



**Tame  
Valley**  
Wetlands

**Tame Valley Wetlands**  
Landscape  
Partnership Scheme

# **Final Review**

June 2019

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## Thanks

The Review team from MRE Unlocking Enterprise would like to express their sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to this Review; in particular the staff team past and present at Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership, other staff at Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, the Partnership's Board members and also to the volunteers and staff from other partner and community organisations who made us welcome and were happy to give their views. A big thank you to you all!

## Disclaimer

*We have made every reasonable effort to verify facts and figures in this Review but cannot take responsibility for inaccurate information provided by third parties. We have also taken care to represent the views of consultees fairly and accurately.*

Title Photograph: Whitacre Heath SSSI (TVW)



**Figure 1: A sunny day at Tameside Local Nature Reserve, Tamworth**  
(Photo: TVW, Summer 2017)





## 1.0 Introduction and Background

### 1.1 Tame Valley Wetlands – an introduction

You are reading the Final Review Report for the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme, a four-year programme of activities led by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, partners and other organisations.

The purpose of this report is to look back at the achievements of the Scheme and to assess to what extent they have met the aspirations and aims the Landscape Partnership intended.

The wetlands of the Tame Valley offer a surprising, hidden landscape. In a 12-mile stretch from Colehill in the south to Tamworth in the north, bisected by the M42 and bounded to the west by the A38, a chain of lakes, pools and reservoirs follow the line of the River Tame, a major tributary of the River Trent, as it flows away from Birmingham to meet the Trent near Alrewas in Derbyshire.



Figure 2: Kingsbury Water Park (Photo: TVW website)

Industrialisation of the West Midlands in the 19th and early 20th centuries gave rise to such high levels of pollution that the Tame was declared a 'dead' river in the 1940s<sup>1</sup>. Urbanisation spread from Birmingham, Solihull and Tamworth and necessitated the construction in the 1920s of the giant Hams Hall Power Stations. Pulverised fuel ash from the power station was deposited in large quantities. Quarrying has changed the topography of the Tame Valley, leaving the area scarred and indelibly changed and it continues to this day.

As the impact of industrialisation reduced and better environmental practices were introduced, the river's water quality improved, aided by the creation of purification lakes near Lea Marston. The damaged landscape 're-greened' and started to provide places that were attractive to

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<sup>1</sup> According to the TVW Living Map animation, by 1945/6 all life in the river had been killed by pollution and it was declared the dirtiest river in the UK.

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wildlife. Changes in the way electricity is generated saw the closure of Hams Hall and the wholesale physical regeneration of its site into a business and distribution park.

The man-made Birmingham and Fazeley Canal was opened in the late 18th century as an additional transit route to the East Midlands and tracks the river for part of its length. When road and rail transport killed commercial canal traffic, the canal also fell into disrepair until restoration for the leisure trade in the 1980s. Now managed by the Canal and River Trust, it provides a corridor for people and wildlife, whilst still offering many reminders of the industrial and social heritage of the area.

While the initial impression of the area is one of dense urbanisation, natural beauty and tranquil landscapes can be found around every corner. Over recent decades, conservation charities, local authorities, utilities and environmental agencies assumed ownership and/or took responsibility for individual sites within the area. Each organisation independently managed their sites for different purposes – nature conservation, human leisure and recreation, water storage – but all are green open spaces, mostly wild (or ‘wilded’). They provide important homes for nature and some now have Nature Reserve or Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status; they are also spaces for the local population to breathe and enjoy the outdoors.

In the past twenty years, the potential value of this area as a cohesive landscape started to be recognised. But with so many different owners, fragmented by transport routes and facing many challenges, its fragility was also evident. Recently this has been underlined when the Birmingham to Nottingham route of High Speed 2 was approved to traverse the Wetlands.

Alongside other partners, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust has championed action to strengthen the resilience of this wetlands landscape, to protect and nurture the habitats it provides for wildlife and reconnect local people with the natural assets of the area in which they live.

In the early 2000s, led by the Trust, the Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership was formed by interested organisations, including Warwickshire County Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency and West Midlands Bird Club. Over the next decade, the Partnership developed its vision for the Tame Valley Wetlands and a credible plan of action. In 2013, it made a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for grant aid for a programme of improvement and development activity that would help to secure a safe future for this intriguing landscape.

## 1.2 Area Designated for and key sites of the Landscape Partnership Scheme

### 1.2.1 Catchment

The area identified for the Landscape Partnership Scheme is 104 square kilometres shown in green on the map overleaf. The area lies across the Warwickshire/ Staffordshire border, across the north eastern boundary of Birmingham City and adjacent to the northern boundary of Solihull Metropolitan Borough. The area overlaps three National Character Areas<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Natural Character Areas are designated by Natural England for their distinct combination of natural characteristics, local heritage and history. Further information is available at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making>

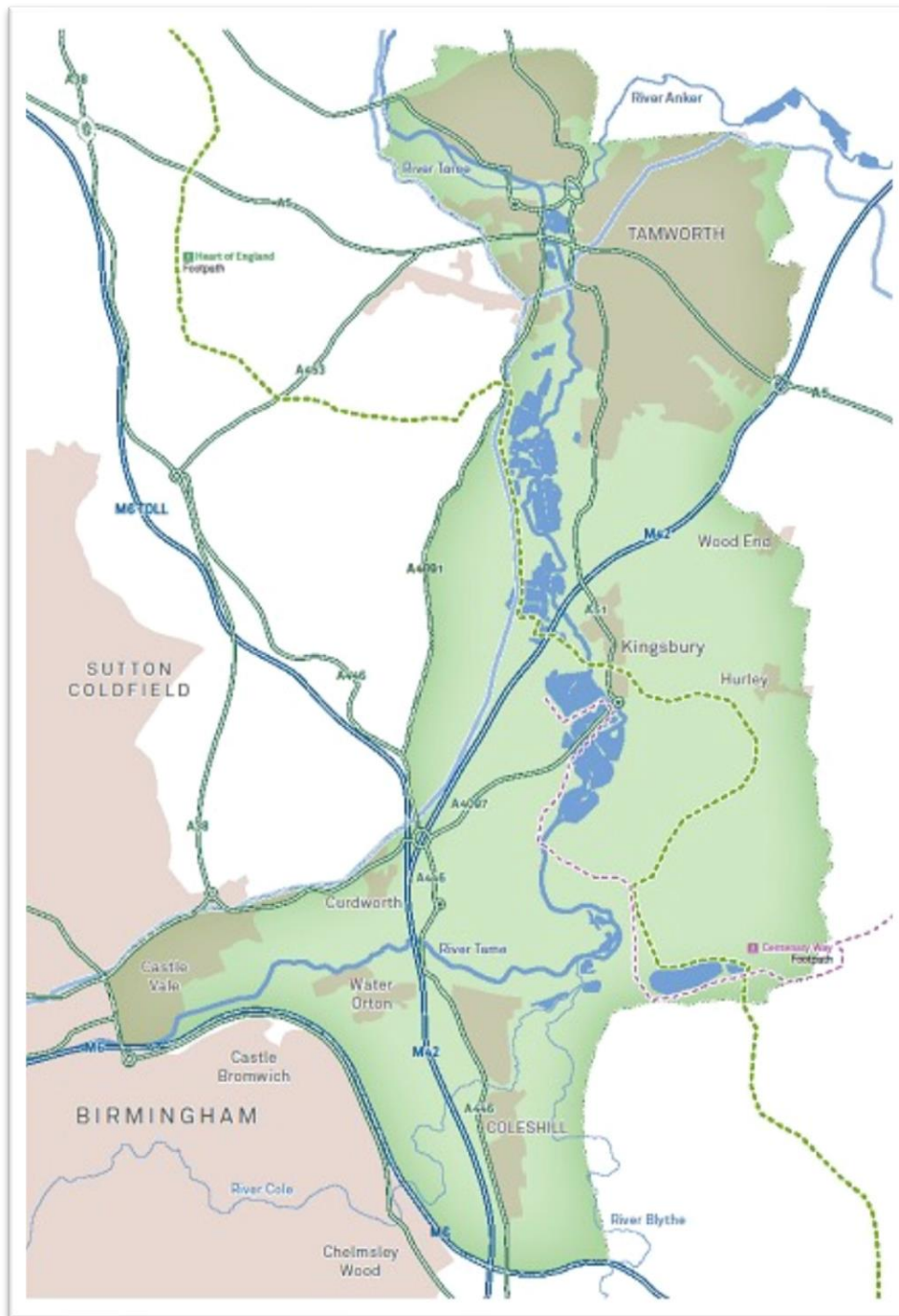


Figure 3: Tame Valley Wetlands LPS Catchment

These are fully detailed in Section One of the Landscape Conservation Action Plan together with a detailed description of the topography, geology, ecology, history and characteristics of the landscape<sup>3</sup>. In 2016, the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Area was designated as a Nature Improvement Area, the first in Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull.

<sup>3</sup> Tame Valley Wetlands Conservation Action Plan 2014-2018 can be viewed at:  
<http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/resources/>



### 1.2.2 Key Sites

This map shows the key sites and points of interest that have provided the focus for the programme of action devised by the Partnership. As can be seen, they are located along the length of this stretch of the River Tame and are predominantly located around the wetlands.

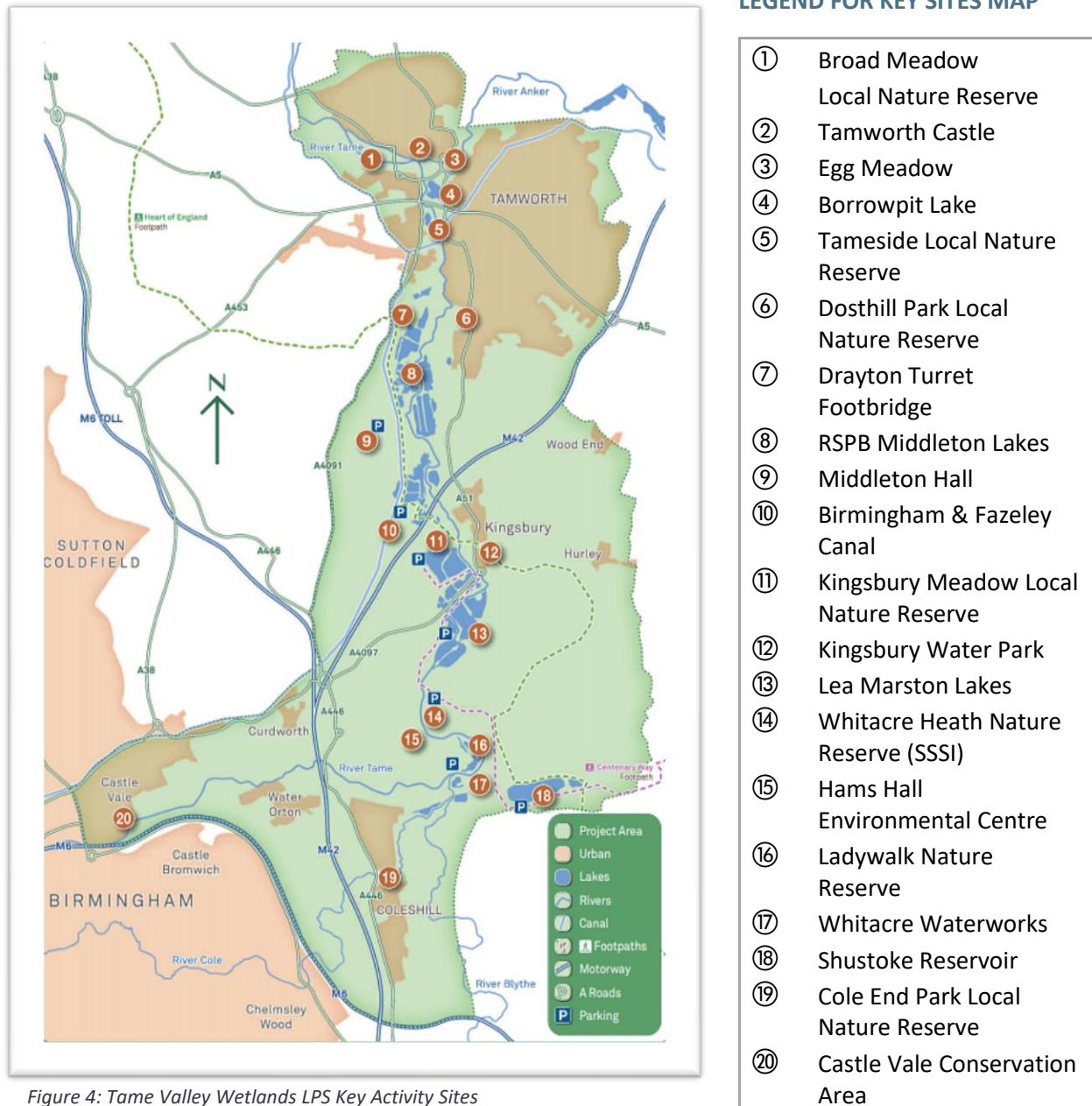


Figure 4: Tame Valley Wetlands LPS Key Activity Sites

## 1.3 Threats to the Landscape

The Partnership identified numerous challenges and risks that it agreed must be addressed to conserve the Tame Valley Wetlands landscape:

- Fragmentation of the landscape by development and transit routes;
- Ongoing degradation of the area's natural assets through mineral extraction;
- Planned development and pressure for housing;
- Increasing lack of understanding about and detachment of the local population from their natural and historical heritage;
- Decline of vulnerable species caused by habitat loss, changing management practices, climate change and flooding;
- Spread of invasive non-native species of flora and fauna;
- Pressure from water-based sports and recreation;
- Changes in land management practices and loss of traditional skills;
- Anti-social behaviour;
- Lack of resources;
- Poor community engagement;
- Poor access or lack of knowledge about how to access the countryside.

More detail about the threats and challenges faced can be found in Section 3 of the Landscape Conservation Action Plan<sup>4</sup> (LCAP).

## 1.4 Ambition and Vision

The Partnership encapsulated its vision of the changes it wished to help bring about in the following statement:

*“To create a wetland landscape, rich in wildlife and accessible to all. This will be achieved by taking a landscape-scale approach to restoring, conserving and reconnecting the physical and cultural landscape of the Tame Valley. By re-engaging local communities with the landscape and its rich heritage, a sense of ownership, understanding and pride will be nurtured to ensure a lasting legacy of restoration and conservation.”*

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<sup>4</sup> See: P99 of LCAP at: <http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/resources/>

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## 1.5 Driving Change

A four-year programme of activity designed to deliver this vision was laid out in the LCAP for the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme (TVWLPS)". This envisaged some 38 projects plus a small number of reserve projects, divided into four thematic areas delivered by an employed programme team, partner agencies, community groups and local volunteers.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) agreed a grant of nearly £1.72 million, which would be matched by partner funding, other funders such as Biffa Award and in-kind contributions totalling a little over £810,000, giving a total programme budget of slightly over £2.5 million.

The programme ran from April 2014 with a target end date of August 2018 and a contract end date of December 2018. In early 2018 a transition plan was approved to enable supplementary activity to take place up to December 2018.

## 1.6 Achieving the Vision – Aims and Objectives

The Partnership clustered the programme of work around four key thematic aims:

<b>Aim One:</b>	<b>Conserve and Restore</b>	Conserve, enhance and restore built and natural heritage features in order to improve the fragmented and degraded landscape of the Tame Valley. Emphasis will be given to linear features such as the River Tame and its floodplain, the canal corridor and historic hedgerows.
<b>Aim Two:</b>	<b>Community Participation</b>	Reconnect the local community with the Tame Valley landscape and its heritage by engaging and involving people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities with their local green spaces, sites of heritage interest and the conservation and restoration of these places.
<b>Aim Three:</b>	<b>Access and Learning</b>	Improve access and learning for local people – both physical access on and between sites and intellectual access on and off site through a range of resources. This includes development of the 'Tame Way', themed trails, and a Gateway to the Tame Valley interpretation centre and website.
<b>Aim Four:</b>	<b>Training and Skills</b>	Provide training opportunities for local people by offering taster sessions, short courses, award schemes and certificates in a range of heritage and conservation topics, in order to increase the skill and knowledge levels within the local population and provide a lasting legacy.

Table 1: Four key aims of the Tame Valley Wetlands LPS

Overarching all of these is a fifth theme "Partnership Development and Management" that provides the staff resource and training to support delivery of the programme.



## 1.7 Directing and Delivering the Scheme - Governance

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust is the lead body for the Partnership and has hosted the Landscape Partnership Scheme throughout development of the bid and delivery of the Scheme. The Trust has also acted as the main employer for the Partnership team of a Scheme Manager, four full-time and two part-time delivery officers, a part-time administrative assistant and, for part of the programme, a full-time seconded marketing apprentice; some staff were provided by partner organisations and line managed by them. The Scheme's volunteer group 'Tameforce' and a small number of administrative volunteers have made a significant contribution to programme delivery.

The Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership was formed in 2005 and so existed before the HLF-funded scheme came to fruition; it continues to operate with alternative funding streams in place, now that the HLF Scheme has been concluded.

It champions the Tame Valley Living Landscape Area. There are 150 'Living Landscapes' across the country where the network of Wildlife Trusts has a vision of "(Creating) Living Landscapes where wildlife habitats are bigger, better managed and more joined-up"<sup>5</sup>

### 1.7.1 Partnership Board

The Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership has taken on the role of Partnership Board for the HLF Scheme, evolving its name to include 'Landscape Partnership' in recognition of HLF funding. It is made up of eleven Board members representing core partners. Within the final year of the Scheme, Solihull Metropolitan and Tamworth Borough Councils have joined the Partnership and become active members:

TAME VALLEY WETLANDS PARTNERSHIP BOARD		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Canal and River Trust</b></li> <li>• <b>North Warwickshire Borough Council</b></li> <li>• <b>Staffordshire Wildlife Trust</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environment Agency</b></li> <li>• <b>RSPB</b></li> <li>• <b>Tamworth Borough Council (joined 2018)</b></li> <li>• <b>Warwickshire Wildlife Trust</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Natural England (joined 2017)</b></li> <li>• <b>Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (joined 2018)</b></li> <li>• <b>Warwickshire County Council</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Community Representation</b></p>

Table 2: Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership Board Composition

<sup>5</sup> See national Wildlife Trust website: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/about-us/vision-and-mission/living-landscapes>

Rather than simply choosing a Chair from amongst its number, in 2015 the Board successfully ran an open competitive process to recruit an independent Chair from the local community.

### 1.7.2 Wider Partnership

A wider partnership of some 24 organisations (including Board members) acts as part of the network for keeping local people and organisations up to date with activities, for encouraging wide community and partner involvement and for shaping the Partnership's plans. These include:

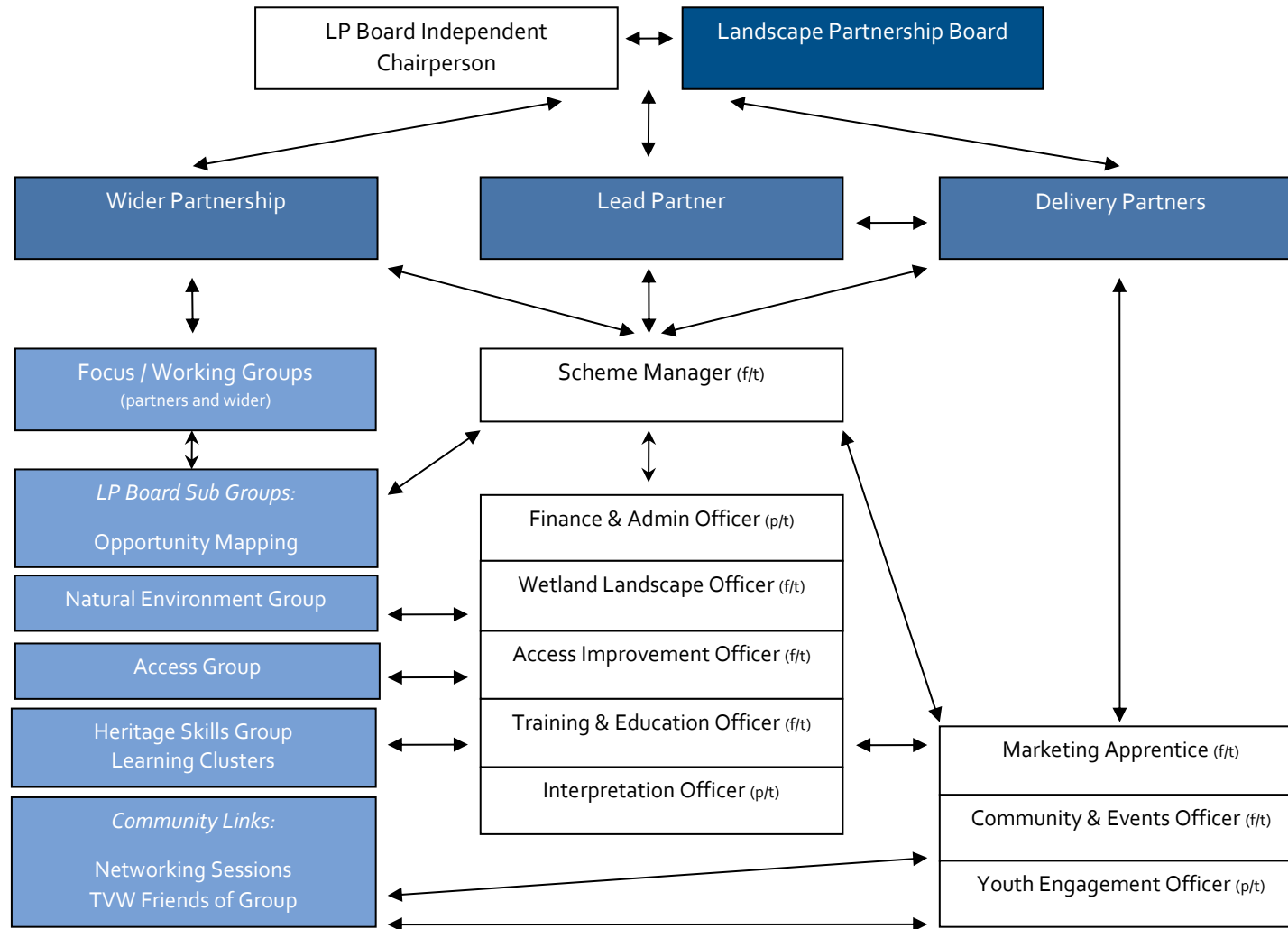
MEMBERSHIP OF WIDER TVW PARTNERSHIP includes:			
• Angling Trust	• Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust	• Community Environmental Trust	• Curdworth Parish Council
• Heart of England Community Foundation	• Lea Marston Parish Council	• Love Coleshill	• North Warwickshire Volunteer Centre
• Middleton Hall Trust	• Middleton Parish Council	• Severn Trent	• Staffordshire County Council
	• West Midland Bird Club	• Woodland Trust	

Table 3: Members of the wider Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership

### 1.7.3 Governance and Management Structure

The diagram overleaf shows the structure adopted for the Partnership and the organisational structure of the staff team. Whilst most of the staff were directly employed by the accountable body, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT), two members of the team continued to be employed and line-managed by RSPB and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, respectively. In addition, a marketing apprentice was seconded to WWT by Warwickshire County Council to work on the scheme. This was a deliberate measure to strengthen relationships between the staff of partner organisations working on the ground.

**FIGURE 5: TAME VALLEY WETLANDS LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**





**Figure 6: Borrowpit Lake**  
(Photo by Tracey Doherty)



## 2.0 Evaluation Methodology

### 2.1 Partnership Approach

The Partnership devised a set of measures to assess the performance of the Scheme and of each of the projects within the four programmes. The Partnership detailed three key questions that it wished to answer through its monitoring and evaluation activities to evidence practical delivery and to show the change it has affected:

- 1. Has the scheme delivered all the outputs it set out to achieve (all projects, within all programmes across the scheme)?**
- 2. What difference did those projects and programmes make to the people and landscape of the Tame Valley?**
- 3. What legacy has been created for the people and landscape of the Tame Valley?**

These questions will be revisited in the Conclusions section of this report.

The Scheme has put in place a series of measures for gathering information, including evaluation and feedback forms for use by participants in its activities. It has a system for collating and reporting factual information that monitors progress over time and against milestones, which directly reflects the quarterly reporting needs for HLF and for the Partnership Board.

At the outset, discussion took place about the range of different outcomes that might reasonably be associated with each project. It was a task of the first half of the Scheme to firm these up and ensure the outcomes chosen are appropriate and measurable.

As it is considered good practice to commission external evaluation, consultants from MRE Unlocking Enterprise have been retained to support the Partnership's monitoring and evaluation work and to undertake the Final Review.

### 2.2 Scope of Final Review

#### 2.2.1 Assessment Criteria

The purpose of the Final Review is to consider the Scheme's performance having completed the four-year programme of activity. The Review specifically seeks to assess:

- What progress has been made with delivering the LCAP, its outputs and outcomes;
- How the Scheme has performed in relation to HLF's objectives;
- What has gone well and what has gone less well;
- What are the particular successes of the Scheme;



- What learning has taken place locally that will help the Partnership with its future work and what messages should other LPS Schemes take from the experience in Tame Valley;
- How project management arrangements have worked;
- How sustainable are the achievements of the Scheme and what are the future plans for the Wetlands?

The age of the Scheme means that HLF does not require it to be assessed against the nine outcome measures to which more recent Schemes were subject. To provide a robust evaluation against those criteria, however, the evaluators have looked at the Scheme in the context of nine outcome measures required by HLF up to 2018.

### 2.2.2 Transition Plan

The Partnership negotiated a Transition Plan with Heritage Lottery Fund which extended to the end of February 2019. As well as making best use of any remaining HLF funding, the purpose of the Plan is to extend projects where more can be achieved. Projects were chosen because they are important to the sustainability of the Partnership's achievements and have a good chance of continuation, supported by funding other than HLF.

MRE has also been commissioned to undertake a review of delivery of the transition plan. For completeness and where appropriate, assessment relating to the delivery of the Transition Plan is incorporated into this Review document.

## 2.3 Logic Model

HLF guidance<sup>6</sup> now advocates the development of a logic model for LPS programmes. MRE also recommends the use of such a tool to help explain how the planned practical activities will deliver specific objectives and outcomes. Producing a logic chain can be a challenging process but, once in place, it becomes much easier to understand what outputs will be delivered by which activities and what evidence can be gathered to show the difference the activities are making.

At the outset of the programme, a lot of effort was made by the staff team to identify possible outcomes from the various projects under their respective control, but these had not been refined into a finite set of measurable outcomes. An early task of MRE's consultancy was to help the Scheme Manager to select manageable and realistic outcome measures and to produce a logic chain. This work actively involved the project team, was completed in 2017 and has resulted in a detailed and lengthy document, which is available as a separate annex to this report. A truncated version is appended to this report in Appendix 1.

Not only is the logic model a helpful guide during the delivery phase, it also facilitates the evaluation process and has provided a useful reference point for this Final Review.

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<sup>6</sup> See: <https://www.hlf.org.uk/evaluation-guidance>

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## 2.4 Methodology for the Final Review

MRE was retained to conduct a formal final evaluation of the Scheme, referred to in this document as the Final Review. MRE has now been working with the Project Team for 18 months and has developed a good understanding of the plans, successes and challenges of the programme. We supported the production of a Mid Term Review in Spring 2017 and that work has acted as a reference point for the Final Review.

A standard methodology for this type of project has been adopted. The detailed methodology can be seen in Appendix 2 to this Review. We should stress, however, that the evaluation team have been involved at repeated stages since early 2017, gathering and reviewing both qualitative and quantitative information, making site visits, attending project meetings, attending and observing activities, conducting consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including Board members, partners, volunteers and staff.

A series of workshops was held in July 2018 with the project team specifically to review what evidence was available for each project within their control.

Formal returns and reports have been reviewed to check which outputs have been delivered. A variety of evidential documents, such as feedback forms and attendance sheets, have been made available to enable random checks on accuracy.

This report is not just about looking back, however, but also seeks to look ahead to ascertain the commitment of partners and the outlook for the Wetlands; as a result, sustainability of project improvements and future strategy have also been considered.

## 2.5 HLF Principles for Good Evaluation

In guidance issued in August 2017<sup>7</sup>, the HLF set out six basic principles of good evaluation. Our standard evaluation methods are consistent with this guidance, nevertheless, we have ensured that they are implicit in the production of this Review. The evaluation team have paraphrased the six principles as:

1. **Tell the project story** - use a logic chain and associated measurement plan to frame the review;
2. **Counting, involving, choosing indicators that matter** - explain the methodology used – use different, relevant, appropriate methods to triangulate findings;
3. **Go beyond counting** - ensure data analysis is robust and transparent and, where necessary, state its limitations. Interpret data as well as presenting it;
4. **Avoid bias** - Make sure the review is objective;
5. **Structure the process of understanding** - present results clearly;
6. **Improve not just prove** - make conclusions and recommendations clear to enable stakeholders to identify and apply any lessons learned.

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<sup>7</sup> Scroll down to Paragraph f of the guidance note at: <https://www.hlf.org.uk/evaluation-guidance>

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## 2.6 Management Information System

The Scheme contains five programmes of activity, four of which have multiple projects to be delivered. In all, nearly 40 projects were included in the programme. The Review includes commentary about the effectiveness of administrative arrangements and the system for managing and reporting data.

## 2.7 Findings of the Mid Term Review

A Mid Term Review was conducted in Spring 2017 to see what progress had been made in the first two years, what lessons could be learned for the last part of the delivery programme and what priorities should be addressed to achieve the aims of the Scheme.

MRE Unlocking Enterprise commenced work to support the evaluation process in early 2017. They were not engaged to undertake a formal Mid Term Review but supported the work of the Scheme Manager to undertake the Review.

The Mid Term Review found that approximately two thirds of the (at that time) 36 projects within the Scheme had been delivered or were making good progress. This meant that tangible achievements were evident, including landmark projects such as the refurbishment of the Visitor Centre at Kingsbury Water Park.

The other third (13 projects) had some level of risk associated with their successful completion. 11 were classed by the Scheme Manager as medium risk and two were classed as high risk.

The reasons for the risks were explained in the Review: these centred on late appointment of (difficulty recruiting) access staff or a partner failing to deliver an agreed project.

A remedial plan was agreed with HLF that focussed attention on the necessary actions to achieve delivery targets, including changing the specification of a few projects.

Particular concerns regarding delivery at that time were:

1. Project A1 – Paving the Way – a key heritage restoration project - responsibility for delivery lay with Canal and River Trust but had not started;
2. Project C2 – The Tame Way – a landmark project to create a series of linked paths around the Tame Valley to improve access - responsibility for delivery lay with the Project Team. The project was underway but staffing issues had meant a late start, so progress was slow.

Other issues highlighted by MRE were:

- 43% of budget still to be spent;
- Access outcomes were at risk if access projects were not delivered fully;

- Close monitoring of delivery of the remedial plan was necessary to maximise achievements;
- Staff fixed-term contracts might mean that staff started to leave before the completion of programme delivery;
- Confirmation that public perception surveying techniques were appropriate;
- Need to secure resources for post-Scheme period to pursue the Partnership's wider vision and underpin sustainability.

During the Final Review the evaluation team was particularly keen to see how/whether these issues had been addressed.

**Figure 7: Hedgerow planted – Wathes Farm Project 1B**  
**(Photo: T Doherty)**



## 3.0 Achievements by LCAP Aims

### 3.1 Structure of the Scheme

The Scheme of delivery envisaged by the Landscape Conservation Action Plan (LCAP) is extensive and complex. To make the Scheme more manageable both in terms of delivery and assessment of success, the Scheme was divided into four key aims:

1. Conserve and Restore
2. Community Participation
3. Access and Learning
4. Training and Skills

Within each aim, a number of objectives were identified that gave greater definition to the Partnership's intentions; where feasible, numerical performance targets were also set. These are detailed on Table 4 overleaf.

As well as explaining the specific objectives, the Table shows the main projects that would deliver each objective.

There was also a fifth programme that deals with staffing and resources for the Scheme. The evaluation has not considered that as a programme in its own right but draws conclusions about administrative matters in Section Six.

The Scheme consists of approx. 40 projects (there have been some projects cancelled, some re-scoped and some reserve projects introduced), which were grouped into four theme areas or 'programmes.' In practice, some of the projects crosscut two or more programmes but they were allocated to the dominant programme to which they contribute. The four project programmes broadly align with the four aims, although some projects contribute to more than one programme.

A full project listing by programme is shown in Table 5 on Pages 26 and 27.

Following the tables, this section assesses to what extent each of the aims has been achieved. Since the achievement of Aim One relies predominantly on projects in Programme A, Aim Two on projects in Programme B and so on, we have described the projects in numerical order. If you want to read more about **all** the projects that have made any contribution to a theme, please use the table overleaf to find the full list of projects to review.

As an example, Aim 2b) is to positively engage with hard-to-reach groups including young people. The main projects for this aim can be found in Programme B projects but project C8 was also designed to contribute to the aim. To get a complete view of how this aim was delivered you would also need to look at Programme C in the Aim Three section to find the assessment of project C8.



Table 4: Scheme Aims, Objectives and respective project delivery

Aim	Theme/ Programme	Descriptions	Objectives	Achieved through
<b>Aim One:</b>	<b>Conserve and Restore</b>	Conserve, enhance and restore built and natural heritage features in order to improve the fragmented and degraded landscape of the Tame Valley. Emphasis will be given to linear features such as the River Tame and its floodplain, the canal corridor and historic hedgerows.	1a Restore at least 2 historic, listed structures of built heritage importance.	Projects A1 and A2
			1b Create / enhance 50 hectares of Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) habitat (predominantly wetland), and 1,000 metres of river or canal bankside habitat.	Projects A3, A5, A6, A9
			1c Create / restore 1,000 metres of hedgerows and historic field boundaries.	Project B4
			1d Provide improved habitat, protection, awareness and monitoring for at least 5 native LBAP species.	Projects A4, A7, A8, A9
<b>Aim Two:</b>	<b>Community Participation</b>	Reconnect the local community with the Tame Valley landscape and its heritage by engaging and involving people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities with their local green spaces, sites of heritage interest and the conservation and restoration of these places.	2a Undertake practical conservation and surveying work at sites across the scheme area through the creation of a regular and mobile volunteering programme, attracting 10 volunteers on average per session.	Project B3
			2b Explore ways to positively engage and involve hard-to-reach groups, particularly young people and those from deprived or segregated communities. This will be achieved through the delivery of targeted work such as youth engagement, which will engage with at least 200 young people.	Projects B7, B8, C8

Aim	Theme/ Programme	Descriptions	Objectives	Achieved through
			<p>2c Provide opportunities for communities to take ownership of their local area ... through community-led initiatives, focusing on cultural heritage by setting up new or supporting established local volunteer groups ...at least 3 active groups spanning the length of the scheme area.</p>	Projects B2, B5, B6
			<p>2d Develop and deliver comprehensive events and activities for schools and families across the Scheme area, with the target of reaching 1,000 school children and 500 members of the public.</p>	Projects B1, C7
<b>Aim Three:</b>	<b>Access and Learning</b>	Improve access and learning for local people – both physical access on and between sites and intellectual access on and off site through a range of resources. This includes development of the 'Tame Way', themed trails, and a Gateway to the Tame	<p>3a Encourage inclusive physical access and health and wellbeing by removing actual or perceived barriers, improving access at 10 key sites of interest, and creating 5 new circular / themed trails across the area.</p> <p>3b Improve existing access routes and the links between these to develop and promote a 'Tame Way' - an interconnected network of access routes, trails and themed walks encompassing a range of heritage sites along the scheme area.</p>	<p>Projects C1, C4, C5, C11<sup>8</sup></p> <p>Project C2</p>

<sup>8</sup> C11 was a reserve project, was not required to complete the Programme and was deleted without delivery

Aim	Theme/ Programme	Descriptions	Objectives	Achieved through
		Valley interpretation centre and website.	3c Raise awareness of the landscape and its wildlife, heritage and accessibility through innovative learning and interpretation, both in the field and on the internet, through the development of a heritage resource pack and site-based interpretation, the use of new and social media, the creation of a Gateway to the Tame Valley interpretation centre at Kingsbury Water Park and an interactive website. The centre and website will engage at least 55,000 people with the scheme.	Projects C3, C6, C9, C12
			3d Promote the scheme and the Tame Valley identity and raise the environmental and socio-economic importance of the landscape - its heritage and its wetlands. 10 articles / press releases will be produced and promoted.	Project C10
<b>Aim Four:</b>	<b>Training and Skills</b>	Provide training opportunities for local people by offering taster sessions, short courses, award schemes and certificates in a range of heritage and conservation topics, in order to increase the skill and knowledge levels within the local population and provide a lasting legacy.	4a Deliver at least 150 taster days and short courses, training approximately 1,000 people in a range of natural and built heritage and conservation topics, such as stonework restoration, hurdle making, coppicing, hedge-laying and species identification.	Project D1

Aim	Theme/ Programme	Descriptions	Objectives	Achieved through
			<p>4b Provide opportunities for local people to gain certification in heritage and environmental conservation skills. At least 40 people will carry out accredited training through OCN or City of Guilds qualifications. 10 of these people will go on to find employment, education or further training as a result of this training. 25 young people will also gain the John Muir Award.</p>	Project D6
			<p>4c Undertake focused learning and research with landowners, colleges and universities to facilitate and encourage sustainable land management and to provide useful data to inform landscape restoration work. 45 landowners / farmers will be engaged, and the scheme will link with college, undergraduate and postgraduate level courses through close working with at least 4 colleges and universities</p>	Project D2
			<p>4d Strengthen skills and knowledge amongst scheme and Partnership staff and the wider network of local groups and volunteers.</p>	Projects D3, D4, D5, D7



Table 5: Projects by Thematic Programme Group

Programme A – Conserve and Restore			Programme B – Community Participation		
Ref	Project Title	Description	Ref	Project Title	Description
A1	Paving the Way	Replacing historic paving stones, handrails and tunnel faces of the Grade II listed Curdworth Tunnel	B1	Heritage Events	Deliver an engaging programme of natural heritage and traditional heritage skills events inc. Wild Wednesdays
A2	Turret Restoration	Improve the condition and appearance of the Drayton Turret Footbridge over the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal nr. Entrance to Drayton Manor Park	B2	Your Local Heritage	Use History Pin to explore local cultural, family and social history via software, events and book
A3	Wilding the Tame	Restore 300m of River Tame, reprofile riverbank, 500m of improved pathway and habitat created in Hemlingford Water (close to Kingsbury Water Park)	B3	Environmental Volunteering	Engage volunteers in management and restoration of site of natural heritage interest - site improved, bird boxes installed, litter picked, invasive species control, habitat management, species monitored.
A4	Fantastic Fritillaries/Borrowpit Lake	Capital works and awareness raising at Broad Meadow floodplain grassland habitat with traditional grazing Enhance marginal wetland habitat at Borrowpit Lakes fishery to benefit water voles, fish and biodiversity, interpretation of Broad Meadow	B4	Hedgerow Restoration	Volunteers trained to plant 500m and restore 500m + involve farmers at various locations including Curdworth, Lea Marston and along the canal
A5	Taming the Tame	Habitat and refuge for fish in 200m channel linked to River Tame and tree planting on island to reduce erosion	B5	Community Grants	Grants to community groups via managing agent
A6	Kingsbury's Community Wetland	New area of wetland, reedbed, improved paths, viewing platform, bank installed as habitat for sand martins	B6	Community Groups	Direct support to local groups and to set up new 'Friends' groups
A7	Ban on balsam	Control of invasive non-native plants with rust fungus at strategic sites	B7	Youth Engagement	Involve young people in learning about, valuing and managing green spaces - taster sessions, youth vol. grp., John Muir award. Production of film
A8	Bringing a boom to Tame Valley	Enhance a wetland area and create reedbed on east of Middleton Lakes as habitat for bittern plus viewing point	B8	School Engagement	Inspire and educate local school pupils (inc. special needs) 5 - 15 about TVW with in-school sessions, field trips, lesson plan created linked to Nat. Curriculum
A9	Wilding the Tame North	Riverbank reprofiling at Kingsbury	B9	Ratty's Return	Improve conditions for water voles - waterway improvements, mink control, pond created on sites where landowners willing
A19R/A5a	River Bourne	Design a bund to keep water flow narrower at confluence of Rivers Tame and Bourn	B10	Purchase of Scheme Vehicles	
A20R/A5b	River Blythe	Scoping exercise for fish bypass channel			

## Programme C – Access and Learning

Ref	Title	Description
<b>C1</b>	Access Group	Establish a volunteer group to improve access
<b>C2</b>	The Tame Way	Create/enhance a network of interconnected routes to be known as 'The Tame Way' to create a long-distance route the length of the wetlands
<b>C3</b>	Tame Valley Interpretation	Increase signage (10 new signs) and interpretation boards at heritage sites (excluding those on The Tame Way). Oak monoliths at entrance to major sites
<b>C4</b>	Tame Valley Access Improvements	Access improvements to sites not on the Tame Way
<b>C5</b>	Circular and Themed Walks	Develop a portfolio of marked walks, supported by leaflet maps for walking and cycling with varying difficulty and length
<b>C6</b>	Signposting Guide	Production of printable and web-based guide to walking, riding, cycling and canoeing routes in Tame Valley
<b>C7</b>	Animation	Originally family resource pack: changed to 'Living Map' tells history of the area in 5 min. animation
<b>C8</b>	Educational Materials for Badged Organisations	Sessions delivered for Girl Guide Groups for informal learning and badge achievement.
<b>C9</b>	Gateway to Tame Valley Wetlands	New visitor/interpretation centre at Kingsbury Water Park plus people engaged via events
<b>C10</b>	Tame Valley Brand and website	Development of brand and website to promote landscape and partnership
<b>C11</b>	Sculpture Trail	Reserve project - not required and did not proceed
<b>C12</b>	Information Hub/Marketing	Promotion and marketing - originally via a trailer but changed to pop-up boards plus range of marketing leaflets and materials for distribution to public

## Programme D – Training and Skills

Ref	Title	Description
<b>D1</b>	Taster Sessions	Varied prog. of taster sessions to encourage learning about natural environment
<b>D2</b>	Research	Students surveying nature reserves twice yearly, talks, field trip, linked coursework, post grad. Research to produce scheme monitoring and evaluation tool
<b>D3</b>	Capacity Building	Programme of training for staff and volunteers, inc. leading to NPTC qualifications
<b>D4</b>	Cultural Heritage Training	A range of training linked to heritage of the landscape
<b>D5</b>	Mapping	Volunteers trained in mapping and recording techniques for natural heritage features
<b>D6</b>	Accredited Training	Targeted at OCN and C & G conservation work
<b>D7</b>	Apprenticeship	Recruit and train a marketing apprentice.

### 3.2 Transition Plan and Addendum Plan

In March 2018, the Partnership negotiated a Transition Plan<sup>9</sup> to be delivered in parallel with and in the months following the Scheme end date of 31 August 2018. Its original timescale was April – December 2018, although, ultimately, it was extended to end of February 2019. The purpose of the Plan was to enhance the value of a group of projects that had demonstrated further potential, to respond to additional improvement opportunities that had emerged during Scheme delivery and to make best use any of Programme underspend. In this way the Partnership felt it would strengthen the legacy of the Scheme.

Several Partners were keen to show their commitment to the ongoing Partnership and agreed to contribute funds. This resulted in a pot of approx. £295K being assembled to fund the Transition Plan, of which approx. £136k is HLF funds and the remainder provided in cash or kind by partners.

A thorough review and consultation exercise was conducted to identify the priorities that partners wished to include in the Transition Plan. These were encapsulated in eight projects, some of which are new activity and some that continue projects in the original LCAP. The projects, designated with a 'T' code, are detailed below:

Table 6: Transition Plan Projects

Ref.	Name	Programme Allocation and Purpose	Funding
T1/A9	River Re-naturalisation and Feasibility Study	<u>Programme A: Conserve and Restore</u> 1) To restore a 250 – 500 metre length of the River Cole, upstream of the River Tame in North Solihull. 2) To carry out a feasibility study for a bypass to Blyth Mill Weir and wetland creation on adjacent land on River Blythe SSSI to support a 2019 funding bid.	HLF: £17.4k Partners: £45.2k
T2	Restoration of Lea Ford Cottage	<u>Programme A: Conserve and Restore</u> To restore a 400-year-old Tudor cottage in disrepair (Lea Ford Cottage) in Lea Marston Parish at Hams Hall Environmental Centre. Replaces lost outputs for heritage restoration resulting from non-delivery of A1	HLF: £10.4k
T3 (C10 & C12)	Tourism, Destination Development and Communications Plan	<u>Programme C: Access and Learning</u> Build on the work achieved over four years and secure a strong legacy and clear future direction for the Tame Valley Wetlands as a brand and regionally important destination for local people and visitors.	HLF: £17.4k
T4	Improvements to Training Studies Centre	<u>Programme B: Community Participation</u> To do essential repairs and additional improvements to partnership office/training centre at Hams Hall Environmental Studies	HLF: £16.8k Partners: £3.2k

<sup>9</sup> "Tame Valley Wetlands Scheme Update and Transition Plan Summary" March 2018

Ref.	Name	Programme Allocation and Purpose	Funding
		Centre in order to make the centre and its operations more sustainable long-term	
T5 (B3, C4 & D6)	Conservation Volunteers, Trainees and Lengthsman	<u>Programme C: Access and Learning</u> To ensure sustainability of the scheme's conservation volunteering group ('TameForce') and accredited training opportunities. Trial an innovative approach to deliver landscape improvements through a Parish Lengthsman scheme, providing added value to the basic requirements by integrating opportunities for volunteering, training in traditional heritage skills and advice for parishes into delivery.	HLF: £9.5k
T6 (B7 & B8)	Environmental Education & Youth Engagement	<u>Programme B: Community Participation</u> To ensure the continuation and legacy of the scheme's successful education and youth engagement, with the aim to establish a sustainable approach post HLF funding by the end of 2018.	HLF: £0 (used remaining B7 and B8 funding) Then funded by Staffs WT and by fee generation from schools
T7 (B1)	Events Programme	<u>Programme D: Training and Skills</u> To deliver a reduced programme of events during 2018 to keep up momentum gained through LPS project. Choosing quality over quantity, events will take place that have had the best feedback from attendees over the last four years and that are best value for money.	HLF: £0 (use remaining funding from B1)
T8	Invasive Non-native Species Control (A7)	<u>Programme A: Conserve and Restore</u> To continue the innovative and cutting-edge work started through the LPS (Project A7) to control invasive non-native plant species through biological and mechanical control.	HLF: £0 Partners: £40.5k

In addition to funding for works and activities, the budget includes £49k for the extension of some staff posts and overheads.

One of the heritage projects, Project A1, that was to be delivered by a partner organisation suffered continual delays. Despite repeated attempts to clarify the situation, it was Summer 2018 before it became clear that the project would not be delivered. This left a further underspend of £66K. An Addendum Plan containing 7 mini projects was agreed with HLF in September 2018 to utilise the A1 underspend. These are denoted by a 'TX' reference and fit within Programme A: Conserve and Restore:

TX1 – Footpath improvements at RSPB Middleton Lakes – led by RSPB

TX2 – Visitor reception at Middleton (part funding) – led by RSPB

TX3 – Wetland feasibility study for Middleton Parish – led by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT)



TX4 – Bridge feasibility study over river to Whitacre Heath – led by WWT

TX5 – Tree and path safety work at Whitacre Heath – led by Reserves team

TX6 – Coleshill Town Council and allotment group - improved access to allotments – led by WWT

TX7 – Fencing in Curdworth – led by Curdworth Parish Council.

Where contingency projects link closely with projects within the main Scheme, the outcome of the transition project is included in the dialogue about the original project in the sub-sections that follow.

Section Five of this Review draws together an overview and assessment of the success of the Transition Plan and Addendum delivery.

### 3.3 Aim One – Conserve and Restore – Programme A

#### 3.3.1 Aims and Achievements

The first aim of the LCAP is to:

*“Conserve, enhance and restore built and natural heritage features in order to improve the fragmented and degraded landscape of the Tame Valley. Emphasis will be given to linear features such as the River Tame and its floodplain, the canal corridor and historic hedgerows.”*

#### **ASSESSMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT**

*The Partnership has been successful in delivering this aim. Multiple examples of improvements can be seen that will bring long term benefits. The loss of Project A1 was unfortunate but largely beyond the control of the Partnership. A different historic structure has benefitted from refurbishment as a result and a range of additional conservation improvements have been undertaken*

The detailed objectives are presented in the tables above on Page 22. To deliver this aim, a programme of nine projects was designed, and Project B4 (see Aim Two for Programme B projects) was intended to make a further contribution to its success in terms of hedgerow restoration. Two reserve projects were also successfully delivered. There were four key targets within this aim as set out in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Key Targets for Aim One

KEY TARGETS FOR AIM ONE	TARGET	ACTUAL
1. Work with partners to restore <b>historic, listed structures</b> of built heritage importance.	At least two	Two – Drayton Turret Footbridge and Lea Ford Cottage
2. With Water Framework Directive targets in mind, work with partners, landowners, farmers and local volunteers to <b>create / enhance</b> areas of Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) <b>habitat</b> (predominantly wetland), and <b>river or canal bankside habitat</b> .	50 hectares LBAP habitat  and 1,000 metres bankside habitat	~50 <sup>10</sup> hectares achieved 2,035 metres
3. Work with landowners, farmers and local communities to create / restore <b>hedgerows</b> and historic field boundaries.	1,000 metres	1,949 metres
4. Provide improved habitat, protection, awareness and monitoring for <b>native LBAP species</b> .	At least 5 native LBAP species	7 species claimed <sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The 50 ha is made up of 19 ha at Broad Meadow, 6 ha at Kingsbury Water Park, 10 ha at RSPB Middleton Lakes plus areas at Borrowpit Lake, and the numerous locations where TameForce have been working.

<sup>11</sup> Evidence not seen

### 3.3.2 Project Delivery for Programme A

The original nine Programme A projects plus two reserve projects are listed below with their completion status as at the end of August 2018.

Table 8: List of Programme A projects

Ref	Project Title	Description	Completion Status at 31.8.18
<b>A1</b>	Paving the Way	Replacing historic paving stones, handrails and tunnel faces of the Grade II listed Curdworth Tunnel	Project cancelled due to partner being unable to resource. N.B. Replaced by T2 and Tx projects
<b>A2</b>	Turret Restoration	Improve the condition and appearance of the Drayton Turret Footbridge over the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal nr. Entrance to Drayton Manor Park	Project completed
<b>A3</b>	Wilding the Tame	Restore 300m of River Tame, reprofile riverbank, 500m of improved pathway and habitat created in Hemlingford Water (close to Kingsbury Water Park)	Project completed
<b>A4</b>	Fantastic Fritillaries/Borrowpit Lake	Capital works and awareness raising at Broad Meadow floodplain grassland habitat with traditional grazing Enhance marginal wetland habitat at Borrowpit Lakes fishery to benefit water voles, fish and biodiversity, interpretation of Broad Meadow	Project completed
<b>A5</b>	Taming the Tame	Habitat and refuge for fish in 200m back channel linked to River Tame and tree planting on island to reduce erosion	Project completed
<b>A5a</b>	River Bourne	Also known as A19 Feasibility study to design a bund to keep water flow narrower at confluence of Rivers Tame and Bourn to stop water spread	Reserve project – completed
<b>A5b</b>	River Blythe SSSI	Also known as A20 Scoping exercise for fish bypass channel helping fish to navigate four weirs and reducing baby bird deaths in flooding	Reserve project – completed
<b>A6</b>	Kingsbury's Community Wetland	To create a new and exciting area of wetland, reedbed, improved paths, viewing platform and bank installed as habitat for sand martins, which will act as a magnet for both wildlife and people and encourage visitors to interact with their natural environment.	Project completed
<b>A7</b>	Ban on balsam	Control of invasive non-native plants with rust fungus at strategic sites	Project completed

Ref	Project Title	Description	Completion Status at 31.8.18
	(formerly Whitacre Wetland for Waders)		
<b>A8</b>	Bringing a boom to Tame Valley	Enhance a wetland area and create reedbed on east of Middleton Lakes as habitat for bittern plus viewing point	Project completed
<b>A9</b>	High speed fish pass/Wilding the Tame North	Riverbank reprofiling at Kingsbury to restore a 300-metre length of the River Tame – re-naturalising the river and improving access for people.	Reserve project – not undertaken. Now included in Transition Plan as TI.

The Partnership was also able to undertake two reserve projects, A5a and A5b (also known as R19 and R20), adding value to this programme's achievements and value for money.

The individual projects are discussed below; a number are also case studies and presented in Appendix 3.

It is unfortunate that the very first project to be considered in detail is the one where planned activity did not happen, causing some challenges to the partnership. It will be seen, however, that several positive outcomes were achieved with the funding originally allocated to it.

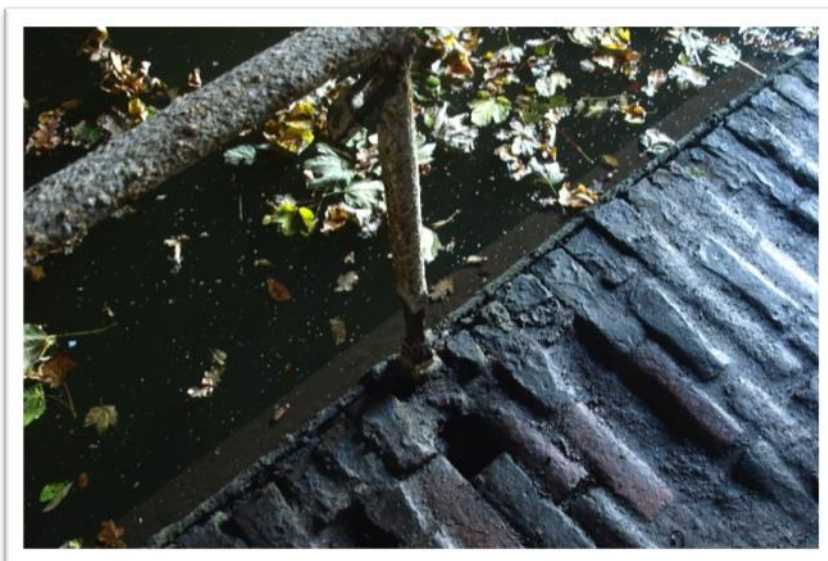


Figure 8: Condition of paving and rail in Curdworth Tunnel (J Holland October 2018)

The **Paving the Way project (Project A1)** was one of only two built heritage projects within the programme and was always considered to be a medium risk activity, mainly due to uncertainty over the exact condition of parts of the infrastructure to be restored. The sponsoring partner, Canal and River Trust (CRT), saw this as a good opportunity to include in the Local

Conservation Action Plan (LCAP) a project that was important, albeit not their highest priority. Converting it into actual activity on the ground proved more challenging for CRT, however.

The TVW progress reports show repeated requests to change the timing of the project up to the Mid Term review. According to the Scheme's early progress reports, at first CRT asked to bring the project forward to Year 2 of the programme, they then asked for it to be moved to Year 3, before asking to move it back into Year 2.

Despite this uncertainty, as late as the Mid Term Review in June 2017, it was not expected that the project would be withdrawn completely; when the Partnership Board asked CRT to either withdraw the project or commit to it, they did not withdraw the project. Notification



that it would not happen was provided finally in Spring 2018 and was, therefore, a disappointment to the Partnership Board and to the team. The Scheme Manager negotiated to carry forward the HLF element of funding into transition project T2, while the match funding was replaced with funds from another source. This enabled the team to undertake exciting work with built heritage at the Hams Hall Environment Centre site by restoring Lea Ford cottage and constructing a round house that will become an additional resource for training activities. An impediment to the programme has, therefore, been turned into a positive for legacy activity and arrangements.

Nevertheless, as the HLF adviser has commented:

*“Despite being frequently chased for decisions and action over the Paving the Way project, the Canal and River Trust only withdrew from this project in spring 2018, meaning a loss of £25,000<sup>12</sup> match funding for the TVWLPS. The team have managed well with this disappointingly late cancellation, while HLF are aware that this is one more in a pattern of recurrent delays or cancellations of projects by CRT within schemes across the region. Other built heritage activity has been developed by the team and partners for the transition plan and will be taken forward in the second half of 2018.”<sup>13</sup>*

There is a lesson to learn here for partners in that between the submission of an LCAP and the implementation activity, situations can change for one or more partners making them less able or unable to undertake their part of the agreed activity. Funding regimes, government policy and organisational structures are all factors that can affect ability to deliver, and all partner organisations should offer a realistic risk assessment of their contributions to a scheme. Service level agreements can also help to tie organisations into promised actions.

By contrast, the **Turret Restoration project (A2)** was undertaken early in the LCAP programme and should be regarded as an early and positive win for the LPS overall. It was CRT itself that asked for the project to be brought into Year 1 of the programme. The detail of this project is discussed in Case Study 1, but this restoration of a Grade II listed structure, unique across the canal and river network was undertaken in Year 1 of the programme between October 2014 and April 2015, using contractors from the CRT call-off contract for works. Evidence of the work is provided through financial claims with supporting timesheets



Figure 9: The refurbished Drayton Turret Footbridge  
(John Harris, Canal and Rivers Trust)

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<sup>12</sup> Early in the Scheme, the team secured funding to use as match that was not envisaged when the LCAP was written. This compensated for the loss of CRT match.

<sup>13</sup> Verbatim comment by HLF Adviser to MRE

and the bridge is visible and looking impressive when passed on the A4091 from Tamworth to Coleshill. The visual impact of the bridge can be seen in the photo.

The CRT has no feedback from users and has undertaken no surveys to see how canal users and local people feel about the improvements to the structure. The refurbishment was reported, however, in the monthly publication of the National Association of Boat Owners<sup>14</sup> and on the website blog of Tamworth and District Civic Society<sup>15</sup>.

**Wilding the Tame (Project A3)** was a project to improve natural river processes on the Tame by reprofiling the riverbanks to the south of Kingsbury village and widening the river. Spoil



Figure 10: Path by River Tame at Kingsbury Water Park,  
(J Holland, November 2018)

from the reprofiling would be used to create reedbed in the adjoining lake and with footpath improvements, walkers in the area would be able to see the river, and a circular walk would be created. This project started in the first months of delivery of the programme and has proved to be very successful.

The main outputs of 'length of bank reprofiled' and 'path created' were achieved, although the area of reedbed created did not achieve the target, as there was insufficient spoil to use. Nevertheless, there were extra benefits in that due to financial savings in one area, more could be invested in developing the pathway and in undertaking general improvement works in the vicinity ensuring that the area is well used by visitors.

The environmental outputs of an increase in biodiversity can be challenging to

evidence over a relatively short period of time, however recording activity, a Bioblitz in 2017 and feedback from local anglers indicate that wildflowers have re-colonised parts of the area, there is a variety of bird life using the area and that salmonids (a grayling) and coarse fish including chub, pike, perch, bullhead and eel have all been recorded in the area.

The results of the project are relatively self-sustaining; however, the Water Park will need to replace the limestone topping of the path after flood events (a cost they are happy to cover given the extent to which the path is used, and the relatively modest cost per year). In addition, dock may have become dominant in one area and may need to be controlled until a more natural balance develops.

**Fantastic Fritillaries (Project A4)** was led initially by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust working with Tamworth Borough Council with the aim of using capital works and awareness-raising to

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<sup>14</sup> See P11 of the publication at: <http://nabo.org.uk/files/nabo-news/nn-2015/3.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> See: <https://tamworthanddistrictcivicsocietyblog.wordpress.com/category/organisations/>

restore traditional land management to an area of floodplain grassland in Broad Meadow Local Nature Reserve, Tamworth. A ramp to facilitate access by heavy machinery onto the Broad Meadow was installed by Tamworth BC in the January to March 2015 quarter, and a Snake's Head Fritillary Event was held in April 2015 with 31 attending. By September 2016 infrastructure for cattle grazing and new signage had been installed, but at that point, capital work on the project as originally envisaged stalled. There were challenges to finding the required match funding although this was resolved, but by the March 2016 report, the Scheme manager noted, due to technical reasons, they were looking for an alternative site for river improvements and by December 2016 a firm decision had been made to move that element of the project elsewhere in Tamworth. At the end of June 2017 and following the



Figure 11: Borrowpit Lake inlet where works were undertaken  
(J Holland July 2018)

Mid Term review, the river works were transferred to Borrowpit Lake in central Tamworth.

January to March 2018 saw extensive works at Borrowpit Lake to clear the reedbed and undertake other work to clean up the area, open up paths around the lake, install angling platforms that are accessible to all and make the site more pleasant for humans and for wildlife. This involved working with new partners, including the Lamb Angling Club that uses the site, and Kier Group who were responsible for maintaining the parts of the site owned and

managed by Highways England. Both partners have enhanced the work that was possible given the budget. This has actually enabled some considerable added value as Kier Group were able to supply Tamworth Borough Council with road planings for use on several sites. This highlighted to Kier that other organisations might also be able to use this material rather than sending it to landfill. Meanwhile, enhanced management and new interpretation were still achieved at Broad Meadow.

**Taming the Tame (A5)** was a project to complete works at Tameside Local Nature Reserve at Fazeley, which had been started but ran out of money. The objective was to create a linked back water channel to create habitat for water and land creatures, including an island which would provide safe nesting spots for ground nesting birds. The bulk of activity was due to take place in year 2 of the programme, but there were a few delays pushing the activity back to avoid breeding periods for birds and fish. The main earthworks were undertaken in October 2016, along with some tree planting although the site then suffered some vandalism. The channel provided refuge for fish during the next flood event in November 2016, so started to produce benefits early on. In addition to the channel/creation of an island, the project also improved access to the site, to the benefit of a local angling club, and 8 nesting boxes for



birds, two specialist bird boxes, four bat boxes and 10 reptile tiles were installed to support wildlife. A sand martin (*Riparia riparia*) bank was installed in early 2017.

The required outputs were achieved, while the outputs of greater appreciation of nature and natural processes and reversal of hard engineered riverbanks need more careful consideration. The activity has been highly praised by the Environment Agency with the nicknamed “Tracey Island” (after a member of the team) being cited as an example of



Figure 12: River Tame showing “Tracey Island” (photo copyright Fresh FX)

a good outcome and good partnership working. In particular, the work undertaken to create the back-water channel is sustainable without intervention or cost to legacy organisations and appears to be contributing to the overall improvement in health of the river.

**Kingsbury’s Community Wetlands (A6)** is another project that has been highly praised by partners, including the Environment Agency, Warwickshire County Council and Natural



Figure 13: Hide and Sand Martin Bank at Kingsbury (J Holland April 2017)

England among others. This project took land near the river that had been under-utilised including abandoned sports pitches and created 6 hectares of wetland with pools, reed beds, channels and ditches. The area provided habitat for birds, including a sand martin bank, while maintaining visitor access, and offering the potential to reduce flood risk.

Various permissions needed to be sought, as well as tendering for contractors to undertake the work and bidding for further funds to enable the team to fully support the ambition of the activity. By August 2015, permissions had been granted, and work was undertaken on site in February 2016. There were delays, due to flooding events, and as the contractors were also engaged to undertake Project A5, the knock-on effect was that A5 had its start delayed to avoid the nesting season (see above). Once the hard landscaping activity had been undertaken, sowing, planting, installing



Figure 14: Hide and wetlands at Kingsbury (J Holland April 2017)

signage, the sand martin bank and viewing platform could all be progressed. TameForce and a number of corporate volunteer work parties as well as Solihull College, undertook planting activities and helped to install the information boards for the site.



Figure 15: Top: Information Board (J Holland April 2017)

Middle: Reed bed for Hemlingford Water (J Holland April 2017)

Bottom: Sand Martin nesting bank with residents (TVW July 2018)



There have been several flood events since work started in February 2016, but the wetlands appear to have coped well. Initially the sand martin bank did not fare so well and was redesigned and reinstalled. However, it has been used in 2018, so the new design has clearly met with the approval of its target audience (see photograph above).

The Kingsbury Water Park staff note that the area is well used by visitors, while the 24-hour Bioblitz undertaken in July 2017 found 612 species (the target was to find 300). Partners including Warwickshire County Council (who own the site), Natural England and the Environment Agency as well as Warwickshire Wildlife Trust are exceptionally pleased with the progress of the site, which should be relatively self-sustaining particularly once the natural balance is reached between competing species and allowing for standard and sympathetic



Figure 16: The devastating spread of Himalayan Balsam (TVW)

maintenance (meadow mowing for example) as is required in any such environment. The site has been widely publicised, including on the BBC's TV programme 'Countryfile' in the episode shown on 30th April 2017.

There have been some issues with anti-social behaviour including damage to the viewing platform and its willow screen and two of the willow sculptures have been stolen, but local outrage ensured that the young culprits have been identified.

**Project A7** was originally intended to improve habitat for wading birds at Whitacre Heath Nature Reserve by installing a sluice. It became apparent, however, that the budget available for the project was insufficient to make a tangible improvement at the site. One of the identified risks for the Wetlands is the existence and spread of invasive non-indigenous species; the project team saw an opportunity to redirect project A7 and, at the same time, add value to other plans to reduce harmful weeds and predators, for example,

Project B9, Ratty's Return, which was designed to reduce the mink population. Accordingly, the project title changed to **"Ban on Balsam"** and a contract variation was agreed by HLF.

The project targeted Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) that can be found at several sites in Tame Valley. Both are tenacious fast-



Figure 17: The pile of bashed balsam grows ever higher! (TVW)

growing plants that will destroy or deplete habitat for other plants. Thanks to volunteer groups, traditional means of removal were used at Whitacre and Ladywalk Nature Reserves and at Kingsbury Water Park to physically remove large quantities of plants.

The project officer was aware that research is being conducted nationally to try other more permanent ways of arresting the spread of Himalayan Balsam. Tame Valley was put forward and approved as a trial site for the use of rust fungus that aims to stunt the growth of Balsam plants, making them less rampant and reducing seed production. The Project Officer was trained in the application of the fungus and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust is now the West Midlands regional coordinator for the Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International for rust fungus and psyllid introduction.

This is a long-term solution to controlling Balsam, so rust fungus application has taken place each year for three years. Eventually the rust will be self-sustaining. Across two sites, a total of 450 square metres has been treated and the results are being monitored.

The project has not only reduced invasive species on several sites but has helped to place Tame Valley and Wildlife Trust at the forefront of control measures for Himalayan Balsam and has resulted in a

legacy project developed in partnership with the Banister Charitable Trust<sup>16</sup>: TameForce volunteers are removing more Balsam on more sites, helping to reduce erosion and restore indigenous plants to the treated areas.

The RSPB has been lead partner for a habitat

improvement project

at its Middleton Lakes reserve, contributing staff and volunteer time as well as cash to project **Bringing a Boom to Tame Valley (A8)**. The purpose of the project was to enhance wetland, create a reed bed and viewing points on the Eastern side of the Lakes. Figure 18 is a plan of

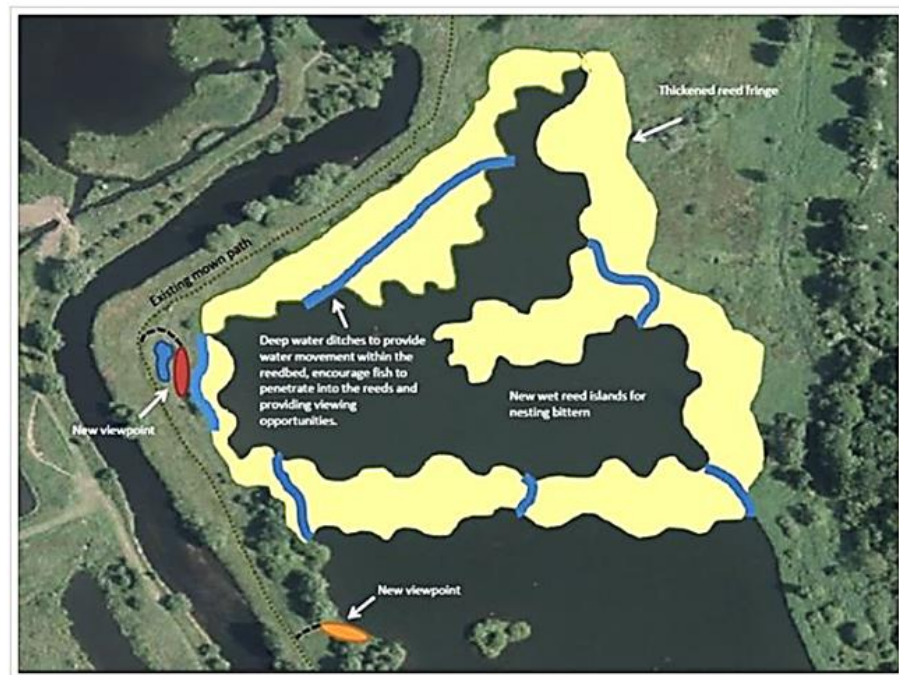


Figure 18: Plan for improvements at Middleton Lakes. (Source: RSPB)

<sup>16</sup> See: <http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/himalayan-balsam-meets-its-match/>

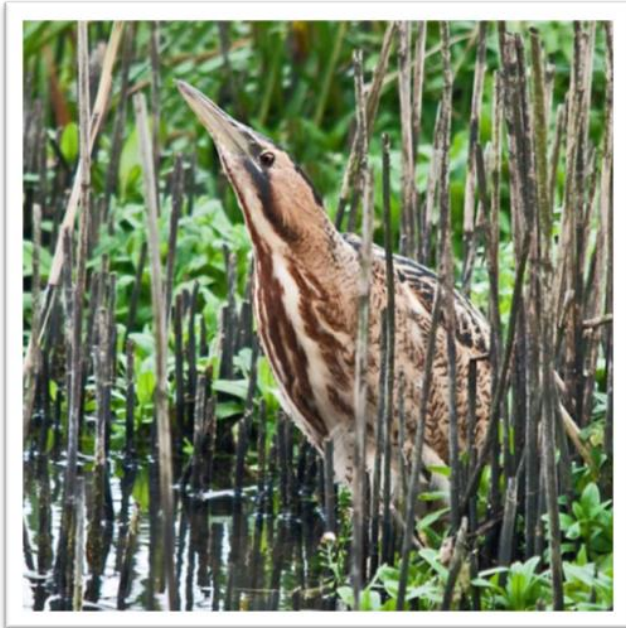


Figure 19: *Botaurus stellaris* - the Eurasian Bittern (TVW)

work superimposed on to a photo of the relevant section of the lake. A particular aim of the project is to increase the presence of Eurasian Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), a secretive reed-living member of the Heron family.

Judicious budgeting has allowed reed cages to be purchased. These will protect the reeds from browsing geese. Interpretation boards, new benches and a new board walk have been added. Further value has been added to the project by installing a channel restrictor to the inflow from the River Tame to protect ground-nesting birds. A heavy-duty pump and fuel bowser have been installed, which is a major addition to the RSPB's tools for managing water levels. The project was

about creating the right conditions for the long-term. RSPB report

they are very pleased with the resultant habitat and visitor improvements and the area can expect to attract more birds over the coming years.

**Project A9** – see Transition Project T1 below.

### 3.3.3 TRANSITION PROJECTS FOR AIM ONE

**Project T1 (formerly Project A9 Wilding the Tame (north))** was designed to extend the impact of project A3 by 'wilding' a further stretch of the Tame further north of the A3 work. Ultimately, it was decided not to deliver the project during the main Scheme. Instead it has been incorporated into the Transition Plan as Project T1 - River Re-naturalisation and Feasibility Study with the objectives:

- 1) To restore a 250 – 500 metre length of the River Cole, upstream of the River Tame in North Solihull.
- 2) To carry out a feasibility study for a bypass to Blyth Mill Weir and wetland creation on adjacent land on River Blythe SSSI to support a 2019 funding bid.

The work on the River Cole was important as it is a major tributary of the Tame and is in poor condition. The works to reprofile the river and to create better habitat for fauna and flora are, therefore, important to the scheme as a whole. The work was delayed from its original start of September 2018 and was completed in February 2019, with 50 meters of coir matting pre-planted with suitable flora installed, a number of berms created to help the formation of meanders and four areas of large woody debris added to alter the flow of the river. The work was not without challenges, from local youths ripping up matting, to large quantities of spoil that needed to be placed appropriately. A key learning point for the project was the timing of



the work, which was done at a time of high water levels and flow speed which made aspects of the work more difficult to get right first time. This may necessitate redigging the channel to create the small island when the river is lower in order to prevent it running dry. High water also caused challenges for deploying silt traps, and for recovering the straw bales used as silt traps when the works were finished (as they were very heavy and difficult to move).

It is too early to say whether the desired increase in biodiversity and water quality will be achieved, but the works have been completed within the transition period, and some important lessons have been learned about undertaking this type of work in the future. The activity has been shared on the TVW website<sup>17</sup>, Twitter feed and Facebook page.

The Blyth Mill Weir is a known and significant block to fish passage, so the Tame Valley Wetlands partners were keen to see if a way could be found to improve the site. They commissioned AECOM to develop some detailed options for the site. These were completed in March 2019 but required some revisions. The proposals recommended the installation of bypass channels of differing lengths to go around the weir. The bypass channel will be put in place in 2019, using funds from a successful Water Environment Grant application. Although this work has been completed successfully, it was delayed due to staffing changes both at Warwickshire WT and at AECOM, which, in turn, caused problems in obtaining agreement from the landowner and other partners. In addition, a refresh of the design drawings was necessary to ensure that what they proposed was fully compliant with the specification and with construction, design and management regulations. At the time of writing, funding has been secured, through the Water Environment Grant, based on the AECOM work to construct a bypass channel to aid fish passage and other biodiversity improvements.



Figure 20: Lea Ford Cottage, before and after replacement of the thatched roof (TVW 2019)

**Project T2** was the **Restoration of Lea Ford Cottage** and was a new project that was included to compensate for the lack of built heritage projects, when the delivery of project A1 began to look doubtful.

The aim of the project was to restore a 400-year-old Tudor cottage in disrepair (Lea Ford Cottage) in Lea Marston Parish at Hams Hall Environmental Centre. The funding from HLF was

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<sup>17</sup> See: <http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/project-updates/re-profiling-the-river-cole/>

to be used to replace the thatched roof and make the building watertight, while other funding would fund replacement lime plastering. The building would then make a useful resource and venue for visiting school groups and other interested parties, and there is planned to be an open day to launch activities that will develop interest in and sensibilities to 'built' heritage.

Reeds for replacing the thatch were delivered in Autumn 2018 and the works were undertaken in January 2019. All the HLF money was spent by the end of February 2019, and the building is now watertight and ready for the next phase of renovation. Progress on the works was shared on Facebook, enabling interested parties to see progress. There is also a detailed write-up on the Tame Valley Wetlands website<sup>18</sup>. This small but valuable project has been successfully completed within the agreed timeframe.

**Project T8 (Invasive Non-native Species Control)** is to continue the innovative and cutting-edge work started through the LPS (Project A7) to control invasive non-native plant species through biological and mechanical control. It is funded through partner contributions rather than HLF funding, but enables the valuable work started with HLF funding to be maintained. Two species were targeted for biological controls – Himalayan Balsam (using a rust fungus) and Japanese Knotweed (using a psyllid release) - as well as mechanical means to remove the plants and replant areas using coir matting and native species plug plants.

As with all cutting-edge projects, success cannot be guaranteed, and the psyllids have not proved to be successful, while the rust fungus deployment has been delayed somewhat. At the same time activity has provided useful data for CAB International and the Animal Plant Health Agency for further activity. The psyllid release was at Ladywalk NR and it does not appear to be a robust or effective agent and will be discontinued. Rust fungus deployment was initially undertaken at Ladywalk NR and Kingsbury Water Park – the latter did not appear to be at all successful and will not be continued. Rust fungus release is continuing at Ladywalk, however, which is now in its second year, and four other sites are being treated in 2019 with rust fungus out of a potential five (one was found to be unsuitable). Two sites are also having coir matting and plug plants installed during the summer of 2019.

The **Tx projects** are 7 mini projects agreed with HLF in September 2018 to utilise the A1 underspend. They are:

TX1 – Footpath improvements at RSPB Middleton Lakes – led by RSPB

TX2 – Visitor reception at Middleton (part funding) – led by RSPB

TX3 – Wetland feasibility study for Middleton Parish – led by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT)

TX4 – Bridge feasibility study over river to Whitacre Heath – led by WWT

TX5 – Tree and path safety work at Whitacre Heath – led by Reserves team

TX6 – Coleshill Town Council and allotment group - improved access to allotments – led by WWT

TX7 – Fencing in Curdworth – led by Curdworth Parish Council.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/renovating-lea-ford-cottage/>



**Tx1 – footpath improvements** - was completed in 2018. The County Rights of Way Officer requested additional footpath improvement works at RSPB Middleton Lakes, and these were commissioned in October/ November 2018 to complement and extend the works completed in June. The activity extended the granite fines surfaced path to complete the entire section of footpath from the canal to the river bridge, thus enabling visitors far better access throughout the year. The works were completed by the same contractor that was recruited to do the work earlier in the year, Withybed Ltd.

In total an additional 635m of granite topped path was constructed plus 385m of limestone track for vehicles using the right of way. A visit from the Rights of Way officer in late November agreed that all was in place and pending some additional drainage adjacent to the path this new right of way could soon be signed off.

Overall the activity improves the visitor experience which may allow for more repeat visits and may contribute to visitor satisfaction in future (no information has been directly collected on this, but a review of TripAdvisor ratings and comments since January 2019 shows positive comments about paths, benches, signage and access).

**Tx2** is a contribution to the **visitor centre** that is being built at the car park at RSPB Middleton Lakes, which was due to open in March 2019, although the HLF contribution was spent in 2018. In order to replace the tired and out-of-date exhibition trailer and to provide a new and superior visitor reception, a 'garden room' style building was researched and selected. The building is fully weatherproof



Figure 21: The new visitor reception centre at RSPB Middleton Lakes (TVW 2019)

and large enough to accommodate information, interpretation plus services will be added to provide the option of hot drinks and light snacks for volunteers – visitors are encouraged to visit the café and retail village at Middleton Hall.

After research and tendering, Green Retreats was selected to supply and build the visitor reception and planning consent was gained for its installation. The building was supplied and signed off as complete on the 6th December. While the visitor reception is due to open in March 2019, to date (April 2019) there is no mention of the new facility on the RSPB reserves website, nor is there any TripAdvisor review available. It is therefore too early to comment on the visitor perception of the upgraded facility.

**TX3** – was a **wetland feasibility study for Middleton Parish Council** which aimed to support Middleton Parish Council in its ambition to manage an area of wet woodland to improve its biodiversity and provide the community with an enhanced asset for recreation, education and community use. A parcel of land was being donated to the parish, who wished to manage it in a manner which would reflect and enhance its ecological importance and also provide a community amenity. The work was commissioned from Middlemarch Environmental, who have provided two detailed reports following site visits and desk research. The reports

include recommendations for further work, management and site improvements. These reports give a solid base for bidding for funding from the HS2 Community Environment Fund.

**TX4** was intended to look at the **feasibility of a bridge at Whitacre Heath** but did not go ahead in the end with the agreement of HLF, as there was neither sufficient time nor funding in the final tranche of transition activity. The concept has not been forgotten however and the team are looking at the potential of S.106 funding to undertake the study, which would be linked to the future of Hams Hall (something which is still being agreed).

**TX5 – Whitacre Heath tree and access works** intended to undertake tree and path safety and improvement works at Whitacre Heath SSSI. This was intended to create safer visitor access to an important and unique SSSI and key site within the valley, encouraging more visitors and enabling better management by local volunteers.

Works included the creation of a small flight of steps to make climbing up and down a bund easier, installation of handrail by a footpath which was also levelled, clearing a small number of bushes and trees that impinged on pathways or were not in good condition, and undertaking some maintenance work on a number of larger trees, including pollarding 3 willows. Contractors undertook the work, which was overseen by the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Reserves Manager and was completed to specification. The timing was a little late but was completed in early February 2019.



Figure 22: New dipping platform  
(I Wykes, TVW, 2019)

#### **TX6 – allotment access. Project changed to two new dipping platforms**

Although this was originally intended to be works at the allotment site in Coleshill, agreement on the work could not be sorted out in time. Instead the funds were used to install two pond dipping platforms to develop the facilities at Hams Hall Environmental Education Centre. This will enhance the experience of educational visitors to Hams Hall and will support HLF Project B8.

The installation of two pond dipping platforms, one at the pond next to the centre building and the other one alongside the pool within Church Pool Covert was undertaken by contractors.



Figure 23: Whitacre Heath tree and access works. Top left: pollarding willow; top right: new steps installed; below: new handrail (E Asbery and TVW 2019)

They should enhance the experience of any visitors to the centre through educational visits by allowing them to pond dip safely. The platforms were installed on time and are already being



*Figure 24: Installed Post and Rail Fence in Curdworth, (I Wykes TVW, 2019)*

used – the project was complete by the end of February 2019. The dipping platform at Church Pool Covert will allow additional exploration of this resource, which has been less used than the platform by the Environmental Centre, due to accessibility issues.

**Tx7 –Fencing in Curdworth –** was a project to install c.100 meters of fencing to protect a newly laid hedge in Curdworth Parish. This was a simple project, with Curdworth Parish Council appointing a contractor to undertake the works, which were completed to time and to specification.





Facebook Review: "Had lots of fun in the summer with activities for kids at Middleton Lakes, thank you."

Denise Beech



Figure 25: Having fun on Wild Wednesdays at Middleton Lakes (photos: TVW)



## 3.4 Aim Two – Community Participation

### 3.4.1 Aims and Achievements

The second aim of the LCAP is to:

*“Reconnect the local community with the Tame Valley landscape and its heritage by engaging and involving people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities with their local green spaces, sites of heritage interest and the conservation and restoration of these places.”*

#### **ASSESSMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT**

*Good progress has been made towards this aim. A vast range of activities have taken place; these have successfully engaged thousands of people from different communities of interest and age groups to increase their awareness and knowledge about their local area and involve them in activities to safeguard it. Feedback has been very positive.*

The detailed objectives of the aim are presented in the tables above on Pages 22 and 23. To deliver this aim, a programme of ten projects was designed, with Projects C7 (Family Resource Pack) and C8 (Support for Badged Organisations) intended to make a further contribution to its success.

There were four key targets as set out in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Key Targets for Aim Two

KEY TARGETS FOR AIM TWO	TARGET	ACTUAL
1. Using an established <b>volunteering</b> programme, undertake practical conservation and surveying work at sites across the scheme area.	A regular and mobile (across scheme area) volunteering programme with an average 10 volunteers per session	253 work party sessions taken place, TameForce set up and continuing
2. Explore ways to positively engage and involve hard-to-reach groups, particularly <b>young people</b> and those from deprived or segregated communities. This will be achieved through the delivery of targeted work such as youth engagement.	Engage with at least 200 young people.	Engaged with 529 young people, 107 youth sessions delivered and 114 sessions for schools or badged organisations
3. Provide opportunities for communities to take ownership of their local area ... through <b>community-led initiatives</b> , focusing on cultural heritage.	Support/establish at least three active groups spanning the length of the scheme area.	7 community groups assisted, and 13 community grants awarded
4. Develop and deliver comprehensive <b>events and activities for schools and families</b> across the Scheme area.	Reach 1,000 school children and 500 members of the public.	3,740 school children engaged, 4,054 attend events and a further 4,870 attend TameFest



### 3.4.2 Project Delivery for Aim Two

The ten main projects that contributed to this aim are listed below, along with their completion status as at the end of August 2018.

Table 10: List of Programme B projects

Ref	Project Title	Description	Completion Status at 31.8.18
<b>B1</b>	Heritage Events	Deliver an engaging programme of natural heritage and traditional heritage skills events inc. Wild Wednesdays	Project completed
<b>B2</b>	Your Local Heritage/Telling the Tale of the Tame	Use of History Pin to explore local cultural, family and social history via software, events, exhibition and book	Project completed
<b>B3</b>	Environmental Volunteering	Engage local volunteers in management and restoration of site of natural heritage interest - site improved, bird boxes installed, litter picked, invasive species control, habitat management, species monitored.	Completed/ Targets exceeded
<b>B4</b>	Hedgerow Restoration	Volunteers trained to plant 500m and restore 500m + involve farmers at various locations including Curdworth, Lea Marston and along the canal	Project completed
<b>B5</b>	Community Grants	Grants to community groups via managing agent	Project completed
<b>B6</b>	Community Groups	Direct support to local groups and to set up new 'Friends' groups	Project completed
<b>B7</b>	Youth Engagement	Involve young people in learning about, valuing and managing green spaces - taster sessions, youth vol. grp., John Muir award. Production of film by young people	Project completed
<b>B8</b>	School Engagement	Inspire and educate local school pupils (inc. special needs) 5 - 15 about TVW with in-school sessions, field trips, lesson plan created linked to National Curriculum	Project completed
<b>B9</b>	Ratty's Return	Improve conditions for water voles - waterway improvements, mink control, ponds created on sites where landowners willing	Project completed
<b>B10</b>	Purchase of Scheme Vehicles	To purchase vehicles to enable the effective delivery of the Scheme	Project completed

The individual projects are discussed below, and a number are also featured in case studies that are presented in Appendix 3.

The objective of the **Heritage Skills (B1)** project was to engage local people in informal training for natural and traditional heritage skills. In all, 88 events took place in 22 different locations, engaging 8114 people, substantially above the 2660 target in the LCAP for this project.

The team composed a varied programme to appeal to a wide audience and also used different venues, including some not normally open to the general public, such as Southfields Farm and Ladywalk Nature Reserve. Training on offer included bushcraft, willow weaving and children's arts and crafts.



Figure 26: The Mayor and Mayoress of Tamworth at TameFest 2017  
(Photo: TVW)

Some events were more successful than others and the team were keen to learn from this experience, making changes to the programme as they discovered what worked and what did not. Events held at Middleton Hall were originally very structured, but the team found that creating more flexibility for exhibitors and demonstrators, as well as making courses suitable for all ages really increased popularity, meaning that all 130 places were booked in advance.

More learning points came from avoiding events that duplicated those offered by other organisations, such as a sunrise church service, recognising that outdoors events would be unpopular at times when the weather was poor and that charging for events was price sensitive, particularly if booking and payment was required in advance.

TameFest, an annual celebration of conservation and the great outdoors was a challenge to organise but, with good support from partners, eventually proved very successful in engaging the general public, bringing a taste of heritage skills and conservation with a fun element to a wide audience.

Keeping the event fresh by moving to different venues for each of the four years added another dimension, although it was important to make sure access to each site was easy for the public and for setting up. In its third year it attracted some 2500 visitors, with all the associated benefits in raising awareness of the Wetlands and promoting volunteering.

## Viewpoint

*The Mayor of Tamworth said:*

*“TameFest (2017) was a fantastic free event which really showcased some of the good work that goes on in areas, such as our Local Nature Reserves. It was great to meet some ... interesting people and learn about conservation in and around Tamworth. I know that the event has grown year by year, and I hope it is something that could return to the Castle grounds next time around.”*

## Doing it Differently



*Some community events worked best when they had community buy-in.*

*Birdbox building didn't attract much interest in Castle Vale until the TVW team involved the community directly by giving funds and support to the Castle Vale Community Group. Letting them organise it themselves was far more successful.*

'Wild Wednesdays' have been a central part of the heritage skills project, with 27 family events held on Wednesdays during the Easter and summer school holidays achieving an average satisfaction score of 4.8 out of 5.

Although not incorporated in the LCAP, the team attended a lot of external events in the early stage of the programme to raise awareness and get the brand known.



Figure 27: 'Restore' project participants at Middleton Lakes (Photo: TVW)

**Project B2 – Your Local Heritage/Telling the Tale of the Tame** recognised the importance of securing local cultural heritage through storytelling and sharing memories. The initial contractor appointed to deliver the project - Museufy – reportedly proved unreliable and necessitated appointing a new delivery agent –

History Needs You- which caused some delay in delivering the project. As a result, the project end date was extended to March 2018 to satisfy the interest that had been generated. The project offered a variety of different ways for people's memories and stories to be recorded, including uploading photographs, emailing and phoning in stories, by visiting 'Memory Cafes' and local groups that would record a story.

A series of videos featuring local residents was created and can be viewed on the TVW website<sup>19</sup>. In addition, 100 copies of a book were published and distributed to local schools and libraries; exhibitions also took place at Middleton Hall and at Coleshill Library.

<sup>19</sup> See: <http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/tellingthetaleofthetame/>



**Project B3 – Environmental volunteering and TameForce** recognised the pivotal role of volunteers in conservation charities. TVW needed a reliable team of environmental



Figure 28: TameForce clearing invasive rhododendron (TVW)

volunteers to carry out vital maintenance work on reserves, to remove invasive species, improve and manage habitat and take part in other activities.

The project has proved extremely successful in bringing together a group of committed individuals who regularly work on behalf of the Partnership. It initially took much longer to attract people and set up than anticipated in

the LCAP. However, that time was productively used and has resulted in benefits to not just the Partnership but also RSPB, Staffordshire and Warwickshire Wildlife Trusts, since a set of common policies and procedures has been developed and is now in place that makes it much easier for volunteers to be well managed and for the volunteers themselves to feel confident and safe in their work. This approach was beneficial for a range of projects that involved volunteer working.

The group has been keen to learn new skills, which has helped to widen the range of work they can tackle, and they have been happy to work with other volunteer groups, for example hedge-laying at Middleton Lakes with an RSPB group. This had a triple benefit as it also contributed to the hedge-laying (B4) and heritage skills (B1) projects.

In addition to the regular group, corporate volunteers, such as Barclays, Environment Agency, PWC, Severn Trent and HSBC, took part in volunteering days.

The project has exceeded all its targets for numbers engaged, sites improved, sessions held, bird boxes installed, and litter picked. A minor learning point was that the target for litter

## Viewpoint

*“(Our community group) The Friends of the Lakes in Tamworth greatly appreciated the input from the TameForce volunteers.”*

*“They were keen, skilled and well led. Two tasks they helped with were the removal of many self-set saplings and the clearance of a huge area of brambles. The volunteers were used to these tasks and completed them with confidence. (They) also had access to and training for equipment that we could not use. ... All work was well organised and safely carried out.*

*“We’d like to say a huge thank you to them and look forward to seeing them again.”*

The Friends of the Lakes

picked specified length of areas in metres but, in practice, it was much easier to measure areas in square metres. More importantly, TameForce is now a well-established and



Figure 29: Hedge-laying in Kingsbury Water Park (TVW)

committed group and continues to be a valued resource, not just for the Partnership but also to help other conservation groups in the area.

The purpose of **Project B4 – Hedgerow Restoration** – was to plant new hedgerows and fill gaps in existing ones. The project offered a cross-over with the heritage skills (B1) project, in that it could also teach the art of hedge-laying,

and with environmental volunteering (B3), during which volunteers surveyed hedgerows to be restored. Hedges were restored in a variety of situations but often working with farmers, who were keen to reinstate their hedgerows due to the messages provided through the team about a living landscape and habitat connectivity.

Project delivery on the ground has often made use of volunteers, of TameForce in particular, and also operational teams from stakeholders, such as the Environment Agency, who seemed to greatly enjoy the work, as illustrated by the feedback form extract above. The project was very successful in terms of helping to build relationships with landowners and virtually doubled the targets set, with nearly one kilometre each of hedges restored and hedges created. The number of training days was also exceeded (11 v. target of 6) and the number of volunteers almost achieved (58 v. target of 60).

Name of Activity: Hedgelaying  
Project Code: B4  
How would you rate today's activities?  
0 1 2 3 4 5 (5 is circled)  
What did you enjoy the most?  
both the trunk cutting & the binding  
Anything we could do better?  
No, it's brilliant!  
Any other comments?  
Really interesting

Figure30: Typical extract from volunteer feedback form

Although farmers did not suffer any financial detriment in this project, the team learnt that, although infilling hedges is not regarded as taking land out of cultivation, a new hedge planted on agricultural land can be seen as a diminution of the land available for cultivation and could result in a loss of a farm agricultural grant.

**Project B5 – Community Grants** – provided a mechanism to make small grant awards to local groups for a range of conservation-related purposes consistent with TVW's objectives.



Landscape Partnership Schemes elsewhere in the country have found grant-giving to be a complicated activity, so Tame Valley decided to work predominantly through a local community organisation, Heart of England Community Foundation. The application form, process and criteria were designed in collaboration with the Community Foundation during Year One, meaning the launch of the programme did not take place until Year Two. Match funding was initially required for projects, but this proved a stumbling block for many community organisations and was relaxed.

A pot of up to £20,000 was available for a two-year programme. In the first year, six applications were received. The purpose ranged from physical improvement works, to one-off activities, new pieces of kit and promotional work. Grants were typically between £1000 and £2000.

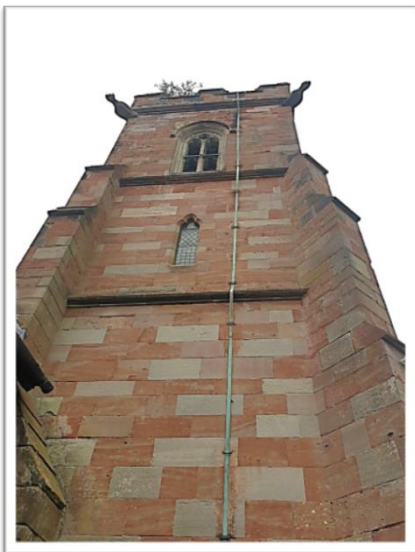


Figure 31: Tame Valley Partnership gave a grant of £2372 to the Parishes of the Whitacres, Lea Marston and Shustoke to pay for the installation of a lightning conductor on the tower of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Grade II listed church.

As awareness of TVW grew, its network of community links strengthened, and it became easier to promote the grants. In addition, TVW could encourage organisations to apply that it felt could add value to its work. In some cases, the community groups are ones with which TVW has worked to deliver other projects, so the grants are a useful way of facilitating partnership working, adding to the sustain-ability and biodiversity of nature reserves.

Despite this and even with the involvement of a 'managing' organisation, the project underspent slightly, and administration was not always straightforward. In Year Four, TVW decided to run the scheme themselves and dropped the requirement for match-funding. This experience mirrors that of other LPSs.

Nevertheless, the grants were a useful way of reacting to lots of local needs and empowering community groups at a very local level, while making them feel listened to and connected with the LPS. During the process of consultation for this review, numerous community representatives told the MRE team how much they had valued the support and contribution made by the TVW funding and by the team.

## Viewpoint

*"One of the teachers at the local primary school is a Forest School Leader and has previously used the platform as part of the 'curriculum', until it became too unsafe.*

*"Now the new platform has been installed, the Forest School Leader can start using this area of the site again to build children's esteem and personal skills!"*

Feedback from Hodge Lane Conservation Group regarding the benefits of their community grant for a new dipping platform made of recycled plastic.

## Viewpoint

*"Thank you to the KWP (Kingsbury Water Park) volunteers for putting in our long-awaited bird information board."*

*"It looks great.... And the birds clearly agree! We'd also like to say thank to the TVWLPS for helping with this project and for providing match funding via the Heart of England Community Fund."*

**Project B6 – Community Groups** – aimed to support existing groups and help create new ones where needed. The support offered took the form of facilitation, training, lending kit and resources and giving grants.

The team explored the possibility of starting new groups in different locations but generally found it was more productive to work with existing ones. A useful learning point arose during this work, since some existing informal groups were happier to stay as they were, without taking on a more formal structure.

Relationships with some groups have been particularly productive, such as Friends of Kingsbury Waterpark. Collaboration with the 'Friends' pre-dates the LPS programme, but the LPS has enabled the Partnership team to develop relations further to add value to the physical improvement work undertaken at Kingsbury Waterpark and with Community Environmental Trust (see the 'Doing It Differently' vignette later in this section).

Rather than create a 'Friends of TVW' group, a Community Forum has been established to bring together key stakeholders in the locality. The role of the

group has been recognised within the permanent governance structure of the Partnership. (See structure chart on P13.)

Anecdotally, community groups have reported how helpful they found not just funding from TVW but also practical support from staff members, who often attended events and gave useful advice. Similar feedback was heard from employed conservation teams e.g. Warwickshire's Ranger Service.

Training courses had a good response overall, but individual courses generally had low numbers. The team decided that it was more cost effective to lead courses themselves than send delegates to external courses. This meant they could offer more flexibility to groups and volunteers.

## Viewpoint

*"Hi Rita*

*I'm writing to thank you and TVW for your time and support (specifically printing and publicity) for the event yesterday. This was the 7<sup>th</sup> time this event has been held and I think it was our busiest ever.*

*"Mark at the café estimated up to 800 people used their services... maybe up to 1/3 engaged to some extent with the bee display, so I think that's a really good result we can be proud of.*

*"... about 50+ people participated in the craft activities.*

*"Hopefully all our efforts are achieving the aim of getting people interested in nature/conservation and beekeeping now and in the future."* Fiona, Friends of Kingsbury Water Park

## Doing it Differently



### Organisational Learning and Development

*Early in the Tame Valley project contact was made with the Community Environmental Trust (the Trust) in Castle Vale. The Trust had initially been established to ensure that environmental issues were central to redevelopment in the Castle Vale area of Birmingham and has developed expertise in community engagement and in working with schools.*

*The two organisations began to collaborate, with the Trust undertaking work with schools in The Tame Valley area as well as environmental projects. Equally the TVW team joined the Trust and many environmental projects in Castle Vale. The relationship between the two organisations continue to develop and the Trust developed new links through the partnership with TVW and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. This extended the Trust's experience, several of their volunteers had also done volunteer work in Warwickshire and this strengthened what they were able to offer in their own area by utilising the knowledge gained. Equally, it enabled other volunteers to become involved in a new geographic area and new projects. For the Trust as a whole, there were opportunities for work in more rural environmental projects extending and supplementing their knowledge and expertise.*

Some community-wide engagement events were also held with good results. Targets for this project were exceeded and focused on the number of groups supported and people involved in those groups plus setting up a 'Friends of' group for Tame Valley. The combination of TameForce and the Community Forum has created a lasting, practical resource.

**Project B7 - Youth Engagement** – the objective of this project was to help young people learn about, value and get involved with their local green spaces. The project was delivered through a range of activities designed to engage different young communities of interest. They included conservation taster days, youth volunteering, participating in the John Muir Award and developing other skills with a conservation context, such as making a short documentary. As well as exceeding all its targets, some young people were regular attenders and a proportion, estimated at 25%, visited local nature sites they had not seen before.



Figure 32: Bridge Building and Fire building for the John Muir Award (TVW)

The John Muir Award is a respected environmental programme that encourages participants to discover, explore and conserve wild places and share their experiences. Young people of varying ages were invited by their respective schools to participate in a five-week programme. This led to 40 awards actually

being achieved against a target of 30. Some schools have indicated that they now intend to continue running the Award themselves.



Not all activities were immediately successful, and some staff changes were needed to find the right person to make the project succeed. The team have used reviews and redesign techniques to rethink what might work. For example, the original idea of a monthly youth volunteering group attracted little interest, so in 2017 the model was changed to 'WildYouth', effectively a weekly outdoor youth club, generally held at Hams Hall Environmental Centre. This allows young people to enjoy a range of outdoor activities, not necessarily all conservation-related. Attendance has grown steadily; youngsters are now making a small financial contribution each week and the club will continue post scheme end. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust is also hoping to roll out the model across Staffordshire, one of the benefits of partner collaboration, since the organiser works across both organisations. The age-range of young people allowed to participate was also changed based on experience, from 16 – 25 down to 11 – 25, to include younger teenagers. Some activities have involved young and old volunteers working together to allow young people to hear the experiences of adults involved in conservation work for many years. The team also worked with the National Citizenship Service to provide taster events to help young people prepare a plan for social action.

**Project B8 – Schools Engagement** – the aim of this project was to engage with schoolchildren aged 5 – 15 in the TVWLPS area to give them a greater appreciation of the local landscape. A further objective was to expand the teaching of conservation-based subjects in schools. Sessions were delivered both in classrooms and in 'outdoor classrooms' with a 'forest school' approach. Partnership working with the Community Environmental Trust and with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust enabled delivery across the catchment area. Some 20 primary schools participated, and the project exceeded all its targets. Teachers were asked to evaluate delivery; this produced an average evaluation score of 4.7 out of 5.0. Although the project was initially free to schools, some schools indicated that they were prepared to pay for this type of studies, post-programme. At the time of writing, demand for such courses is high and delivery is continuing on a paid-for basis.

The plight of the endangered water vole is now recognised across the country. **Project B9 – Ratty's Return** – planned habitat improvements that would encourage the return of these threatened small mammals to riverbanks and lakes in the Tame Valley, to build on successes already achieved in adjacent parts of Warwickshire.



Figure 33: Clearance work at Ladywalk Nature Reserve (TVW 2018)





Figure 34: Water Vole (T. Doherty 2017)

The programme of improvements took place in a variety of locations, such as Ladywalk Nature Reserve, Stonydelph Lakes, Hodge Hill, Tameside Nature Reserve and Borrowpit Lake. The work included bank reprofiling, removing invasive species of plants, plug planting marginal native species that are important food plants for water voles and controlling mink populations, while also engaging with and educating landowners about how they can make changes.

Volunteers and partner organisations have played a pivotal role in the work, taking part in all aspects of delivery including monitoring mink populations and surveying for signs of water voles

moving into the various locations. A team of volunteers from different partner organisations and from TameForce have been fully trained in mammal surveying techniques and in mink monitoring, which will assist the sustainability of the work in the future. All targets were met, and the project also attracted media attention from local newspapers and from the BBC 'Countryfile' television programme.

### 3.4.3 TRANSITION PROJECTS FOR AIM TWO

The team decided that they would like two projects to take place during the transition phase to underpin projects related to Aim 2/Programme B. These projects had an important part to play in strengthening the future sustainability of the Partnership's work. The projects were:

*Project T4 – Improvements to Hams Hall Environmental Centre – delivering cross-cutting benefits for the team and for ongoing training and schools engagement projects. These improvements would build on projects B1, B3, B8, C9, D1 and D6;*

*Project T6 – Environmental Education and Engagement –ensuring the continuation of the Scheme's programme of support for school pupils and young people, by building on the work and successes of projects B7 and B8.*

**Project T4 – Improvements to Hams Hall Environmental Centre** – has enabled repair and improvement work to the Partnership's base and training centre that have strengthened the sustainability of the centre and will underpin the Partnership as it seeks to remain viable when HLF funding has stopped. As part of this, the energy efficiency of the building will be increased, with LED lighting and a more effective heating system that will reduce running costs, lower the building's carbon footprint and make it a more inviting and comfortable space for clients, trainees, staff and volunteers.

The building is rented, so prior to committing to the work, the Partnership has successfully negotiated to strengthen its tenure by encouraging Lea Marston Parish Council to take on



Figure 35: Construction of the Round House at Hams Hall Environmental Centre (TVW 2019)

the leasehold from owners Eon. There is additional benefit because other pieces of local woodland are included in the arrangement, allowing the Partnership to secure these green spaces for the future in a densely developed business park. The LPS Scheme has played an important part in making this happen.

All the work was carefully tendered to ensure best value and was managed by Partnership staff, increasing their commissioning skills.

Chargeable school visits are proving very popular and cover their costs. Education for young people is a foundation stone for raising public

awareness of the importance of the wetlands and also getting young people involved with nature from an early age. Offering suitable facilities for these activities is an important part of being able to attract schools. The project includes the construction of a traditional Iron Age round house as a further venue for training in the grounds of the Environmental Centre.

**Project T6 – Environmental Education and Youth Engagement** – were incorporated into the transition plan to progress the Partnership’s successes in engaging with young people, both within the school curriculum and in their own time. The Partnership’s Youth Engagement Officer employment contract was extended to continue services that include youth sessions, sessions in schools and school sessions delivered at Hams Hall Environmental Centre. The staff role continues to be a shared one with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, with whom collaboration during the LPS has been successful, so extending a valuable relationship.

The school sessions have proved very marketable, attracting both return school visits and new schools, with income covering employment costs. Demand for the service means that it will continue when HLF funding has ceased. Reportedly, centres offering river studies for primary age pupils are rare, so there is a good ‘market’ opportunity.

Since March 2018 (end of HLF B8 programme) the project has engaged 475 students from school visits to Hams Hall, with a total income of £2312.60.

The ‘WildYouth’ group has continued but generating sufficient income to cover costs has proved more challenging and keeping the outdoor group running during the winter at a viable size has also been difficult. This has been useful learning for the Partnership, so they are now considering how to restructure the programme to make it viable in the long term.

Since July 2018 (end of HLF B7 programme), the project has engaged 290 young people, with 106 individual participants, and a total income of £347.





Figure 36: BBC 'Countryfile' visits Tame Valley Wetlands to film Ratty's Return project work (Ebony Chapman, 2017)



### 3.5 Aim Three - Access and Learning – Programme C

#### 3.5.1 Aims and Achievements

The third aim of the LCAP is to:

*“Improve access and learning for local people – both physical access on and between sites and intellectual access on and off site through a range of resources. This includes development of the ‘Tame Way’, themed trails, and a Gateway to the Tame Valley interpretation centre and website.”*

#### **ASSESSMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT**

*Progress has been made towards this aim. Access and interpretation have been improved in a range of locations. The Gateway Visitor Centre in Kingsbury Water Park is completed and offers visitors a greatly improved experience and more information. Challenges have been encountered with staffing and planning that have delayed delivery, meaning that the full range of access benefits envisaged for local people is not yet available.*

The detailed objectives are presented in the tables on Page 23 and 24. To deliver this aim, a programme of 12 key projects was designed, together with a number of projects in other programmes that were also expected to contribute to Aim Three objectives. There were four key targets within this aim as set out in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Key Targets for Aim Three

KEY TARGETS FOR AIM THREE	TARGET	ACTUAL
1. Encourage inclusive physical access and health and wellbeing by removing actual or perceived barriers, improving access, and creating new trails across the area.	1a Access improved at 10 key sites of interest.	5,195m footpaths created/improved, 740m boardwalk, 21 kissing gates and 80 waymarkers/ fingerposts installed across 10 sites
	1b Create 5 new circular/themed trails	10 circular walks created and publicised with leaflets
2. Improve existing access routes and the links between them to develop and promote a ‘Tame Way’.	2. Create an interconnected network of routes, trails and themed walks encompassing a range of heritage sites along the scheme area.	Two Tame Way trails created, one following the canal, one following the river.
3. Raise awareness of the landscape and its wildlife, heritage and accessibility	3a Develop a heritage resource pack.	Changed to the development of the Living Map animation, which has



KEY TARGETS FOR AIM THREE	TARGET	ACTUAL
through innovative learning and interpretation, both in the field and on the internet.		received 615 views on YouTube, but is also used offline at several locations
	3b Develop site-based interpretation.	17 new interpretation panels and 6 mini panels installed
	3c Use new and social media.	Facebook page and Twitter feeds up and running
	3d Create a Gateway to the Tame Valley interpretation centre at Kingsbury Water Park.	Gateway created
	3e Centre and website to engage a minimum of 55,000 people with the scheme.	At least 75,000 visitors to Gateway, and c300 website hits per week
	3f Design an interactive website.	Website created and maintained
4. Promote the scheme and the Tame Valley identity and raise the environmental and socio-economic importance of the landscape.	4. Produce and promote 10 articles/press releases.	15 pages of latest news stories on website, plus social media updates, 1,029 Facebook followers.

### 3.5.2 Project Delivery for Aim Three

The twelve projects are listed below along with their completion status as at August 2018.

Table 12: List of Programme C projects

Ref	Project Title	Description	Completion Status at 31.8.18
<b>C1</b>	Access Group	To establish a flexible and independent working group with access improvements as their key area of focus.	Project nearly completed
<b>C2</b>	The Tame Way	To create, enhance and promote a network of interconnected routes that, together, form the 'Tame Way' – a long distance route spanning the length of the scheme area and beyond	Project completed
<b>C3</b>	Tame Valley Interpretation	To increase the level of signage and interpretation at heritage sites within the scheme area (excluding sites on the Tame Way)	Project completed
<b>C4</b>	Tame Valley Access Improvement	To improve access at sites of heritage interest and across the scheme area (if not on the Tame Way).	Majority of work completed

Ref	Project Title	Description	Completion Status at 31.8.18
<b>C5</b>	Circular and Themed Walks	To develop and promote a portfolio of circular and themed walks and cycle rides across the scheme area of varying lengths and difficulties.	Project completed
<b>C6</b>	Signposting Guide	To help local people explore and discover the Tame Valley by producing a print and web-based list and map of all current walking, riding, canoeing and cycling routes in the Tame Valley.	Project complete
<b>C7</b>	Your Heritage Family	To produce a family-friendly resource pack with games and activities to encourage informal learning about the landscape and its heritage.	Project changed and complete
<b>C8</b>	Education Materials for Girl Guides	To produce a family-friendly resource pack with games and activities to encourage informal learning about the landscape and its heritage.	Project changed to Badged Organisations and completed
<b>C9</b>	Gateway to the Tame Valley	To create a new vibrant and engaging interpretation centre and visitor experience in the heart of the Tame Valley	Project completed
<b>C10</b>	Branding	To develop a Tame Valley brand and website in order to promote the landscape and TVWLPS, and to create a sense of place for local people and visiting tourists.	Project completed
<b>C11</b>	Sculpture Trail (Reserve Project)	To create a community sculpture trail along the canal network inspired by local heritage.	Reserve project - not needed
<b>C12</b>	Promotion and Marketing	To ensure that the Tame Valley, the scheme and its projects are widely promoted across the scheme area.	Project completed

The individual projects are discussed below, and a number are also case studies and presented in Appendix 3.

**The Access Group project (C1)** was envisaged as creating a group that would be able to undertake works to improve and maintain rights of way across the Tame Valley, however the concept evolved during the duration of the programme, with some work being undertaken by Tame Force (B3) and some by community groups (B6). The work relating specifically to opening up access was seen as a subset of the work done by volunteer groups to help deliver several of the 'C' programme projects. It was not appropriate to ask volunteers to tackle some of the work, such as installing gates, benches and way marking posts, so some installation work in projects C3 and C4 was undertaken by external contractors rather than volunteers.

Some equipment was purchased to support the activity and the availability of the equipment means the team are able to support community groups to undertake maintenance tasks.

A flagship project within the scheme was **The Tame Way (C2)**, envisaged as two long distance routes running from north to south across the area, one closely linked to the canals, and one following other rights of way. The ambition of this project had not been fully realised at the end of the main delivery period, with the final section of the route only agreed in June 2018 and signage, benches and leaflets not in place at that stage. This was completed during the transition phase.

From the outset, this project has been challenging and ran behind schedule. One of the reasons for this was that it took until January 2016 to get an Access Improvement Officer into post, but other factors also played a part. Once in post, it took a while to identify landowners and gain permissions for access, although it could be argued that the post holder could have pursued this more actively. There were some difficulties with the canal route as the Canal and Rivers Trust was reluctant to take responsibility for signage and benches by the canals, although staff and volunteers have been helpful. In addition, delays were caused by fibre-optic cabling taking place under the tow path, which had to be completed before CRT staff could install way



Figure 37: Tame Way signage near Lea Marston (J Holland November 2018)



Figure 38: Tame Way River route signage at Kingsbury Water Park, (J Holland, November 2018)

markers. The final section of the non-canal route was agreed late, as the team was seeking an alternative to a path in Hams Hall that was not considered attractive for ramblers.

While a permissive route has now been agreed, the work to put in signage and get leaflets printed and distributed took place during the Transition Plan period. This delay inevitably meant that some outputs, the outcomes and impact of this particular project cannot be assessed as part of the end of scheme evaluation. The project officer has identified two key learning points from the project:

- a. Identifying landowners and obtaining permissions can take longer than expected.
- b. For the programme overall, the key learning point is to get staffing right and in post early, particularly in a four-year programme.

To some extent **Tame Valley Interpretation (C3)** has faced some of the same challenges as C2. The Interpretation Officer role, which had responsibility for this area of work, did not start take up his post until April 2015, and in addition was only employed for two days per week (occasionally three days per week if needed). The key outputs for this project were to increase signage (10 new signs using



Figure 39: Examples of oak monoliths, Hams Hall Environmental Centre, (J Holland 10 May 2018)

Middleton Lakes. The monoliths are high quality and include the common branding for the Tame Valley Wetlands, but again, have been installed right at the end of the delivery period and therefore, have not yet influenced or enhanced the awareness of the Tame Valley Partnership brand or of the Tame Valley Wetlands itself. Nevertheless, the material chosen is durable and the monoliths should last for many years, continuing to promote the brand.

On a site visit in August 2018, a monolith and interpretation board were visible at Ladywalk Reserve, but signage at Whitacre Heath SSSI was poor (at the time of writing, this has been improved). The interpretation board at Borrowpit Lake was not obvious from the main car park when the site was visited. The interpretation boards at the community wetlands at Kingsbury Water Park were clearly visible. In addition, some information plaques were designed to be installed on finger posts at key points around the area, with details about particular sites. These had been delivered to the team by early July 2018 but had not been installed at that point. They were in place by October 2018.

logo), interpretation boards at heritage sites (excluding those on The Tame Way) and oak monoliths at entrances to major sites. While some interpretation boards were put in place promptly, for example at Kingsbury Water Park, others have been slow to be produced and put in place.

An interpretation board has been produced for Borrowpit Lake in partnership with the Lamb Angling Club and, reportedly, was installed in July 2018.

There are also interpretation boards created for Ladywalk Nature Reserve, where work has taken place in partnership with the West Midland Bird Club and for Whitacre Heath SSSI in partnership with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

The oak monoliths were delivered to Hams Hall Environment Centre by May 2018 and have since been installed on key sites including RSPB



Figure 40: Small interpretation sign in place at Curdworth (J Holland October 2018)





Figure 41: Interpretation Boards: Top Left: Tame Way at Kingsbury Water Park (J Holland April 2017); Top Right: Ladywalk Nature Reserve (Board – design, TVW LPS team archive); Bottom Left: Whitacre Heath SSSI (Board – design, TVW LPS team archive); Bottom Right: Borrowpit Lake (J Holland April 2017)

They were not part of the original outputs and, thus, add value to the Scheme. These high-quality plaques would be easy to replace should they be vandalised.



Figure 42: Information plaques before being installed (J Holland July 2018)

While some high-quality materials have been produced by the team, a significant proportion have been installed in the final months of the main LPS delivery period or will be installed during the Transition Plan period. The desired outcomes of raised awareness and increased understanding achieved to date are mainly due to other sources of information, including the website, and the full outcome and impact of all interpretation and awareness-raising measures are only likely to be seen from 2019 onwards.

An additional activity within this project was to create a new bird hide at Whitacre Heath SSSI for birdwatching, with associated interpretation boards. While the boards have been developed, the work on hides at the site did not commence until July 2018 and was still on-going at the time of the site visit in August 2018. However, as at the time of writing, the project is now complete.

Tame Valley Access Improvement (**C4**) included several small-scale improvements at a number of sites including Whitacre Heath SSSI, Kingsbury Water Park, RSPB Middleton Lakes and Tameside

LNR, with some early wins. Activities included installing, repairing or replacing board walks, resurfacing footpaths and bridleways, putting in steps, and installing cycle racks, most of which have been achieved, although there have been some changes in emphasis. The conversion of some paths to bridleways has met with some delays and resistance as the local authority Rights of Way teams needed to lead this process and take account of the



Figure 43: Small interpretation sign in place at Hams Hall, (J Holland October 2018)



ongoing maintenance responsibility and costs of such changes but it appears that all the improvements except for access work at Tame Aqueduct have been completed.

**Circular and Themed walks project (C5)** was originally conceived to create five walks and five cycle routes but, given the nature of the area, it was considered too challenging to

develop safe cycle routes, so the team have concentrated on circular walks instead. As at July 2018, four walks had been created based around Curdworth, Kingsbury Water Park, Coleshill and Shustoke Reservoir. Two further trail guides were in draft form with the printers, based around a Coleshill town trail and Middleton Village. A seventh leaflet was in the design phase covering a trail at Dosthill and RSPB Middleton Lakes. The final three were planned to be Alvecote Lakes and Warwickshire Moor, Hopwas and a Tamworth Town Trail. This last was being worked on with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and Wild About Tamworth. As at 27 September, only the four original circular walks were available from the Tame Valley Wetlands website<sup>20</sup>. The way markers for the circular walk at Shustoke Reservoir were not easy to spot during a site visit at the Reservoir in August 2018.



Figure 44: Circular Walk information board by canal at Curdworth, (J Holland October 2018)

The feedback gathered by the team on the use of the circular walks is limited. A guided walk has been conducted along the route at Curdworth and the parish council had received 2 boxes of printed leaflets and have asked for some changes to the leaflet when it is reprinted. Kingsbury Water Park have asked for further copies of the leaflet for their circular walk, and Broome Croft Café and Children's Farm have also asked for further copies of the leaflets to be provided. Of the 34 boxes of walk leaflets initially ordered, as at July 2018, 15 boxes were left at the Hams Hall Environmental Centre.

The original concept in the LCAP was for phone apps to guide route users, but this has been changed to commissioning videos of the routes to assist users, which are also downloadable to portable devices from YouTube and are intended to be downloadable direct from the TVW website in due course. As at 27 September, these were not available through the Tame Valley Wetlands website. At the time of drafting this report, however, all the routes

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/circular\\_walks/](http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/circular_walks/)

have been completed and leaflets produced for them, including a folder pack to contain the full set.

The **Signposting Guide (C6)** was conceived to be produced in two distinct phases. The first phase would be undertaken in Year 1 and would be a web-based and printed map of the Tame Valley Wetlands with all the sites of interest and access routes marked, to help people to find and access the Tame Valley. The second phase was an updated version of the web and printed map, including all new and improved routes from the scheme and was due to be produced at the end of Year 4.

The original signposting guide was produced in May 2016 (slightly late due to the delay in successfully appointing the Interpretation Office role). It is an A5 leaflet, folding out to A3, featuring a brief description of the area, the project and partnership, a map of the scheme area, showing the River Tame, settlements, canals, motorways and major roads, and sites of interest, with a brief description of those areas, including access information. The leaflet was designed and written in-house and was illustrated with photographs. The guide was widely distributed and available.

The second guide has been designed and is also an A5 leaflet, but this time folding out to an A2 size with a large map of the area on one side with walks and places of interest marked up. The reverse side includes more detailed information on the Tame Valley Wetlands and includes photographs by the TVW team and by local volunteers. It is more informative about the development and history of the TVW, and includes material developed for the Gateway project (C9) as well as a map showing the TVW in the West Midlands context. Only visuals of the layout and design of the leaflet were available at the end of the Scheme, but a printed copy was available by April 2019.

There is no evidence of the outcomes or impact of the leaflets from the team. The survey put into field by MRE included questions as to whether people had heard about the funded programme of activity: 84% of respondents said they had. Of those, 24% had heard about it through leaflets, and given that the Year 1 leaflet was finally produced by May 2016, it is possible that this document helped to raise the profile of the programme with some respondents.

The project **Your Family History Resource Pack (C7)** was originally intended to create resources including games and activity sheets related to the heritage and wildlife of the Tame Valley for use in a family setting. Following the Mid Term Review and with the permission of HLF, this project was changed and instead the funding was used to commission a short, animated film, called “Living Map”, showing the evolution and importance of the Tame Valley from 500,000 BC to the current day. The project was put out to tender in October 2017 and Second Home Studios were the successful bidders, producing an attractive and informative animation which is available to view via the Tame Valley Wetlands website<sup>21</sup> and runs for just over five minutes. By July 2018 there had been around 400 views of the animation.

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<sup>21</sup> See: <http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/discover-a-hidden-landscape/livingmap/>

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While it clearly needs to be marketed further, the animation is a good way of showing how the Tame Valley we see today has evolved and it could be used in education as a teaching aid, among other applications.

Apart from web hits and views, there are no other output or outcome measures for this project, although team members report that it has been well received.

Project **C8** was originally intended to focus on developing **Education Materials for Girl Guides** but was broadened out to a wider range of uniform groups including Rainbows and Sea Cadets. Initially the project was the responsibility of the Training and Education Officer but was later handed to

the Youth Engagement Officer as a better division of labour and time. Following the Mid Term Review, the focus of the project was changed, to move emphasis from developing an education pack (which had already been produced in project B8), and also to widen the scope of the badges and awards participants would aim to achieve. During the period, 10 sessions were delivered, exceeding the planned LCAP targets both for the number of young people participating and the number of awards achieved.

In addition, the young people engaged helped to achieve targets for other projects by getting involved in conservation projects as part of their activities (for example, litter picking at Borrowpit Lake), while the adults with them were made aware of the different wild areas in the Tame Valley and the potential for their use as part of planned activities. TVW staff collected soft evidence of changes in attitudes of young people to the area, willingness to get involved in activities and sharing their new knowledge with family and friends. The opportunity for uniformed groups to continue to work with Tame Valley Wetlands projects and staff is still there, although with the end of HLF funding, there has to be a paid contribution. From the feedback evidence collected, young people profited from the sessions, enjoyed them hugely; in addition, the sessions scored highly on the 'five ways to wellbeing' scale used by the team to assess holistic impact on participants.

As well as helping groups achieve badges and awards, the work with the uniform groups developed both their members' and their leaders' awareness and knowledge of their local area and ecosystems.

The **Gateway to the Tame Valley (C9)** was perhaps the flagship project for this aim as it was about creating a new, vibrant and engaging interpretation centre and visitor experience. It is located at Kingsbury Water Park, the key site in the valley for the general public and for publicity purposes. At the time of the development of the LCAP, it already had an estimated

### **Viewpoint**

As well as working for specific awards, the **Tamworth and Lichfield Sea Cadets** helped with a litter pick in March 2018 at Borrowpit lakes, which they found enjoyable, and which the group leader thought they would be prepared to do again. In addition, one sea cadet offered the following opinion:

*"I'm really happy we've collected this (litter) and made a difference, but sad that humanity has created it."*

300,000 visitors per year. The original visitor centre was described as tired and with outdated interpretation of the site and the wider Tame Valley setting. The project would provide a 25m<sup>2</sup> visitor experience with a contemporary feel, while exploring and explaining the heritage of the area.

This complex project was slightly delayed, but the new design visitor centre was soft launched in May 2017 and officially opened on 1 July 2017, with snagging works continuing until March 2018 on the interactive computer screens. The centre was completely redesigned and split the retail aspect of the area from the interpretation and information element. There are also information panels on the outside of the building as it is not open all the time. As at July 2018 there had been 75,000 visitors through the door (not necessarily unique visitors). The TVW team and their contractors worked closely with Warwickshire County Council who run the site and own the building, and Council officers report they are very pleased with the outcome.

The limited number of completed visitor questionnaires are generally favourable, with the only negative comments relating to toilet facilities (not part of the building) and entry to the Park overall (again not relevant to the Visitor Centre). Feedback on the internal and external appearance of the centre was very positive, as was the feedback on information on the park and on TVW. Just as importantly, the Warwickshire County Council staff who work at the centre were consulted throughout the development of the

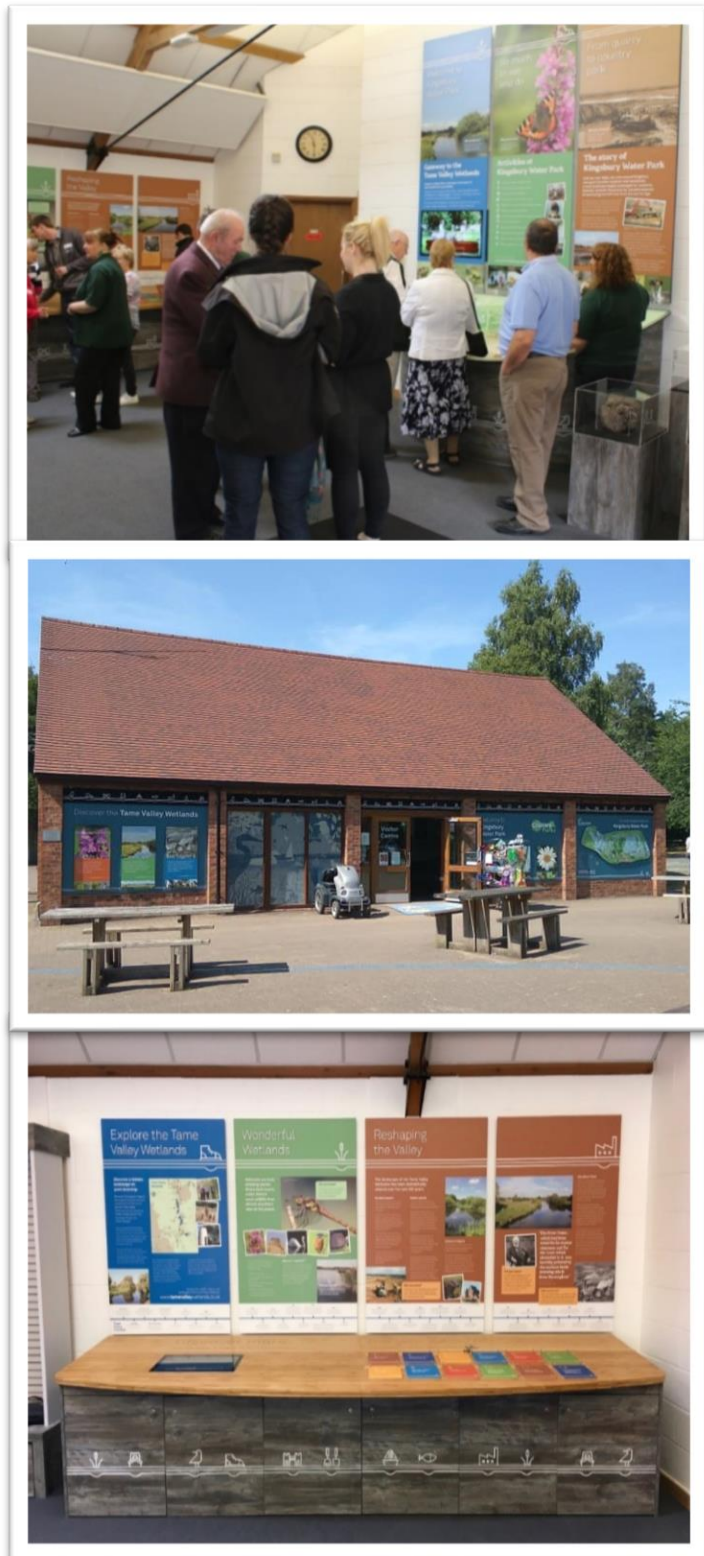


Figure 45: Top: Visitor Centre Launch Event;  
Middle: Exterior of visitor centre (J Holland July 2018);  
Bottom: Interpretation display, including touch screen and with full use of the TVW logos (Chris Harris, TVW)

new design, and are happy with the new layout and design, and the way the area works. As can be seen from the photograph of the interpretation display, there is a strong brand for the project carried through physical and digital media.

## Tame Valley Wetlands



Figure 46: Branding style for Tame Valley Wetlands

The **Tame Valley Brand and Website (C10)** was a key project for the programme as a whole and one of the most successful. The aim was to develop a brand and identity for the Tame Valley Wetlands to create a sense of place and to help to start to create a destination for visitors. Once the brand was in place, the website would drive its use and awareness across the internet and would be the digital equivalent of the Visitor Centre (C9).

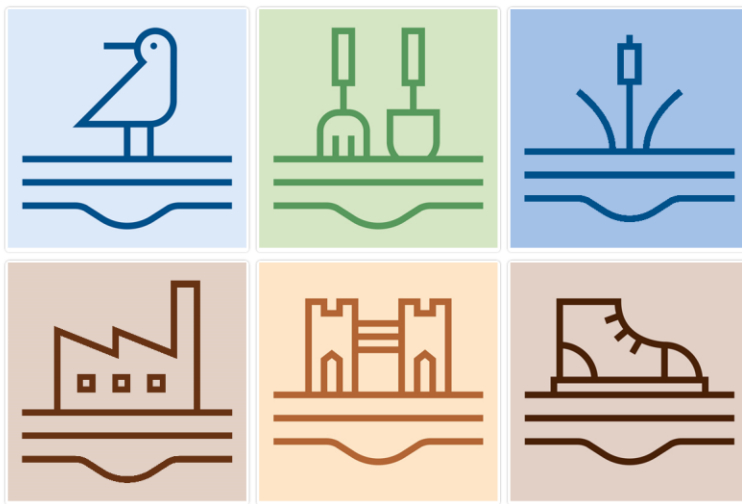


Figure 47: Examples of brand use for different activities

The logo and branding were created by The Cafeteria<sup>22</sup>, a Sheffield based design consultancy, and is exceptionally good, with all partners and HLF very proud of it and some partners using the branding in conjunction with their own, even when they do not need to. The survey for the Visitor Centre showed that a third of visitors were already aware of the logo when they went to the Centre, however the survey

put in field by MRE from April 2018 showed that 87% of respondents had seen the main TVW logo at least once before responding to the questionnaire. For many partners, the logo is a key element of the legacy of the LPS programme and there is extensive debate on how it should be used going forward, including whether an adaptation can be used to link the TVW to the proposed project linking the Tame to the Trent, creating a consistent brand for the whole of the valley of the Tame.

The logo has been included on way markers, interpretation boards, the oak monoliths (C3), benches, finger posts, sites, leaflets and indeed any other opportunity that the team have had to raise awareness.

The website was originally created using WordPress by the scheme manager but was taken over by the Interpretation Officer once in post. There was a redesign of the website, launched in November 2016, and control of design and content has been kept within the team to ensure they are able to react and add content quickly. The emphasis of the website

<sup>22</sup> See website - <https://thecafeteria.co.uk/> - the Tame Valley Wetlands is used as one of their flagship examples for Brand and Identity

has evolved over the programme period, from a way of detailing the projects that were running to more of a destination hub and virtual gateway to the Tame Valley Wetlands. It is still used for advertising events and opportunities as well as a place to source information on circular walks, non-native species and things going on in the area. The team estimates there are 133 pages of content on the site.

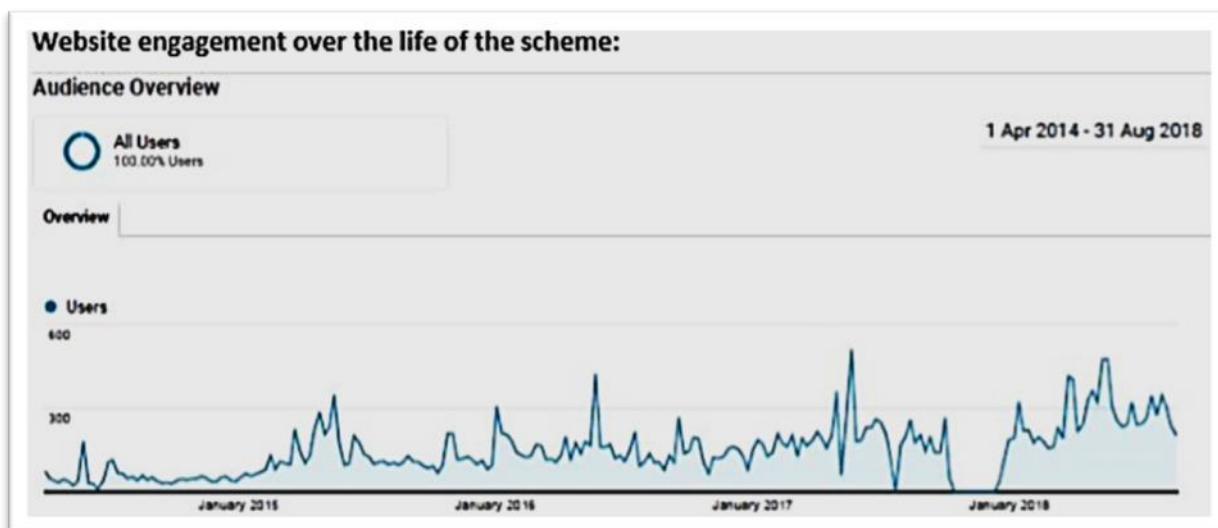


Figure 48: Website engagement over the Programme's life

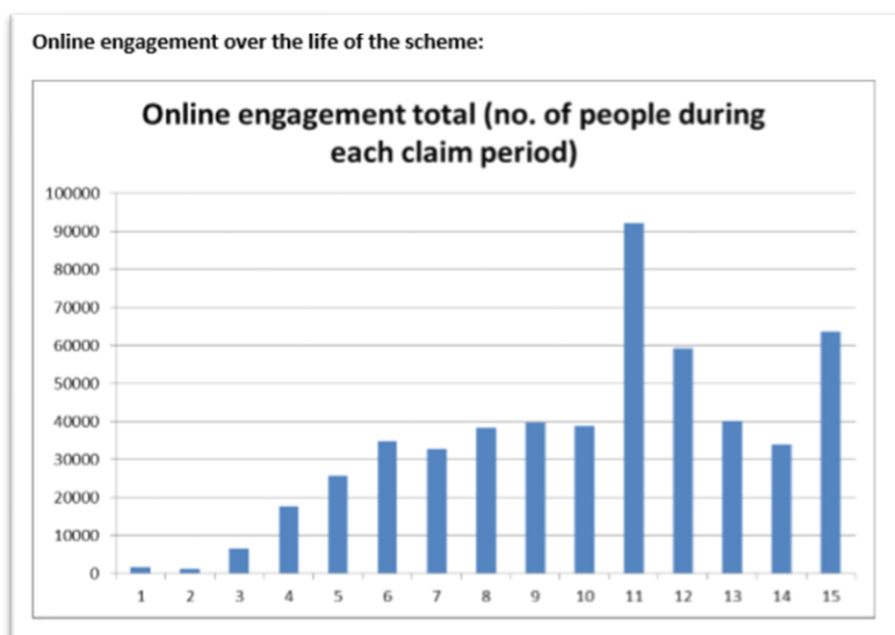


Figure 49: Graph showing online engagement figures, taken from August 2018 report to HLF

The analytics for the site show a good level of on-line access. Figure 48 shows the numbers of online visitors per reporting period across the life of the programme.

There was a slow build-up of engagement early on, not least as the Interpretation Officer was not in post, and there was a need to develop content and awareness. However, from half way through the scheme, numbers reached a reasonable plateau – it is likely that the peak of engagement in reporting period 11 (April to June 2017) coincided with the scheme's appearance on the BBC's 'Country File' TV programme, which in turn generated a lot of



media interest. Period 15 covers a longer period than usual (April to August 2018), hence the higher level of engagement. These figures include website hits, Twitter and Facebook. Figure 49 above shows the monthly website hits. There is a discontinuity in the data for the last months of 2017 and early 2018, when data was diverted to a different collector (the numbers are included in Graph 48). This graph shows a gradually rising trend over time, as awareness of the area increases, and more content is added to the site. There is a good base of website engagement all through 2018, and assuming the site continues to be added to, including details of the circular walks, this should continue to be a strong resource for the NIA going forward.

**C11 Sculpture Trail** was a reserve project that was not required to complete the Programme.

The **Promotion and Marketing project (C12)** has seen some changes from the original concept. In the LCAP this was described as an information hub and was conceived as a trailer that could be converted to a mobile information hub and transported, towed by a scheme 4x4 vehicle, to various sites and events throughout the Tame Valley Wetlands area to spread the message about the wetlands to a much wider audience.

This plan was reviewed, as the trailer option was expensive, not necessarily sustainable after the programme finished and there was also some doubt as to how much it might be used during the programme. With HLF permission, the project was therefore changed to developing a wide range of materials that could be used more flexibly to promote the brand and would not be a challenging asset to deploy after the end of the funded programme.

The range of materials produced included:

- A star-shaped shade to provide a shaded area at outdoor events but including TVW and partner logos. This was used regularly for Wild Wednesday workshops and for TameFest;
- 1 pop up display and 5 pull up banners;
- 2018 calendar using photographs from sites around the Tame Valley and distributed to partners and volunteers;
- 10 promotional A2 posters for use in libraries, community centres and tourist destinations among others;
- Promotional films;
- Branded mugs and pencils;
- A free-standing touch screen kiosk for use at Hams Hall Environment Centre and for loan to other venues.

There is no particular evidence to support the success of these items. However, the volume of materials and their flexibility for use in a wide range of settings is more appropriate than the creation and use of a trailer that could spend a considerable amount of time parked up in the compounds of various partners and would be vulnerable to deliberate or weather induced deterioration.

Overall the survey put into field by MRE gives some evidence of improved awareness of and access in the Tame Valley Wetlands area. Given the locations where the survey was available in either electronic or paper format, it is not surprising that 96% of respondents

had heard of the Tame Valley Wetlands, but it was good that 50% of respondents knew that it was a Scheme, an area AND a partnership.

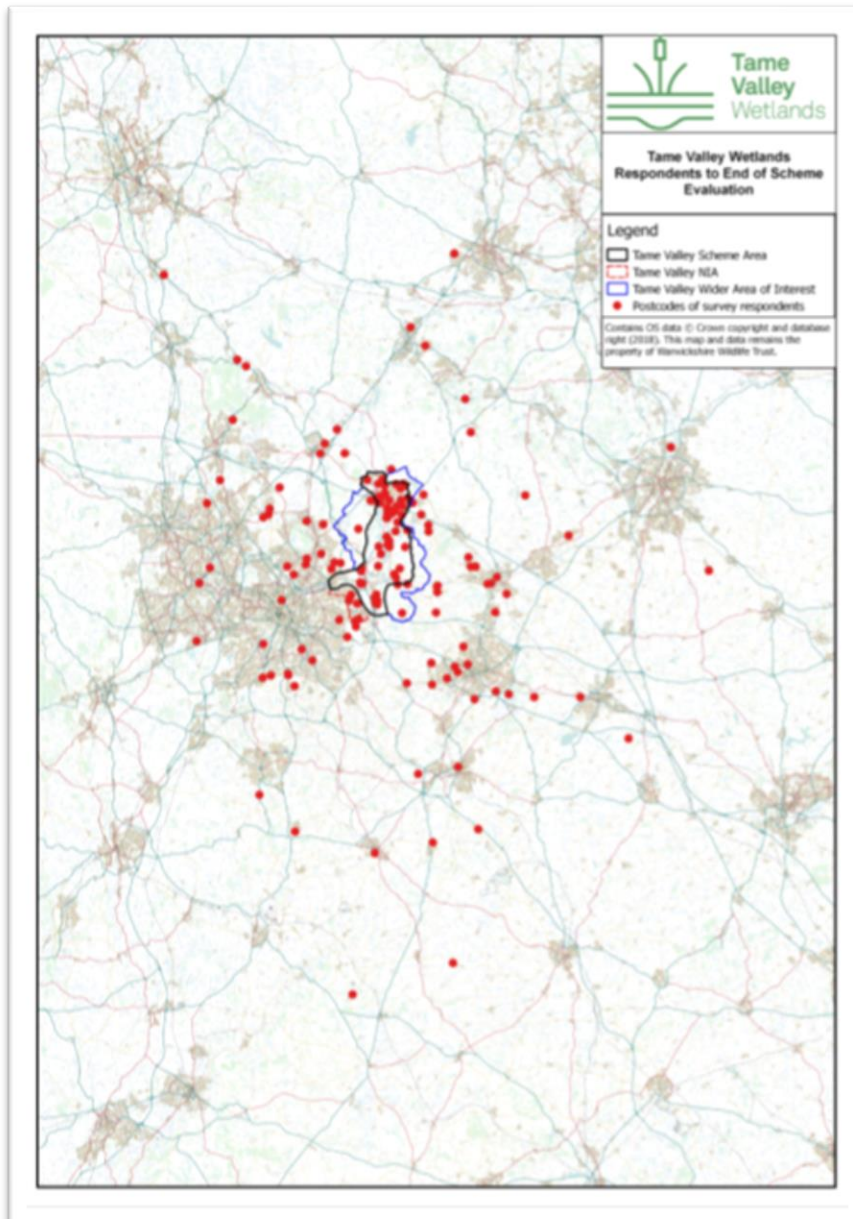


Figure 50: Map of survey respondents' home postcodes

where people were from. The map shows the respondents as well as the TVW LPS area and the wider area of interest. There is an obvious cluster of respondents around Tamworth, and a scattering of respondents through the rest of the area, with other respondents living in Coventry and the Greater Birmingham area, and some outliers in southern Warwickshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire.

In terms of frequency of visiting one or more sites in the Tame Valley Wetlands, 58% of respondents visited at least once a month (13% daily). Their reasons for visiting were multiple, but 65% said to see wildlife, 53% to enjoy the peaceful landscape and 51% to get some exercise as at least part of their motivation. The single most important reasons for respondents for visiting were seeing wildlife (20%) and other (17%), which included

As indicated above, awareness of the logo was high at 87%, and awareness of the funded Scheme was also high at 82%. In terms of raising awareness of the Scheme, partner organisations were the most popular route, with 53% of those who had heard of the Scheme being aware of it through an organisation, particularly Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Wild About Tamworth, Friends of Kingsbury Water Park, RSPB and Tameside Wildlife Conservation Group - as the most commonly cited groups. As part of the survey undertaken with the public about the Tame Valley Wetlands, respondents were asked to give their home postcode so that we could understand

volunteering and work. The main benefits from visiting the Tame Valley Wetlands were a break from everyday life (55%), developing an interest or hobby (49%) and a way of getting or keeping fit (48%). In terms of barriers to visiting the Tame Valley Wetlands or visiting more frequently, 56% of respondents said that nothing prevented them, while the main barriers were lack of knowledge and too far away (12% each) and public transport (9%). Most people knew how the landscape was formed, with 86% of those responding to the question correctly identifying that the landscape was created by the extraction of sand and gravel. Of those that responded, 90% either agreed or strongly agreed that they had become more aware of the river in the past 4 years and 80% agreed or strongly agreed that they were more confident in accessing the river than they had been 4 years ago.

There are very few statistically significant differences between the responses by e-survey and by paper survey. The only ones are that those who responded to the e-survey visited the area less frequently on average than those filling in the paper survey, and they were also less likely to agree with the statement that they felt more confident about accessing the Tame Valley Wetlands.

It would appear that the LPS has made progress in its ambition to bring residents and their river valley closer together and improve access to the area, but with the delay to footpaths and signage, there is still ample opportunity for the impact of the programme to improve further.

### 3.5.3 TRANSITION PROJECTS FOR AIM THREE

**T3 – Tourism and Communications** was a project designed to build on the work achieved over the last four years and secure a strong legacy and clear future direction for the Tame Valley Wetlands as a brand and regionally important destination for local people and visitors. The project had two main aspects – a review of the branding policy and work on a visitor strategy.

Cafeteria were once again commissioned to look at how the brand could be taken forward, including its use by partners and in promoting the Tame Valley itself. This resulted in a document for use by partners to show how the brand could be applied, often in conjunction with other logos, to provide a consistent message about the area (“Tame Valley Wetlands Identity Partnership Guidelines 2019”). They also developed a document (“Tame Valley Wetlands Identity – from project to place”), also known as the ‘Interruption’ document, which explains the transition of the scheme from being driven by the needs of the LPS project to being opened to a wider ownership and purpose.

At the request of HLF, Cafeteria also looked at the potential for sharing the branding with the Transforming the Trent Valley LPS scheme, in an advisory document (“Transforming the Trent Valley Shared Identity Review”), which has been shared with the Partnership. This document looks at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a shared identity or sister identity from a marketing perspective and is still under review.

The other aspect of T3 had been planned to be a visitor strategy, which would also include extending the area covered to part of the River Cole valley. The Environment Agency offered further funding to extend the scope of the project to look at the whole of the River Cole. With the agreement of HLF, the scope of the study was changed, and the resulting

study provides a useful and thorough overview of the potential to create a multi-functional green corridor following the River Cole to act as a catalyst for future change and investment. Atkins was retained to undertake the work, overseen by a group of partners, and the final report will be presented to the HS2 Environment and Landscape Board to form the basis for a bid for funds for environment, visitor and access improvements at three sites. As a result, the Partnership is managing a £40,000 project 'Love Your River Cole', funded by the Environment Agency, while a further £100,000 has been secured as match funding for HS2 CEF Strategic bid for works at the three sites along the River Cole. The River Cole study is already forming the basis of future projects. It means that the Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership will still be able to collaboratively deliver on its outcomes through other funding sources.

**T5 – Conservation Volunteers, Trainees and Lengthsman<sup>23</sup>** was to ensure the continuation and sustainability of the scheme's conservation volunteering group ('TameForce') and accredited training opportunities. It would also trial a new, innovative approach to delivering improvements to the landscape through a Parish Lengthsman scheme, providing added value to the basic requirements by integrating opportunities for volunteering, training in traditional heritage skills and advice for parishes into delivery.

The project was a continuation of B3 (TameForce) and D6 (Skills Training), while the Lengthsman was funded by the Parish Councils to meet the needs of their local areas and was intended to provide opportunities for the volunteers to learn and work. In practice, the tasks required by the parishes in general required working too close to roads to provide a safe environment for volunteers and learning, so the link to the Lengthsman did not work out as expected. The volunteers have been working at a number of sites, removing invasive non-native species, including Himalayan Balsam and rhododendrons, as well as hedge-laying and assisting with the building of a timber Roundhouse at the Hams Hall Environmental Centre.

Volunteers have undertaken valuable work, providing in the order of 2,058 volunteer hours, but partnership staff need to consider how they can better manage the work that they undertake to know how long activities will take. It would also be good to attract a few more regular volunteers if at all possible. The Lengthsman project in its current form is not suitable for supervising or training volunteers and needs some adjustment to meet the ambition of the role and demonstrate added value through involving local people and embedding skills.

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<sup>23</sup> A person employed to maintain a length of road or railway (Oxford English Dictionary)

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Figure 51: Live Willow weaving at Lea Marston (photo Rita Gries (WWT))

## 3.6 Aim Four – Training and Skills

### 3.6.1 Aims and Achievements

The fourth aim of the LCAP is to:

“Provide training opportunities for local people by offering taster sessions, short courses, award schemes and certificates in a range of heritage and conservation topics, in order to increase the skill and knowledge levels within the local population and provide a lasting legacy.”

#### **ASSESSMENT**

*Very good progress has been made towards this aim. An extensive programme of taster and training opportunities was offered at different times and locations; attendance targets were exceeded. The skills and knowledge of volunteers, staff and Partner staff have been enhanced and targets for gaining qualifications were met, albeit with some renegotiation of which awarding body was used.*

Its detailed objectives are presented in the tables on Pages 24 -25. To deliver this aim, a programme of seven projects was designed.

Table 13: Key Targets for Aim Four

KEY TARGETS FOR AIM FOUR	TARGET	ACTUAL
4.1 Deliver taster days and short courses in a range of natural and built heritage and conservation topics, such as stonework restoration, hurdle making, coppicing, hedge-laying and species identification.	4.1.1 At least 150 taster days and short courses	140 taster days and short courses delivered
	4.1.2 Train approx. 1,000 people	1,375 training participants
4.2 Provide opportunities for local people to gain certification in heritage and environmental conservation skills.	4.2.1 Min. 40 people trained through OCN or City & Guilds.	27 trainees, with more doing City & Guilds (higher GLH)
	4.2.2 10 of those trained to progress into employment, education or further training	TVW Apprentice and at least two other trainees progressed into employment
	4.2.3 25 young people to gain a John Muir Award.	40 achieve a John Muir Award
4.3 Undertake focused learning and research with landowners, colleges and universities to facilitate and encourage	4.3.1 45 landowners / farmers to be engaged	26 new landowners engaged



KEY TARGETS FOR AIM FOUR	TARGET	ACTUAL
sustainable land management and to provide useful data to inform landscape restoration work.	4.3.2 Link the scheme with college, undergraduate and postgraduate level courses through close working with at least 4 colleges and universities.	At least 4 colleges and universities involved in projects over the life of the scheme
4.4 Strengthen skills and knowledge amongst scheme and Partnership staff and the wider network of local groups and volunteers.	4.4.1 No specific targets	While no specific targets were attached to this, skills and knowledge have been improved

### 3.6.2 Project Delivery for Aim Four

The seven projects are listed below, along with their completion status as at the end of August 2018.

Table 14: List of Programme D projects

Ref	Project Title	Description	Completion Status at 31.8.18
D1	Taster Sessions	Varied programme of taster sessions to encourage learning about natural environment	Project completed
D2	Research	Students surveying nature reserves twice yearly, talks, field trip, linked coursework, post grad. Research to produce scheme monitoring and evaluation tool	Project completed
D3	Capacity Building	Programme of training for staff and volunteers, including leading to NPTC qualifications	Project completed
D4	Cultural Heritage Training	A range of training linked to heritage of the landscape	Project completed
D5	Mapping	Volunteers trained in mapping and recording techniques for natural heritage features	Project completed
D6	Accredited Training	Targeted at OCN and City & Guilds conservation work	Project completed
D7	Apprenticeship	Recruit and train a marketing apprentice.	Project completed

The individual projects are discussed below, and a number are also case studies and presented in Appendix 3.

The **Taster sessions project (D1)** aimed to teach audiences about the natural environment. Sessions were open to anyone and were advertised on the Scheme's website and in its events programme, which was widely distributed. Further publicity was gained by including



Figure 52: Bird Identification training (TVW)

the events in the programmes of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and other partners and by displaying posters in the local area and on the sites where sessions would take place.

A varied programme of 18 topics was covered. This included coppicing, hedge-laying, stone carving, watercolour workshops and photography, as well as sessions devoted to identification of different species of flora and fauna e.g. birds, bats, orchids and mammals.

Some renegotiation of targets took place for both session numbers and

participants. 113 sessions took place throughout the four-year programme.

The staff achieved the total number of participants in slightly fewer sessions than targeted. Workshops took place at the Environmental Centre in Hams Hall and in a variety of locations around Tame Valley, such as Whitacre Heath SSSI, helping to introduce delegates to the local landscape as well as offering skills training. Attendance records show that there were a number of repeat attendees. Existing volunteers also took part, helping to enhance their personal skills base and learning skills that would be valuable to their volunteering work.

**Research (D2)** was divided into four distinct activities:

- Surveying;
- Introduction to nature research;
- Farming-related land management;
- University research.

Survey work was carried out by local schools and colleges, including Bordesley Green Girls High School, with two in particular keen on this, especially at 6<sup>th</sup> Form level. The focus of surveying work was linked to habitat and biodiversity studies and habitat management.

For the land management activity, Tame Valley Wetlands collaborated closely with a local farm which has experience of working with students, schools and colleges. Despite active



Figure 53: Happy stone carving trainee! (TVW)





The project was very popular and over-delivered: the set target was 22 sessions and 80 participants; actual delivery was 28 sessions and 107 participants.

The NPTC (now City & Guilds) qualifications target was 6, the actual delivery was 9 plus 3 staff. Staff participation and attainment is shown separately because the team wished to indicate that their target was met without the staff count.

**Project D4 - Cultural heritage training** – sought to offer an engaging programme of training to a wide range of stakeholders. A broad variety of subject matter was specified in the LCAP and included insights into archaeology, researching historic records, historic building valuation, conservation and restoration. Outside help had to be brought in from partner organisations and others to develop and provide this training as, on the scale required, it was beyond the capabilities of the team. As a result, a particularly strong relationship developed with the Historic Records department of Warwickshire County Council, who delivered engaging training sessions that were very popular.

The targets for this project were 18 sessions and 184 people. Whilst the targets for some individual sessions were missed, overall the project over-performed, delivering 15 sessions with 763 attendees.

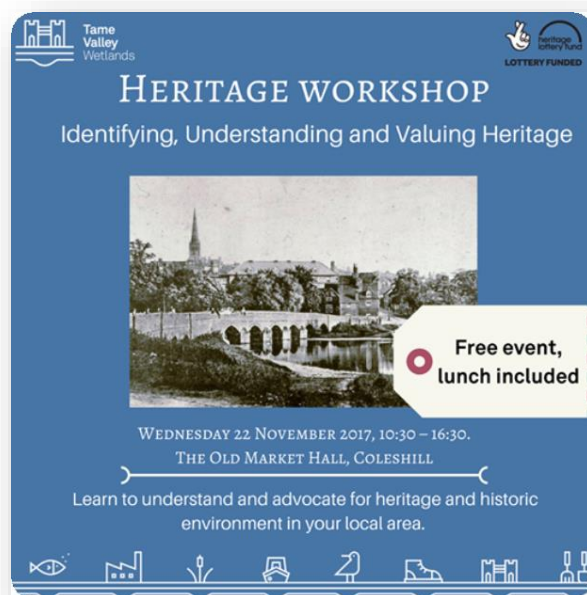


Figure 55: Advert for cultural training session

The larger number of actual participants included over 500 attending a major event at Middleton Hall but even without this, the 'people' target would still have been exceeded.

A useful lesson here is not to be too specific about individual events in the planning stage. The delivery officer also reported some missed opportunities resulting from partners, such as Canal and River Trust, not building conservation training into refurbishment work, which would have expanded the capability of the volunteer team.

Again, the team have taken the opportunity to do some volunteer training that will benefit the delivery and sustainability of other projects.

The purpose of **project D5 – Mapping** – was to identify and assess built and natural heritage features in the Scheme area, with a view to giving better protection to both. Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are recognised under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for their importance for nature, with the purpose of reducing damage to them, caused by future development. During the four-year Scheme, the team have presented to the relevant county panels in Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Birmingham 11 sites for Local Wildlife Site

designation. Of these, five have been designated, one was rejected and the remaining five have been given 'proposed' LWS status.

In the future, the designated sites will be shown on green infrastructure maps, affording them extra protection. All the information gathered has been submitted to the WWT's Habitat Biodiversity Audit (HBA), a unique, perpetually updated database that began in the 1990s. The HBA will be able to seek formal designation for the additional four proposed LWS sites.

Planned activity to help people understand historical maps was delivered through training workshops provided by Warwickshire Historical Records under Project D4.



Figure 56: Staff member C&G certificate

The LCAP recognised that the volume of conservation work being undertaken would provide an opportunity for local people to gain formal qualifications while also strengthening their career opportunities. **Project D6 - Accredited training** – delivered this process. When the project began, targets were set for the delivery of accredited training that related predominantly to the achievement of OCN Environmental Conservation and Heritage. In practice, it was found that there was a preference from trainees and others for the Level 2 City and Guilds (C&G) course in land-based conservation. This was based on the greater familiarity people have with the C&G name and also perceived greater credibility attached to the qualification by employers. For this reason, the qualifications delivered changed to C&G and, after the Mid Term Review, there was a change of emphasis to

the number of guided learning hours achieved rather than the number of trainees. An evaluation was undertaken to show the equivalence in guided learning hours of the courses, which demonstrated that targets had been met. 16 individuals achieved the C&G course and 11 people the OCN.

The project originally envisaged that the training would be available to volunteers but there was insufficient demand from that interest group, so the opportunities were advertised more widely and attracted local trainees, including some staff members, employees and volunteers from partner organisations. TVW has been able to offer a range of work-based training to support the qualifications, which has also been available to volunteers who were not following the formal course.

**Project D7 - Apprenticeship** – was originally intended to employ an apprentice to teach practical conservation skills but it was decided that the team had sufficient resource for conservation, so the job specification was changed to marketing and social media. The

apprentice, Ebony Smith, was recruited by an open process. She was employed by Warwickshire County Council, who seconded her to Warwickshire Wildlife Trust where she was placed in the Tame Valley Wetlands team.



Figure 57: Apprentice Ebony (right) assisting trainees (TVW)

The change of role has proved beneficial for the team because it brought an additional skill set in social media that was generally lacking amongst the team.

However, Ebony's role was not limited to desk-based work: she helped to deliver many events and undertook promotional work in the field.

At the end of her apprenticeship she was able to get a job she enjoys in marketing with another

organisation. You can read more about Ebony's experience in a case study that accompanies this report.

In the LCAP, the original intention was that each team member should take responsibility for promotional work for their area of responsibility and each was given training to help with this. Nevertheless, Ebony's appointment came at a busy time for the team and added extra resource to help them raise their social media activity further, which in turn assisted the profile of the Scheme and was achieved in a very cost-effective manner.

Team members reported that Ebony's contribution was greatly missed at the end of her 18-month employment with the Scheme, at which time they were focused on completing delivery of the projects under their management. As a local resident, and a result of the extra experience she gained at TVW, she was able to move into full-time work in marketing with a local business in Tamworth. The apprenticeship was clearly beneficial both for the Scheme and for Ebony herself.

### 3.6.3 TRANSITION PROJECTS FOR AIM FOUR

Events have played a particularly important role in raising awareness of the Partnership's work and getting local people involved. Keeping the programme going was seen as an important part of embedding the sustainability of the Partnership, so Project T7 was incorporated into the transition plan– to extend the events programme and so support projects B1 and D1.

The programme of events has been carefully constructed by reviewing feedback and value for money from events run over the life of the LPS. The Partnership's model of using a variety of venues and locations has continued through the transition phase, because this has also been important in engaging with different geographic communities.



Since March 2018 372 people have been engaged at over 15 events, with an income of £672.64. These have ranged from family activities (Wild Wednesdays) to adult events (Christmas wreath workshops), run by TVW staff and external providers (Community Environmental Trust and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust).

Since the end of HLF funding, events have been chargeable; it is evident that attendee numbers have dropped since charges were introduced but less marketing has been possible due to reductions in the staff team availability and this may also have had an impact. Nevertheless, the Partnership's successful 'Wild Wednesday' events, aimed at families, will continue during school holidays with a small charge.

TameFest 2018 took place at Hams Hall Environmental Centre during the transition phase and was very well received by visitors, although it experienced lower visitor numbers than previously due to a clash with an England World Cup football match. The event enabled local residents to learn more about the Centre and its work. Reportedly, some subsequent school and youth group visits were booked as a result of adult leaders attending TameFest. Although outside the time frame for the transition plan, the Partnership intends to hold a further TameFest event in 2019 to build on the success of previous festivals.

Figure 58: Small mammal identification training  
(Photo: TVW)



## 4.0 Assessment of Scheme Achievements

### 4.1 Delivery of targeted outputs

In this section we look at how well the Scheme achieved its planned outputs, according to the latest data available. Transition project outputs are considered in Section 5 of this report.

#### 4.1.1. Aim One Achievements

The outputs planned and achieved under Aim One (“To conserve, enhance and restore built and natural heritage features in order to improve the fragmented and degraded landscape of the Tame Valley”) are shown in Table 15 below.

Table 15 – Aim One outputs – Conserve, enhance and restore

OUTPUTS	TARGET	ACTUAL	CONTRIBUTING PROJECTS
Hedgerow restoration (m)	500	<b>1046</b>	B4
Hedgerow creation (m)	500	<b>983</b>	B4
Habitat created/restored (ha) <sup>25</sup>	50	<b>41</b>	A3, A4, A6, A7, A8
Ditch re-profiled / enhanced (m)	650	<b>925</b>	A4, B9
River / waterway restored (m)	630	<b>1110</b>	A3, A4, A5, B9
Fencing (m)	1000	<b>1200</b>	A4
New landowners	45	<b>26</b>	B4, D4, D5
Built heritage structures restored	2	<b>2</b>	A1, A2
Sand martin banks	1	<b>2</b>	A6
Bird and bat boxes	9	<b>92</b>	A5, A6, B3
New Local Wildlife Sites designated	2	<b>4</b>	D5
Potential New Local Wildlife Sites identified	0	<b>20</b>	D5
Plugs planted	0	<b>28524</b>	A3, A5, A6, B9
Native trees planted	0	<b>100</b>	A3, A5
Seed mix (m2)	0	<b>13400</b>	A5, A6

A number of outputs achieved did not have targets in the original LCAP, including plugs planted, trees planted, and areas seeded. Nevertheless, these are included at the bottom of the table to demonstrate the scale of the activity undertaken to improve the landscape and habitat and the commitment of the Partnership.

Several targets have been significantly exceeded, including hedgerows planted or restored and rivers and waterways restored. The scale of these achieved outputs is one reason why some partners are so pleased with the Scheme and why they believe that the achievements

<sup>25</sup> The areas of habitat creation or restoration were at Kingsbury Water Park, RSPB Middleton Lakes, Broad Meadow, Borrowpit Lake, Meriden Park and River Blythe.

will be sustainable in the longer term. While Curdworth Tunnel works were not undertaken, Lea Ford Cottage was rethatched, so two built heritage sites have been restored.

#### 4.1.2. Aim Two Achievements

The outputs achieved under Aim Two (“To reconnect the local community with the Tame Valley landscape and its heritage by engaging and involving people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities with their local green spaces, sites of heritage interest and the conservation and restoration of these places”) are shown in Table 16 below.

Table 16 – Aim Two outputs – Reconnect local people to the landscape

OUTPUTS	TARGET	ACTUAL	CONTRIBUTING PROJECTS
River litter picked (m)	8000	<b>3750</b>	B3
No diff sites habitat improved	16	<b>29</b>	A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, B3, B9
Sites surveyed (no)	36	<b>18</b>	A7, B3, B9, A3, A5, D2
Area habitat better managed/enhanced (ha)	34.5	<b>10</b>	A7, A8, B3, B9
Monitoring rafts	10	<b>19</b>	B9
Large TameFest events	3	<b>4</b>	B1
TameFest attendees	780	<b>4870</b>	B1
Events (all others)	93	<b>98</b>	A4, A5, B1, B2, C9
Event participants (not TameFest)	2810	<b>4054</b>	A4, A5, B1, B2, C9
School / badged org sessions delivered	76	<b>114</b>	B8, C8, D4, B2
School children engaged	1840	<b>3740</b>	B8, C8, D4, A3, D4
College sessions delivered	6	<b>15</b>	B7, D2
College students engaged	190	<b>203</b>	B7, D2
Community grants awarded	8	<b>13</b>	B5
Community groups supported	3	<b>7</b>	B6
Volunteer work parties	86	<b>229</b>	B3
Youth sessions	82	<b>162</b>	B7
John Muir Award completed (young people)	30	<b>40</b>	B7
Individual young people	200	<b>529</b>	B7
Youth participants	510	<b>1150</b>	B7

Again, it can be seen that many of the original targets have been exceeded. In particular:

- Events have done well at attracting more visitors than expected, including TameFest;
- More school children have been engaged than originally envisaged;
- Youth participants and sessions have also exceeded targets.



The target for river litter-picked is below expectation, but overall the team estimates that 167,639m<sup>2</sup> of land was subject to litter-picking activities during the Scheme. Some sessions where litter-picking was undertaken were not suitable for measurement in length, amounting to at least 24 sessions (not individuals). The number of sites surveyed was also below target. The area of habitat better managed/enhanced is also below target – this is due to the required change to project A7 (see section 3.3 above) in particular as it was not possible to carry out the works originally intended, and so other activities were included which were not focused on one particular site.

#### 4.1.3. Aim Three Achievements

The outputs associated with Aim Three (“To improve access and learning for local people – both physical access on and between sites and intellectual access on and off site through a range of resources”) are shown in Table 17 below.

Table 17 – Aim Three outputs – Improve access and learning

OUTPUTS	TARGET	ACTUAL	CONTRIBUTING PROJECTS
Interpretation panels / signs	34	<b>28</b>	A4, A6, A8, C2, C3
Mobile information hub created	1	<b>1<sup>26</sup></b>	C12
Waymarkers / fingerposts	99	<b>80</b>	C2, C5
Leaflets created	12	<b>14</b>	B1, C5, C6
Videos created	1	<b>6</b>	A6, A8, B7, C7, C10, C12
New Visitor Centre/new website/new app	3	<b>2</b>	C5, C9, C10
Footpath created/improved(m)	2923	<b>5195</b>	A1, A3, C2, C4
New benches	11	<b>15</b>	A6, A8, C2
New boardwalk installed (m)	70	<b>740</b>	A8, C2, C4
New circular trails (no)	8	<b>10</b>	C5
New visitor platforms/hides	3	<b>7</b>	A6, A8, C3
Circular trails created / promoted (m)	0	<b>74000</b>	C5
Kissing gates installed	0	<b>21</b>	A3, C5
Willow sculptures installed	0	<b>4</b>	A6

For this aim most targets have been achieved, albeit rather late in the Scheme with delays to the roll-out of waymarkers and finger posts, interpretation panels and signs, benches and circular trails. It is fair to say that while the trails are now plotted out, leaflets and instructions on the website were not in place as at November 2018, and not all circular walks were adequately signposted on the ground either. However, it is pleasing to note that by November 2019, all leaflets are published and have been distributed and the walks are now described on the website with downloadable maps.

<sup>26</sup> While not delivered in the way originally conceived, there is a mobile unit that can be used at different sites with interactive content, and the scheme also supported the improvements to the information hub at RSPB Middleton Lakes.

The mobile information hub – an adapted and equipped trailer – was not pursued because of concerns about its utility and sustainability after the Scheme end. The output was renegotiated with HLF, so that a number of smaller but more flexible information hubs could be developed instead.

The footpath length created or improved has been exceeded due to judicious use of underspend at a couple of sites, plus additional work at Borrowpit Lake that had not been envisaged at the start of the Scheme. Some of the willow sculptures that were installed at Kingsbury Water Park were sadly stolen and have not been replaced. The boardwalk target was exceeded, with four sites benefiting from this – Warwickshire Moor, Tameside Local Nature Reserve, RSPB Middleton Lakes and Whitacre Heath SSSI.

#### 4.1.4. Aim Four Achievements

The outputs for Aim Four (“To provide training opportunities for local people by offering taster sessions, short courses, award schemes and certificates in a range of heritage and conservation topics, in order to increase the skill and knowledge levels within the local population and provide a lasting legacy”) are shown in Table 18 below.

Table 18 – Aim Four outputs – Training and skills

OUTPUTS	TARGET	ACTUAL	CONTRIBUTING PROJECTS
C&G Trainees	6	<b>16</b>	D6
OCN Trainees <sup>27</sup>	35	<b>11</b>	D6
Accredited Training Guided Learning Hours	3048	<b>3088</b>	D6
Apprentice f/t 18 months	1	<b>1</b>	D7
Research students	6	<b>8</b>	D2
Training sessions / taster days	178	<b>140</b>	D1, D3, D4, A7
Training participants	1364	<b>1375</b>	D1, D3, D4, A7

The training outputs have been challenging. An OCN qualification was developed but was not what people wanted to do. By contrast, the City and Guilds (C&G) qualifications (Certificate and Diploma) were much more popular than expected, so while numbers of trainees for OCN have not been achieved, C&G trainees have been exceeded. As the C&G qualifications are also more intensive in terms of guided learning hours, the target for hours has also been exceeded overall. Although the physical number of training sessions and taster days was not achieved, this was because sessions were more popular than expected and so the target number of training participants was exceeded without having to hold so many sessions, representing a saving in resources. Instead of continuing to hold sessions purely to hit the target, the team took the decision to concentrate their efforts on aspects of the Scheme which were not working so well at that stage. The appointment of an apprentice was a key success of the Scheme and is included in Appendix 3 as a case study.

<sup>27</sup> Renegotiated based on guided learning hours

## 4.2 Financial Performance

Table 19 below shows the main Scheme financial position as at the end of August 2018 according to the management information provided by the Scheme Manager, as well as the final outturn figures for the end of the Scheme at the end of February 2019.

The Scheme achieved more cash match funding and in-kind support than originally planned, while the volunteer value has been achieved. In fact, more in-kind support and volunteer value was achieved but this cannot be claimed or input into the HLF systems due to HLF rules, so the excess was not recorded. There is extra in-kind support in the final figures to account for some extra activity in the transition projects, which has been approved by HLF.

There was a 12.6% underspend of the HLF grant at the end of August 2018, which was used to part-fund the Transition Plan which ran from September 2018 to February 2019. The total expenditure at the end of the transition period shows a slight overspend against target.

Table 19 – Financial scheme outturn

<b>FINANCIAL AND VOLUNTEER MEASURES</b>	<b>ACTUALS (END AUGUST 2018)</b>	<b>ACTUALS (END FEBRUARY 2019)</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	<b>% DIFFERENCE FINAL OUTTURN</b>
HLF grant	£1,502,644	£1,719,795	£1,719,600	0.01%
Cash match	£466,948	£466,948	£457,800	2.00%
In-kind support	£131,700	£134,580	£131,700	2.19%
Volunteer value	£189,700	£189,700	£189,700	0.0%
Volunteer days	3,323	3,323	-	
Volunteer hours	23,419	23,419	-	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE<sup>28</sup></b>	<b>£2,183,143</b>	<b>£2,511,023</b>	<b>£2,498,800</b>	<b>0.49%<sup>29</sup></b>

The cash match funding was made up as shown in Table 20 below. The Partnership was successful in raising more cash match than was required for the LPS contract. The figure notified to HLF was the exact amount needed to meet the target. The additional amount shown below could be used in other related work and to support the Transition Plan.

This has enabled the Partnership to achieve more than was originally envisaged with the HLF funding, meaning that the LPS achieved even better value for money than laid out in the original LCAP.

<sup>28</sup> The actual total expenditure figure for end August 2018 is taken from the relevant claim and does not sum correctly but the final outturn is taken from the final claim at end of February 2019 which adds up accurately.

<sup>29</sup> The slight overspend of just over £12,000 resulted from additional cash and in-kind contributions.

Table 20 – Sources of cash match

ORGANISATION	AMOUNT OVER FOUR YEARS	NOTES
Environment Agency	£150,000	£40k not needed for LPS main scheme
Tamworth Borough Council	£126,346	Section 106 and HLS monies as match for project A4
Warwickshire County Council	£39,200	Match for projects at Kingsbury Water Park – C4 and C9
Canal and River Trust	£24,918	Cash and external grant for project A2
RSPB	£62,755	External grant, charges for events, and fund raising
Other	£93,891	Grants from the Saintbury Trust, Woodland Trust, community groups as part of community grants, and other unspecified sources
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£497,110</b>	<i>This exceeds the total shown in Table 19 above as it is not all needed for the main LPS scheme</i>



Figure 59: Pond dipping at Middleton Lakes requires serious concentration! (TVW)



## 4.3 Achieving the Heritage Lottery Fund outcomes

### 4.3.1 Introduction to HLF Outcomes

In addition to outcome measures set by the LPS Partnership, HLF developed three sets of criteria for Schemes supported by its Landscape Partnership fund, to assess what difference its investments have made in relation to *heritage*, *people* and *communities*. HLF offers guidance on how partnerships can tell whether they have met the criteria, and this is set out in Appendix 4 at the end of this report. However, the criteria were not in place when TVW developed its LCAP and HLF no longer formally requires Partnerships to assess their performance against these requirements. Nevertheless, we think they are a useful yardstick for Scheme Managers and Boards, so, in this section, we have mirrored the questions asked by HLF to consider TVW's relevant achievements.

### 4.3.2 Heritage

#### a. Is **heritage** better managed?

The Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership has made some significant improvements in the way the local natural heritage is managed, specifically:

- The TameForce volunteer group has been able to work at a large number of sites to remove/manage scrub and invasive species, lay hedges to provide better shelter for wildlife and better protection for the land, among other tasks. The group will continue beyond the LPS funded period.
- Support has been offered to local conservation groups, some more formal than others, in terms of extra pairs of hands (TameForce) when needed for a major initiative, as well as access to tools, training, skills and small pots of funding. These groups are now better equipped both in kit and knowledge to carry on managing local sites.
- Training has been provided to partner staff that will allow them to manage sites more effectively. This training includes raising awareness amongst local councillors, who will be better informed when making decisions about conservation matters.
- The development of the wider Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership group, which provides a networking and support platform for local groups, including shared learning and resources.
- A strong overarching Partnership including the key statutory and third sector organisations, ensuring joined-up thinking along the whole of the Tame Valley Wetlands area, with the vision, enthusiasm and resources to keep certain aspects of the projects running.
- Awareness of the Tame Valley Wetlands and their importance has been raised at a strategic level in the West Midlands and nationally, as evidenced by high level visits to the area from senior staff in the Environment Agency and the West Midlands Combined Authority. The area has also been given Nature Improvement Area (NIA) status.
- The most concrete example of better partnership working is that TVW have been able to employ a part-time Lengthsman for maintaining highways and byways. This role has been funded by three councillors giving monies from their delegated budgets to provide £16,000 per year for three years to fund the role. In addition, local partners are



working together to create a large area of conservation land around the Hams Hall Environment Centre to provide a focus for future work and skills development.

Interviews with Board members show that all partners are proud of the achievements of the TVW Partnership during the LPS funding period and regard it as having strengthened their collaboration so that they can carry on working together for the area. They have a common goal in ensuring the minimum damage to the area from HS2, but are looking at the future far more creatively, rather than just focussing on a defensive stance. There is even discussion about the potential for an application for National Park status including a wider area than the core NIA.

#### b. Is **heritage** in better condition?

As can be seen from the assessment of project A2, Drayton Turret Bridge, the one project that was achieved in built heritage during the main part of delivery has improved the condition of a Grade II structure on the canal. Sadly, the other built heritage project could not go ahead. To compensate for this loss to the Scheme, the Transition Plan includes work on other built heritage in the area, notably rethatching the 17<sup>th</sup> century Lea Ford Cottage in the grounds of Hams Hall Environmental Centre.



Figure 60: Thatching is completed on Lea Ford Cottage (TVW, March 2019)



Figure 61: So-called 'Tracey Island', Tameside LNR still photograph from video – TVW

Hams Hall Environmental Centre, the base for the Partnership, has itself benefited from the LPS. Prior to the Scheme, its situation was uncertain with the likelihood that the Centre would be demolished, and Lea Ford Cottage relocated outside the parish of Lea Marston. Instead, the future of an

important wildlife 'oasis' in the middle of dense industrial development site has been secured, retaining an important educational asset for the local community.

More importantly in this Scheme, the natural heritage of the area has been improved extensively through Aim 1 focusing on conservation. The creation of the so-called 'Tracey Island', the reprofiling of the banks of the Tame, the creation of the Community Wetland,

planting and restoring hedges and the work at Borrowpit Lake have all had a positive impact on the river, its water quality, and its fauna and flora. Many of these interventions are self-

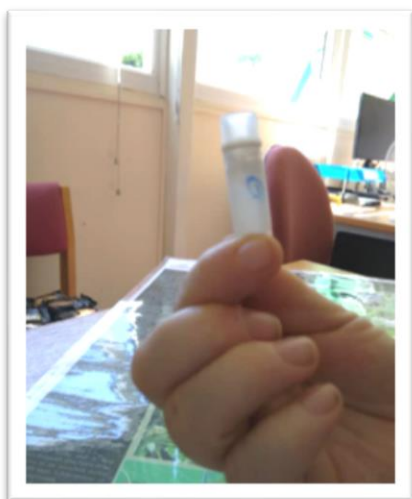


Figure 62: Vial of rust fungus  
(J Holland, July 2018)

sustaining and will not need major interventions again for quite a while, although the Community Wetland would benefit from reed cutting on a regular but not annual basis. These improvements have been highly praised by Natural England and the Environment Agency, as TVW has been able to source funding and get work done that statutory agencies would not have found the resources and time to do otherwise. The expectation is that the work undertaken will have a long-term positive impact on ecological diversity and reducing the adverse impacts of flooding, although such benefits will not be seen during the life of the Scheme.

The Rust Fungus trial to impede the growth of Himalayan Balsam is an element of the Scheme with particularly strong potential for widespread publicity and impact, if

successful, and the learning can be shared widely across the country. However, because this project was late in the Scheme the impact cannot be known at this stage.

### c. Is **heritage** better identified/recorded?

Wildlife and heritage recording have not been a major target of this LPS, although there is an element of mapping in Aim Four. Most identification and recording activity has been incidental. Nevertheless, there have been some useful additions to the public record, most notably from the Bioblitz undertaken at Kingsbury Community Wetland in 2017. The team was able to bring together resources from a number of agencies and involve several groups, as well as local residents, over a 24-hour period, resulting in the identification of 614 species including three Red Book<sup>30</sup> insect species and five different species of bat. In addition, one target species (Snipe) was spotted in the area in March 2018.



Figure 63: Species observations, RSPB Middleton Lakes, (J Holland, October 2018)

<sup>30</sup> According to the IUCN website, "Established in 1964, the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species has evolved to become the world's most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of animal, fungi and plant species". See: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>



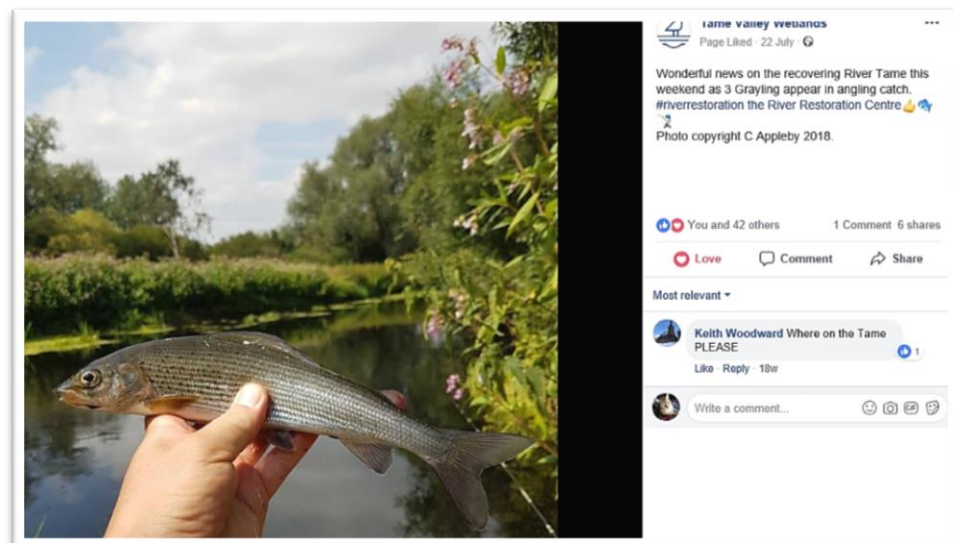


Figure 64:  
Examples of sightings  
recorded on the TVW  
Facebook page.

(Photos:

Top: Marion Parnell,  
July 2018

Bottom: C Appleby,  
2018)



Between an electrofishing activity at the Bioblitz event and good communications between the TVW team and local angling groups, there is evidence of improved diversity of aquatic life, including eels, bullhead, grayling, predatory pike and perch.

The public are also encouraged to share any sightings, particularly of key species, via sightings boards at RSPB Middleton Lakes and Kingsbury Water Park Visitor Centres, as well as by posting to the TVW Facebook page. Project D5 contributed significantly to the knowledge and recording of local heritage. It was changed from heritage and historical mapping to reviewing sites, including the River Tame itself, to identify which might be designated Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) for planning purposes as the National Planning Policy Framework, Making Space for Nature, recognises these sites. Out of the 20 identified sites of interest, 10 are on course to be recognised while one site at Castle Vale has been put forward for Local Nature Reserve status due to the presence of orchids. This activity will continue.

### 4.3.3 People

#### a. Have **people** developed skills?



Figure 65: 'Timehike' around Coleshill, learning from plants (TVW)

A substantial proportion of projects have helped to develop people's skills in some way. In some cases, this was the aim of the project, such as project D6, which helped participants gain formal conservation qualifications. This project renegotiated its targets to respond to demand for C&G, rather than OCN qualifications. For at least one trainee this was contributory to securing permanent employment.

Many projects achieved skills improvement alongside other outcomes. For example, volunteers working on habitat management projects have learnt new skills to expand their capabilities.

Every skill-related target was achieved except for the number of training sessions and taster days. However, in a sense this was also a success as the number of training participants was met – 1364 participants - and slightly exceeded within a reduced number of events. Consequently, this took less resource.

A further success has been the range of people who have benefitted from informal skills training and taster sessions. Effectively, all the communities of interest with which TVW engaged have received some benefit. These include the staff team themselves, staff of partner organisations, volunteers of TVW and of other partners, school pupils, college students, young people, community organisations and the general public.

A very broad view was taken about the subjects and activities that might interest people – everything from building bird boxes to surveying wildlife, controlling invasive species to stone carving, willow weaving to safe handling of power tools. Undoubtedly this has helped to attract a broader audience and has also strengthened relationships between the Partnership and its audience through repeat attendance at events. The viewpoint vignette from a volunteer on P82 bears witness to this. Within this extensive offer are many skills

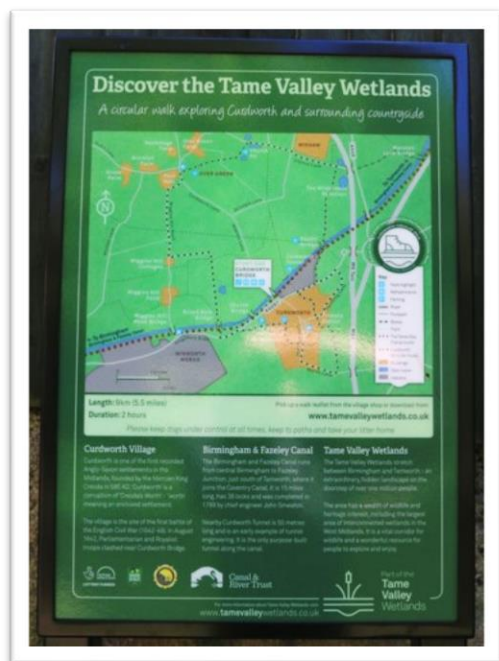


Figure 66: Curdworth orientation map

### b. Have **people** learnt about heritage?

The LPS Scheme has provided multiple opportunities for people to learn about natural heritage. There have also been numerous opportunities for people to learn about built heritage and these have been delivered in different ways.

Many events have taken place on Local Nature Reserves within the Wetlands, allowing people to experience wild places for themselves and gain a better understanding of the countryside and wildlife on their doorstep. Events have been aimed at different generations and some have been inter-generational. 'Wild Wednesday' events took place at RSPB Middleton Lakes, 'WildYouth' took place at Hams Hall Environmental Centre, conservation volunteering has taken place at many sites and field research has been undertaken in a number of locations. The settings have not been coincidental but have often provided a focus for raising people's awareness and understanding.

Interpretation boards have been sited around the area to help people understand the history, flora and fauna of the location, such as the Whitacre Heath SSSI shown here.



Figure 67: Whitacre Heath interpretation board

pertinent to sustaining the work of the Partnership, so skills development has also helped to underpin ongoing conservation work. Alongside formal skills training, the Scheme has also helped the team and their partners to develop improved partnership working and practical collaboration.

Feedback forms from different events and activities provide evidence that people plan to use the skills they have developed. Feedback from teachers suggests that they have not only found environmental and conservation sessions to be beneficial for pupils during the Scheme but intend to continue using them in the future. In the case of some school children, anecdotal feedback suggests that their experience has awakened an interest in a career in conservation. Sessions for young people had an average approval rating of 4.8 out of 5.



Viewing platforms have been installed in a number of locations to give a better insight, for example, the sand martin bank viewing platform at Kingsbury Water Park.

Different types of media have been used to help people learn about the local area, including both hard copy and online media, particularly an extensive website providing lots of information about the area, the work of the Partnership and why it is important. The Partnership has a Youtube channel featuring videos of a number of its activities; a very effective 'Living Map' video<sup>31</sup> was commissioned to tell the story of the evolution of area. Although only four Circular Walk leaflets were produced for by the Scheme deadline, at the time of writing all the planned ten walks are in place, they are featured in a set of leaflets and can be downloaded from the TVW website. These not only provide maps but explain the significance of various locations and buildings along the route.

Feedback forms demonstrate that the various learning tools have been valued by local people. Here are a couple of examples:

Hi

Thanks ever so much for the session on Friday. The girls absolutely loved it! It's great to see them doing something outside even with the dodgy weather working as a team.

We will also be visiting that area again now we know it's there. We all felt very ashamed that after 30 + years of being in Tamworth we didn't know it existed.

If you have any other sessions that we could do please let us know and we will be there!

Thanks again,

Sarah & 1st Two Gates Rainbows  
[Quoted text hidden]

**Tame Valley Wetlands Evaluation Questionnaire**

Name of Activity: *Summer Woods* Date: *15/6/16*

Project Code (office use):

How would you rate today's activities?

0 1 2 3 4 5

What did you enjoy the most?

*learning about the different trees.*

Anything we could do better?

*order better weather!!!*

Any other comments?

*Very enjoyable + informative*

Figure 68: Examples of feedback from satisfied participants

Since the focus of the scheme has been on natural conservation, there were less opportunities to learn about built heritage. Nevertheless, there are examples of information about built heritage throughout many of the items and activities referred to above and the team built a valuable relationship with the Historical Records department of Warwickshire County Council, who ran training courses in identifying, valuing, and conserving historic buildings.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/discover-a-hidden-landscape/livingmap/>



### c. Have **people** volunteered time?

Volunteering has been a pivotal activity to deliver the Scheme and increasing volunteering was one of the targets set by the Partnership. Many of the projects involved ad hoc volunteering by different audiences, for example, for litter picks and wildlife surveying, which demonstrated the fun and personal benefits to be gained from volunteering.

The Scheme's volunteer group TameForce has become a valuable and reliable resource for any number of physical improvement projects and there are many examples of praise for their work. Feedback forms for some activities show the high level of satisfaction volunteers have experienced from learning new skills and, in some cases, simply being in the great outdoors. For example, participants in a hedge-laying course predominantly scored their determination to return to do more volunteer work as 4 or even 5 out of 5.



Figure 69: TameForce volunteers laying a new hedge (TVW website)

The Scheme set a target of deploying 86 volunteer working parties over the four-year term but, in fact, was successful in organising 229 working parties. In addition, the target for volunteer time has been exceeded for match funding purposes, and while the HLF portal will not allow over-delivery to be recorded, the extra sessions and activity mean that

there is a wealth of added value above the output figures quoted for volunteers. When interviewed in January and March 2018, TameForce members were particularly keen to keep their activity going.

In addition to TameForce, the project team were extensively supported by independent volunteers for clerical tasks, improving access and for checking footpaths. Such individuals have contributed significantly to the smooth running of the Scheme and its success.

## 4.3.4 Community

### a. Have environmental impacts been reduced?

The overarching objective of the Scheme is to contribute to reversing the detrimental environmental impact of years of industrialisation and pollution that effectively killed all life in the River Tame. A key approach of many of the projects within the Scheme is to improve biodiversity and reverse trends that have been detrimental to nature in the Wetlands. Many examples can be cited: reed bed creation to help wading birds and encourage the return of the Bittern, coir mats of indigenous plug plants to help restore the habitat for water voles, use of rafts for mink control, reprofiling river banks to attract wildlife, removing invasive non-native species; the list is long. Although it is too early to be able to point to firm evidence of the difference being made, the presence of a strong population of nesting sand martins, perhaps 25 pairs, in a newly created artificial sand martin bank in Kingsbury Water Park has been a highlight for both staff and the volunteers who helped to build it.

A major threat to the Tame Valley Wetlands area exists because of the incursion of the HS2 route through the catchment. Whilst the Partnership cannot stop this, they are seeking to work with HS2 to minimise the damage caused and believe this engagement has cemented TVWLPS as a key stakeholder regarding HS2. They have been successful in achieving recognition of Tame Valley Wetlands as a Nature Improvement Area and, having surveyed 11 sites, have successfully petitioned for one new nature reserve and five Local Wildlife Sites to be created.

The Partnership has also persuaded at least one of its local authority partners to recognise the importance of the area within its Local Development Plan and feedback from

consultation suggested that councillors at another major authority were now much more aware of the sensitivity of the area.

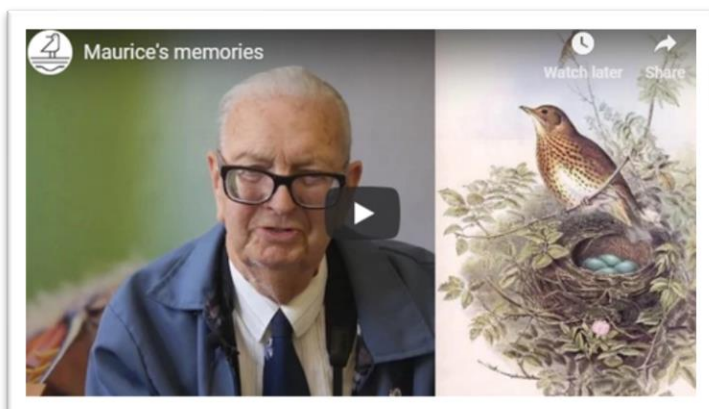


Figure 70: 'Still' taken from one of the 'Telling the Tale of Tame' videos. Lifelong botanist Maurice Arnold sharing memories of the work he and his brother did to preserve the flora of the Tame Valley

b. Have more people and a wider range of people engaged with heritage?

Through the various means described in the 'People' section above, the Partnership has successfully engaged with thousands of individuals

throughout the area and has ensured that activities have been available for all ages, ability levels and different communities of interest, including working in both urban and rural areas. The series of TameFest events are a good example of how the Partnership has reached out to the local population to raise awareness of local heritage. Different sites were used for the events, including Tamworth Castle and Hams Hall Environmental Centre. Without the Partnership's programme of activities, people would not have been encouraged to explore their local area and try new pastimes.

The project 'Telling the Tale of the Tame' has contributed to local cultural heritage by creating a permanent video record<sup>32</sup> of local people's memories of the river. One of the positive results from this is that it is evident that people who viewed the river as 'dead' when they were young have remarked on its improving condition and the return of wildlife. Projects with young people, school pupils and their families have been well attended and have provided opportunities that did not exist elsewhere. Most have featured learning opportunities and it has been pleasing to note that a number of schools are now planning to incorporate environmental studies into their curriculum in some way. A further important development during the transition stage is the strong interest from schools in paying for environmental studies sessions run by the Partnership.

<sup>32</sup> These videos can be viewed at: [www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/tellingthetaleofthetame/](http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/tellingthetaleofthetame/)

c. Is your local area/community a better place to live, work or visit?

The evaluation shows that the Scheme has brought about multiple benefits to improve TVW for residents, workers and visitors. As a result of the Scheme, the condition of many green spaces has been improved and they are easier to access; interpretation allows people to understand more about their local flora and fauna; some physical schemes have improved flooding problems. New walking routes, maps and guides to the Wetlands encourage visitors to explore the area. Heightened awareness about the area, its history and ecology should help to give people a stronger sense of place and pride. The Partnership received external acknowledgement of its achievements when it won the National UK River Prize 2018 for best partnership project with multiple benefits.

## 4.4 Sustainability and Legacy

### 4.4.1 Partnership and Strategy

The Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership pre-dated the HLF bid for funding and has now been in existence for 13 years. The partnership structure includes both a core group of partners but also a wider network of community organisations and other interested bodies. The structure is proving to be durable and having senior representatives from a manageable group of organisations has helped to secure high levels of commitment.

The Partnership recognised that to continue its work, it needed to ensure it did not simply become a talking shop when the HLF funding finished. Partner commitment has been valuable in identifying resources to carry forward the practical work of the Partnership and in designing a new staffing structure with five members of staff.

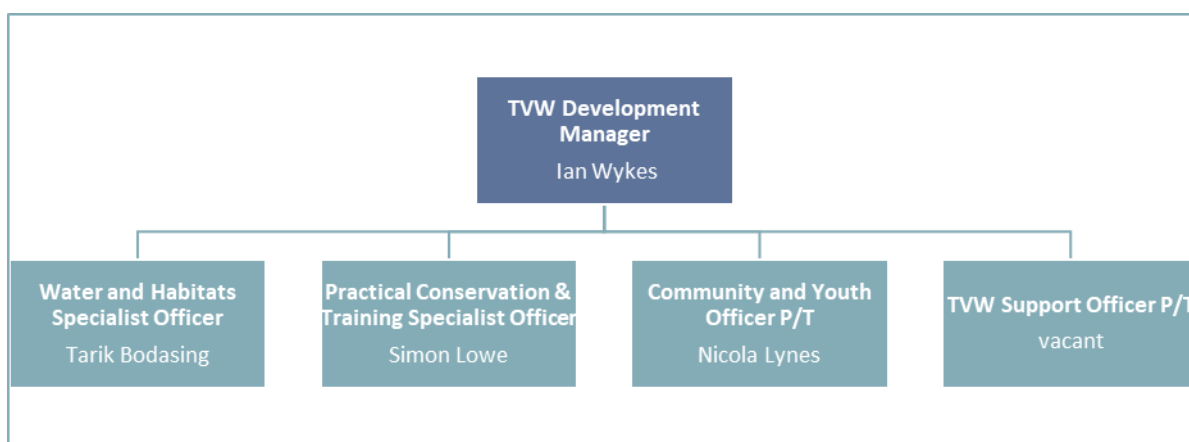


Figure 71: Revised staffing structure post HLF funding

The Partnership also negotiated a transition plan with HLF (see Section 5 of this report for full details) to act as a conduit to the next stage of its existence. The plan makes use of Scheme underspends, matched with resources from other partners and with substantial commitment from WWT as the accountable body, meaning that a Development Manager can be employed for a further two years, making that a sufficiently rewarding post to attract a good calibre of applicant. The updated Partnership structure can be seen overleaf.

From an early date, the Partnership was conscious of the need to take a long-term approach to protecting the sensitive environment of the Wetlands and the need to take account of what was happening around it. Working with Dr. Kathryn Moore, Professor of Landscape Architecture at Birmingham City University, a respected academic in this field with an interest in the West Midlands, it commissioned the “Tame Valley Landscape Vision Development” document in November 2016. This was followed in 2017 by a strategy called “Tame Valley Wetlands: Developing our Vision for the Future”. Both documents can be viewed online<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> “Tame Valley Landscape Vision Development 2016”: [http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/TVWW\\_Report\\_Final\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/TVWW_Report_Final_WEB.pdf)



As a result, and following wide consultation, the Partnership updated its vision:

“By 2030, the Tame Valley Wetlands will be a high quality, well-known and valued landscape, rich in wildlife, beauty and culture for all to enjoy.”

It has decided to build on the successes of the HLF Scheme by theming its activities to deliver the following objectives:

Theme A – Delivering landscape-scale connectivity and habitat creation and management.

Theme B – Maximising opportunities from strategic planning and developments.

Theme C – Community engagement and ownership.

Theme D – Tourism: marketing and destination development.

Changing national policy is making its impact in Tame Valley on a variety of issues. In particular, part of the high-speed rail link from south to north (HS2) will pass through the Wetlands with serious and detrimental implications. There has been much local opposition from residents and the Partnership’s decision to try to work with the HS2 management team was not immediately welcomed by local people. However, the Partnership continues to try to protect key assets in the area by working with rather than against HS2.

The Partnership sees collaboration as the best way to conserve the area, recognising that the West Midlands Combined Authority is tightly constrained by its borders and may well seek development sites outside its boundaries.

Interestingly, its strategy appears to have been one of the catalysts for an emerging discussion in the West Midlands about the possibility of establishing a West Midlands National Park, with Tame Valley cited as a possible case study<sup>34</sup> for a feasibility study; the Partnership’s success in obtaining NIA status for Tame Valley Wetlands and achieving the formal recognition for various nature sites should help its case.

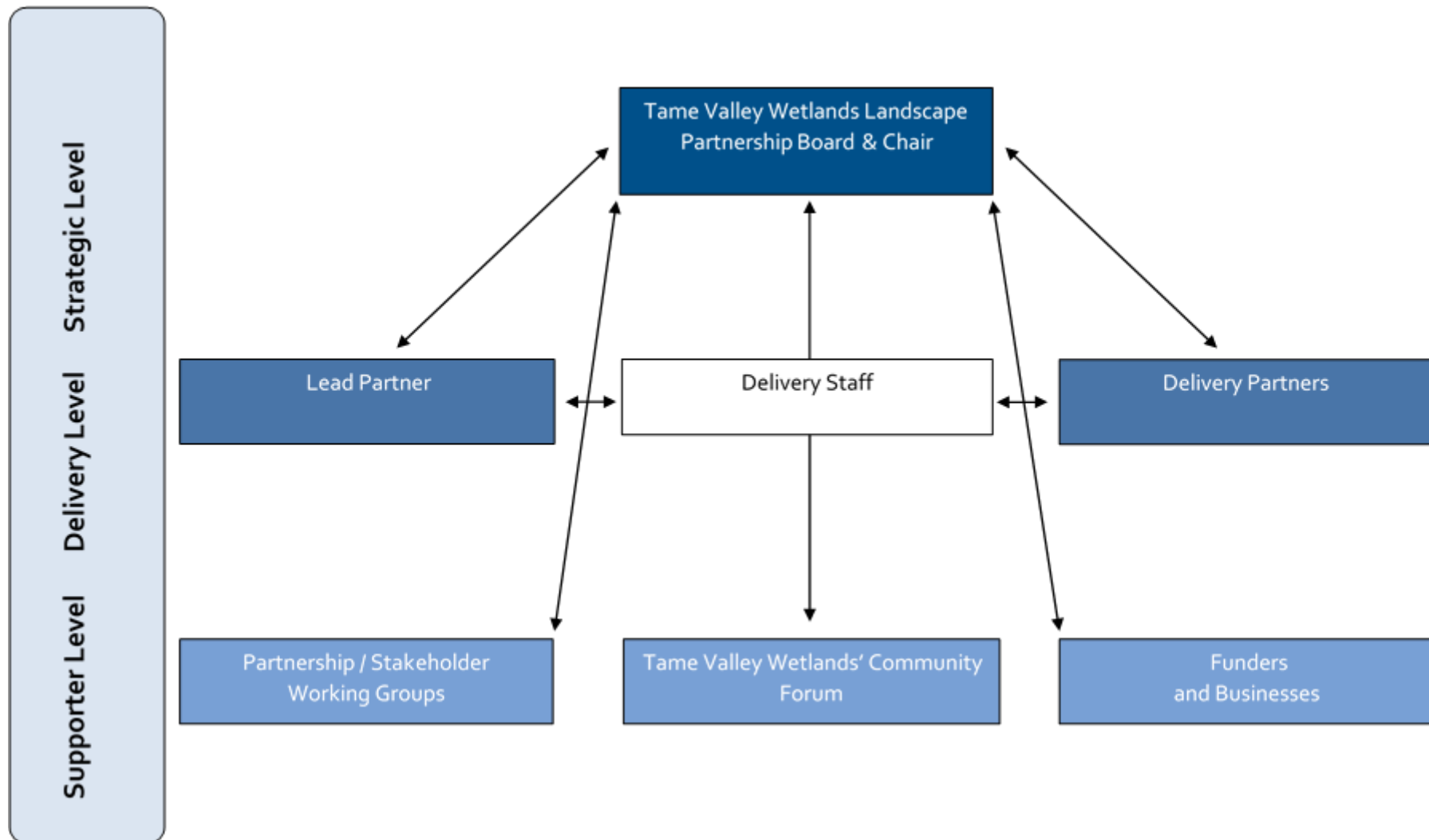
Whilst it is clear that the partnership is committed to the long-term improvement of the area, HLF funding has played a pivotal role in the delivery of its plans. It has enabled the Partnership to work on a much broader front, making improvements to many sites throughout the area, raising people’s awareness of them and their value and getting people involved in ways that simply would not have been possible otherwise. Successfully delivering the HLF Scheme has helped to cement the Partnership and has demonstrated its ability to be a ‘safe pair of hands’ for other work.

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Tame Valley Wetlands: Developing our Vision for the Future 2017”: [www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/advocacy-doc.pdf](http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/advocacy-doc.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> June 2018: <https://www.insidermedia.com/insider/midlands/new-west-midlands-national-park-plans-unveiled>

**FIGURE 72: PARTNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE POST HLF FUNDING (2018-2030)**



#### 4.4.2 Brand and Public Awareness

The Tame Valley Wetlands has created a strong brand, as shown in the review of project C9 earlier in this report. The suite of logos linking to wildlife, built heritage, the canal network, footpaths and the river are simple but highly effective. Branding is supported by a



Figure 73: Information Board at RSPB Middleton Lakes (TVW/RSPB)

comprehensive set of brand guidelines, which have helped partners to use the logos correctly.

Awareness is generally good, with a third of those responding to the TVW Gateway questionnaire recognising the brand, and 87% of respondents to the MRE survey saying they had seen it. We can further analyse this data by splitting out those who responded to a paper questionnaire and those who responded to the survey via the internet. Those responding to the e-survey were

marginally less likely to be aware of the branding, while those who used a paper form were more likely to be aware of the branding. These were people who visited the Hams Hall Environmental Centre, attended courses or work parties, or who attended TameFest.

When interviewed towards the end of the Scheme, all Board members and stakeholders, including HLF, were proud of the branding and felt it had contributed to the development of a sense of place. This is in spite of the fact that some key sites and footpaths had limited use of the logo and that finger posts, signage, monoliths and benches were installed later than scheduled.

The brand has been well used by the team, including on all printed materials, interpretation boards they have produced, the website, marketing materials and the scheme vehicles.



Figure 74: TVW-branded star shade in use (TVW)

The Star Shade includes the logos as well, although how far other organisations use it is perhaps a moot point! Apart from the monolith installed in August 2018, use of the TVW logo at RSPB Middleton Lakes is very limited.

The logo is very clearly displayed at the Visitor Centre at Kingsbury Water Park and can be seen on the relevant pages of the Warwickshire County Council website, but not on Tamworth Borough Council or Staffordshire Wildlife Trust webpages. However, some

partners are constrained in the use of the logo by their own corporate identities and rules (for example, Natural England). Tamworth Borough Council has used it when boards and markers are replaced.

Given all the hard work to establish the brand, the Partnership wanted to ensure it was up-to-date and relevant, so a review of the branding and guidelines was commissioned during the transition phase, which will help to underpin the legacy of TVWLPS.



Figure 75: Interpretation Board RSPB Middleton Lakes, showing TVW logo (J Holland, October 2018)

In terms of the wider use of the brand, it would be ideal to carry it on up the Tame towards the Trent and apply it to the Transforming the Trent draft Landscape Partnership Scheme. HLF are particularly keen to see the continuity along the river, not least as Tamworth is included in both schemes. It is however the TVW Partnership Board that has the final say on

the use of the logo and its potential to be more widely used and/or adapted. The May 2018 Board Meeting included some debate on the extension of the use of the brand, and after the meeting, attendees said it was probably the most controversial subject they discussed. There was some concern that the brand could be diluted through being applied upstream or downstream of the main Tame Valley Wetlands. However, at its Board meeting in March 2019, the Board confirmed they were happy to explore the issue with TTTV and relayed its decision by email. A response is awaited.



Figure 76: Information desk at Kingsbury Water Park Visitor Centre with prominent use of TVW brand (C Harris, 2018)

#### 4.4.3 Links to Existing Activity

The Partnership approach was to build relations with partner organisations through collaborative planning and action, which included improvements to existing partner sites run by charities, community groups and local authorities. These have included:



- RSPB Middleton Lakes
- Whitacre Heath SSSI
- Ladywalk Local Nature Reserve
- Kingsbury Water Park.

This type of collaboration has brought about improvements to these sites that would not have happened without the Partnership's resources and now places that work under the orbit of the Partner responsible for running the site and so improving the likelihood that maintenance will continue.



Figure 77: Photo and quotation taken from “Developing our vision for the future” TVW consultation document 2017

“The close proximity of such a wonderful, wildlife-rich landscape to millions of people, places the Tame Valley Wetlands in the same league as London’s Lee Valley Park. Now is the time to recognise this green corridor as a key natural asset in the region’s development plans.”

Emma Marsh, Director, RSPB Midlands

## 5.0 Transition Plan and Addendum

### 5.1 Rationale

There is plenty of evidence that Tame Valley Partnership has a strong focus on planning for the future. In early 2018, it started to firm up its plans for what would happen when the LPS Scheme finished. It wanted to maximise the legacy from the LPS scheme by building on its successes. It also needed to ensure a smooth transition from LPS funding to financing operational costs itself. Judicious management of the LPS funds meant that the scheme's outputs were largely on track to be delivered using slightly less HLF funds than originally anticipated. There were also a few projects which had taken longer to deliver than initially intended and for which outcomes would be improved if the delivery period continued for a few months longer.

Consequently, the Partnership designed a Transition Plan that would address all these issues and opportunities and strengthen its route to self-sufficiency. The Plan also set out the Partnership's achievements and progress with delivering the LPS. The Plan was presented to HLF and approved in March 2018. Initially, it intended to run from April to December 2018. Latterly, with HLF agreement, the delivery deadline was extended to end of February 2019. The April start date meant that some elements of the Transition Plan ran in parallel with the main LPS Scheme. This allowed some projects that had met their outputs and showed further potential to be extended. Other projects were important to the sustainability of the Partnership's achievements and had a good chance of continuation, supported by funding other than HLF, if supported through a transition phase.

By summer 2018, it became clear that, despite everyone's best efforts, one of the heritage projects, Project A1, would not come to fruition. This left a further underspend of £66,000 to be reallocated (with HLF permission). The re-designation of these funds was incorporated into the Transition Plan as an Addendum.

### 5.2 Updated vision and themes

Alongside its practical planning, the Partnership also reviewed its vision for the future and the key themes that it felt would be required to deliver the vision. Its updated vision and themes were agreed as:

**"By 2030, the Tame Valley Wetlands will be a high quality, well-known and valued landscape, rich in wildlife, beauty and culture for all to enjoy"**

Theme A – Delivering landscape-scale connectivity and habitat creation and management

Theme B – Maximising opportunities from strategic planning and developments

Theme C – Community engagement and ownership

Theme D – Tourism: marketing and destination development.

### 5.3 Consultation

In order to maintain strong partner and Board member involvement and to continue developing community engagement, extensive consultation was conducted to establish what actions were felt to be most important and most likely to help the Partnership achieve its aims. These actions were of a very practical nature with particular attention paid to identifying the specific location where work would be beneficial, even down to grid references.

### 5.4 Content of the Plan

A thorough review was conducted to prioritise the ideas produced through consultation. These were encapsulated in eight projects, some of which were new activity and some that continued projects in the original LCAP. The projects, designated with a 'T' code, are detailed in the table below.

The Plan is a detailed and complex piece of work in its own right and shows a serious commitment by the Partnership to ensuring that the Plan demonstrated how it would help to move them beyond HLF funding, not just use up underspend.

Several Partners were keen to show their commitment to the ongoing Partnership and agreed to contribute funds. This resulted in a pot of approx. £295k being assembled to fund the Transition Plan, of which approx. £136k was HLF funds and the remainder provided in cash or kind by partners.

In addition to funding for works and activities, the budget included £49k for the extension of some staff posts and overheads.

The individual project plans submitted to HLF give detailed breakdowns of the work to be undertaken, the aim of the work in the context of sustainability and legacy, the budget, including, where appropriate, specific contributions from partners. Outputs and outcomes plus a risk analysis were presented for each project.

Table 21: Detail of projects within the Transition Plan

Ref.	Name	LCAP Programme Allocation and Purpose	Funding
T1/A9	River Re-naturalisation and Feasibility Study	<u>Programme A: Conserve and Restore</u> 1) To restore a 250 – 500 metre length of the River Cole, upstream of the River Tame in North Solihull. 2) To carry out a feasibility study for a bypass to Blyth Mill Weir and wetland creation on adjacent land on River Blythe SSSI to support a 2019 funding bid.	HLF: £17.4k Partners: £45.2k
T2	Restoration of Lea Ford Cottage	<u>Programme A: Conserve and Restore</u> To restore a 400-year-old Tudor cottage in disrepair (Lea Ford Cottage) in Lea Marston Parish at Hams Hall Environmental Centre.	HLF: £10.4k



Ref.	Name	LCAP Programme Allocation and Purpose	Funding
		Replaces lost outputs for heritage restoration resulting from non-delivery of A1	
T3 (C10 & C12)	Tourism, Destination Development and Communications Plan	<u>Programme C: Access and Learning</u> Build on the work achieved over four years and secure a strong legacy and clear future direction for the Tame Valley Wetlands as a brand and regionally important destination for local people and visitors.	HLF: £17.4k
T4	Improvements to Training Studies Centre	<u>Programme B: Community Participation</u> To do essential repairs and additional improvements to partnership office/training centre at Hams Hall Environmental Studies Centre in order to make the centre and its operations more sustainable long-term	HLF: £16.8k Partners: £3.2k
T5 (B3, C4 & D6)	Conservation Volunteers, Trainees and Lengthsman	<u>Programme C: Access and Learning</u> To ensure sustainability of the scheme's conservation volunteering group ('TameForce') and accredited training opportunities. Trial an innovative approach to deliver landscape improvements through a Parish Lengthsman scheme, providing added value to the basic requirements by integrating opportunities for volunteering, training in traditional heritage skills and advice for parishes into delivery.	HLF: £9.5k
T6 (B7 & B8)	Environmental Education & Youth Engagement	<u>Programme B: Community Participation</u> To ensure the continuation and legacy of the scheme's successful education and youth engagement, with the aim to establish a sustainable approach post HLF funding by the end of 2018.	HLF: £0 (used remaining B7 and B8 funding) Then funded by Staffs WT and by fee generation from schools
T7 (B1)	Events Programme	<u>Programme D: Training and Skills</u> To deliver a reduced programme of events during 2018 to keep up momentum gained through LPS project. Choosing quality over quantity, events will take place that have had the best feedback from attendees over the last four years and that are best value for money.	HLF: £0 (use remaining funding from B1)
T8	Invasive Non-native Species Control (A7)	<u>Programme A: Conserve and Restore</u> To continue the innovative and cutting-edge work started through the LPS (Project A7) to control invasive non-native plant species through biological and mechanical control.	HLF: £0 Partners: £40.5k

## 5.5 Addendum Plan

The Addendum Plan containing 7 mini projects was agreed with HLF in September 2018 to utilise the A1 underspend. These are denoted by a 'TX' reference and fit within Programme A: Conserve and Restore:

TX1 – Footpath improvements at RSPB Middleton Lakes – led by RSPB

TX2 – Visitor reception at Middleton (part funding) – led by RSPB

TX3 – Wetland feasibility study for Middleton Parish – led by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT)

TX4 – Bridge feasibility study over river to Whitacre Heath – led by WWT

TX5 – Tree and path safety work at Whitacre Heath – led by Reserves team

TX6 – Coleshill Town Council and allotment group - improved access to allotments – led by WWT

TX7 – Fencing in Curdworth – led by Curdworth Parish Council.

## 5.6 Project Descriptions and outcomes

This sub-section draws together the assessment of each transition project. These assessments are repeated in the individual sections devoted to the four original aims of the LCAP, which appear earlier in the Review.

### 5.6.1 Transition Plan projects

**Project T1 (formerly Project A9 Wilding the Tame (north))** was designed to extend the impact of project A3 by 'wilding' a further stretch of the Tame further north of the A3 work.

Ultimately, it was decided not to deliver the project during the main Scheme. Instead it has been incorporated into the Transition Plan as Project T1 - River Re-naturalisation and Feasibility Study with the objectives:

- 1) To restore a 250 – 500 metre length of the River Cole, upstream of the River Tame in North Solihull.
- 2) To carry out a feasibility study for a bypass to Blyth Mill Weir and wetland creation on adjacent land on River Blythe SSSI to support a 2019 funding bid.

The work on the River Cole was important as it is a major tributary of the Tame and is in poor condition. The works to reprofile the river and to create better habitat for fauna and flora are therefore important to the scheme as a whole. The work was delayed from its original start of September 2018 and was completed in February 2019, with 50 meters of coir matting pre-planted with suitable flora installed, a number of berms created to help the formation of meanders and four areas of large woody debris added to alter the flow of the river. The work was not without challenges, from local youths ripping up matting, to large quantities of spoil that needed to be placed appropriately. A key learning point for the project was the timing of the work, which was done at a time of high water levels and flow speed which made aspects of the work more difficult to get right first time. This may necessitate redigging the channel to create the small island when the river is lower in order to prevent it running dry. High water

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also caused challenges for deploying silt traps, and for recovering the straw bales used as silt traps when the works were finished (as they were very heavy and difficult to move).

It is too early to say whether the desired increase in biodiversity and water quality will be achieved, but the works have been completed within the transition period, and some important lessons have been learned about undertaking this type of work in the future. The activity has been shared on the TVW website<sup>35</sup>, Twitter feed and Facebook page.

The Blyth Mill Weir is a known and significant block to fish passage, so the Tame Valley Wetlands partners were keen to see if a way could be found to improve the site. They commissioned AECOM to develop some detailed options for the site. These were completed in March 2019 but required some revisions. The proposals recommended the installation of bypass channels of differing lengths to go around the weir. The bypass channel will be put in place in 2019, using funds from a successful Water Environment Grant application. Although this work has been completed successfully, it was delayed due to staffing changes both at Warwickshire WT and at AECOM, which, in turn, caused problems in obtaining agreement from the landowner and other partners. In addition, a refresh of the design drawings was necessary to ensure that what they proposed was fully compliant with the specification and with construction, design and management regulations.



Figure 78: Lea Ford Cottage, before and after replacement of the thatched roof (TVW 2019)

**Project T2** was the **Restoration of Lea Ford Cottage** and was a new project that was included to compensate for the lack of built heritage projects, when the delivery of project A1 began to look doubtful.

The aim of the project was to restore a 400-year-old Tudor cottage in disrepair (Lea Ford Cottage) in Lea Marston Parish at Hams Hall Environmental Centre. The funding from HLF was to be used to replace the thatched roof and make the building watertight, while other funding would fund replacement lime plastering. The building would then make a useful resource and venue for visiting school groups and other interested parties, and there is planned to be an open day to launch activities that will develop interest in and sensibilities to 'built' heritage.

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<sup>35</sup> See: <http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/project-updates/re-profiling-the-river-cole/>

Reeds for replacing the thatch were delivered in Autumn 2018 and the works were undertaken in January 2019. All the HLF money was spent by the end of February 2019, and the building is now watertight and ready for the next phase of renovation. Progress on the works was shared on Facebook, enabling interested parties to see progress. There is also a detailed write-up on the Tame Valley Wetlands website<sup>36</sup>. This small but valuable project has been successfully completed within the agreed timeframe.

**T3 – Tourism and Communications** was a project designed to build on the work achieved over the last four years and secure a strong legacy and clear future direction for the Tame Valley Wetlands as a brand and regionally important destination for local people and visitors. The project had two main aspects – a review of the branding policy and work on a visitor strategy. Cafeteria were once again commissioned to look at how the brand could be taken forward, including its use by partners and in promoting the Tame Valley itself. This resulted in a document for use by partners to show how the brand could be applied, often in conjunction with other logos, to provide a consistent message about the area (“Tame Valley Wetlands Identity Partnership Guidelines 2019”). They also developed a document (“Tame Valley Wetlands Identity – from project to place”), also known as the ‘Interruption’ document, which explains the transition of the scheme from being driven by the needs of the LPS project to being opened to a wider ownership and purpose.

At the request of HLF, Cafeteria also looked at the potential for sharing the branding with the Transforming the Trent Valley LPS scheme, in an advisory document (“Transforming the Trent Valley Shared Identity Review”), which has been shared with the Partnership. This document looks at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a shared identity or sister identity from a marketing perspective and is still under review.

The other aspect of T3 had been planned to be a visitor strategy, which would also include extending the area covered to part of the River Cole valley. The Environment Agency offered further funding to extend the scope of the project to look at the whole of the River Cole. With the agreement of HLF, the scope of the study was changed, and the resulting study provides a useful and thorough overview of the potential to create a multi-functional green corridor following the River Cole to act as a catalyst for future change and investment. Atkins was retained to undertake the work, overseen by a group of partners, and the final report will be presented to the HS2 Environment and Landscape Board to form the basis for a bid for funds for environment, visitor and access improvements at three sites. As a result, the Partnership is managing a £40,000 project ‘Love Your River Cole’, funded by the Environment Agency, while a further £100,000 has been secured as match funding for an HS2 CEF Strategic bid for works at the three sites along the River Cole. The River Cole study is already forming the basis of future projects. It means that the Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership will still be able to collaboratively deliver on its outcomes through other funding sources.

**Project T4 – Improvements to Hams Hall Environmental Centre** – has enabled repair and improvement work to the Partnership’s base and training centre that have strengthened the sustainability of the centre and will underpin the Partnership as it seeks to remain viable when HLF funding has stopped. As part of this, the energy efficiency of the building has been

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/renovating-lea-ford-cottage/>



increased, with LED lighting and a more effective heating system that will reduce running costs, lower the building's carbon footprint and make it a more inviting and comfortable space for clients, trainees, staff and volunteers.

The building is rented, so prior to committing to the work, the Partnership has successfully



Figure 79: Construction of the Round House at Hams Hall Environmental Centre (TVW 2019)

negotiated to strengthen its tenure by encouraging Lea Marston Parish Council to take on the leasehold from owners Eon. There is additional benefit because other pieces of local woodland are included in the arrangement, allowing the Partnership to secure these green spaces for the future in a densely developed business park. The LPS Scheme has played an important part in making this happen.

All the work was carefully tendered to ensure best value and was managed by Partnership staff, increasing their commissioning skills.

Chargeable school visits are proving very popular and cover their costs.

Education for young people is a foundation stone for raising public awareness of the importance of the wetlands and also getting young people involved with nature from an early age. Offering suitable facilities for these activities is an important part of being able to attract schools. The project includes the construction of a traditional Iron Age round house as a further venue for training in the grounds of the Environmental Centre.

**T5 – Conservation Volunteers, Trainees and Lengthsman<sup>37</sup>** was to ensure the continuation and sustainability of the scheme's conservation volunteering group ('TameForce') and accredited training opportunities. It would also trial a new, innovative approach to delivering improvements to the landscape through a Parish Lengthsman scheme, providing added value to the basic requirements by integrating opportunities for volunteering, training in traditional heritage skills and advice for parishes into delivery.

The project was a continuation of B3 (TameForce) and D6 (Skills Training), while the Lengthsman was funded by the Parish Councils to meet the needs of their local areas and was intended to provide opportunities for the volunteers to learn and work. In practice, the tasks required by the parishes generally required working too close to roads to provide a safe environment for volunteers, so the link to the Lengthsman did not work out as expected. The volunteers have been working at a number of sites, removing invasive non-native species, including Himalayan Balsam and rhododendrons, as well as hedge-laying and assisting with the building of a timber Roundhouse at the Hams Hall Environmental Centre.

Volunteers have undertaken valuable work, providing in the order of 2,058 volunteer hours, but partnership staff need to consider how they can better manage the work that they

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<sup>37</sup> A person employed to maintain a length of road or railway (Oxford English Dictionary)

undertake to estimate the duration of activities. It would also be good to attract a few more regular volunteers if at all possible. The Lengthsman project in its current form is not suitable for supervising or training volunteers and needs some adjustment to meet the ambition of the role and demonstrate added value through involving local people and embedding skills.

**Project T6 – Environmental Education and Youth Engagement** – were incorporated into the transition plan to progress the Partnership’s successes in engaging with young people, both within the school curriculum and in their own time. The Partnership’s Youth Engagement Officer employment contract was extended to continue services that include youth sessions, sessions in schools and school sessions delivered at Hams Hall Environmental Centre. The staff role continues to be a shared one with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, with whom collaboration during the LPS has been successful, so extending a valuable relationship.

The school sessions have proved very marketable, attracting both return school visits and new schools, with income covering employment costs. Demand for the service means that it will continue when HLF funding has ceased. Reportedly, centres offering river studies for primary age pupils are rare, so there is a good ‘market’ opportunity.

Since March 2018 (end of HLF B8 programme) the project has engaged 475 students from school visits to Hams Hall, with a total income of £2312.60.

The ‘WildYouth’ group has continued but generating sufficient income to cover costs has proved challenging and keeping the outdoor group running during the winter at a viable size has also been difficult. This has been useful learning for the Partnership, so they are now considering how to restructure the programme to make it viable in the long term.

Since July 2018 (end of HLF B7 programme), the project has engaged 290 young people, with 106 individual participants, and a total income of £347.

**Project T7 – Events Programme** - Events have played a particularly important role in raising awareness of the Partnership’s work and getting local people involved. Keeping the programme going was seen as an important part of embedding the sustainability of the Partnership, so Project T7 was incorporated into the transition plan– to extend the events programme and so support projects B1 and D1.

The programme of events has been carefully constructed by reviewing feedback and value for money from events run over the life of the LPS. The Partnership’s model of using a variety of venues and locations has continued through the transition phase, because this has also been important in engaging with different geographic communities.

Since March 2018 372 people have been engaged at over 15 events, with an income of £672.64. These have ranged from family activities (Wild Wednesdays) to adult events (Christmas wreath workshops), run by TVW staff and external providers (Community Environmental Trust and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust).

From the end of HLF funding, events have been chargeable; it is evident that attendee numbers have dropped since charges were introduced but less marketing has been possible due to reductions in the staff team availability and this may also have had an impact.

Nevertheless, the Partnership’s successful ‘Wild Wednesday’ events, aimed at families, will continue during school holidays with a small charge.

TameFest 2018 took place at Hams Hall Environmental Centre during the transition phase and was very well received by visitors, although it experienced lower visitor numbers than previously due to a clash with an England World Cup football match. The event enabled local residents to learn more about the Centre and its work. Reportedly, some subsequent school and youth group visits were booked as a result of adult leaders attending TameFest. Although outside the time frame for the transition plan, the Partnership intends to hold a further TameFest event in 2019 to build on the success of previous festivals.

**Project T8 (Invasive Non-native Species Control)** is to continue the innovative and cutting-edge work started through the LPS (Project A7) to control invasive non-native plant species through biological and mechanical control. It is funded through partner contributions rather than HLF funding, but enables the valuable work started with HLF funding to be maintained. Two species were targeted for biological controls – Himalayan Balsam (using a rust fungus) and Japanese Knotweed (using a psyllid release) - as well as mechanical means to remove the plants and replant areas using coir matting and native species plug plants.

As with all cutting-edge projects, success cannot be guaranteed, and the psyllids have not proved to be successful, while the rust fungus deployment has been delayed somewhat. However, activity has provided useful data for CAB International and the Animal Plant Health Agency for further activity. The psyllid release was at Ladywalk NR and it does not appear to be a robust or effective agent and will be discontinued. Rust fungus deployment was initially undertaken at Ladywalk NR and Kingsbury Water Park – the latter did not appear to be at all successful and will not be continued. Rust fungus release is continuing at Ladywalk, however, which is now in its second year, and four other sites out of a potential five are also being treated in 2019 ; one site was found to be unsuitable. Two sites are also having coir matting and plug plants installed during the summer of 2019.

### 5.6.2 Addendum Projects

The **Tx projects** are 7 mini projects agreed with HLF in September 2018 to utilise the A1 underspend. They are:

TX1 – Footpath improvements at RSPB Middleton Lakes – led by RSPB

TX2 – Visitor reception at Middleton (part funding) – led by RSPB

TX3 – Wetland feasibility study for Middleton Parish – led by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT)

TX4 – Bridge feasibility study over river to Whitacre Heath – led by WWT

TX5 – Tree and path safety work at Whitacre Heath – led by Reserves team

TX6 – Coleshill Town Council and allotment group - improved access to allotments – led by WWT

TX7 – Fencing in Curdworth – led by Curdworth Parish Council.

**TX1 – footpath improvements** - was completed in 2018. The County Rights of Way Officer requested additional footpath improvement works at RSPB Middleton Lakes, and these were commissioned in October/November 2018 to complement and extend the works completed in June. The activity extended the granite fines surfaced path to complete the entire section of

footpath from the canal to the river bridge, thus enabling visitors far better access throughout the year. The works were completed by the same contractor that was recruited to do the work earlier in the year, Withybed Ltd.

In total an additional 635m. of granite topped path was constructed plus 385m. of limestone track for vehicles using the right of way. A visit from the Rights of Way officer in late November agreed that all was in place and pending some additional drainage adjacent to the path this new right of way could soon be signed off.

Overall the activity improves the visitor experience which may allow for more repeat visits and may contribute to visitor satisfaction in future (no information has been directly collected on this, but a review of TripAdvisor ratings and comments since January 2019 shows positive comments about paths, benches, signage and access).

**TX2** is a contribution to the **visitor centre** that is being built at the car park at RSPB

Middleton Lakes, which was due to open in March 2019,

although the HLF contribution was spent in 2018. In order to replace the tired and out-of-date exhibition trailer and to provide a new and superior visitor reception, a 'garden room' style building was researched and selected. The building is fully weatherproof and large enough to accommodate information and interpretation. In addition, services will be added to provide the option of hot drinks and light snacks for volunteers – visitors are encouraged to visit the café and retail village at Middleton Hall.

After research and tendering, Green Retreats was selected to supply and build the visitor reception centre and planning consent was gained for its installation. The building was supplied and signed off as complete on the 6th December. While the visitor reception centre is due to open in March 2019, to date (April 2019) there is no mention of the new facility on the RSPB reserves website, nor is there any TripAdvisor review available. It is therefore too early to comment on the visitor perception of the upgraded facility.

**TX3** – was a **wetland feasibility study for Middleton Parish Council** which aimed to support the Council in its ambition to manage an area of wet woodland to improve its biodiversity and provide the community with an enhanced asset for recreation, education and community use. A parcel of land was being donated to the parish, whose councillors wished to manage it in a manner that would reflect and enhance its ecological importance and also provide a community amenity. The work was commissioned from Middlemarch Environmental, who have provided two detailed reports following site visits and desk research. The reports include recommendations for further work, management and site improvements. These reports give a solid base for bidding for funding from the HS2 Community Environment Fund.



Figure 80: The new visitor reception centre at RSPB Middleton Lakes (TVW 2019)



**TX4** was intended to look at the **feasibility of a bridge at Whitacre Heath**. In the end, and with the agreement of HLF, this did not go ahead as there was neither sufficient time nor funding in the final tranche of transition activity. The concept has not been forgotten however and the team are looking at the potential of S.106 funding to undertake the study, which would be linked to the future of Hams Hall (something which is still being agreed).

**TX5 – Whitacre Heath tree and access works** intended to undertake tree and path safety and improvement works at Whitacre Heath SSSI. This aimed to create safer visitor access to an



Figure 81: Whitacre Heath tree and access works. Top left: pollarding willow; top right: new steps installed; below: new handrail (E Asbery and TVW 2019)

important and unique SSSI and key site within the valley, encouraging more visitors and enabling better management by local volunteers. Works included the creation of a small flight of steps to make climbing up and down a bund easier, installation of handrail by a footpath which was also levelled, clearing a small number of bushes and trees that impinged on pathways or were not in good condition, and undertaking some maintenance work on a number of larger trees, including pollarding 3 willows. The work was undertaken by contractors and overseen by the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Reserves Manager and was completed to specification. The timing was a little beyond that originally intended but was completed in early February 2019.

**TX6 – allotment access. Project changed to two new dipping platforms.**

Although this was originally intended to be works at the allotment site in Coleshill, agreement on the work could not be obtained in time. Instead the funds were used to install two pond dipping platforms to develop the facilities at Hams Hall Environmental Education Centre. This will enhance the experience of educational visitors to Hams Hall and will support HLF Project B8.

The installation of two pond dipping platforms, one at the pond next to the centre building and the other one alongside the pool within Church Pool Covert,



Figure 82: New dipping platform (I Wykes, TVW, 2019)

was undertaken by contractors. They should enhance the experience of any visitors to the centre through educational visits by allowing them to pond dip safely. The platforms were installed on time and are already being used – the project was complete by the end of February 2019. The dipping platform at Church Pool Covert will allow additional exploration of this resource, which has been less used than the platform at the Environmental Centre, due to accessibility issues.



Figure 83: Installed Post and Rail Fence, (I Wykes TVW, 2019)

**Tx7 –Fencing in Curdworth –** was a project to install c.100 meters of fencing to protect a newly laid hedge in Curdworth Parish. This was a simple project, with Curdworth Parish Council appointing a contractor to undertake the works, which were completed to time and to specification.

## 5.7 Transition Plan and Addendum Outputs and Outcomes

The approach taken by the Partnership to addressing the issue of a positive exit strategy from the LPS and smooth transition into self-funding demonstrated strong governance by the Board. Delivery of the Transition Plan and Addendum Plan has been successful, hitting most of the targets set for it. The negotiation of a small extension to the timeframe for delivering the plans was a necessary but sensible step, not least because some staff contracts were ending whilst new staff were being engaged during the latter stages of delivery.

Some significant outcomes have resulted from the Transition Plan. The inefficient heating and lighting of Hams Hall Environmental Centre sometimes made it a challenging place to work but it is now greatly improved. This not only brings benefits for staff located there but makes it more attractive for school groups and trainees, who are paying a more commercial rate for the training they receive. In the training world, it is well recognised that, however good the training, delegates often only remember the quality of the refreshments, the distance from the car park and the ambience of the venue, so customers will be much more likely to return if the environment is good.

The focus on small projects that have benefited communities was a good way of further cementing local relationships and are a physical reminder of the Partnership's existence.

Working with young people in general and schools in particular is vital for awareness-raising and engagement and represents a further income stream that might be, at least, self-funding. There is clear evidence that the continuation of work with schools has enabled the Partnership to embed their existence in the mind of teachers, so that school groups are now paying for sessions.

Most importantly, taking on the delivery role for partners who may have the budget, but would struggle to deliver work themselves and like the idea of a not-for-profit organisation

with which they can confidently contract, should help the Partnership to develop its profile as a reliable green infrastructure organisation. Working on a broader geographical front will assist the Partnership to embed its extended area of interest and creates the possibility of undertaking improvement work up and down stream that will be of benefit to the wetlands themselves.





Figure 84: TVW Partnership Celebration Event at Drayton Manor Park on 17 July 2018  
(Photo: © Tim Haselden (WWT))



## 6.0 Conclusions, Learning Points and Recommendations

### 6.1 Conclusions

In this sub-section, we have drawn together everything we have learned from our observation, research, file reviews and consultation to provide a summarised set of conclusions covering the key aspects of the Scheme:

#### 6.1.1 Governance and Partnership

The Partnership structure was appropriate for the Scheme. Some LPS Partnership's include an Executive group within their structure, which is useful for pulling together senior managers from partner organisations in an operational rather than strategic role. In TVW's case, however, many of these individuals are on the Board and appear to give practical support.

We think the Board is to be congratulated on its vision and strategic drive. The Partnership pre-dated the LPS and, from early in the Scheme, it has been devising ways to continue its work beyond the LPS phase and these came to fruition as the HLF-funded Scheme concluded. It is not unusual to see partner commitment waning at the end of funded Schemes, but most of the TVW partners appear to be both very committed and enthusiastic about the ongoing work of the Partnership. This has included the promotion and review of its brand (sometimes a thorny issue with partners) with a set of practical guidelines that underpin its consistent use. The Scheme Manager believes the success of the brand has helped to embed a perception of the Partnership as an organisation in its own right.

There is plenty of evidence of how top-level support translates into practical commitment on the ground and into financial support. Undoubtedly, the strength of relationships developed over the medium-term has facilitated this process and has also helped to bring new partners on board.

The Board have predominantly seen their role as strategic, leaving the management of the Scheme to the accountable body. This has generally worked well but when difficulties arose in relation to a partner's withdrawal from a high-profile project, we think a more hands-on approach by the Board might have helped, at least to clarify, if not to resolve the issue more quickly. In fairness, HLF were keen to see the project retained within the programme, which delayed a final decision being taken. Reportedly, the Board was more engaged with delivery after this issue was raised in the Mid Term Review.

As accountable body, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust has played a very active and supportive role to ensure the success of the Scheme. This has demonstrated the Trust's ability to direct a large-scale Scheme. With other partners, it has made a considerable forward financial commitment to resource the Partnership's continuation, which has given others confidence to invest in the Partnership's future, so strengthening its sustainability.

There is plenty of evidence that the Partnership has not just worked with major institutions and charities but has also engaged widely with local community groups. The integration of

the Community Forum into the future Partnership structure is an important way of cementing these relationships and keeping a local perspective to its work and focus. Nearing the end of the LPS delivery contract, approx. 100 representatives of partners and local organisations came together to celebrate the achievements of the Partnership and, importantly, to look ahead to its future intentions.

### 6.1.2 Scheme Design

The Scheme appeared well-designed to achieve the aims of the Partnership with an extensive spread of activities and locations involved.

The Scheme was ambitious but has made good progress towards all of its aims and has created great foundations for the future. Inevitably there were challenges along the way, and these meant that some outputs were achieved later than intended. This had a knock-on effect as far as outcomes and measurable impact were concerned. We think there would have been management and delivery benefits if the number of projects had been reduced and if the detail of some projects had not been so prescriptive at the outset. This sometimes meant that renegotiation had to take place with HLF over minor issues, which was never a quick process.

*Recommendation: Unsurprisingly, we would like to have seen the evaluation framework in place from the outset of the Scheme rather than at mid term. This would have made it easier for the team to collect relevant evidence of positive outcomes. We recommend this action for all major projects.*

### 6.1.3 Management and Staffing

The Partnership found it difficult to fill some team roles with the right people and skills; this slowed down project delivery and created a backlog of work in some themes. This is more a statement of fact than a criticism, since in our experience, recruitment for such schemes is often challenging. We have seen other organisations use secondments to kick-start schemes, but we recognise that comes with its own challenges and sometimes the skill sets needed will not be present in the available workforce. The achievements of the Scheme at its end date signify that, ultimately, these problems were not allowed to compromise the delivery of targets.

Praise for the Scheme Manager Tim Haselden has been universal. Despite a steep management learning curve, many consultees we spoke to commented on his hard work, commitment, support for his staff team and excellent relationship-building skills.

Once the permanent staff team was in place, the team appear to have gelled well together, were committed to the Scheme and supported one another. This was particularly impressive given there were three employing organisations with differing terms and conditions. Departure of staff towards the end of a scheme is a challenge that every fixed term programme has to face. Although we were concerned that this might hit finalisation of projects, in practice, extending employment contracts has seen a reasonably well-managed exit and planning for staff resource for the transition phase was good.

It has been particularly pleasing to note the effort and commitment made during the transition phase to secure resources to put in place a slightly scaled down but, nevertheless, significant and permanent staff team to take forward the Partnership's work and build on the achievements of the LPS. Many Schemes struggle at this stage to maintain interest, but the partners have come together to make this happen and the new team have a clear focus on income generation that will underpin their continuation.

#### 6.1.4 Scheme Delivery

Ultimately, the Scheme has been delivered successfully. However, there will always be some glitches in delivering a Scheme of this size and complexity and TVW is no different in this respect. The access projects have proved more challenging than anyone anticipated in terms of staffing, planning and realisation. Most have been completed successfully but delays had at least a short-term knock-on effect for the delivery of benefit to the local community.

Losing one of the built heritage projects late in the Scheme because of partner withdrawal was outside the control of the Partnership, despite their best efforts. Delivery partners did sign delivery agreements but more formalised agreements with partners when the LCAP was devised might have helped. To the Partnership's credit, they have produced replacement projects from the underspend that may actually add greater value to their core objectives and sustainability.

The LCAP placed significant pressure on the staff team to directly deliver many of the projects. The team appears to have coped well with this arrangement, but resources appear to have been stretched at times and there are a few instances where the team favoured project delivery to the detriment of planning other projects, ultimately ending in delays in delivery. During consultation, some partners reported they would have been happy to take on more direct delivery, so it would have been possible to delegate/contract some delivery and assume a management rather than delivery role in relation to some projects, which would have eased the pressure. More contractors were used in Year Four but could have been brought in earlier in the Scheme.

*Recommendation: we recommend that formalised delivery agreements are used with all delivery partners to reinforce partner responsibilities to multi-agency Schemes.*

#### 6.1.5 Achievement of Outputs

The vast majority of output targets have been hit, many have been substantially exceeded and there has been additional activity for which targets were not set. A few targets have been missed but we think this is more due to over-optimism in the planning stage and a lack of awareness of some of the barriers that would be faced, rather than lack of activity. The team appear to have been pretty quick to realise when planned projects were not working and changed direction to give a successful result. This would explain why some targets have not been achieved but others have over-delivered. The team has also shown good flexibility and pragmatism, being prepared to change projects to something more relevant or deliverable, as their knowledge increased about what was really needed and what would work on the ground.

### 6.1.6 Achievement of Aims

This report bears witness to the massive amount of physical improvement and engagement work that has taken place. Much of the Scheme has been about creating strong foundations: conservation management and maintenance work, improving sites, creating habitat, removing problems. All of this work has been delivered and so the Tame Valley Wetlands themselves and heritage within the Wetlands area have been improved. There are some early signs of the benefits to wildlife, but it will take much longer to see whether and how biodiversity increases, notwithstanding the many external factors that affect the flora and fauna of the area.

The team struggled slightly to identify what evidence would signify the achievement of aims and some of the outputs originally chosen for this purpose were unsuitable. This was largely rectified when the evaluation framework was put in place.

The core objective of improving access to many sites for the public has been achieved, albeit in the final stages of the Scheme. As a result of the delay and without a reliable baseline, it is too early to show that more people are visiting the sites. Nevertheless, feedback from various events shows that people are now more aware of local sites and intend to visit more, so the indications are positive.

Engagement with local people was seen as a key way to improve people's understanding about the importance of the landscape in which they live and, hopefully, to encourage them to care more for it. The programme of activities to achieve this was wide-ranging and appealed to many different audiences, thus attendance targets have been exceeded. Online media via the TVW website has been a great source of information and marketing and has been well used. Supplies of printed literature have been made available in many locations, and regularly re-stocked. Feedback forms indicate that many participants have enjoyed the activities and have learnt in the process. Volunteering targets have been exceeded and TameForce, TVW's volunteer force, continues, confirming that good foundations have been laid.

*Recommendation: Setting a clear, measurable and manageable evidence set at the beginning will make it easier to demonstrate the achievements of any project.*

### 6.1.7 Systems

The internal systems used by TVW to manage the Scheme have been made up of a combination of processes and finance systems utilised by the host organisation (Warwickshire WT) plus excel workbooks set up at the local office, which have evolved during the scheme. Partner organisations, particularly when running projects on behalf of the Scheme, have been required to submit invoices, timesheets and quarterly reports (where appropriate) to support the development of the quarterly claims for HLF. Weighed against this slightly ad hoc approach, is the flexibility of HLF for reporting and data submissions – no systems are imposed on grant recipients, all they need to be able to do in the end is supply the required forms and information to the portal to a regular schedule. We make the following observations on the systems involved in ensuring the Scheme ran smoothly:



**Monitoring spreadsheets** – these have been developed as the Scheme progressed, with sheets added as different ways of capturing and presenting information have been needed. While not always easy to update or for others to interpret, these have met the needs of the Scheme Manager to show progress to his line manager, to the Board and to share progress with staff. While there are bespoke and free-to-use systems available now for such complex schemes, the team have had a tool which works for them, which has to be the ‘litmus test’ for such systems. The Scheme Manager felt that using a ‘traffic light’ risk management system, monitoring closely the percentage of outputs achieved and using a common template for project reporting provided a useful set of management tools.

**Host organisation (Warwickshire WT) finance systems** – as the project team were hosted by the Warwickshire WT, the finance systems and protocols used were those of the Trust. HLF observed some constraints and delays caused by the system and its sign-off levels, which they found frustrating. While sign-off levels are actually in line with general Wildlife Trust practice, there appeared to be bottle necks in the implementation of the process which impacted on the flow of funds. One cause might be the fact that the project team were located separately and well away from the Wildlife Trust headquarters, so the ability to nudge about critical invoices was reduced. In most other ways, the separate location within the LPS area offered many advantages.

**Timesheets and other partner inputs** – as with all partnership projects, there must be a strong commitment to deliver the required documentation regularly, to meet the required deadlines and with the full level of detail required. Also, in common with other projects of this nature, some partners were very conscientious in supplying the required information, particularly those who were seeking to reclaim funds, others needed a lot of chasing and even then, could not be relied on to provide information in the right format. As ever, we recommend that service level agreements for data exchange are put in place at the start of any such programme, and that partners sign up to them.

**Quarterly reporting** – the team were very keen to share the successes and progress of their work. As a result, reports became long and complex, with a lot of detail, particularly during periods where major conservation projects were in full swing. Given the time required to draw together these documents, including waiting for evidence from partners, and the wealth of outputs and outcomes they were trying to evidence, quarterly reporting started to be a marathon task, and had to be reduced to keep it manageable.

**HLF systems** – while MRE were not able to observe the process, there was some comment over the ease of use, or not, of the HLF portal for submitting quarterly reporting documentation. As we have indicated before, this was not insuperable, and is also an aspect of the flexibility of systems for those in receipt of funding that marks HLF out favourably. There were some concerns raised over the speed at which decisions over changes in project activity were given, in some cases where timing was “mission critical” this did cause activity to be delayed until the next propitious season. When we raised this with HLF, they said it was an entirely possible and regrettable complaint.

*Recommendation: Keep the data set manageable; keep data collation systems as simple as possible; make use of existing software developed for project management; agree and enforce clear data exchange protocols.*

### 6.1.8 Sustainability

In strategic terms, from an early date the Partnership started to lay plans for the longer-term conservation of the area and how that might happen. By publishing a credible strategy document, achieving designation for local wildlife sites, securing NIA status, building sound relationships with key stakeholders like the local authorities, Environment Agency and HS2 and by developing a practical business plan to continue the work of the Partnership with staff resources in place, we think its approach deserves credit and would be useful for other partnerships to consider.

On the ground, the use of LPS funds to catalyse the Partnership's plans has created improved wild spaces and raised the public's awareness about the existence and value of the landscape. Arrangements to maintain physical improvements are in place for many projects, often in the form of agreements with partners. TameForce and other volunteers and community groups will also continue to play an important part in this regard and part of the forward plan to seek other funding streams that will allow work to be continued and underpinned is already coming to fruition. Successful delivery of the LPS has strengthened the credibility of the Partnership and shown it to be a 'safe pair of hands' to deliver green infrastructure projects.

The level of resources secured means that some of the engagement activities, not least with school children and young people, will continue, the brand will remain active and the Partnership will have opportunities to cement the awareness-raising work of the past four years.

At this closure stage, the future of Schemes often looks uncertain, but we think it is fair to say that the foundations laid, and commitment given by Partners mean the future in TVW is looking bright.

*Recommendation: The Partnership's capabilities in securing long-term commitment from its members and developing an agreed strategy represents good practice and should be promoted so other partnerships can learn from its approach.*

## 6.2 Board's 'Acid Test' Questions

The Board set itself three critical 'acid test' questions to be reviewed at the end of the Scheme as part of the assessment process:

### Q1. Has the scheme delivered all the outputs it set out to achieve (all projects, within all programmes across the scheme)?

A large majority of outputs have been met across all four themes. Where they have not been met, there has been compensatory action that, in our view, mitigates any under-performance. For example, the target for the number of sites to be surveyed has been missed but the number of sites on which work has taken place has been substantially exceeded. In fact, many targets have been exceeded.

A substantial amount has been achieved in relation to all aims. The cancellation of a major built heritage project (A1) could have been a major loss to the Scheme but alternative action is planned for the transition period that will make good use of the associated funds. The 'access' aspect of the 'access and learning' theme has been the most challenging to deliver

and a lot of the practical work on the ground has taken place late in the Scheme. Nevertheless, most targets were met by the end of the Scheme.

The Scheme has delivered numerous outputs that were not envisaged at the outset nor included in the LCAP.

We think that the amalgamation of all the outputs achieved represents a very determined effort to deliver the Scheme and to add further value, wherever that was possible.

## Q2. What difference did those projects and programmes make to the people and landscape of the Tame Valley?

The programme of works has improved habitat and the river itself, conserved open spaces, refurbished built heritage and created more protected areas, while opening access for local people. It is impossible to measure an improvement in awareness of the importance of the wetlands at a population level but the evidence base for the Scheme suggests many people are more aware of the local landscape and value it.

At the same time, people have had many opportunities to learn new skills and try new pastimes and young people have been engaged more effectively with their natural surroundings. Evidence has been provided to show they have valued these opportunities. Many people have given their time to help with conservation of different types and with administration to support conservation work. The Scheme has enhanced the ways that local people can access open spaces and nature – often seen as a major contributor to improved well-being.

The process of delivering the Scheme has helped to cement and grow an already strong partnership that will now continue to do practical conservation work, improving the future prospects for the Wetlands.

## Q3. What legacy has been created for the people and landscape of the Tame Valley?

A key focus for the Partnership has been not just to work in the present but also to look to the future. At a practical level, maintenance arrangements are in place for many of the improvements it has delivered. These will help to ensure the benefits of better managed wild spaces continue to be available to people and wildlife, that more is understood about their importance and at least some local people know how they can make a personal contribution through volunteering to protecting these assets.

At a strategic level, the Partnership has developed a long-term vision with a plan for how it will start to deliver that vision. It has done this with due consideration for the changing world around it and is doing its best to work with these shifting parameters to represent the interests of and protect the Tame Valley Wetlands. The importance of the Wetlands is now recognised at regional and national level, while the proposed Transforming the Trent Scheme will continue the work in Tamworth and further downstream.

## 6.3 Learning Points

Throughout the course of our observations and during consultation, we heard a number of reflections on good ways of doing things and how some things might have been done differently to improve delivery or impact:

### Build relationships early:

this lesson applies to contacts across the board, but arose specifically in relation to landowners, when access to their land will be needed. Setting up a database of contacts, approaching them getting to know them and building trust takes a while, so starting early will make project delivery easier down the track.

### A strong, individual brand and identity are really important:

TVW branding has been helped by the fact that WWT have not pushed their own branding and have made a strong contribution to the overall sustainability of the Partnership.

### Project Delivery:

In TVW the team have punched above their weight in project delivery, but the team has been too large to manage effectively on occasions and more use of partner or contractor delivery would have made life easier.

Delivery agents are very useful but make sure that, whether partners or contractors, they are credible and reliable. Some that were identified for the LCAP proved to be unreliable or unable to deliver.

### Work to make the Scheme part of the local community:

so that it becomes integrated and accepted by parishes. Transparency and collaboration are part of this. Find and work with key influencers and ambassadors in local community. Team members should all possess an understanding of community engagement. It is important to make sure staff have sufficient time in their role to do engagement work as well as delivering the project.

### Volunteering and training:

were initially separate staff roles in TVW but were brought together in the final stages. It would have been beneficial to combine these two roles from the beginning.

### Partnership working:

is really important to embedding the Scheme and sustainability, plus taking advantage of opportunities to share knowledge and use one another's resources e.g. combining policies and procedures that are now used by all, such as volunteer policies and documentation, to create an integrated process.



Programmes such as this can give some partners the flexibility to be able to commission works that for various reasons (procurement processes, timing constraints for example) could not otherwise be undertaken. This is valuable additionality for the area of interest and for partners.

Within the delivery of this Scheme, there were numerous instances of where, through talking to new partners and making new contacts, more has been done both for the scheme and for contiguous areas – this has helped to develop the sustainability and strength of the partnership, so that it has a future post-HLF funding.

### Skillsets:

one of the challenges for this Scheme was finding people with the required skills against predefined job roles. In the end, job roles had to be redrafted to find people who could do part of the required role, as no candidates could be identified who had the full range of talents for some of the originally described posts. Being prepared to split the roles may be a pragmatic way to resolve any such problems.

### Marketing:

is really important and needs a dedicated role from the outset. TVW created this by engaging an apprentice, which worked well but when she left, the team had to pick up the work themselves and that was not as effective. It needed someone to take responsibility for making sure it happened.

Social media and websites are a quick and easy way of sharing messages with a wide potential audience, but Schemes should not JUST rely on online means of communication. More extensive use of posters, leaflets, notices and press releases etc. can bring additional contacts. However, the most important advocates for the Scheme are likely to be interested organisations and word of mouth.

Get marketing materials ready early to help build awareness.

Having a graphic designer in-house helped in many different ways, allowing rapid development of materials, stock images that TVW has control over, and templates and materials that can be adapted easily to changing circumstances.

### Management Systems:

Spreadsheets can be very useful management tools but keeping them up-to-date and including changes can make them become unwieldy over the life of a 4-year funding Scheme. Before delivery starts, it is worth looking at the options for free or low-cost management solutions that can take some of the pressure off the Scheme Manager. It is worth talking to other Landscape Partnership Schemes about how they manage this side of things.



Figure 85: Schoolchildren captivated by the miniature world revealed through a magnifying glass (TVW)

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