

THE BLACKWATER VALLEY

Welcome to the Blackwater Valley, located on the borders of Hampshire, Surrey and Berkshire running approximately 30km from the source of the river at Rowhill near Aldershot, northwards to Swallowfield.

The Valley has a surprisingly varied landscape rich in wildlife, and the shallow floodplain along the river, set amidst extensive heathlands and woodlands, contains many lakes and wet meadows created by years of gravel and sand extraction.

Blackwater Valley Path

Walk sections of the riverside path and discover the green spaces and recreational facilities en route.

GETTING HERE

By Rail: Great Western Railway operate the North Downs line from Gatwick to Guildford, then onto Reading.

Visit nationalrail.co.uk for details.

By bus: Visit traveline.info for details of services.

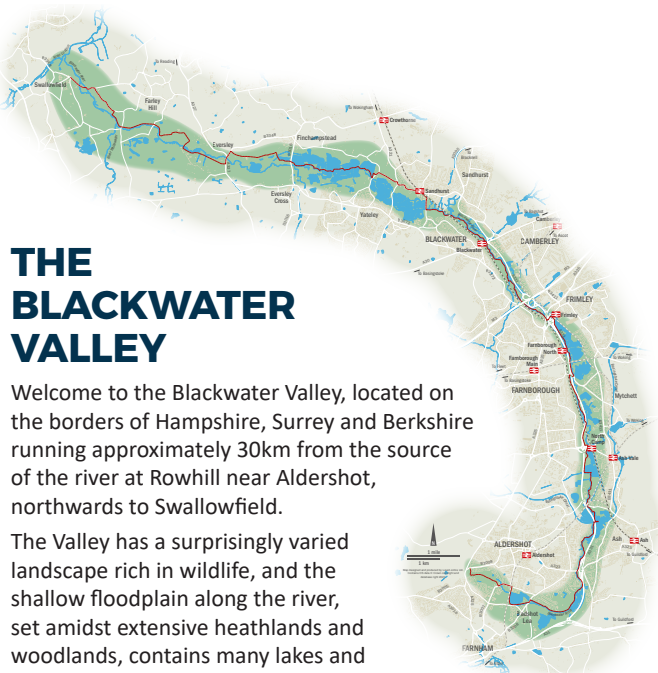
COUNTRYSIDE CODE RESPECT • PROTECT • ENJOY

For a safe and fun visit to the Blackwater Valley please remember to follow the Countryside Code.

Respect other people – Consider the local community and other people when enjoying the outdoors. Keep to designated paths and bridleways, leaving gates and property as you find them.

Protect the natural environment – Keep dogs on a lead around livestock and wildlife and remember to bag and bin dog poo. Take all litter home and don't have BBQs or fires.

Enjoy the outdoors – Plan ahead, follow advice and local signs.



Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust (BVCT)

BVCT are a registered charity, with dedicated Trustees using their wide range of backgrounds to help conserve and improve its natural environment. This includes managing its countryside, preserving its wildlife habitats and landscapes by making conservation projects happen.

We also organise events, including walks, talks and conservation activities, and encourage the public to take part in them, educating people about, and introducing them to, the Valley and its wildlife.

In short, we do anything we can to make the Blackwater Valley a better place to live and visit.

To find out more about how to join the Trust and what other initiatives we are involved with go to:

Website www.bvct.org.uk

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/BVCTrust>

Southeast Communities Rail Partnership

The Southeast Communities Rail Partnership CIC (SCRCP) covers 8 lines, working to connect communities to their railway across Berkshire, Hampshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex. They work in partnership with GTR Southern, GWR, SWR, SER and Cross Country on those lines, joining up with community groups, local authorities and local businesses to help them achieve their objectives through the railway and are supported by the Community Rail Network (CRN). www.southeastcrp.org

Rail to Trail The Best of Both Worlds

If you are already a Trust member, you're concerned about the environment. You'd probably like to reduce your carbon footprint. That's why our latest initiative is on the right track.

We've got together with our local train service to show how easy it is to get more - more out of your Blackwater Valley by using the train, and more out of the train service by seeing the Valley. It's a win-win.

Rail to Trail ticks a lot of boxes. It:

- encourages use of the train rather than the car, reducing carbon footprints;
- helps residents and visitors who are walkers to enjoy parts of the Valley they might not have considered;
- makes train users think about walking in the Valley; and
- has a direct impact on health, fitness and wellbeing.

Because the North Downs rail line closely follows the course of the River Blackwater and the Valley Path, Rail to Trail shows how easy it is to use the stations to open up parts of our scenic Valley you would normally only reach by car.

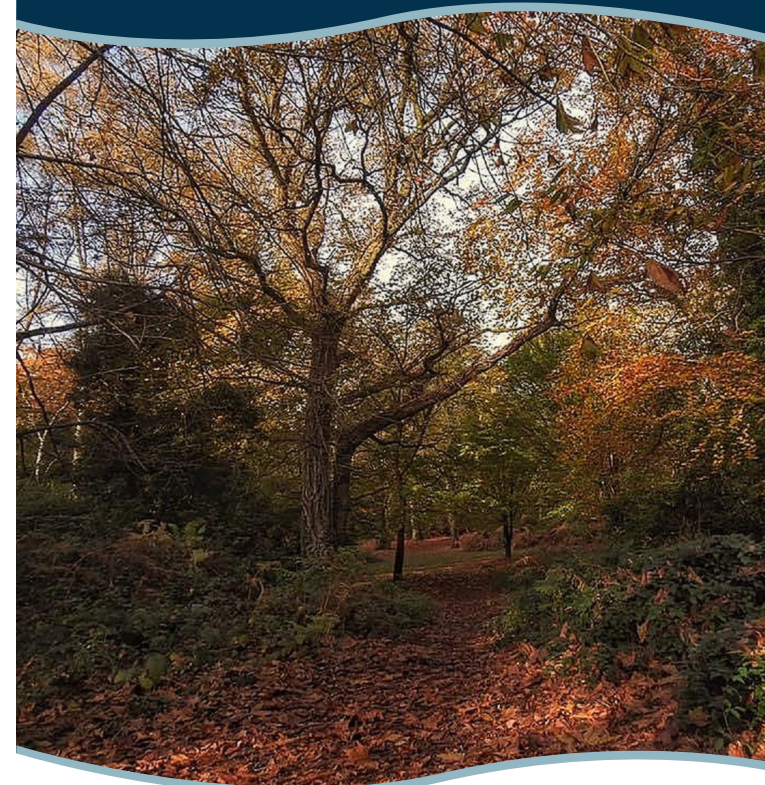
Rail to Trail is a BVCT Make a Difference (MAD) initiative



Great
Western
Railway

RAIL TO TRAIL

a Blackwater Valley walk between Farnborough North and Blackwater stations



Hawley Meadows – comprise 27ha of riverside meadows that provide open access for public use with an attractive section of the Blackwater Valley Path.

The River Blackwater and Cove Brook run through the site.

Following road construction in the 1980's sections of the river were straightened and the northern fields were lowered to increase the sites value for flood protection. Since then the site has been managed to increase its landscape and wildlife value, with tree and hedge planting, native flower seeding and restoration of the river habitat.

Whatever the time of year there is always something to look out for; you can spot fish in the river or identify the many meadow plants and butterflies that feed on them. Remember to look up to see birds overhead and moving through the treetops.

Hawley Meadows

Photo: BVCT



Blackwater Park – a former gas works and railway sidings, has been restored to a pleasant tree-lined linear park beside the River Blackwater.

The park's varied natural habitats include mixed woodland, scrub, a pond, wildflower meadows and, of course, the river.

The meadows in particular come alive in the summer, when grasshoppers and butterflies are abundant.

The river provides habitat for fish, ducks, moorhens, herons and even the occasional visiting kingfisher.

The Park is maintained by Surrey Heath Borough Council.

Easily accessed from the A30, a footbridge leads into the park at its northern end, and the walk south along the river brings you to a gate which links to Hawley Meadows.



Queen Elizabeth Park – A 24-acre woodland park popular with dog walkers, joggers and cyclists. Ideal for local families to enjoy the natural setting.

Queen Elizabeth Park was once part of the Farnborough Hill estate belonging to Empress Eugenie who was Napoleon III's wife, and before that, the outer reaches of the Royal Windsor Great Park.

A well-used play area and an ephemeral pond are located close to the south entrance off Cabrol Road.

Beech, oak, chestnut and rhododendron trees are predominant in the park with occasional plane, willow, service and Scot's pine trees also dotted around. The Fairy Tree, an old beech that is estimated to be at least 300 years old, has been a special tree for many generations of Farnborough residents.

Greater spotted woodpeckers, nuthatches and pipistrelle bats are common sights in the park, as are a variety of woodland butterflies.

The Fairy Tree – Queen Elizabeth Park



Farnborough Abbey – St Michael's Abbey is Farnborough's jewels. Home to a working community of Benedictine monks, it is the last resting place of the Emperor Napoleon III (the last sovereign and first President of France), his wife the Empress Eugenie and their son Louis, the Prince Imperial. Once described as 'France transplanted into England' its magnificent French Gothic architecture of gargoyles and pinnacles make it a local treasure.

For opening times go to www.farnboroughabbey.org

Farnborough Abbey

