

Case Studies

from the Tame Valley Wetlands

Landscape Partnership Scheme

2014 - 2019

Appendix Three to the Final Review

“A wetland landscape, rich in wildlife, accessible to all”

INTRODUCTION

This document forms an appendix to the Final Review. Its purpose is to highlight a range of activities undertaken by the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme that illustrate the achievements and diversity of the Partnership's work.

CONTENTS

Case Study	Page
Drayton Turret Footbridge	3
Ban on Balsam	5
Kingsbury Community Wetlands	7
Environmental Volunteering	9
Hedgelaying and Restoration	11
Youth Engagement	13
Living Map	15
Tame Way	17
Gateway to the Tame Valley	19
Marketing Apprenticeship	21
Using branding to underpin partnership	23



Drayton Turret Footbridge

Case Study

Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme Project A2

Title picture: The restored Drayton Turret Footbridge (photo by Chris Harris)

Background:

The Drayton Turret Footbridge is a Grade II listed structure, unique on the canal network, originally built as a folly for the Drayton Estate (now part of Drayton Manor Park Theme Park).

Built in the late 18th century¹, the footbridge is made up of a pair of cylindrical stair turrets flanking the canal, joined by a foot bridge across the water. Each turret has a pointed arch doorway and a crenelated parapet. The turrets are built from red brick which has been painted white, with stone parapets.

The Birmingham & Fazeley Canal that the bridge serves was completed in 1789 and links Birmingham with the Midlands and the south east. It is possible that the eccentric design² of the footbridge was seen as a way to placate the Marquis of Bath for having the canal cut through his estate.

A swing bridge was added at the site to allow carts to cross the canal, and it is believed that formerly this was kept in place across the canal

but it is now kept open to allow barges to progress without stopping.

As at 2014, the bridge was looking tired, with worn paint, dilapidated steel work and concerns over the stonework.

Project Aim and Short Description:

As an important waterways structure, Project A2 was incorporated into the programme of works Action Plan (LCAP) undertaken for the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme *"to improve the condition and appearance of this iconic structure, to ensure that it remains in a good condition and stays visually and structurally sound into the future."*

The work encompassed the refurbishment of the iconic Grade II listed footbridge, including removal of an inappropriate paint system on the masonry towers, renewal of timber bridge deck components, refurbishment of steelwork, parapets and bridge beams, towpath improvements, and stonework repair.

¹See: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1038818>

² <http://canalrivertrustwaterfront.org.uk/history/in-focus/>

Case Study - Drayton Turret Footbridge

Process:

Undertaken on a partnership basis by the TVW Partnership and the Canal & River Trust (CRT), the work was managed by the latter. The projected costs were £42,500 of which £23,000 would be paid by HLF and final costs amounted to some £54,000.



Figure 1: Shrouded in scaffolding as work begins (Photo TVW)

Works were originally planned for Year 3 of the LCAP, but the Canal & River Trust asked to bring forward the work as they had the required match funding in Year 1. Works commenced on site in February 2015 using the Canal & River Trust's Framework Contractor, Kier May Gurney, and were complete by May 2015.

They erected scaffolding, removed the existing masonry paint system by pressure washing and chemical treatment and then undertook localised repointing. They applied appropriate new paint to the masonry turrets. The existing timber decking was removed and replaced using FSC timber and anti-slip panels. They removed corrosion from the existing steelwork on the bridge beams and on the parapets where it was accessible and repainted both the steelwork and the bridge plaque. Finally, they excavated the towpath and bridge surrounds, laid a new macadam towpath with bonded gravel wearing course and reinstated the soft

verges, before removing the scaffolding and installing two anti-vehicle bollards.

Outputs and outcomes:

As per the LCAP, the bridge was improved both structurally and aesthetically, to make it safer for users, more attractive, and better able to withstand the elements. Articles in the local papers, on BBC Midlands Today and on TVW and CRT websites publicised the works and the fact that HLF funds had been invested locally.

No work has been undertaken with the local population to see how they regard the improvements to the bridge, or if they have noticed those improvements. The refurbishment was reported, however, in the monthly publication of the National Association of Boat Owners³ and on the website blog of Tamworth & District Civic Society⁴. The project was completed early and to budget.



Figure 2: The finished walkway (Photo CRT)

The refurbishment is a physical demonstration of the valuable activities undertaken via the LPS. Although parking is difficult nearby, the bridge is highly visible from the A4091 and to anyone using the canal and towpaths.

Learning Points:

- The opportunity to undertake projects earlier in a programme of activity should be grasped, as an early win and chance for publicity.
- Evaluation, including canvassing user opinion, needs to be built into all projects from the start, even when projects are delivered by a partner.

³ See P11 of the publication at:

<http://nabo.org.uk/files/nabo-news/nn-2015/3.pdf>

⁴ See:

<https://tamworthanddistrictcivicsocietyblog.wordpress.com/category/organisations/>

Ban on Balsam

Case Study



Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme Project A7

Title picture: Damaging impact of Himalayan Balsam (Tracey Doherty, TVW, June 2017)

Background

Numerous sites in the Tame Valley Wetlands (TVW) have been invaded by non-native plant species such as Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam (HB). Whilst volunteers do sterling work in manually removing some of the plants, it is an ongoing battle that is being lost. The plants are tenacious and quickly swamp less vigorous native species. HB spreads through seed dispersal, with each plant producing up to 2500 seeds that are released and catapulted up to seven metres. It then spreads through rivers and flood events, colonising river banks and connected wetland to create dense stands of plants that degrade our native habitats and reduce their biodiversity value and ecosystem services. A more permanent control would be welcomed.

The team at TVW discovered that the Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International

(CABI) had developed a targeted rust fungus that could impede the growth of HB and was looking for test sites around the country.

Tame Valley was approved as a trial site. Warwickshire Wildlife Trust is now the West Midlands regional coordinator for the CABI International trial for rust fungus.

Project Aim and Short Description

The aim of the project was to:

- Reduce the coverage of Himalayan Balsam across 6 project sites;
- Enhance 6 sites by the installation of coir matting, seeding and native plug plants;
- Reduce erosion and siltation due to more stabilised soils on 6 sites;
- Introduce rust fungus at 5 sites;
- Reduce the regrowth of Himalayan balsam in future years.

Case Study – Ban on Balsam

Process

Project A7 was intended to improve habitat for wading birds at Whitacre Heath Nature Reserve by installing a sluice. The budget available for the project, however, was insufficient to make a tangible improvement. The project team decided to redirect the project, address a key risk to the wetlands and add value to other plans to reduce harmful weeds. Thus, the project title changed to “Ban on Balsam”. Additional funding was secured from the Banister Charitable Trust and a contract variation was agreed by HLF.



Figure 1: Applying rust fungus to Himalayan Balsam plants

Samples of HB were sent to CABI so they could supply a fungus with the best chance of controlling the local variety of plants. Trial sites were identified at Ladywalk Nature Reserve and Kingsbury Waterpark; spraying took place in June 2017. A workshop to introduce the concept was held for partners and landowners. Birmingham University assisted the Partnership with monitoring in October 2017 to see whether the impact of the fungus was apparent.

In 2018, it became apparent that the trials had not been successful because the fungus has not overwintered. In fact, infection was poor or absent from all but three trial sites across the UK, probably due to unfavourable climatic conditions. CABI are investigating to see how the success rate can be improved.

There was a shortage of fungus available from CABI in 2018, so the ‘re-engineered’ fungus will be re-introduced on to TVW sites in summer 2019. TVW are continuing to monitor rust fungus treatment sites so they can report infection rates and regrowth to CABI.

Meanwhile, the impact of the other measures used alongside the rust fungus – installation of coir matting plug planted with reeds and sowing grass seed where HB had been removed – is being monitored.

Outputs and outcomes

The project met its targets by introducing the rust fungus to 450 sq. metres on two sites, with plans to extend usage when a successful strain has been identified.

As the approved agent for administering the fungus in the West Midlands, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust can carry out this function for other projects.



Figure 2: Rust fungus attacking Himalayan Balsam

Although the initial local results are disappointing, the fungus has worked well under test conditions and represents a real opportunity to find a ‘bio control’ for HB that will help restore biodiversity to areas that have been swamped.

Lessons learned

- The project took much more time than anticipated because the fungus must be applied in very specific weather conditions and after 6.00 p.m.
- The fungus is expensive to purchase. Even when successful, the fungus must be applied over a three-year period before it gains a strong hold, so funding and resources are important over the medium term.
- The fungus is not a complete cure, so using more traditional measures remains important but it may be a useful tool to reduce the vigour and, therefore, the spread and invasion of HB.



Kingsbury Community Wetlands – making a space for nature

Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme Project A6

Title picture: New sand martin bank and hide (Jane Holland, April 2017)

Background

On the eastern edge of Kingsbury Water Park were several under-used, poor-quality sports fields, which became unusable when the River Tame flooded. One of Tame Valley LPS's aims was to improve the flood plain's capacity, reducing the risks of expensive flood events, while also improving habitat, attracting more wetland species and making the area more interesting to visitors.

Project Aim and Short Description

The project intended to create an exciting area of wetland, a magnet for wildlife and people, encouraging visitors to interact with their natural environment. The proposed wetland habitats included reedbeds, pools, channels and a ditch network. They would be supplied by water from nearby Bodymoor Heath Water, augmented by rainfall and occasional flood events from the River Tame. Features included a small pond with an artificial bank designed to provide nesting spots for sand martins, a viewing platform to watch activity on the sand



Figure 1: New interpretation board (Photo: J Holland Nov. 2018)

martin bank, screen paths and information boards for visitors. Excavated spoil would be moved to provide the base for a reedbed on the fringes of Hemlingford Water.

Overall it was estimated that 6 hectares of LBAP¹ wetland would be created, providing valuable habitat for several resident and migrant species, improving flood plain capacity and providing a valuable resource for local people to better understand and be closer to nature.

¹ LBAP = Local Biodiversity Action Plan, which sets out local conservation priorities

Case Study – Kingsbury Community Wetlands

Process

Planning permission was sought in June 2015 and granted in August 2015; the project won a Biffa grant to match the HLF funding. The planned start date was January 2016, but a series of floods delayed the groundworks until late February 2016, so machinery did not leave the site until late March. TVWP's volunteer group Tameforce and other organisations' volunteering days were used for planting plug plants and spreading seed, but further flooding occurred in June 2016. Despite the flooding, the plants blossomed but the sand martin bank had to be redesigned during winter 2016/17.



Figure 2: Planting plugs on the re-profiled river bank (Photo by T Doherty 2016)

The flooding events allowed the team to observe how the ditches and pools reacted to floods and to assess if flood plain capacity had improved.

Outputs and outcomes

Aside from the physical improvements, a main way of measuring outputs and outcomes was a 'Bioblitz' Wildlife Discovery Weekend held on 7/8 July 2017. Organisations participating included the Environment Agency (fish survey), Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, West Midlands Bird Club, and Staffordshire Mammal Group. Overall 250 people, including 78 pupils from Kingsbury Primary School, were involved. The pupils spent the day enjoying wild activities. The school gave a five-star rating on Facebook and stated they would pay for such an event in the future. The 'Bioblitz' included a series of walks and talks and an overnight session. 614 species were recorded in 24 hours on the six-hectare site: 3

red book insect species, 5 bat species, a barn owl and several amber-listed bird species.

The entomologist Stephen Falk² supported the observation of 260 insect species, which he considered "*not bad given that it is such a dry year and many species have been affected*". Three species with rarity status were noted:

- *Anagnota bicolor* - a tiny Nationally Scarce fly associated with wetlands, especially sedge beds, with larvae that may be stem-borers.
- *Psenulus schencki* - a Nationally Scarce wasp that has been gradually spreading over southern England, for which there are several older Warwickshire records.
- *Sciomyza dryomyzina* - a Red Data Book 2 (Nationally Vulnerable) snail-killing fly.



Figure 3: Sand martins in their new nest boxes (TVW website 2018)

In summer 2018, sand martins moved into the bank - Tracey Doherty, TVWP's Wetland Landscape Officer, said: "*Approx. 20 of the nest holes (were) being used. We designed an artificial nest site which mimicked the aspects of natural sites in the river corridor but then ensured that the nesting area was above the level of the highest flood. It's... a much-needed safe nesting site.*"

In May 2017, the project won a North Warwickshire Heritage Award for Environmental Improvement which has been given to Warks. County Council Country Parks team.

Learning Points

- Hard landscaping activity needs to be planned early in a scheme to allow for delays from poor weather conditions.
- Designs and materials need to be suitable for all conditions – the learning from the sand martin bank needs to be shared widely to assist other projects nationally.

² <http://www.stevenfalk.co.uk/>



Environmental volunteering

Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme Project B3

Title photo: Staff and TameForce volunteers enjoy digging deep! (TVW)

Background

Volunteers are an essential component of the charitable sector in the UK, without whom it could not operate effectively. The conservation sector is no different: the Wildlife Trusts, RSPB and National Trust all depend on volunteers for many aspects of their operation.

The resources needed to fully deliver Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme (TVWLPS) could only be achieved if local people donated their time and efforts to improve and maintain nature reserves. Thus, engaging volunteers was a critical task and the recruitment and support of volunteers was made a project in its own right that would provide resource for other Scheme projects.

Project Aim and Short Description:

The project aimed to engage local volunteers in the management and restoration of sites of natural heritage interest within the TVWLPS area.

The volunteers would be established as a mobile volunteer group that met regularly

– weekly or fortnightly - to work on different sites. They would be led by the Partnership's staff, with transport provided, and would be supported by different partner organisations, depending on where they worked. As appropriate, they would support existing volunteer groups.

Sessions would include woodland and wetland habitat management, litter picking, controlling invasive plant species and surveying different habitats and species within the valley. Tools, personal protective equipment, on-site training and the all-important tea, coffee and biscuits were provided free of charge by the Scheme. Site-based and task-specific risk assessments were carried out by staff prior to each session.

Process:

The project was started at the beginning of the Scheme because of its importance. Initially, it proved difficult to recruit volunteers because there was no system for recruiting them to the Scheme itself, rather than to individual partner organisations. The team overcame this by meeting with representatives of the partner

Case Study – Environmental Volunteering

organisations that had volunteer workforces. By April 2015 a joint procedure had been developed with common registration forms, Welcome Pack and expenses form.



Figure 1: Before and after shots of wild Rhododendron clearance work at Middleton Hall by TameForce volunteers (TVW)

With a more robust system in place, it proved much easier to recruit and support volunteers and the so-called TameForce group was formed.

The group has taken on tasks at nature sites across the Scheme area. These have included woodland, wetland and habitat management, bird-box making and installation, litter picking, control of invasive plant species and surveying.

Outputs and outcomes:

The project massively exceeded its targets for each area of activity. Bespoke conservation was targeted to involve 30 participants to improve one site but actually attracted 117 and improved three sites. A target of 9 bird boxes was left far behind by the 49 actually installed by 66 participants rather than the targeted 24. The amount of green space litter

picked was double the target – 160,000 square metres rather than 80,000 sq. m.

The project plan anticipated the value of volunteer time given would equal £30,000. In fact, volunteering across the Scheme exceeded 7000 hours. Even at a low day rate of £50, this was worth £50,000.



Figure 2: TameForce volunteers laying a new hedge (TVW)

Whilst the nature reserves of the Valley have benefitted significantly from all this work, local communities have also appreciated the volunteers' efforts and the volunteers themselves have enjoyed the experience and received skills training. Several reported improved wellbeing and lower anxiety as a result of their participation and at least one reported the activity as a useful strengthening of his CV, which had resulted in him securing employment.

“Hi Rita,
Thank you and the volunteers for great work.
I have just been in the Conservation Area looking at the work you and your team did, it looks amazing!
Regards
Project Manager & Forest School Practitioner
Community Environmental Trust”

Figure 3: Community feedback for work done by volunteers at Castle Vale Conservation Area.

Importantly, TameForce has become a reliable resource for the Partnership beyond the LPS.

Lessons

- Devise a strong promotional campaign to attract volunteers.
- Work with partner organisations to provide consistency to volunteers.



Hedgerow Restoration

Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme Project B4

Photo: a beautiful newly laid hedge at Kingsbury Water Park (Photo: TVW)

Background:

Hedgerows provide food and protection for many species and act as an important wildlife corridor. Loss of hedgerow habitat is a growing problem across the UK, estimated at 50%¹ since WWII, partly due to changes in farm practices, poor management or neglect.

In recent years, there has also been a loss of many heritage skills used on the land; hedgelaying and maintenance is one of these.

When Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme developed its activity plan, it decided that restoration of some hedgerows was a major priority and would support its objective of restoring the linear features of the Valley. The Partnership saw an opportunity to link restoration with skills training and so built into its community engagement action plan a project to address hedgerow loss and build the capacity of local skills in this ancient but very practical art.

Project Aim and Short Description:

The aim of project B4 was to restore 1000 metres of hedgerow either by replanting, filling gaps or proper maintenance. The project would be led by skilled hedge layers, but volunteers would help to do the work and would be trained in hedgelaying and maintenance skills. This activity worked in concert with projects to increase the pool of environmental volunteers and to train local people in conservation skills. A further objective was to develop and strengthen relationships with local landowners, particularly with farmers.

Process:

Initial feasibility studies conducted by the Partnership had identified priority hedgerows close to the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal and in Curdworth and Lea Marston that would restore historic boundaries.

In March 2017 the Trust invited all landowners in the Valley to attend an event to discuss which other hedgerows might be restored.

¹ RSPB – A history of hedgerows

Case Study – Hedgerow Restoration

23 delegates attended, including agencies such as RSPB, Environment Agency and local farmers. As a result, multiple potential sites were identified on five farms, on RSPB and Environment Agency land, at Kingsbury Water Park (KWP) and at Whitacre Heath SSSI.



Figure 1: Open farmland boundary before and after planting (TVW)

As part of the volunteering project B3, local people were trained to do hedgerow surveys to finalise where work would take place and a series of hedgelaying training days were held to give people the skills to do the work. Volunteers from the RSPB, from Friends of Kingsbury Water Park, from some of the farms and corporate volunteers from Environment Agency participated in the training.

Contractors did some of the work, but the majority was completed by volunteers, who had been trained by the Partnership.

The feedback forms from hedgelaying courses demonstrate how much it was enjoyed by all delegates. No-one rated the events less than 4 out of 5 and most gave them a perfect satisfaction score. It was interesting to see that volunteers found out about the courses from a wide range of sources – the TVW website, RSPB magazine, attendance at other courses and from other voluntary organisations.

Outputs and outcomes:

The original targets of 500m of hedgerow restored and 500m planted were smashed and doubled on the ground, so that nearly 2 km of hedgerow was revived. The scheme was so popular that requests for hedging were over-subscribed in comparison with the available budget.

By training 58 volunteers, the Partnership almost met the target of 60 people trained, although it took more events (11 actual versus a target of 6) to achieve this.

As well as the physical improvements, the project has a number of long-term benefits. A substantial number of people are now much more aware of the importance of hedgerows

and have the skills to survey and improve this important feature of our countryside. Relationships with farmers were forged that have helped other work undertaken by the Partnership.



Figure 2: Whitacre Heath SSSI, before and after planting and showing early growth (TVW)

Lessons:

- The Partnership team noted that, whilst none of their farmers were affected, it is important to check that farm subsidies for the area of cultivated land will not be affected if new hedgerows are planted.



Youth Engagement

Case Study

Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme – Projects B1, B7, B8 and D2

Photo: Young conservationists enjoying pond dipping on a 'Wild Wednesday' (Photo: TVW)

Background:

Frequent examples appear in the media of young people's concern about issues like pollution and climate change. Tame Valley Wetlands (TVW) Partnership sees young people as one of its key audiences. It used its Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) to harness their attention to help them understand, appreciate and ultimately care for natural surroundings.



Figure 1: Flyer for family school holiday events

The Partnership recognised that it would be most effective by engaging with young people (aged 16 – 25) in a variety of situations, through:

- Conservation education in schools;
- Fun, hands-on awareness-raising and training sessions;

- Multi-generational family events;
- Informal play-based activities in the open air.

Project Aim and Short Description:

The work programmes designed by the Partnership to meet its objectives for (1) developing strong community participation in its activities, (2) delivering conservation-related skills training and (3) improving access to local wildlife sites included activities targeted at the whole population, thus including younger generations, and it also created specific projects aimed at engaging young people.

The projects included:

- Family 'Wild Wednesdays' events held outdoors during the school holidays included foraging, arts and crafts, pond dipping, small mammal trapping and den building;
- Taster days at different locations to showcase the extent and range of nature reserves in the local area;
- Offering the John Muir Environmental Award;

Case Study – Youth Engagement

- Youth volunteering including the National Citizenship Service;
- In-school sessions and field trips for 5 – 15 year olds, linked to the National Curriculum;
- Work with young people's 'badged' organisations, such as 'Girlguiding';
- Research/mapping by university students.



Figure 2: John Muir Award students planting reed beds

Process:

During the LPS development phase, consultation was used to find out what sort of events people might attend. Over 40% of respondents were interested in children's and family activities. One third thought attending events and taster sessions would inspire them to visit the Wetlands more often. The Partnership understood that many young people are interested in heritage and nature but find the 'offer' unappealing and do not relate to the language used to sell it.

These were important factors to consider, both in marketing material but also in how sessions were presented. The Partnership talked to youth workers, young people via youth clubs, youth councils and at the cinema to better understand the approaches that would work and what barriers to avoid. These conversations suggested using arts and multimedia were good ways of engaging young people, volunteering should have elements of work experience and skills development built in, working with existing youth support staff would increase attendance and venues should be known, trusted and accessible by public

transport. These factors were incorporated into event design.

Feedback from schools suggested that tying sessions into the curriculum was essential and that schools differed widely in whether they offered formal environmental education or used less formal forest school and field trips to educate pupils. Cost was also a potential barrier, particularly for transport. Teachers themselves would also benefit from training in what to teach for this subject.

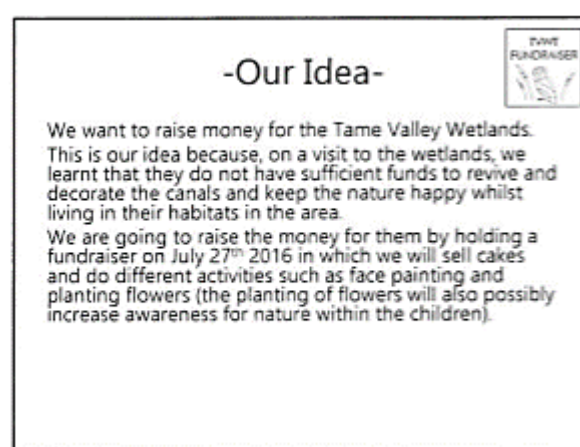


Figure 3: Tamworth's National Citizen Service: young people's fundraising proposal, which raised over £120.

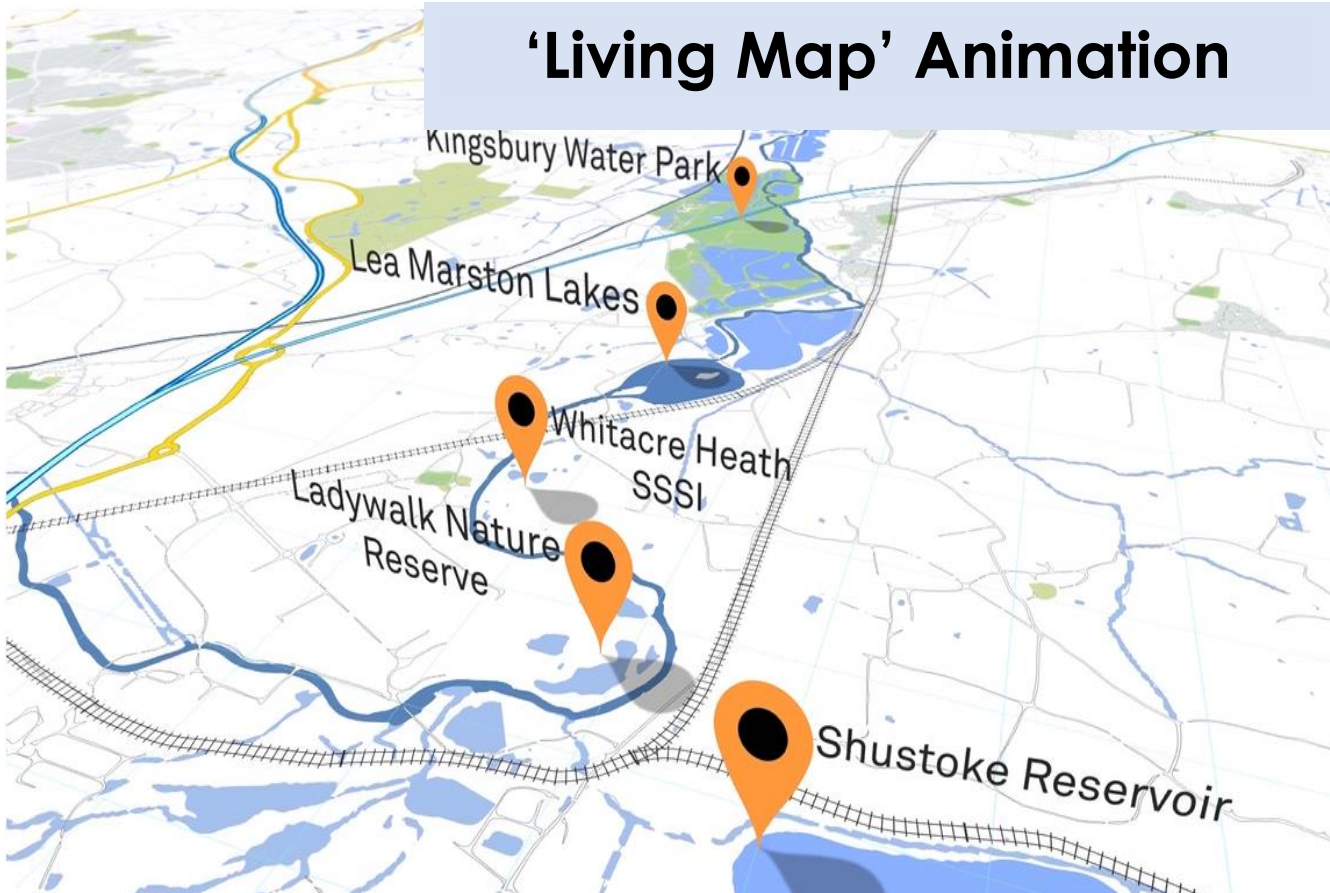
Recognising that young people from urban areas get less chance to learn outdoors, TVW staff ensured that contacts were developed with city-based as well as local schools to publicise their programmes.

Outputs and outcomes:

All youth-related targets were exceeded: 114 school/'badged' organisation and 15 college sessions took place (targets: 76 and 6); 3740 school pupils attended sessions (target: 1840). 162 youth sessions were held (target: 82); 529 individual young people took part (target: 200); 40 pupils achieved the John Muir Award (target: 30) and the total number of youth participants was 1150 (target: 510).

Heavy subsidies were offered to schools during the Scheme, but a number have valued the sessions highly and are now paying fees that help to cover the cost of the TVW coordinator.

'Living Map' Animation



Case Study

Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme Project C7

Title picture: Screen shot from the Tame Valley Wetlands Living Map Animation (Second Home Studios)

Background:

Tame Valley Wetlands web site has many short films that convey information about the wetlands, its history, the reclamation work and conservation that has taken place and is continuing as well as the reactions of some of those that are involved.

The purpose of these videos is to offer engaging ways to inform the general public and, particularly local people, about the Wetlands: to increase understanding about their importance, to show people how they can get involved and to educate about their heritage. It was decided to enhance the suite of films with a short animation that would portray the history of the area.

Project Aim and Short Description:

The aim of the project was to produce a short, animated film that would be available on the TVW website and Youtube to illustrate the rich

history of the Tame Valley Wetlands, as a resource for the public, for partners, for schools and for local groups.

The animation would show how the valley had changed over the centuries, through natural and human influences from its formation at the end of the last Ice Age up to the modern era.

Process:

Project C7 was originally intended to develop a Heritage Resource Pack for families that used games and activities to encourage informal learning about the landscape and its heritage. Before the pack was produced, however, some research revealed that there were already some similar products available, so the team decided instead to use the funding to produce an animation that would be a new tool for telling the story of the Wetlands' history.

Case Study – ‘Living Map’ Animation

For much of the team’s promotional work, the Partnership employed an Interpretation Officer, who was responsible for producing many of the short videos. Animation work required specialist skills, however, so a project brief was drawn up and quotations were invited from local businesses experienced in animation work and in late 2017, from six proposals, the contract was awarded to Second Home Studios, based in Birmingham.



Figure 1: Extracts from the animation

A series of exploratory meetings were used to develop the concept for the animation which focused on the changing valley landscape. Each major transition in the valley’s history was marked by a change in the underlying map style, with three dimensional computer-generated models representing significant historical structures, such as temples, castles, power stations and historic houses.

The resultant video was finished in February 2018; it takes its viewers through the history of Tame Valley from 500,000 BC to the present day in five minutes and twenty-two seconds.



Figure 2: Extracts from animation

Outputs and outcomes:

The project met its target to produce an engaging, short animation that tells the history of the area and its landscape in a way that will appeal to a wide audience.

As well as remaining available on the TVW website¹ and its Youtube channel, the video is shown at the Kingsbury Waterpark Visitor Centre and has been used by the TVW team for presentations to local groups, from whom the feedback was positive.

Learning Points:

- Recognising the strengths of using specialist external expertise when appropriate.
- Using research to check that projects fill a genuine gap in resources available to the public.

¹ See: <http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/discover-a-hidden-landscape/livingmap/>



The Tame Way – improving access to the valley

Case Study

Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme Project C2

Title picture: Fishers Mill Bridge Fingerpost (Photo: TVW, July 2018)

Background:

When the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme (TVWLPS) was developed, the *Tame Way* was a long-distance footpath initiative, stretching from near the source of the River Tame at Darlaston to its confluence with the River Trent at Alrewas. The section between Castle Vale, Birmingham and Hopwas in Tamworth was within the LPS catchment. Walk Unlimited¹ explored the feasibility of creating an accessible and well-promoted long-distance route, the *Tame Way*, building on a 1998 study by the Environment Agency and a second assessment that took place in 2009 during the LPS development phase. The final plan was to create two routes: the Canal Route (TWC) and the River Route (TWR). To maximise the routes' accessibility, recommendations were made to provide adequate:

- Waymarking
- Information/orientation
- Seating

- Unrestrictive gates
- Signs to local amenities
- Path surfacing where necessary.

Establishing a *Tame Way*, with waymarking and promotion, would raise the area's profile for walking, both locally and regionally. It would link with an integrated network of canal towpaths and proposed circular walks, using existing public rights of way, permissive paths and other long-distance footpaths, such as the Heart of England Way, North Arden Heritage Trail and the North Warwickshire Cycle way.

Project Aim and Short Description:

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, creating both canal and river routes in, respectively, 12 months and two to five years. Both would interlink with other projects within

¹ Walk Unlimited is a social enterprise working with communities and organisations to encourage more people to walk, more often and to more places

Case Study – The Tame Way

the scheme e.g. a series of circular routes, some fully accessible walks, and a 'signposting' guide (web- and leaflet-based), directing visitors to existing sources of information about accessing the valley. The Tame Way would be as inclusive and unrestrictive as possible, to encompass many local heritage sites.



Figure 1: Tame Way River Route Waymarker
Artwork (TVW)

Process:

Although recruitment difficulties initially delayed the project until 2016, a volunteer surveyed existing rights of way to provide a wealth of information for the Access Officer, once in post. The Canal route existed, but surveys showed parts of the tow path were liable to flooding, were overgrown or needed other maintenance work. As the canal route was under the Canal and River Trust's stewardship, works could be suggested and funding offered, but were subject to approval by the Trust and in many cases undertaken by their contractors.

Parts of the river route existed but needed work, while others had to be negotiated; some permissive paths required approval by county Rights of Way teams, as with a path through RSPB Middleton Lakes, for example. There were challenges in agreeing and developing the River route, including identifying and negotiating with landowners and finding suitable routes that were safe and attractive. The Officer was keen that as little as possible of the route was on pavements beside roads. Once stretches of route were agreed, finger posts, benches, kissing gates and way markers could be installed, and footpaths upgraded. The final piece of the Tame Way River route was identified in July 2018.

Outputs and outcomes:

20 miles of Tame Way River route were improved by pruning vegetation and installing waymarking posts. In addition, 12 miles of Tame Way Canal route were improved by waymarking along the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal. Thus, long distance routes have been created, allowing visitors to explore the wider TVW landscape. Partners will need to maintain the route and update the leaflet created. Part of the legacy work planned for 2019 and beyond is to publicise the routes extensively and thus attract more people to Tame Valley Wetlands.



Figure 2: Tame Way River Route, Kingsbury
Water Park, Jane Holland, November 2018

Lessons learned:

- Not having an Access Officer in post for 18 months delayed the project – although the time estimates from the development phase of the LPS were fairly accurate.
- While partners and landowners were willing to support the project, it took time to identify some landowners, secure permissions and build relationships.
- Not all partners are willing to take ownership of items installed along footpaths, particularly in the case of the tow path.

Gateway to the Tame Valley at Kingsbury Water Park

Case Study



Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme Project C9

Photo: The newly upgraded Gateway Visitor Centre (Photo: C Harris TVW)

Background:

Kingsbury Water Park sits at the heart of the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme area and is its most popular visitor centre, enjoyed by over 300,000 people¹ each year. This makes the centre an ideal location for an interpretation hub for the Wetlands.

Project Aim and Short Description:

The aim was to create a vibrant, engaging interpretation centre and visitor experience in the heart of the Tame Valley.

Before the project, the visitor centre housed an area of outdated interpretation about the site and wider valley. This project transformed a 5m x 5m (25m²) space, providing visitors with an exciting and informative experience of the Tame Valley and the Scheme. The required ambiance was that of an engaging and vibrant heritage centre that inspired people to explore and discover their local landscape by sign-posting places to visit, things to do and see, training events, wildlife and local heritage.

The centre would be re-branded as 'The Gateway to the Tame Valley' and a grand opening of the new hub was planned for Year 2 of the scheme, linked to a Heritage Event.

Process:

The project was managed by the Interpretation Officer, but due to challenges in recruitment, this role was not filled until early 2015, delaying the project start to mid-2015. A two-stage brief was developed in discussion with partners and put out to tender in Autumn 2015, but there was limited interest due to the split of design and delivery and very short timescales. The brief was rewritten to make one project, deadlines were extended, and the tender was reissued.

By the deadline (15th Feb 2016), proposals were received from seven companies. Of these, three were invited to present their ideas to a panel, including the Scheme Manager, Interpretation Officer and Warwickshire County Council (WCC) representatives; the project consultant, ABG Design was selected.

¹ 305,358 visitors quoted in Warwickshire County Council's 2012/13 visitor survey

Case Study – Gateway to the Tame Valley

A consultation event, involving TVW team members and Kingsbury Water Park staff, took place in May. The event was well attended and generated some useful feedback, which was captured in a start-up document. This was circulated to all attendees for comments, which were then fed back to ABG to produce a final version. ABG and their sub-contractor Parc Signs visited Kingsbury in June to conduct a detailed building survey. They developed concept designs to present to the team in July.



Figure 1: Gateway Centre Launch Event (Photo: Chris Harris, TVW)

While ABG and Parc Signs focussed on the design elements, TVW staff generated the content (text and images) for the interpretation. This portrayed the Valley's recent industrial history, how this had shaped the landscape, and how the landscape and wildlife had begun to recover over the last few decades. The draft interpretation was widely circulated amongst the TVW team and WCC staff, before being supplied to ABG.

The major structural elements of the redesign were signed off at the end of 2016, but discussions about the design of the interpretation elements continued well into 2017.

Installation was agreed for mid May 2017. The Visitor Centre was closed to the public while the existing centre furniture was dismantled, and the contents removed. The interior was thoroughly cleaned, and decorators were engaged by WCC. The old carpet tiles were removed, and new flooring installed.

The refit by Parc Signs took four days in May. The shop area was restocked, and the centre reopened to the public the following week. A

snagging list was drawn up over the following weeks, which the contractors addressed.

A formal reopening event was held on 1st July, which was well attended by staff, volunteers, councillors, local people, and project partners and many positive comments were received. Project C9 was mostly complete but the interactive touchscreen software was not operating properly. This was redesigned by the Interpretation Officer, using PowerPoint, and supplied to ABG, who further developed it. An interim version was installed on the touchscreen unit and ran successfully until it was replaced by the final version in March 2018.

Since the refit and up to July 2018, around 75,000 people visited the building. The survey forms received show a generally positive opinion of the new centre; the centre staff report that the interpretation is well used and well received. TVW have continued to respond to feedback by purchasing and installing new leaflet dispensers and a 'recent sightings' board. TVW staff were keen to meet the needs of partner Warwickshire County Council, as it is their staff who run the shop and are therefore most impacted by the redesign.

Outputs and outcomes:

Paula Cheeseman, Warwickshire County Council Parks Manager, is pleased with the refurbished Visitor Centre and Gateway:

"There were a few issues ... but it all came right in the end. There were teething problems with the conceptual and technical sides and the TV screens and interactive displays, but now it's fine. It is difficult to attribute, but the Water Park is busier than ever, which is good and benefits us, and visitor centre staff are well aware of people using resources at the centre."

Learning Points:

- Involving staff in the design of workspaces helps to build acceptance.
- Listening to users improves the visitor experience.
- Both interior and exterior displays and content need to be attractive and informative.

Marketing Apprenticeship



Case Study

Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme Project D7

Title photo: Ebony helping students at a workshop (Photo: TVW)

Background:

Engaging with young people was one of the central objectives of Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme, (TVWLPS) so when planning the staffing resource needed to deliver the Scheme, the recruitment of an apprentice was built into its group of projects that promoted training and skills.

Project Aim and Short Description:

The original intention was to recruit an apprentice to enhance its conservation team and carry out some marketing duties. Once the permanent team was in place, however, it became apparent that there were sufficient staff with conservation skills and what the team really needed was more marketing support. So, the post became one for a marketing trainee with particular emphasis on social media, web-based marketing and events.

The trainee would gain valuable work

experience and learn skills that would equip them to gain full-time employment. Part of the training would be college-based with Heart of England Training and would lead to an NVQ 2 marketing qualification.

Process:

The apprentice was seconded to Warwickshire Wildlife Trust by Warwickshire County Council (WCC) to work with Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership. WCC had agreed to manage the apprenticeship contract on behalf of the Partnership. The change of discipline from conservation to marketing was agreed jointly with them. The original conservation role had been conceived as lasting 15 months, but the role was extended to 18 months to accommodate marketing qualifications. The intermediate apprenticeship also included Functional Skills Level 1 English & Maths, Employer Rights and Responsibilities, Personal Learning and Thinking Skills.

Case Study – Marketing Apprenticeship

In April 2016, Ebony Smith was recruited to the role, which would last for 18 months. When she left school, she had not decided on a career, so did not go on to study A levels but found employment in various jobs.

She was interested in wildlife and the natural world but was unsure how to take that forward. She studied a wide range of publications and web sites, saw the apprentice opportunity and made a successful application for the post.

Ebony was familiar with social media but needed to relate that experience to TVW. She was encouraged to visit marketing officers at several partner organisations to develop marketing skills and techniques. She shadowed the Marketing Officer at Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, who helped her to design layouts and to use a software program that proved essential in the permanently employed role she gained after completing her apprenticeship. She also met the Communications Officer to discuss the benefits of different mail merge programs, which helped her choose a suitable piece of software for TVW.

Ebony explained the help she received with brand training and awareness from the RSPB's Head of Marketing:

"He explained how consistency and clarity was key. Learning so much about the RSPB brand helped me implement the same knowledge into the Tame Valley Wetlands (LPS). From this, the Tame Valley brand has become stronger, clearer and recognisable."

She discussed other training opportunities with her line manager and took a number of other courses including safeguarding, first aid, photography, bird identification and rustic furniture. All of the training contributed to her marketing role, adding to the support she was able to give to the team and also to her job satisfaction.

She also helped budget, organise and develop events, often acting as the Partnership's representative to facilitate training sessions and workshops.

She assisted with the organisation of the Partnership's flagship public engagement event 'TameFest'.

Outputs and Outcomes:

Ebony achieved all her qualifications, aided by training from the different organisations in the Partnership. Ebony's role was significant in the success of the project and she was a fully integrated part of the team. She was able to play an important role in the promotion of the Wetlands project including raising awareness and informing a widening audience through the use of social media.

Ebony reported that, during her stewardship:

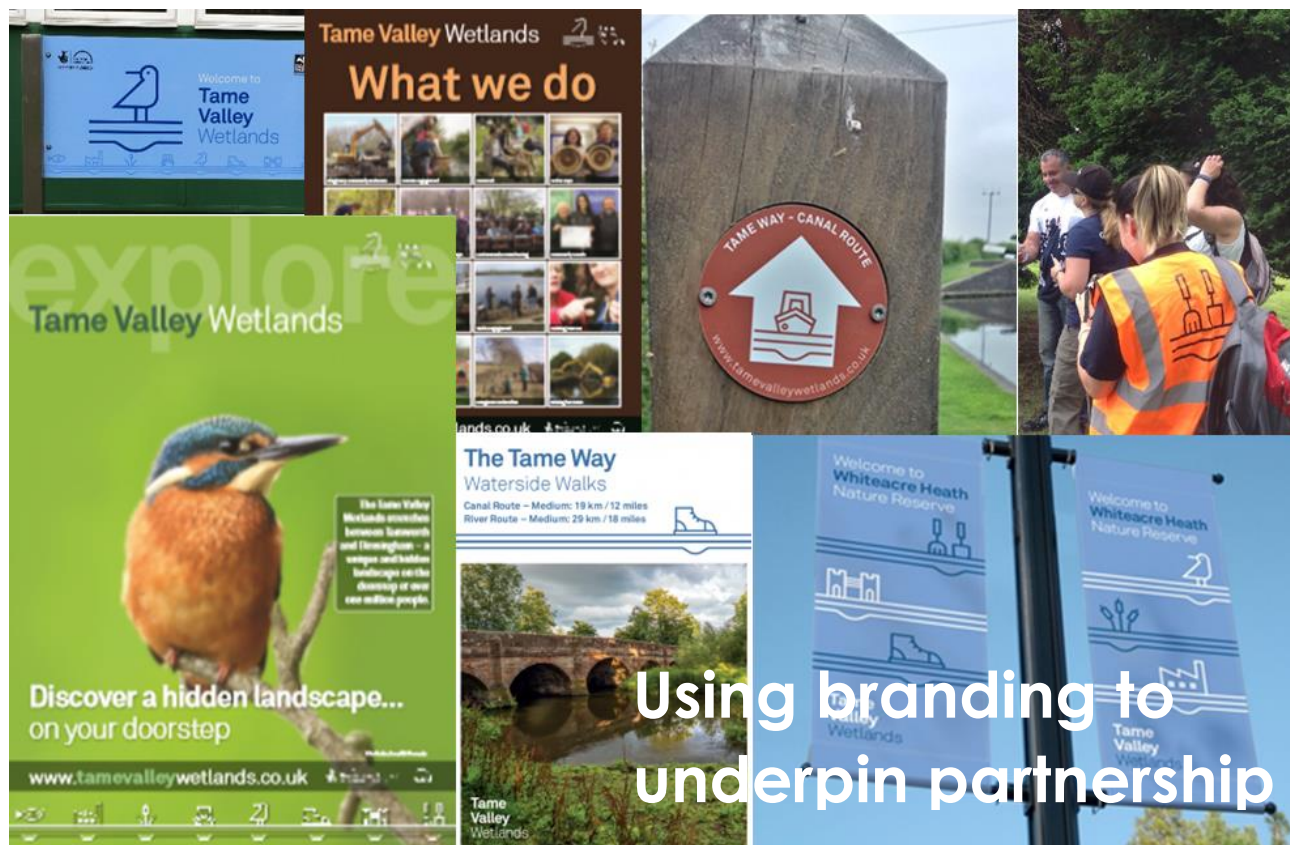
"the TVW Facebook likes rose from 355 to 824 in 15 months, over double the original number and a steady 31 likes per month. Twitter followers also rose from 674 to 1,116, resulting in an increase of 442 at a steady 29 new follows per month."

Colleagues in the team reported that they felt Ebony's work was very valuable to them and she believes that her apprenticeship was valuable for her. It helped her to find a role which she enjoys, and which opened her eyes to other career opportunities, both with the natural world and elsewhere, which would have social value.

At the end of her apprenticeship she found a job with the By Design Group in Tamworth, working in a team promoting STEM subjects to young people in schools.

Ebony commented on her time with Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership:

"I am really thankful that I have gotten to be a part of this opportunity and feel proud knowing I can look back in years to come and say, I saw that work happen, I was a part of that development. I've seen so many new species that I had never seen before and have caught a real interest in conservation. I have a much more positive mental health and knowledge of the environment around me and will miss being a part of the scheme."



Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme Project C10 and all activity

Picture: Examples of Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership branding (All photos: TVW)

Background:

One of the founding principles of the Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership was that it should develop and maintain a strong brand. The design should create a sense of place, representing the physical assets and experiences offered by the Tame Valley, should be suitable for partner organisations to actively display and easy for the general public to recognise and remember.



Figure 1: TVW Partnership's strongly branded star shade for use at events (Photo: TVW)

The brand should work wherever it was used, including on a newly designed website and on social media. Partnership work often demands multiple logos to be displayed together, so it

would need to work alongside others, while maintaining its integrity.

Project Aim and Short Description:

A specific project (C10) was included in the Partnership's action plan to cover brand development, guidelines and graphic design, including the new website. The brand and branding guidelines developed through this project would be applicable throughout the Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS).

Establishing a recognisable brand takes time and the branding would have to work for the Partnership's long-term activities and aspirations, not just the four-year long LPS.

Process:

Agreeing the brand was one of the early tasks of the Partnership once their LPS bid was approved. The Board decided to take professional advice from graphic designers and commissioned design agency 'Cafeteria'. Working from its vision for the Tame Valley Wetlands, a comprehensive development

Case Study – Using branding to underpin partnership

process took place. This included agreeing what the Partnership stood for, how it wanted to be seen by the public and the key characteristics of the Tame Valley that it wished to promote. This caused a lot of debate and helped to create a common understanding between the partners.

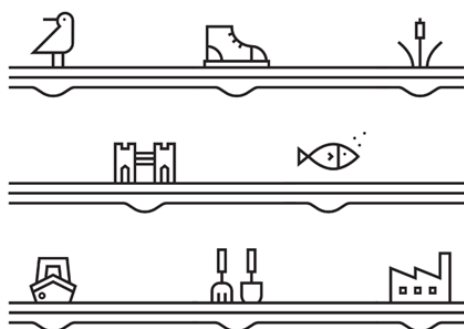


Figure 2: The family of logos developed for TVW Partnership

Options were put forward for the graphic designs to be adopted. Choosing a logo is a subjective business, but the Partnership agreed upon a family of logos that gave them flexibility to promote different aspects of the area, while still maintaining a consistent style.

A set of detailed brand guidelines were produced to help staff and partners to use the brand correctly in different situations.

At the centre of the Partnership's communication strategy is its website. It is managed in-house to give greater control over its regular updating, as well as to control cost. It acts as a key promotional tool and information hub with live details about events, projects and ways to get involved, all strongly branded with the Partnership's livery. In effect, it is a virtual gateway to the Tame Valley Wetlands. It is supported by active Facebook pages and a Twitter feed.

Outputs and outcomes:

The inclusive way the brand was agreed means there is a strong commitment to its use by partners. They wanted it to have an enduring quality and regard it as one of the key legacies from the Landscape Partnership Scheme. Its importance for the future continues to be a high priority, witnessed by the job description for the Partnership's permanent Manager

published in October 2018: "Management of the strong Tame Valley Wetlands brand and overseeing the website information will be important elements of the role."

The branding has been used extensively – leaflets, walking guides, signposts, benches, interpretation boards, corporate clothing, vehicles and promotional items all bear the brand. Many of these items will have a long life span, embedding the Partnership's profile.

As a result, there are already good levels of recognition by the general public. A survey of visitors to the Tame Valley Gateway Visitor Centre showed one third of visitors were familiar with it before their visit. A separate survey conducted in April 2018 reported that 87% of respondents had seen the logo at least once prior to the survey.

The brand guidelines appear to have worked well in bringing discipline and consistency to the correct use of the brand.

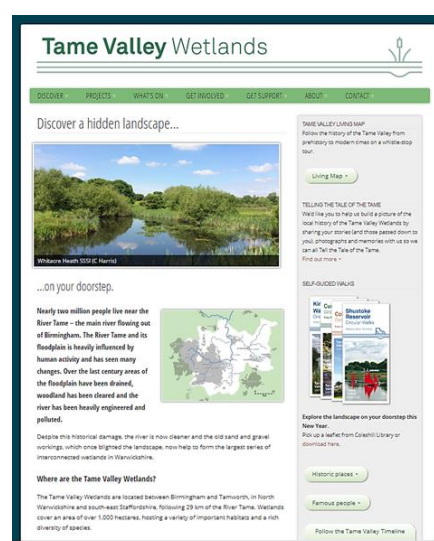


Figure 3: Screenshot from TVW website

The LPS required the website to offer at least 15 pages of information. It quickly exceeded this target and now has over 130 pages. Website visitors increased steadily over the life of the LPS and were regularly over 30,000 per quarter since 2016. There have been over 110,000 page views of the Tame Valley Wetlands website and a Facebook total reach of nearly 450,000, all helping to spread knowledge and awareness of the value of the Wetlands.