

COLNE VALLEY PARK Community Interest Company



Notes from Annual Forum 2014, Thursday 25th September
Venue: Buckinghamshire Golf Club, Denham, Bucks, UB9 5PG

Welcome & introduction Richard Skehens Chairman, Colne Valley Park CIC

Welcomed everyone to the CIC's annual forum and thanked Buckinghamshire Golf Club for providing the attractive venue.

Reminder that there is no 'you' and 'us', it's all 'us'! We are all here because our organisations have signed up as a member of the Colne Valley Park CIC. Richard requested that all groups should encourage other groups and associations to sign up, together we are stronger and have a louder voice for our local landscapes and countryside.

Actions following on from the last forum include

- 8 Founding Corporate Supporters have joined, many thanks to all of them.
- Regular column of various authors giving a personal take on the Colne Valley in Bucks Advertiser – thank to the paper and Mort Smith in particular. Please contact us with other suggestions and your own articles. Still a long way to go with awareness of the Colne Valley Park but we are in a better position than when the CIC formed 2.5 years ago
- Spatial planning. Main focus has been on HS2 (more of that later)

The CIC's Managing Agent (Groundwork South) have submitted a stage 1 application for £1.7M to the Lottery Landscape Partnership for a 5 year programme to address key challenges facing the Park A decision expected in October. If successful we will have funds from the Lottery to write a business plan and submit the full application.

2015 marks the 50th anniversary of the Colne Valley Park. Since George Hooper, in his role as the first Chief Executive of the newly formed London Borough of Hillingdon, first brought the local authorities together to focus on the whole landscape. We intend to use the anniversary as an opportunity to raise awareness of the Colne Valley Park amongst local residents, users, businesses.

High Speed 2 Mike Nye Director, Colne Valley Park CIC

HS2, if permitted to proceed, will be one of the most disruptive projects that the Park has had to contend with in all of its existence. The character of the most attractive and well used parts of the landscape will change forever with the addition of viaducts, embankments, construction compounds, tunnel portals. Not forgetting the impact on the peace and serenity that many visitors seek, whether they be serious bird watchers or family groups walking and enjoying the countryside on their doorstep.

Plan A: Best case for the Colne Valley is that High Speed 2 does not go ahead

Plan B: Tunnel under the Park

Plan C: Impacts on the Park are reduced alongside mitigation and compensation for the benefit of local landscapes and local communities.

The CIC has submitted a petition against the HS2 Hybrid Bill. We are unclear on exactly when we will be called in front of the select committee but one of the directors will present to the select committee possibly as soon as early Spring 2015.

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When we appear in front of the select committee we will need to provide evidence on the impacts on the Colne Valley Park to back up our petitioning points. We will also need a clear vision of what we are asking for.

The CIC are involved in joint discussions with Local Authorities and local groups who have also petitioned against the Hybrid Bill. The Buckinghamshire Councils have appointed Land Use Consultants (LUC) to undertake a study that will take an overview of the appropriate landscape design and mitigation principles for the HS2 scheme.

We are all agreed that HS2 Ltd have not done a good job with integrating mitigation into the scheme. We intend to make a start on what we would like it to look like to present an alternative scenario, using the environmental statement as a starting point. This will require us to draw up a masterplan for the Colne Valley. The Masterplan would effectively be an implementation of the more strategic work undertaken for Buckinghamshire.

This appears to be the best scenario for us in order to obtain a creditable and professional package for the onerous task of evidencing our submission to the Select Committee. There will be additional cost implications to the CIC, which is the reason that a letter from our Chairman went to all members of the CIC requesting a small contribution to the HS2 'fighting fund'. Many thanks to all our member organisations that have contributed so far.

Finance Update

John Whitby

Director and Treasurer, Colne Valley Park CIC

John started by describing one example of what the CIC achieves.

- The CIC receives lots of individual small financial contributions from members
- These are collated into one pot
- Groundwork uses some of this to develop projects and fundraising. During 2013/14 Groundwork was able to secure over £7 of external funding for every £1 put into the CIC.

Other activities of the CIC include responding to planning, bringing stakeholders together, raising awareness of the Park and the issues faced by our local countryside

The overriding aim when setting up the CIC was to affect a positive step change in what the Colne Valley Park can achieve. We are doing this – progress has been made since our formation in July 2012. Your board of directors wants to do more

The board has set a planned budgeted deficit for the CIC on core income vs. core expenditure in 2014/15, The CIC has reserves but if nothing is done the CIC will fold in less than 5 years or sooner if we continue to spend reserves on one-off costs (e.g. High Speed 2 costs, legal fees on leases)

The CIC's board has agreed that a budget should be set that aims to close the core operating deficit within 3 years.

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The CIC board has set a tight core expenditure schedule to achieve the aims and ambitions for the Colne Valley Park. Directors Development Day reviewed expenditure, view taken that cannot reduce expenditure on:

- communication and publicity
- Responding to planning applications
- Project development and fundraising and delivery
- Finance and administration
- Visitor centre, community engagement and volunteering

Therefore focus on increasing income. The CIC's business plan identifies 9 income sources, 4 main sources will be focussed on in the near future.

Local Authorities:

- Currently the largest source of income
- however note that prior to the establishment of the CIC this was the only source of income
- We are aware of pressures faced by local authorities and need to work with local authorities to ensure that any decreases in contributions are tapered and are offset by other means (e.g. gift in kind, officer support, one off capital contributions)

Corporate Supporters.

- This is an area with potential for further growth,
- There will need to be active involvement of all member organisations, directors and recruitment of new director(s) with good business contacts.

Donations and legacies

- We could encourage donations towards the Colne Valley Park.
- It is intended the Managing Agent develop a legacies scheme in 2014/15

We believe the targets have the right balance of realism and ambition. If the income generation targets to achieve 3 year deficit reduction budget are unable to be met (as reviewed regularly at board meetings) we will look again at reducing expenditure and will have to take tough decisions

ColneCAN

Stewart Pomeroy

Groundwork South

Update on the Colne Catchment Action Network (ColneCAN) that brings people together to explore better ways to protect and enhance the water environment of the Colne valley. This focusses on the wider Colne Catchment through linking the Colne Valley Park with the Chilterns Chalk Stream Project and the Upper Colne in Hertfordshire. SP talked through the soon to be launched website and new web based action plan to improve our rivers for wildlife and for people.
www.colnecan.org.uk

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Questions

How is the CIC going to respond to Heathrow Airport expansion plans?

The proposals conflict with the 6 objectives of the Colne Valley Park – all groups were encouraged to reference to the Colne Valley Park and its objectives in their communications with Heathrow. The Davies commission will report back in July but now is the time to start influencing Heathrow to look at mitigation for local landscapes and local communities.

It was noted that no MP's were present, how many were invited?

All 9 MP's that cover part of the Colne Valley Park were invited. 3 of the MP's have expressed interest in a meeting to discuss issues and challenges in the rural urban fringe – the CIC will follow this up.

To help with income generation can the CIC apply for grants?

We do and so do Groundwork South (our managing agents) and many other organisations that are active within the Park. However the income figures presented by John Whitby were for core income required for the CIC to continue to function respond to planning, bringing groups together etc. Grant income is an essential part of what we do as it helps achieve our 6 objectives but does not help financially sustain the CIC.

Why can't the CIC make money from car parking?

The CIC does not have leasehold or freehold interest in land –therefore are unable to generate significant income in this way. Bucks County Council who own 3 country parks do generate income from their sites to contribute towards their own operating costs.

Information stalls gave people an opportunity to talk to directors and other organisations to feed back on:

- **ColneCAN action plans** to improve the 200km of watercourse in the Colne Valley as part of the wider 1000km² Colne Catchment
- **High Speed 2:** Colne Valley Park landscape masterplan – focussing on mitigation for the impact of HS2
- The **Colne Valley Park Community Interest Company** – our shared objectives and how individual members and individuals can help.

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Attendance List:

Deborah Valman	Groundwork South
Stewart Pomeroy	Groundwork South
Jamie Murray	Groundwork South
Matthew Hartgrove	Groundwork South
Kate Birch	Groundwork South
Paul Graham	Iver & District Countryside Association / CIC
Michael Nye	Friends of the Colne Valley Park / CIC
Richard Skehens	Grundon Waste Management / CIC
John Whitby	Rural Development Forum / CIC
Denise Alder	Colne Valley Park CIC
Cllr. Carol Gibson	Iver Parish Council / CIC
Cllr. David Martin	Bucks County Council / CIC
Mike Woods	Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust/ CIC
David Greenwood	Surrey County Council
Justine Bayley	Friends of the Gt Barn at Harmondsworth
Jeff Creak	Hillingdon Outdoor Activity Centre
Liz Pinfold	Friends of the Colne Valley Park
Robin Allen	Denham Waterski Club
Gill Taylor	Groundwork Hertfordshire
Keith Clayton	Middlesex Branch, Inland Waterways Association.
Martin Cartwright	Friends of Plnn Meadows
Dubravka Griffiths	Buckinghamshire Golf Club
Nick Orson	Egham and Staines Conservation Volunteers
Pippa Hopkins	Slough Borough Council
Rob Rees	Environment Agency
Paul Samson-Timms	Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative
John Price	Croxley Hall Trout Syndicate
Allen Beechey	Chilterns Chalk Streams Project
Cllr. Marilyn Heath	Denham Parish Council
Chris Burridge	Rickmansworth Waterways Trust
Jenny Bazilay	Rickmansworth Waterways Trust
Cllr. Margaret Skelton	Denham Parish Council
Becca Taylor	Affinity Water
Rob Sage	Affinity Water
Terry Skelton	Denham History Society
David Munkley	Slough Local Access Forum

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Jacqui Wheeler	Slough Local Access Forum
Cllr Neil Fyfe	London Borough of Hillingdon
Keith Pursall	Maple Lodge Conservation Society
Jane Griffin	South Bucks District Council
Ifath Nawaz	Chiltern District Council
Graham Pearce	Harrow Angling Society
Cllr. Carol Coleman	Surrey County Council
Cllr. Robert Evans	Surrey County Council
Alan Rix	Hillingdon Natural History Society
Ann Rix	Hillingdon Natural History Society
Mr Dunlop	Willowbank Association
Mrs Dunlop	Willowbank Association
David Coupe	Amey
Claudia Innes	Thames Water
Maggie Nye	Friends of the Colne Valley Park
Cllr. Wendy Matthews	Iver Parish Council
Mort Smith	Buckinghamshire Advertiser
Richard Pollard	Iver Environment Centre
Jean Phillips	Friends of the Colne Valley Park
Richard Nokes	Friends of the Colne Valley Park