildings. Coleshill has a typical medieval 'single-street town' plan comprising of a meandering High Street, a back lane (Parkfield Road), and market place (Church Hill), together with a large Medieval church. Manor houses were built by the gentry, for example, Middleton Hall, with its moat and deer park, was built in medieval times, as was the manor house of Kingsbury Hall.



St Peter and St Paul at Coleshill © 2013 NWBC

The Normans re fortified Tamworth and built a motte and bailey castle. A number of churches have their origins in medieval times including St Peter and St Paul at Coleshill, St Nicholas at Curdworth, St John the Baptist at Lea Marston and the chapel at Dosthill. Other medieval buildings now lay in ruins such as Kingsbury Hall Castle. A medieval settlement was also discovered at Lea Marston.

In the 12th and 13th Centuries there was a general upsurge in the economy that encouraged rapid growth of towns, trade and marketing. The climate warmed, the horse collar and iron horse shoe increased efficiency of use of horses, and the invention of windmills and watermills speeded the production of flour.

However this prosperity did not last long into the next century. The harvest in 1315 was disastrous. Very wet cold summers caused crops to fail, food shortages and famines ensued. Ergotism, caused by eating diseased rye, killed many people, as well as epidemics of typhoid and influenza and outbreaks of bubonic plague. Domestic animals also suffered from foot and mouth and rinderpest. Many families and communities were decimated by the chain of events and some hamlets and villages disappeared altogether.

In 1348 the population was 3,750,000, but this had dropped to 2,250,000 by 1374. Human labour was in short supply. Wages rose but so did sheep farming, replacing agriculture. Some landowners demolished hamlets and enclosed land for sheep pasture, leaving people to find new homes and work elsewhere. By the mid 15th Century the population was probably at its lowest point, whilst many fields had been enclosed and hedged.

The 16th Century brought many changes, including improved education, and Jethro Tull's seed drill. There were many tradespeople in towns such as Coleshill and Tamworth, many operating from houses. Blyth Hall near Blyth End was built in this post medieval period, together with fish ponds and a dovecote. The packhorse bridge over the River Tame at Blyth End, and the bridge over the river at Lea Marston were built in the same period.

The 17th Century was very cold and there was a huge demand for firewood, resulting in large areas of the woodlands of the Tame Valley being cleared.





Tamworth Castle from the River © 2013 Steven Cheshire

The first skirmish of the Civil War

Civil war disrupted daily life in the mid 17th Century, with labourers becoming soldiers and trade affected as well as skirmishes in the area, notably at Curdworth, the scene of the first skirmish of the war in 1642. A small royalist force held Tamworth Castle for the King, although they were eventually captured after a siege by parliamentarians.

Road improvement

The Turnpike Act of 1663 resulted in improved toll roads through the Tame Valley, with the toll road through Coleshill on the route from London northward to Chester and Holyhead and on to Ireland. Many coaching inns were built to accommodate travellers such as the Swan in Coleshill which was a staging post for the Royal Mail on its journey from London to Liverpool. Improvements to Watling Street followed and then the building of Thomas Telford's new Coventry Road, which is now the A45. Prior to this, travel through the area had been difficult as the heavy clay soils resulted in the roads becoming impassable in wet winters.



The Swan in Coleshill © 2013 NWBC

Agricultural improvements and the industrial revolution

By the early 18th Century, improved livestock breeds and alternative methods of crop rotation meant that farming was more prosperous. The Enclosure Act of the 18th Century established the pattern of blackthorn and hawthorn hedges that we see today, altering the landscape by enclosing commons, wasteland and open fields, replacing the spacious open fields in which many cultivators had their strips. Both arable and pasture improved although a lot of arable land was converted to winter fodder crops. The practice of killing cattle and sheep in autumn and salting meat ended and fresh meat became available all year round, improving national health. However enclosure also meant that agricultural labourers were not allowed keep a cow or pig on the common or help themselves to firewood.

The increased prosperity resulted in the construction of many of the Georgian

buildings we still see today as well as improvements to roads. In Tamworth, the town's streets were flagged and kerbstones were laid to make pavements in 1809, and, by 1839, the Tamworth Gaslight and Coke Company were providing street lighting for the town.

Robert Peel, MP for Tamworth between 1830 and 1850 (and Prime Minister 1841-46), had close connections with Tamworth, which remain evident in the town today. He built a cotton mill at Tamworth and then adapted the Castle Mill for cotton production with textile production soon overtaking tanning as the main industry in the town. He had also opened a bank in the town in the 1770s. As well as the textile industry, the 19th Century also saw the development of the extractive industries, important to the growth of the town.

Mineral extraction created changes in the landscape, leaving open pits behind.



Daw Mill Colliery © 2013 John Ball

The industrial revolution produced great changes within the Tame Valley landscape. The Coventry Canal runs from Fradley Junction near Lichfield to Coventry and was built to transport coal to Coventry and, via the Oxford Canal, to London. A number of engineers, including James Brindley, and companies were involved in its construction, and the stretch from Fazeley Junction to the Whittington Brook was built by the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal Company.

The Birmingham and Fazeley Canal was completed in 1789, allowing waterborne traffic to travel from Birmingham to London for the first time. The canal comes eastwards from Birmingham to Curdworth, through a tunnel then north to Kingsbury and Middleton, joining the Coventry Canal at Fazeley Junction at Tamworth. Sites of former commercial wharves where barges would have loaded and unloaded their cargo have been found at Curdworth, Kingsbury and Middleton.

A number of older brick bridges can still be seen in the more rural lengths from Minworth Locks onwards towards Fazeley as well as several lock keeper's cottages.

The continuing mechanisation of farming increased prosperity for farmers in the 19th Century, together with the introduction of mixed arable and livestock farms. Many farms were amalgamated, again altering the landscape.



Drayton Turret Bridge © 2013 Kate Sugden

The Birmingham and Derby Junction Railway was opened on 12 August 1839, built by Robert Stephenson, coming from Derby and Tamworth in the north, passing through Kingsbury station (now demolished) on its way into Birmingham. Additional stations were added at Water Orton and Forge Mills (now Coleshill station) in 1842. The Kingsbury Branch was built to serve the collieries at Kingsbury, Birch Coppice, Hall end and Baxterley Park (Baddesley), allowing connection with the Birmingham and Derby main line and the Trent Valley line at Atherstone. It was opened on the 28 January 1878 and closed in March 1989.

The building of the railway had a huge impact on the Tame Valley, increasing the population and number of dwellings as people moved to the area to work on the railway. In Water Orton in 1841, a third of the population were employed on construction of the railway. The railway also allowed people to travel and move out from the cities into the surrounding countryside. In this way the population of Water Orton increased 10 fold from 1851 to 1951. On 10 February 1842 the direct line from Whitacre Heath to Birmingham via Water Orton and Castle Bromwich opened. The now lost Stonebridge Railway ran from Whitacre Heath down to Hampton in Arden with a station at Coleshill on its track. The line has now gone but the remains of bridges and banks that indicate its way can still be seen. However the rise in the number and usage of railways resulted in a decline in the commercial traffic on the canals.

Extraction of coal in the north of the area changed the landscape especially round Kingsbury, Piccadilly and Hurley, with pit wheels on the skyline but it brought employment to the area, and provided fuel for the industrial revolution.

The abundance of clay especially around Dosthill resulted in a proliferation of brickworks. The diorite outcrops at Dosthill, known locally as Dosthill granite, were quarried for use as road stone.



Gravel was extracted along the length of the River Tame
© 2013 Fred Hopkins

The need for clean water resulted in the creation of reservoirs at Shustoke and Whitacre, and the pumphouse at Whitacre. There is also evidence of industrial workings such as quarries and marl pits, lime kilns and blacksmith's workshops.

In the 1920s Hams Hall power station was built, on the site of the manor house, powered by the locally extracted coal. Pulverised fuel ash from the power station was used to fill some of the mineral extraction sites, allowing them to return to farmland.



Pill Box on the Tame Aqueduct © 2013 Steven Cheshire

War defences

More recent changes to the landscape occurred during the Second World War, when an estimated 28,000 pill boxes were built as part of the numerous 'stop lines' which ran across the country to protect Britain from the threatened invasion of Hitler's troops. Remains of these pill boxes can be seen within the Tame Valley, positioned to protect bridges, the canal and the river, as well as around Tamworth.



*Highrise development in Tamworth
© 2013 Steven Cheshire*

Post war

In the 1960s and 70s many older buildings throughout the Tame Valley were demolished to make way for modern developments, for example, the 17th Century Park Hall eventually falling victim to the railway and the M6 and the Green Lane, an ancient ridgeway passing from Castle Bromwich to Coleshill, buried under the M42, following its completion in 1991. Many villages have grown in size, such as Kingsbury, providing housing for people working in nearby Birmingham, Coventry or Tamworth. Electricity generation ceased at the Hams Halls power station in 1992 and it was demolished and cleared for new industrial development, the site of today's Hams Hall Distribution Park.

2.6 Cultural and Human Significance

The Tame Valley has long been subject to different peoples coming in to the area, from the Romans coming from mainland Europe to the Angles coming into the area via the river. Tamworth was the home of the Kings of Mercia during the 7th and 9th centuries. Vikings, Saxons and Normans all followed, all leaving their imprint on the landscape. The largest influx of people was during the industrial revolution. People came to build first the canals and then the railways and to work in the collieries, sand and gravel works and brickworks and the local population grew accordingly. Today census figures show that 95% of people are white British, a mixture of all of the previous incomers to the area.

The landscape has played a significant role in the jobs of the local people, changing from a predominantly rural farming community before the industrial revolution, to a one based on extraction and usage of the rich mineral resources of the Tame Valley. Landowners became wealthy, allowing them to build some of the grand properties that remain today.

Extraction of the sand, gravel, coal and clay and the resulting transport networks to move the materials has resulted in a changed landscape. Many of the older inhabitants used to work within the former industry and it is vital that their memories are recorded so we can better understand



Coventry Canal © 2013 Steven Cheshire

the Tame Valley as it used to be and how the industry has shaped the landscape we see today. The landscape is still changing as extraction pits fill with water to create rich wetland areas for wildlife and recreational areas and consequently employment for the local communities.

The canals were once full of barges transporting coal and materials to fuel the industrial revolution. Both canals are now enjoyed by leisure boats rather than commercial traffic, with approximately 1700 boats passing through Minworth and Curdworth locks each year, reflecting the importance of these canals within the West Midlands canal network. The canal towpath provides recreational opportunities for walkers, joggers and cyclists, as well as a rich habitat for wildlife.

The Tame Valley landscape has been shaped by its industrial heritage and we need to understand and recognise the role of that heritage in the formation of the landscape we know today in order to help local people reconnect with their local landscape. While the history of coal mining in Leicestershire can be accessed through exhibitions at Snibston Discovery Museum at Coalville, there is a lack of industrial heritage learning opportunities in the area.

The area has been home to several notables, including William Dugdale, author of 'The Antiquities of Warwickshire', first published in 1656, one of the most detailed county histories of the period. William Dugdale lived at Blyth Hall.

The first scientific natural history collection of stuffed animals and birds was collected by John Ray at Middleton Hall with his lifelong patron and friend Francis Willughby. John Ray was the first to define the term 'species' in a scientific sense.

Having defined species, Ray grouped those that he catalogued (18,000 in all) into families. This is the essential basis of the binomial system of plant names. In Anna Pavord's book, 'The Naming of Names' she says, *"But it was John Ray himself, writing in 1696, who first used the word 'botany' ... Ray, finally, had worked out the rules that could clarify nature's game. He had provided a more solid foundation for future scholars to build on than anyone else before him. There was still much more to do and he understood that."*

Sir Robert Peel was MP for Tamworth between 1830 and 1850 and Prime Minister between 1834 and 1835 and then 1841 to 1846. During his second term as Prime Minister, he repealed the Corn Laws, which enabled the growing working class to enjoy cheaper food and providing relative social stability.

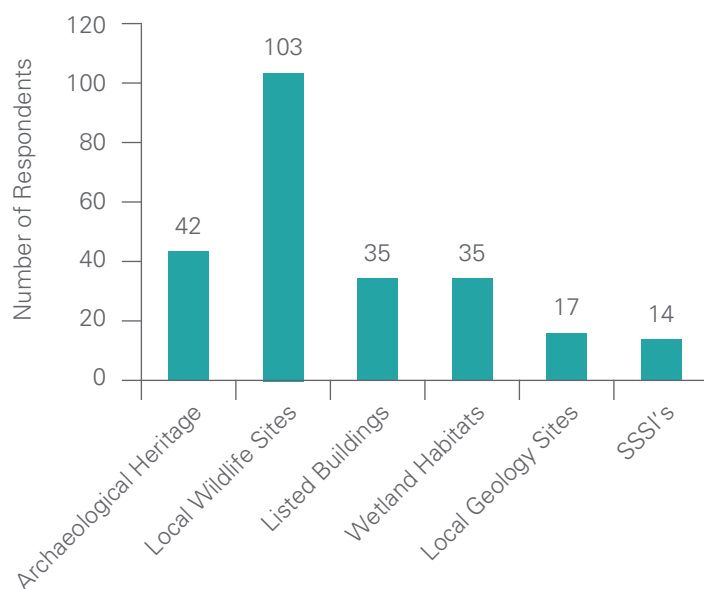
The introduction of the Factory Act in 1844 restricted the number of hours that children and women could work in a factory, and set rudimentary safety standards for machinery, a key issue in the ever growing industrial landscape of the Tame Valley. Whilst Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel has Drayton Manor built.

2.7 Importance to Local Communities

There is a wealth of heritage in the Tame Valley, some of it well known and often visited by local people, some hidden and seldom visited by people, but providing a haven for wildlife. Consultation with local people was carried out before the first round application by partnership staff and by Barker Langham during the development phase. Both reports are available in full (see Appendices 22 and 11 respectively) but key points are highlighted below. People from across the scheme area were asked for their views of the Tame Valley, in a variety of ways and at many different locations, including questionnaires, a visioning exercise at the focus groups where people were asked to think about the Tame Valley's future, by using a memory box at the We Love Tamworth festival and through a mapping exercise with young people at TamYouth.

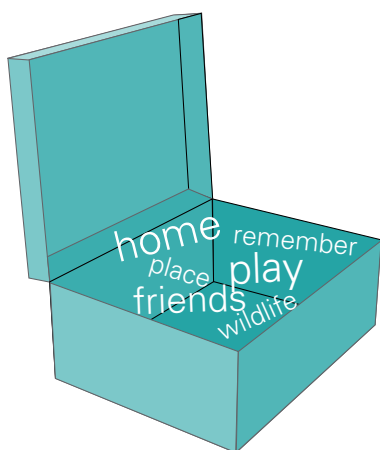
People's favourite places were Tamworth, Kingsbury and Kingsbury Water Park, suggesting there is scope to promote the lesser-known areas, perhaps at these locations, and create 'new' favourites for residents.

Top priority for conservation in the Tame Valley



As the chart above shows, local wildlife sites and nature reserves are the top priority for conservation.

Natural heritage is important to 44% of people and archaeological heritage was chosen by 18% of people as their priority for conservation.



Memory box

The memory box at the Wild about Tamworth event generated the following memories. The hope is that many more will be generated through the use of HistoryPin as a tool to collect them.



I remember finding a Redstart's nest with eggs in Beresford Pool in Fazeley when I was a lad.



I remember growing up in Amington, playing in the fields which are now housing estates. We used to play in the 'bomb hole' – well that's what everyone called it, it was a giant hole near us – we'd go sledging there in the winter.

Schools

Barker Langham's consultation showed that the decision for a school to engage in an activity is very much dependent on the nature of the content and learning outcomes. Generally, the ability to link educational programming and activities, including those outdoors, to the national curriculum was essential. This will be covered in scheme delivery.

Karen Hanson, Head teacher at Kingsbury Primary School said, *"We are keen to support the scheme and be involved in the activities that are being proposed if the application is successful. It is important for children to understand their role in protecting and developing the environment for their future and that of future generations. In fact children are passionate about this aspect and relish the opportunity to engage in outdoor learning activities and activities that are real and relevant."*



Morning sunrise © 2013 Mandy Austin

Community Participation

The main motivating factor for 52% of people visiting the Tame Valley is an opportunity to spend quality time with friends and family. Furthermore, 25% visit with friends, which is indicative of people seeing the Valley as a place to go for a day out.

Many people within the Tame Valley already work with partnership organisations. Regular weekly volunteering activities take place on RSPB and Wildlife Trust nature reserves in order to maintain the reserves, as well as train and inspire local residents to take care of nature on their doorstep. The Wild:Life project has worked with local people in Kingsbury and Coleshill to create two new local nature reserves, funded through the BIG Lottery's Changing Spaces programme. Local voluntary groups work with Warwickshire County Council and Staffordshire County Council to audit, maintain, report on and repair Rights of Way and whilst other volunteer rangers organise litter picks, and update signage on Sustrans routes.

In addition, the Environment Agency have worked with groups of people with learning difficulties to install signage on their land, and Tamworth Borough Council has engaged young people in diversion activities through graffiti painting in tunnels and under bridges throughout the town. Groundwork are also working in partnership with local Sure Start and Home-Start to engage families in outdoor learning activities and fun days.

These activities are important to local people and provide information on what works as well as highlighting the gaps that need to be filled. For example, the above cited all take place 'out and about'. This gives us an opportunity to develop 'at their site' participation opportunities for the less able and hard to reach groups.

The existing volunteers within the Tame Valley are the foundation for this scheme. Their knowledge and enthusiasm is vital to increasing participation amongst new people. The scheme will strengthen this resource and offer additional training and responsibilities to these individuals.

33% of questionnaire respondents expressed 'a break from everyday life' as a chief benefit of visiting Tame Valley.

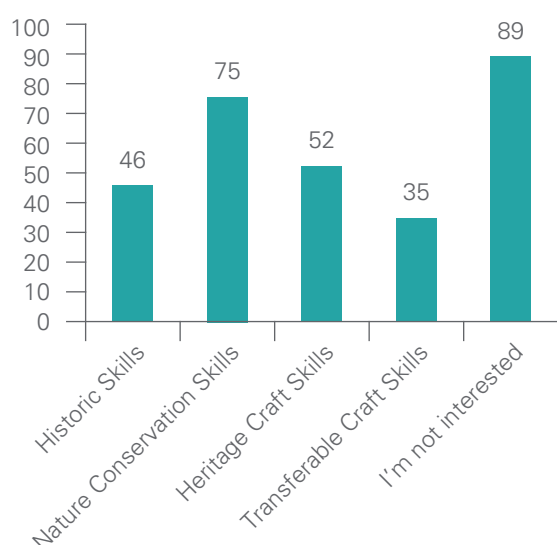
Family activities are of interest to 33% of respondents.

Twenty five percent of people consulted expressed an interest in volunteering to help look after the heritage and landscape of the Tame Valley and a further 33% responded 'maybe'.

There are also opportunities to work with new groups of people who have not been involved in activities in the valley before to provide them with regular participation activities and increase their links with the local community, as well as ensuring the area is accessible to all people.

Training and Skills

Heritage craft skills were identified by 22% of survey respondents as of interest. The majority of people appear interested in learning a variety of new skills, the breadth of which, from most to least popular, include nature conservation skills, heritage craft skills, historic skills and transferable skills.



Nature-based activities are of interest to 39% of people.

“

I commend the Partnership's desire to improve and link wetlands to benefit wildlife such as otter, water vole and bittern, but I also welcome its aspirations for people. I have seen for myself how local communities are getting involved actively in the care for and improvement of Local Nature Reserves in my constituency and have witnessed what improvements they have made. But there is more to be done and the proposal for a "Tame Way" is just the sort of positive idea that a large scheme like this can tackle, which would otherwise be very challenging using current levels of resources.

Christopher Pincher, MP for Tamworth

www.discovertamevalley.com

 @thetamevalley



Warwickshire

**Produced by Lead Partner Warwickshire Wildlife Trust
on behalf of the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership.**

024 7630 2912

enquiries@wkwt.org.uk

www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk

Design by Steven Cheshire (Warwickshire Wildlife Trust)