

# BLACKWATER VALLEY COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

## NEWSLETTER      October 2025

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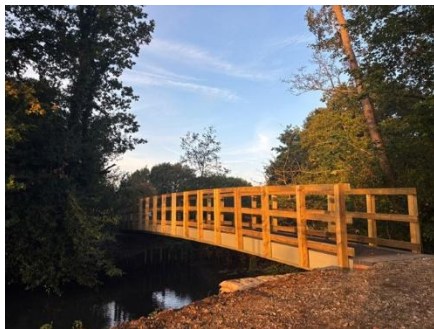


### Welcome to your October newsletter

– a roundup of news and events from the sole charitable organisation focused on the protection, enhancement and human enjoyment of the natural environment of the whole Blackwater Valley.

### Shepherd Meadow footbridge reopens

Bracknell Forest have announced that they have completed this bridge replacement and upgrade. They installed the new footbridge at the end of September.



They closed it in January 2023 for safety reasons, after a visual inspection by rangers found evidence of rot and instability. Further inspection and a condition report by specialist contractors identified significant defects in the bridge's structure which neither strengthening nor refurbishing work would

resolve. Closing the bridge was the only option while they looked for a long-term solution.

The footbridge straddles the boundary between Bracknell Forest and Hampshire County and forms part of the SANG route and the long-distance Blackwater Valley Path.

Funding was secured with a significant contribution from the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership.

Executive Committee approval was given in March 2024.



## Protecting nature



BFC commissioned ecological surveys by independent wildlife experts to make sure there was no impact to wildlife at Shepherd Meadows. They also worked with the Environment Agency to make sure there was no negative impact to the Blackwater River. The land is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and Blackwater River is treated as a salmonid river. To protect the fish during the spawning season, no works were carried out between 1 October and 15 June.

They have more recently been carrying out some final work before they can officially open the bridge and are organising an official opening event with key stakeholders to say thank you to everyone who has supported this project.

*(This is based on an article on Bracknell Forest Council's website)*

## EXPLORE NATURE BY RAIL

With £1400 funding from GWR and working with Sara Grisewood of the SCRP, we commissioned an artwork poster from artist Claire Watson to encourage people to use the train to explore nature in the Blackwater Valley.

The poster was “launched” at North Camp station on 4 April 2025. Rushmoor Councillor Keith Dibble said, *“People think of the Blackwater Valley as a built-up urban area but actually it is full of pockets of nature and this poster encourages people to get out there, leave their cars, and use sustainable travel to access these areas, promoted by the Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust and funded by GWR.”*

The poster has been installed at Guildford and stations along the Valley, and at several cafes locally.

# EXPLORE NATURE BY RAIL

in the Blackwater Valley

CHIFFCHAFF



ROE DEER



BRIMSTONE



HAZEL DORMOUSE



SMOOTH NEWT

## SITE FOCUS - Runfold Ridge

Runfold Ridge is a SANG created to provide access to the countryside for residents of the new housing developments in the Tongham area. It is owned by the Land Trust who asked BVCP to take on management in 2021.

It is an interesting site being at the very southern end of the Valley on the higher ground of the Hogs Back and underlain by chalk. Previously arable, it provided a great opportunity for landscape and habitat creation. Blocks of trees have been planted but the main target is calcareous grassland, being a habitat of principal importance. This is still in the early stages with grassland colonisers such as hawksbeards, catsear and bristly oxtongue creating fields of yellow in Spring.

Green hay from nearby flower-rich areas has been spread introducing chalk specialist species such as marjoram, cowslip, and wild basil.

Scrapes to expose bare chalk have been created, some left for natural



colonisation, others sown with kidney vetch, the food plant of the small blue butterfly, as part of the efforts to extend this species range. Other butterflies are already established including brown argus and brown hairstreak, while bumblebees and other insects benefit from the many flowers on site.

In one night's trapping over 200 moths were caught. Skylarks breed onsite and can be heard and seen overhead throughout summer.

Much of the work on site has been achieved with the support of volunteers including BVCP, Farnham Biodiversity Partnership, the Butterfly Conservation Group and Hive Helpers. The full impact of their efforts will not be seen for a number of years as the chalk specialist species gradually increase, but you can still get expansive views along the Valley from the viewpoints.



There is a small car park at [w3w.this.picked.views](http://w3w.this.picked.views) (closed evenings) and pedestrian entrances at [W3W.tins.cable.makes](http://W3W.tins.cable.makes) and [diary.zone.nasal](http://diary.zone.nasal).

*Steve Bailey*

## **Goshawks in Guildford?**

A recent national press article featured the successful introduction of goshawks to European capitals such as Berlin, Prague, and Amsterdam, and plans to bring them to English cities in a project run by Rewilding UK.

The goshawk is an apex predator and it is hoped that they will come to the rescue of Britain's smaller garden birds by preying on mesopredators such as crows, magpies and jackdaws, whose populations have threatened birds further down the food chain. Described as avian 'stealth bombers', in Berlin, where there are estimated to be 100 breeding pairs, the birds hunt pigeons in the street and even perch on rooftops. They have adapted to the traffic and are far more at ease with the streams of people than their forest-dwelling counterparts would be.

Rewilding UK will be submitting a proposal to Natural England to release fifteen birds in London and Chester. If the project goes ahead the goshawks will be fitted with GPS transmitters and given a supply of food for as long as is needed after release.

Who knows? – shopping in Guildford may soon be a bit more interesting up above!

## **More to BVCT than you think? - another first**

A project that we were recently involved with was our anti-litter campaign in conjunction with Keep Britain Tidy (KBT). As part of our railway Rail to Trail initiative BVCT approached KBT to ask if we could link our anti-litter initiative at North Camp Station with their cigarette butt box campaign. It transpired that KBT had been looking at ways to roll out the campaign to public transport hubs albeit they were waiting until 2026 to make the approaches.

After some discussion BVCT finally secured the first trial of its kind in a railway setting and provided KBT with a report on its success together with a number of pointers for them to consider in their approach to public transport operators next year.

This partnership worked very well with KBT providing the boxes and BVCT providing the display equipment which was placed in the platform waiting room. Posters encouraging people to take up the offer of free boxes and help the Friends of North Camp Station Group to maintain a good record of helping to keep the station clean were strategically placed around the platforms and in the community display cabinets.



The whole exercise was a success with the boxes all going within the first two weeks. GWR, the train operators, have since installed additional litter bins to help to encourage people to use them.

BVCT is keen to send out the message that it is not acceptable to drop litter in the first place and will hope that by working with other partners we can change attitudes.

*Chris Smith*