

## Section 3:

### Risks and Opportunities



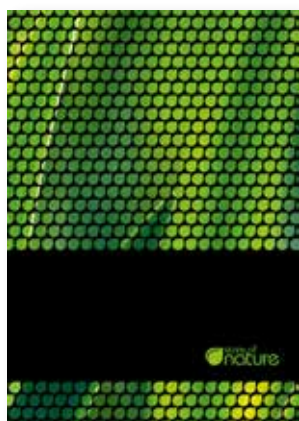
## SECTION 3: Risks and Opportunities

### 3.1 Introduction

Many people pass through the Tame Valley without giving it a second thought, travelling at speed along one of the motorways or A roads or on the train. Created to transport the rich mineral resources of the region, the ever growing number of transport routes have resulted in fragmentation of the landscape. Separated by these transport routes, local communities have been cut off from the rich natural and industrial heritage of the valley around them. The Tame Valley is a landscape under threat of further degradation and fragmentation and increasing separation from the people who live and work there.

The previous sections have outlined the different types of heritage to be found in the Tame Valley and their regional and national significance. This section outlines the risks to the heritage as well as the opportunities to address these risks. It will also consider some of the risks to the successful delivery of the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme.

### 3.2 Loss of Wetland Habitats, Species and Landscape Character



The State of Nature Report was launched by Sir David Attenborough in May 2013

The wetland landscape that we see today across the Tame Valley has been shaped by man's use of the rich geology underlying the valley. The low lying wetlands adjacent to the River Tame have seen dramatic changes following gravel extraction and the transport routes needed to extract these minerals have resulted in a fragmented and degraded landscape. There are few areas of traditional landscape remaining and the landscape is still evolving as quarrying continues and regeneration of former gravel workings takes place. The location between and in close proximity to Tamworth, Kingsbury, Coleshill and industrial areas around Hams Hall power station and the connecting busy trunk A roads, motorways and railways contribute to a fragmented and degraded landscape.

The State of Nature report launched by Sir David Attenborough in May 2013 reported that 60% of the species studied have declined over recent decades. More than one in ten of all the species assessed are under threat of disappearing from our shores altogether.



*This report reveals that the UK's nature is in trouble - overall we are losing wildlife at an alarming rate. These declines are happening across all countries and UK Overseas Territories, habitats and species groups, although it is probably greatest amongst insects, such as our moths, butterflies and beetles. Other once common species like the lesser spotted woodpecker, barbastelle bat and hedgehog are vanishing before our eyes. Reliable data on these species goes back just fifty years, at most, but we know that there has been a historical pattern of loss in the UK going back even further. Threats including sweeping habitat loss, changes to the way we manage our countryside, and the more recent impact of climate change, have had a major impact on our wildlife, and they are not going away.*

Dr Mark Eaton, a lead author on the State of Nature report.

Invasive species are also of concern and can out compete and displace native species if not controlled. In the Tame Valley the non-native invasive plant Indian (Himalayan) balsam and the North American mink are of major concern. Indian balsam rapidly colonises river corridors, out competing and displacing native species. North American mink predate water voles and have taken over territory previously inhabited by otters. Whilst there has been a gradual recovery in the otter population over the last ten years, the numbers are still very low.

The lack of vegetation buffers of suitable width and management along the river side, and the increase in road traffic and subsequent road kills at crossing points mean that there is significant downward pressure on the recovery. Otter will displace American Mink, so the impact of the two species is interlinked.



*Water Vole © 2013 Dean Eburne*

The TWWLP scheme provides the opportunity to:

- identify key habitats and work to fulfil targets for maintaining, restoring and creating priority habitats and fulfilling the requirements for priority species
- create and restore wetland habitats, thus benefiting the wildlife that relies on these habitats, including bittern, snipe, otters, water voles and bats.
- develop new relationships with local farmers and landowners to manage the area sympathetically
- bring new areas into sympathetic management to retain the historic character of the valley
- raise awareness of historic landscape and the need to conserve it
- provide training on wetland habitat management
- control non native invasive species throughout the scheme area where possible

### 3.3 Climate Change

Current models predict an increase in temperature, a decrease in summer rainfall and an increase in winter precipitation (UKCP09).



*Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, sea level has risen, and the concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased.*

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2013).

The UK Climate Risk Assessment: Government Report outlines the following effects of climate change:

- loss of suitable habitat for species
- changes in species migrations patterns
- generalist species more able to adapt than specialist species with consequent decline or loss of specialist species
- changes in soil composition which in turn could lead to increased release of gases from soils, increased erosion, and changes in invertebrate populations thus reducing the amount of available food for insect eating birds and mammals
- increased flooding due to higher river levels and increased surface water flooding

Changes in seasonal events such as bud burst in the spring, emergence time for insects, migration, can result in a lack of synchronicity with reliant species.

Some species may be unable to cope with temperature extremes or changes in rainfall patterns.

The fragmented nature of the Tame Valley will exacerbate the effects of climate change if species are unable to move out of unsuitable habitats towards more suitable habitats, potentially resulting in the decline or loss of these species. Species tend to migrate from the south to the north as habitats become unsuitable in order to find more suitable habitats.

The effects of pollution on water quality may also be exacerbated by climate change due to lower flows in rivers and a resulting increase in the concentration of pollutants. Temperature changes in rivers and water bodies may affect nutrient levels and decrease available oxygen levels. In areas where the river has been disconnected from its floodplain, changes in rainfall patterns and intensity may lead to an increased number of floods.

Data from the Met Office shows that, nationally, 2012 was the second wettest year since 1910 and the wettest since 2000. Two months in the year – April and June – were the wettest, with 128 mm and 149 mm falling in respective months. In the Midlands, 2012 saw the highest levels of rainfall since 1910 with a total of 1,085 mm falling in the year. However, the years of 2010 and 2011 were relatively dry years, which led to concerns in the early months of 2012 about drought.

Climate change will also have an effect on built and industrial heritage as more extreme weather events may lead to increased weathering at heritage sites.

The TWWLP scheme provides the opportunity to:

- create new areas of wetlands, improve the quality of existing habitats and increase habitat connectivity across the scheme area thus allowing species to move as the climate alters
- raise awareness of the potential threat climate change poses to the local heritage and landscapes
- consider climate change and greenhouse gas emissions when putting management plans into place

## 3.4 Flooding

Like all major river systems, the River Tame has a history of flooding. Sections of the river have been engineered with brick walls and concrete as it passes through urban areas. In addition, channelling of the River Tame, creation of the settlement lakes at Lea Marston through which the River Tame flows, and construction of engineered banks together with artificial concrete weirs have altered the natural flow of the river, reducing the natural shingle banks, impacting on fish refuges, and in some cases causing erosion of the banks due to the change in flow. In some places the river has been disconnected from its natural floodplain, with attendant change in water levels in the surrounding areas. The River Tame is also affected by water abstraction, altering levels of flow, as well as diffuse pollution from a variety of sources.

In Summer 2007, England experienced the wettest three months since records began. Flood events in June and July 2007 caused widespread flooding to areas along the River Tame - including areas of the Lower Tame at Fazeley and Coton in Tamworth. The River Tame as a whole has experienced flood events for many years and has been documented since 1955 when records started. Following these floods, an in-depth review of flood risk management was completed by Sir Michael Pitt. Lessons from this report were incorporated into legislation on flood risk management enacted in 2010 in England and Wales. There have also been changes in the overall approach to flood risk management following recent major flood events, the intention being to improve sustainability and reduce dependence on more and bigger expensive flood defences.

The Lower Tame Flood Risk Management scheme consists of flood alleviation schemes on the River Tame in Coton, Fazeley, Kingsbury, and Whitacre Heath, at a total cost of £11 million, due for completion in spring 2014. This will reduce the risk of flooding to over 1,000 residential properties across the four locations.

Flooding can cause damage to wildlife and habitats, buildings and archaeological sites, affecting the heritage sites of the Tame Valley.

The TVWLP scheme provides the opportunity to:

- Use wetlands to provide water storage during floods
- projects help to increase the capacity of the floodplain where possible
- River restoration work and buffer strips will help to increase lag time, reduce river discharge and slow flows, helping to reduce flooding downstream.

## 3.5 Development

### High Speed 2

High Speed 2 is part of a strategic network of high speed routes which are currently being planned to link major cities in the UK. The new generation of high speed trains are intended to provide an alternative to domestic air travel and to supplement the capacity of motorways and the existing railway system.

The High Speed 2 Phase 1 route will pass west of the M6 toll, M42 and Coleshill, then go northwards, crossing the River Tame near Curdworth Bridge. The route then crosses the M42 and the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal then continues northwest, passing between Middleton village to the west and Middleton Hall and Middleton Lakes to the east. The route of the spur into Birmingham will skirt to the south of Water Orton then run parallel to the existing route into Birmingham through Castle Vale, passing through the Park Hall Nature reserve.

The Hybrid bill for phase 1 was submitted to parliament on 25th November 2013 and is currently open for public consultation until January 2014. Target date for Royal Assent of the hybrid bill is 2015, with construction beginning in 2017 and the line to Birmingham open in 2026.

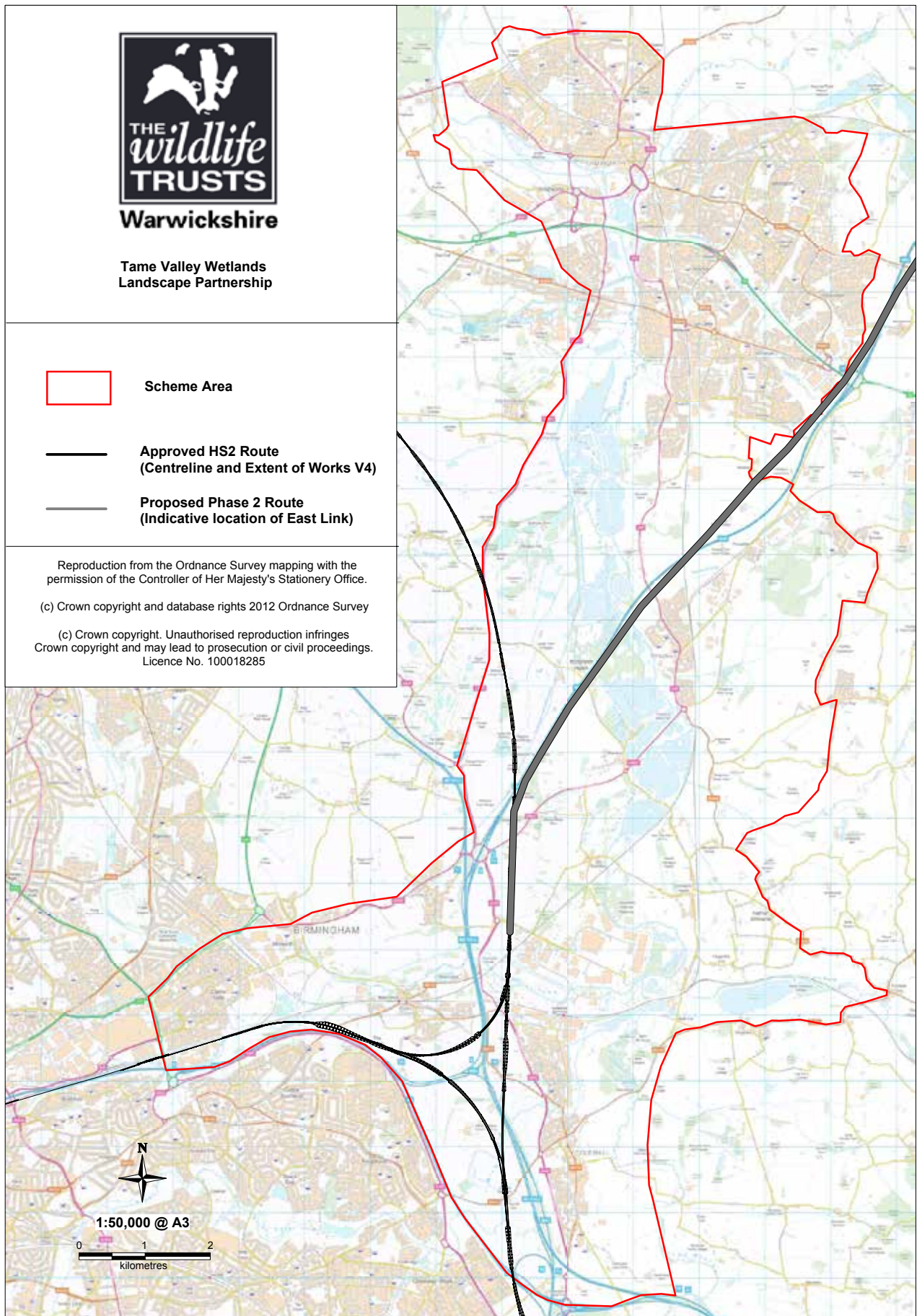
The Wildlife Trusts and other affected organisations have already been in discussion with HS2 regarding environment impacts during construction and subsequent operation of the new lines.

The Phase 2 route goes from Water Orton, northwards along the M42 corridor towards Leeds. Kingsbury Water Park will be affected. Formal consultation on the preferred Phase 2 route began in September 2013 and will run through to January 2014. Detailed design and environmental impact assessments will follow in 2014/15 prior to the preparation of the second hybrid bill. Phase 2 is expected to open to passengers in 2033.

HS2 is a significant concern to local residents and the issue was raised at all consultation events that were held during the development phase. The TVWLPS has had no direct contact with HS2 Ltd. during the development of this scheme and the partnership have agreed to keep a 'watching brief' over developments and review this stance in light of any further developments. Organisations on the TVWLPS are either opposed or hold an impartial view on matters related to HS2. All capital projects and assets produced as part of the HLF grant will occur outside of the proposed route.

The map opposite shows the proposed route of HS2 through the TVWLPS area (see supporting document 21).





## Mineral extraction

Pressure for minerals extraction continues. Warwickshire County Council's Minerals Plan is currently being revised (November 2013). The new plan will identify where new minerals sites should be located, and set out the policies to assess new minerals development proposals over the next 15 years.

A number of sites in the Tame Valley were put forward for consideration in the previous version for the Minerals Core Strategy including Lower Farm, Bodymoor Heath; Hams Lane, Lea Marston; and Kingsbury Brickworks, Dosthill. The next consultation document will only include sand and gravel sites.

With regard to the developing unconventional hydrocarbons such as shale gas 'fracking' and underground coal gasification there will need to be policies in the minerals plan to deal with these development types. The policies are yet to be drafted. A 'Preferred Option and Policies' consultation document for unconventional hydrocarbons is due for consultation in 2014.

Continued mineral extraction may result in the destruction of archaeological remains, as areas are mined for sand and gravel.

## Built development

The North Warwickshire Core Strategy was submitted for Examination in Public (EiP) on 28th February 2013. The Strategy sets out plans for the development of up to 3800 dwellings and 68.5ha of employment in the borough by 2028 and details policies which will guide how and where development will proceed in order to achieve these targets. If the strategy is found to be 'sound' the Local Authority will aim to adopt the strategy in 2014.

The floodplain character largely protects this area from encroachment by built development.

The TWWLP scheme provides the opportunity to:

- Work with developers to ensure aims of partnership are taken into consideration
- Work with local authorities in the development of environmentally acceptable policies.

## 3.6 Recreational Pressure

Angling takes place along certain stretches of the River Tame, with a number of Angling Clubs holding fishing rights. Angling also take place along the Blythe and the Anker.

Kayaking also takes place on some sections of the Tame as well as the Anker, Blythe, and Cole. Other water sports take place on the canals, ponds and lakes such as Kingsbury Water Park.

Public footpaths run along sections of the river and the towpaths along the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal and Coventry Canal also provide public access.

There are public open spaces along and close to the river, for example, Broad Meadow and Tameside LNR in Tamworth.

Some of the more sensitive designated areas throughout the scheme area such as the Sites of Special Scientific Interest could be adversely affected by a large increase in numbers of visitors.

The TVWLP scheme provides the opportunity to:

- Positively manage access to sites to ensure the best outcome for people and wildlife
- Provide well signposted routes to minimise the impact of visitors to sites
- Promote the countryside code and responsible behaviour by visitors, whilst reminding them of their impact on sites
- Promote the Tame Way footpath
- Develop activities that focus on the Tame Valley and the heritage sites within
- to improve partnership working to increase provision of, and access to, footpaths, bridleways and cycleways
- to encourage greater community engagement with local green spaces
- to increase awareness of the availability of recreation facilities by improving publicity and promotion.
- Encourage new visitors to the Tame Valley, resulting in boost to local economy
- Higher levels of activity will be focused around well-used areas, whilst the more sensitive sites (e.g. SSSIs) will be promoted only for lighter and 'quiet' recreation.

### 3.7 Lack of Understanding

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. Consultation with local people highlighted a need for more information on both the history of the Tame Valley and what you can do there.

The TVWLPS area is a largely hidden landscape, the TVWLPS provides the opportunity to:

- help people to learn about and understand their local heritage
- inspire people to conserve and restore their local heritage
- create family friendly information.

### 3.8 Forgetting the Past

As detailed previously, the Tame Valley has played an important role in history, being home to Kings, political reformers, scientists and historians, as well providing the raw materials for the industrial revolution. As the last of the collieries has now closed and its workers age, we run the risk of losing the human stories behind the winning of the 'black gold' in this part of the country.

The TVWLP scheme provides the opportunity to:

- record memories and oral histories of those involved in the former industry
- record memories and oral histories of how the landscape used to be
- involve the local community in collecting and recording these histories thus improving relations between generations
- help the older members of the local community to feel better valued
- improve awareness of past mining and extraction industry heritage.

### 3.9 Changes in Land Management and Loss of Traditional Skills

Intensification in farming has resulted in a loss of traditional husbandry skills and changes to the landscape as field sizes increase and hedgerows are removed to make room for large machinery.

Maintaining local natural and built heritage within the Tame Valley is hampered by a shortage of local heritage skills within the local workforce as there are insufficient numbers of trained people to conserve the landscape.

Recent research by the National Heritage Training Group (NHTG) into the skills needs of the built heritage sector for England, Scotland and Wales has revealed a shortage of traditional building skilled workers. At present only about 86,000 people are currently working in the built heritage sector and yet there are estimated to be 500,000 listed buildings (as being of architectural interest) and some 4.9 million historic buildings (defined as being built before 1919) and in danger of falling into disrepair in England alone. Over £3.5 billion per year is spent on conservation and restoration of historic buildings, based on latest available research in 2004. However many of the specialist skills needed to preserve these buildings are in decline, with some in severe danger of dying out completely. It is estimated that as many as 6,500 skilled new entrants are required each year to meet demand. This lack of appropriately skilled crafts people is putting our historic buildings at risk. The ten main specialist skills that are most likely to be used on historic building work are: bricklaying and craft masonry, carpentry and joinery, lead working, painting and decorating, plastering, roof slating and tiling, steeplejacking, and stonemasonry.

A Skills Assessment for the Environmental and Land-based Sector report published by Lantra in October 2009 identified the following skills shortages: practical habitat management skills; wildlife monitoring and surveying skills; species identification; communication and interpersonal skills; IT skills; supervision and management skills; project management; financial and budgetary skills; policy, planning and legislation; wildlife and conservation impact awareness; negotiation, staff management and leadership. The most common skills gaps identified were field interpretation and species identification skills as well as heritage management.



In May 2009 a response from the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) and the British Ecological Society (BES) to the Environmental Audit Committee's Inquiry into green jobs and skills suggested that there is a skills gap relating to the provision of qualified ecologists and environmental managers for a wide range of posts across the sector. The skills gap was being felt by government agencies including statutory nature conservation bodies and regulators as well as in other key areas of the sector such as wildlife conservation charities, compromising the ability of the UK to respond sufficiently to issues such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Marine Bill.

The TWWLP scheme provides the opportunity to:

- Learn traditional heritage skills
- Work with partners to protect local heritage.

### 3.10 Anti-Social Behaviour

Outward signs of vandalism, graffiti and damage to benches and signposts can deter some people from visiting sites again or encourage others to think that such behaviour is acceptable. Illegal use of off road vehicles can cause yet more significant damage to sites and potentially to livestock.

Criminal activities and antisocial behaviour can be a deterrent to people accessing their local heritage. Lack of visitors make the sites vulnerable to other forms of crime.

The TVWLP scheme provides the opportunity to:

- Engage with local people to encourage them to protect and take ownership of their local heritage.



*Graffiti under a road bridge over the Coventry Canal © 2013 Kate Sugden*

### 3.11 Lack of Resources

Lack of resources to address the risks already highlighted above is itself a key risk. There are a number of contributing factors.

#### Government

The next general election scheduled for May 2015 could be the greatest risk to the community participation element of the scheme. Coming within the first year of the delivery phase, the partnership will prepare for any changes in government. With a prediction of a 76% labour majority (September 2013 [www.electoralcalculus.co.uk](http://www.electoralcalculus.co.uk)) the effect is likely to be policy shifts in local councils and slower responses (no response) from council staff during the introduction of the new government.

#### Funding

Reduction or increases in funding subject to changes in Government are very likely especially for certain partners such as Sure Start, Probation Services, the Youth Contract for 16-17 year olds, apprenticeships, job seekers and back to work schemes. Where possible, partnerships with these providers have been developed as drop-in services only and therefore our provision should not be affected by their funding cuts. If anything, we will provide continuity of activities while changes across these organisations are undertaken. Changes to CAP and Higher Level Stewardship will also result in landowners receiving reduced income.

#### Staffing

Any further cuts in local government staff and rights of way officers will affect engagement activities and linking of existing routes.

Further risks to the scheme are changes in staffing in the last 3 to 18 months as scheme staff look for new roles. In order to ensure that delivery continues uninterrupted, contingency will be available to take on and train up apprentices and contract service delivery staff if required.



### Lack of participation and volunteers

Target numbers for this bid have been set based on experience of other local schemes and other Landscape Partnership schemes, but the scheme intends to exceed these figures where possible. Ongoing monitoring will ensure that opportunities remain current and relevant to residents, trusted intermediaries such as Youth Club leaders will be partnered with to engage groups and where possible expenses will be reimbursed where this is a barrier to involvement. This is also to ensure a quality experience for participation and encourage a more in-depth involvement where possible.

The TVWLP scheme provides the opportunity to:

- to strengthen existing partnerships across the scheme area and create new ones in order to address the risks to the heritage of the Tame Valley.
- to provide a small grants scheme which will allow community groups to address the risks to local heritage.



*Cadets at Warwickshire Moor LNR © 2013 Staffordshire Wildlife Trust*

## 3.12 Audience Barriers

A number of specific barriers relating to training, community participation and volunteering have been identified. However, it is worth noting that whilst there is no particular reason for preventing the majority of people from visiting the Tame Valley, 18% of survey respondents cited that they didn't know enough about it.

### Barriers to community participation

For young people, the greatest barrier to participation is lack of transport. For some local organisations, recent funding cuts have left them without transport, making activities outside the centres prohibitive.

Working parents responded that it was lack of time that stopped them getting involved more in local activities.

Friends of groups, such as the Friends of Kingsbury Water Park, and other groups represented at the Coleshill focus group discussion expressed frustration at the lack of participation from local residents and voiced concerns that their small groups struggled to recruit new members and find funding for projects. Apathy was one reason cited, as well as general lack of interest and that such concerns are someone else's responsibility.

All activities that take place between Monday and Friday 9am to 5pm are not accessible for about 70% of our population as they are either in work or education during these hours.

### Schools

The most prominent barrier to undertaking activities in the scheme area was the cost. In particular, transportation costs were highly prohibitive, with coaches costing £200-300 per trip. As a result a good level of interest exists for schools to carry out environmental activities within school grounds. Some schools were already engaged in on-site activities such as activities at the school pond and gardens. If on-site outdoors facilities were unavailable, some schools undertook local trips to nearby rivers and canals on foot.

## Physical Access

North Warwickshire Borough Council are looking to develop a number of new walking and cycling routes in the green belt area to add to the existing promoted routes. However, there are a substantial number of permissive routes on publicly owned land in the scheme area that are not shown on OS maps, causing visitors to be unaware of their existence. Other barriers included: Lack of bridleways, especially in the middle section of the valley; limited routes out of the major towns and villages, often due to lack of public right of way; and some parts of the valley are not seen as attractive places to walk / ride.

Consultation with local people highlighted that many people are unable to access sites easily, especially older people with limited mobility and families with younger children. Lack of easy access between sites in the Tame Valley was of concern to local residents, as well as lack of public transport.

## Barriers to volunteering

The barriers to volunteering include lack of time, especially for parents with young children, lack of transport, cost of transport, off putting images of volunteering activities, and not knowing anyone else who volunteers.

The TVWLP scheme provides the opportunity to:

- promote and market the scheme during the delivery phase, reaching out to those people who would potentially get involved with the scheme if they were aware of what it had to offer.
- address transport availability and cost by provision of a mini bus as well as improving access to sites.
- Improve physical access to and between sites in the Tame Valley including: suggested upgrades to bridleways north-south from Shustoke, through Lea Marston to Kingsbury, as well as an east-west link near Middleton; creation of circular walks; Tame Way.
- Improve access to further information about the opportunities available both online and in the Gateway to the Tame Valley at Kingsbury Water Park.
- Positively promote volunteering for all.

## 3.13 Partnership-Based Risks

### Skills and Knowledge

The Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership has developed from a partnership of primarily natural heritage conservation based organisations and now has a range of organisations involved to address all of the heritage across the scheme area. However there are concerns over engagement with some of the hard to reach groups across the area. This concern will largely be addressed by the appointment of a Youth Engagement Officer through the scheme.

### Funding

At the time of writing, 43% of the match funding requirement has been secured, including 100% of match funding for Year 1 of the scheme. Failure to secure the remaining funding will result in a reduction in the number of projects that the scheme can deliver. Applications have been made to cover the shortfall but the outcome will not be known for several months. Positive discussions have been held with local businesses who are likely to contribute to the scheme once the outcome of the application is known. Match funding for the following three years will be secured on a rolling annual basis.

The TWWLP scheme provides the opportunity to:

- recruit skilled and experienced staff onto the scheme
- expand the partnership to bring new organisations on board to address engagement with the hard to reach groups
- Work with local businesses to obtain further match funding for the scheme
- Work with other funders to obtain further match funding for the scheme.





*Inhabitants of the Tame Valley have adapted to living in a floodplain* © 2013 Steven Cheshire



[www.discovertamevalley.com](http://www.discovertamevalley.com)

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