



Wetland News

Restoring ancient water meadows for the benefit of all

Spring 2024 | 01

Welcome back and reflections since our last KVWR newsletter

Since you last received a newsletter, a huge amount has been happening behind the scenes progressing the Kennet Valley Wetland Reserve project.

This newsletter format and the wetland logo have been developed alongside the work to ensure we have all the surveys required for our planning application. In addition, we have been exploring fundraising opportunities, patrons and ambassadors.

The planning application

It has taken some time and a lot of work, with nearly 30 surveys, reports and plans being sourced including: a detailed landscape design, a topographical survey, a tree survey, an archaeological report, an ecological assessment, a flood risk assessment, a flooding sequential test, a planning report, a transport report, a utilities survey and report, a design study for the new access road, bridge and car park, as well as plans, designs and visualisations for the Education and Information Centre – but we are pleased to announce that we have

submitted our planning application for the reserve to West Berkshire Council.



Photo credit: © Helen Llewellyn

Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) is just one of the species that we hope will visit the wetland.

The application reference is:
24/00764/OUTMAJ

Do visit our application at
<https://tinyurl.com/KVWRplanningapp>
and support this amazing project for Hungerford.





What's been happening on the wetland site itself over the winter?

The months between October 2023 and March 2024 have seen a huge amount of rainfall and some of the highest river levels we've seen locally for a very long time. Undy's Meadow, the site of our proposed wetland reserve, is one area of the River Kennet's floodplain managed by the Town and Manor. Trustee and Honorary Fishery Secretary, Pip Porter, tells us:

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The rains of the last weeks have been the worst seen in our Water-keeper's memory. Not one bank of the river remained above the water in early January. Swans were swimming in Eddington Marsh! High flows at this time of year are expected but even so this year is exceptional. The rapid flow of the river will have had some positive effects also.

In 2021 a significant river restoration project took place on this stretch of the River Kennet, as part of

the Sparkling Streams project. A collaboration between the Town and Manor, ARK (Action for the River Kennet) and Southern Streams Farmer Group saw the River Kennet returned to her former sinuous beauty, the banks lowered and a collapsed sluice removed. The project also reconnected the river with its original channel, restoring much greater flow all year round and enabling creation of a "nature-like" fish pass.

The wetland reserve will fully reconnect the River Kennet to its historic floodplain, helping create new wetland habitats and mitigate flooding further down the valley. Knowing that this flooding will occur is a great thing for the reserve as it means regular inundation by fresh water, the arrival of new sediments, seasonal fluctuations in moisture levels and replenishment of scrapes, ponds, and lakes; all of which will contribute to the creation of a much richer mosaic of wetland habitats so increasing the biodiversity of the site.



This image shows the reconnection of the original channel



This image shows the restored sinuosity of the main channel and a view of the wetland site to the right.



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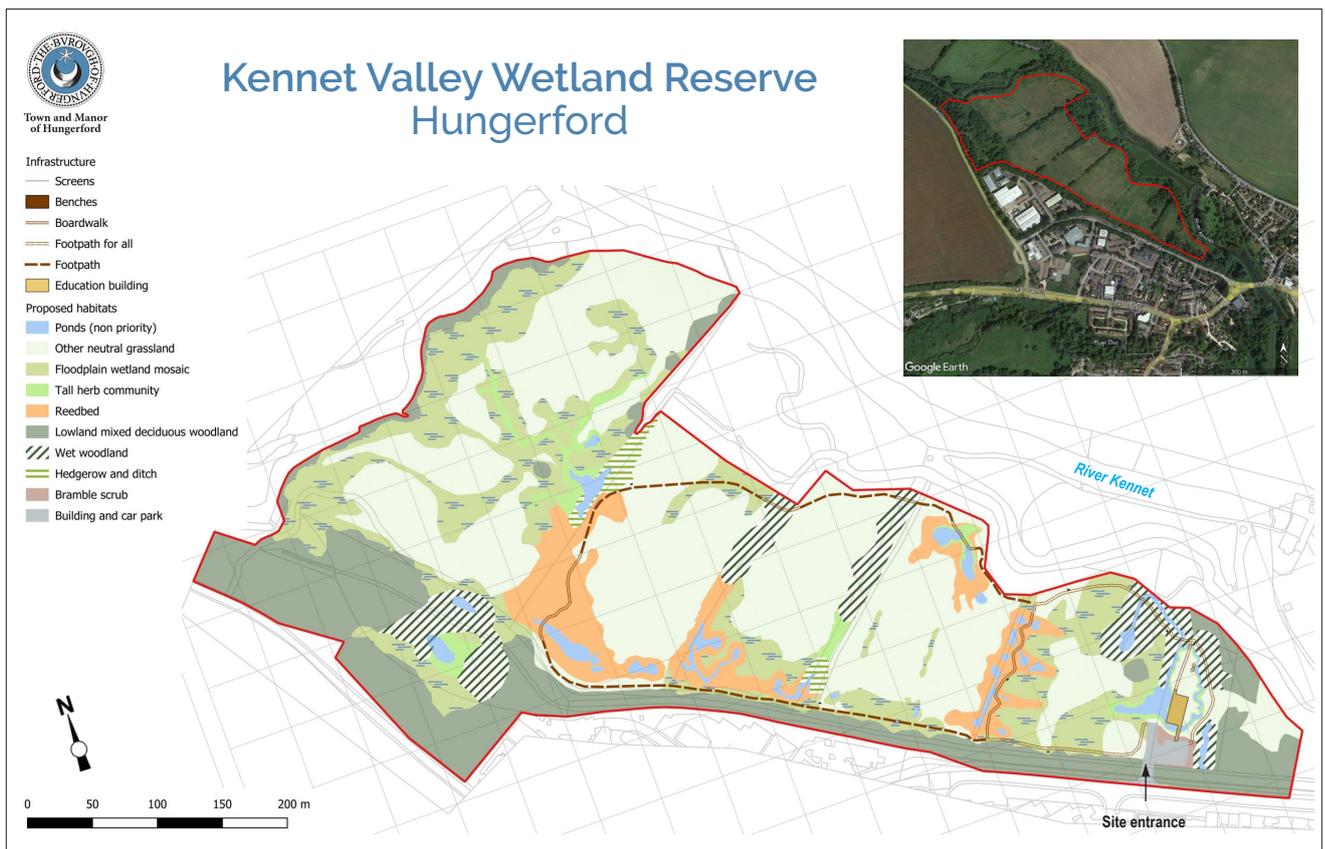
Want to know more about the KVWR project

The Town and Manor team are happy to answer any questions regarding this project and arrange site visits. We also have a number of displays regarding the plans for this amazing reserve. Please just get in touch via our website www.townandmanor.co.uk/wetland-reserve and submit your query. We will respond promptly.

Alternatively write to:

Town and Manor of Hungerford

Town Hall, Hungerford, Berkshire RG17 0NF



Fundraising

We are very grateful for all the support we received via The Good Exchange. The money raised enabled us to fund all the surveys required for the planning application. We are now busy researching further fundraising opportunities to enable us to bring this amazing project to Hungerford.



Once we have received planning consent, we will be focussing on raising the funds from trusts, foundations, events and donations. If you can help with our fund-raising appeal in any way do, please get in touch via our website www.townandmanor.co.uk/wetland-reserve or email claire.jones@townandmanor.co.uk

We are thrilled that Nicola Chester has agreed to be our first Ambassador

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I am proud and honoured to be an Ambassador for the new, ambitious Kennet Valley Wetland Reserve. The river and its skirts are the very source of our community, history, present and future here in Hungerford - and beyond. We are a welcoming town where nature is integral to our unique sense of common 'ownership,' celebration and responsibility. Restoring and reconnecting the river to its natural floodplain reconnects us too, and will extend a vital habitat to our threatened wildlife, help mitigate some of the effects of the climate crisis, and invite endless opportunities to engage, learn, grow and revel in our wilder spaces. It's forward-looking, future-focussed and inclusive – and I am so excited about it!



Nicola is an activist for nature, and has been called an 'early, female pioneer of the new nature writing' (Dominic Couzens). She and her family live in an estate worker's cottage at the heart of the North Wessex Downs and has a long connection with this area. Nicola's aim is that her writing engages, moves and reconnects people with nature in the hope they will then care enough to help stem its catastrophic loss. If her writing was not enough, Nicola is also a Secondary School Librarian, and never misses a chance to campaign for nature.

Nicola has been writing professionally for 20+ years, and is a winner of **BBC Wildlife Magazine's** Nature Writer

of the Year Award. She is the **RSPB's** first and longest-running female columnist as well as writing a column for **Countryfile Magazine** and is a **Guardian Country Diarist**. She is the author of the Award Winning Memoir **On Gallows Down; Place, Protest and Belonging** (Chelsea Green, 2021) and **RSPB Spotlight: Otters** (Bloomsbury 2014) which was the first in an exciting, new series on iconic British Wildlife.

As well as writing for the **BBC Wildlife Magazine**, Nicola has also written for **Caught By The River**, **The Clearing**, **Country Living**, **The Telegraph**, **The Financial Times**, **Slightly Foxed** and **The Wildlife Trusts**, and is a regular contributor to the **Newbury Weekly News**, our local newspaper. She wrote for many years for the RSPB's **Junior** and **Youth Magazines**, inspiring many of today's young wildlife campaigners.

Follow Nicola on X: [@nicolawriting](https://twitter.com/nicolawriting)



Watervole (*Arvicola amphibius*) is a threatened species in the UK. We hope they will make their home in the wetland.

Photo credit: © Helen Llewelyn