

Winter Newsletter

Bad news on our land exchange application



Cowslips on Dellfield

Photo: Ian Waterfield

The Trust received some very disappointing news recently. Our application to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for de-registration and exchange of Common Land, which so many local people had supported, has been refused.

The application sought approval for common land restrictions to be lifted on 4 pieces of land at Two Waters and Box Hill near the Trust Centre and transferred to our lovely wildflower meadow, Dellfield, in Westbrook Hay. The exchange application if approved would have increased the amount of common land by 2 acres but the eventual development of the Field known as Two Waters East would have reduced the balance of our overall amenity land by 1.5 acres

If approval had been given, it would have:

- Helped the Trust achieve sustainable income from the small field known as Two Waters East. This would have prevented cutbacks in grants to the community, environmental education, project work and events that will be needed as a result of the Trust's reduced income following the crash in commercial property rents.
- Enabled improvements to community facilities near the river in Apsley for a growing population.
- Given the Trust the opportunity to work with the Borough Council to provide footpath access through Durrants Hill Lakes
- Allowed fencing and animal housing to be erected on Box Hill. This would help build on our popular family lambing days and deliver more awareness about farming practices

- Helped to ensure long term protection of Dellfield
- Led to badly needed affordable housing at Two Waters East

There were two public consultations and we were supported by a large majority that included charities, national bodies and local Councillors from different political parties. Sadly that was not to be enough. It is ironic that a Charity which has increased amenity land by 250 acres in 20 years and which needs an annual income from TWE to buy more has been turned down because of the loss of just 1.5 acres.

There is no appeal so we are searching hard for 1.5 acres of alternative land that fits all the difficult criteria. Full background on the application can be found on our website.

**David Kirk, Chair
Box Moor Trust**



Results: 2020 Trustee Election



Thank you to all our beneficiaries who voted in our 2020 Trustee election. As a result of the ballot, six candidates have been duly elected to serve as Trustees. They are:

Peter Ablett	2,371 votes
Graham French	1,935 votes
Julie James	3,123 votes
Peter Phillips	1,941 votes
Patrick Schneiders	2,162 votes
Steve Wilson	2,419 votes

Our congratulations go to them and we look forward to working with them going forward. We would also like to extend our thanks to all the candidates who stood.

The number of eligible voters: 40,977
The total number who cast votes: 4,317
Turnout: 10.54%

Meet your new Trustees:



Peter Ablett was re-elected and looks forward to continuing to support the Trust in demonstrating best practice in managing its resources for the benefit of all local residents, including providing opportunities for volunteering, learning and relaxing.



Graham French is an ex-police officer with the Metropolitan Police who moved to Boxmoor in 1998. He walks his dogs on Trust land every day, meeting and chatting to local people and listening to their thoughts on issues about the Trust.



Julie James lives in Chaulden with her husband and children. She has a long association with the Trust through the Saturday clubs and helping out with education visits for local children and is keen to promote the Trust's work in education, conservation and farming.



Peter Phillips was also re-elected and has been a Trustee for 15 years, most recently as Chair of the Finance & Assets Committee. A retired widower with a background in finance and law, he has time to apply to Trust matters on a regular basis.



Patrick Schneiders recently moved back to Bovingdon to be closer to where he grew up. He has worked for 9 years in the environmental sector specialising in habitat creation, wildlife enhancement and sustainability.



Steve Wilson A HH resident since 1954, Steve taught at Astley Cooper School and now volunteers for Dacorum Environmental Forum and the Friends of Gadebridge Park. More recently, he was co-opted onto the Box Moor Trust's Education & Community committee.

Our newly-elected Trustees join David Kirk, Dennis Furnell, Steven Mansbridge, Nat Sims, Andy Cook and George Tite in governing Trust policy and direction.

Launch of 'Kickstart for Dacorum'

The Box Moor Trust in partnership with Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors, has announced 'Kickstart for Dacorum', an initiative for local young people not currently in employment to develop work skills and help them to move into sustained employment.

A serious impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic is its effect on youth unemployment and its economic threat to the local community in Dacorum. This initiative sets out to help avert a youth employment crisis in Dacorum.

Under the Government 'Kickstart Scheme' the Trust will offer paid 6-month work experience for a group of qualifying individuals. Importantly, the Trust has decided to take on the key task of being one of only 14 Gateways in Hertfordshire to help smaller local businesses with administration, delivery and training aspects of the scheme. The latest lockdown has delayed matters somewhat but if the required number of placements is reached it is hoped that the first opportunities for young people will begin to be advertised in a few weeks.

For more information on the Government Kickstart scheme visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme>

To qualify, individuals must be aged 16 to 24 years, registered with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), qualify for Universal Credit and be willing and available to work a minimum of 25 hours per week for 6 months. Individuals will receive 6 months of quality work experience in their chosen role along with training that increases their attractiveness to future employers and long-term employment.

Along with work experience provided by businesses, it is intended that this local initiative will also provide individuals with structured employability skills.

Local businesses interested in joining the initiative and hosting individuals will receive both administrative and financial support. For more information and for businesses to register their interest please visit: <https://www.boxmoortrust.org.uk/kickstart-scheme/> or email us at kickstartfordacorum@boxmoortrust.org.uk



We are delighted to support this local initiative which we hope will give the next generation of employees access to our local businesses and help their long-term career prospects. The Government Kickstart scheme offers great opportunities with funding for both young people and businesses to connect positively. The Box Moor Trust as a local community 'not-for-profit' organisation is ideally placed to make the scheme accessible and beneficial for our local community".

Jean McLeish, Chair of Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors



I congratulate the Box Moor Trust and Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors on the hard work they have done to be able to launch the 'Kickstart for Dacorum' initiative. This is great opportunity for young people who are currently not in work and for small businesses who can use this scheme as a 'Gateway' to the Government's Kickstart scheme. I would encourage any small business that would like to employ a young person on the Government Kickstart scheme to get in touch with them."

Sir Mike Penning, MP for Hemel Hempstead



Photo: Elizabeth Warriner

Hedge Laying at Three Crofts

Early in December, skilled volunteers Tim Edwin, Chris Whittle and Liz & David Warriner undertook a hedge laying task at Three Crofts, a meadow on the perimeter of Westbrook Hay. No staff were involved – it was purely a volunteer task. About 60m of hedging, mainly blackthorn, hawthorn, field maple and Ash, were laid in a 'conservation style' to encourage thick regrowth to create a safe space for nesting birds and a wildlife corridor.

Red Kite Rescue

Some of our conservation volunteers found themselves called upon for a spot of wildlife rescue whilst working at Upper Roughdown Common recently. They were sowing Kidney Vetch seeds (sole food plant for the larvae of Britain's smallest butterfly, the Small Blue) when they noticed a Red Kite that appeared unable to fly. They contacted Tiggyswinkles Wildlife Hospital and their volunteer David Evans, with the assistance of Trust volunteer Iain Nibbsy, managed to catch the bird so it could be cared for back at the animal hospital. When caught, the bird 'played dead' (a typical defence mechanism), which meant it could be safely contained. Hopefully, after recovery it will be released back into the wild.

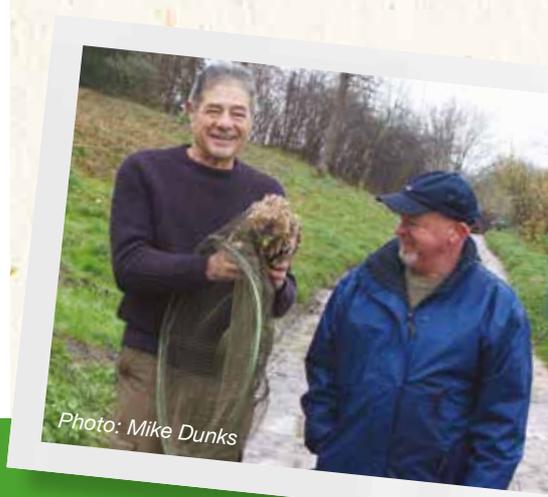


Photo: Mike Dunks

Farewell to Caroline and Ben



Caroline Evans

In December, we bade farewell to two valued members of staff, both of whom are heading for pastures new.

Caroline Evans has been our Education & Community Manager for the past 8 years and in that time has been instrumental in the development and delivery of our education programme for schools, uniform groups and adult learners. She has also been a key member of the team managing and supporting our amazing volunteers, has organised a range of popular events and activity days for the local community and has been the lead on Safeguarding and Data Protection on behalf of the Trust. Caroline is leaving to take up an exciting new role in outdoor education at a local

primary school. Popular with her colleagues at the Trust and in the wider community, she will be sorely missed.

Our Ecology Ranger, Ben Sale, is leaving to take up a full-time post closer to his home. Working with the estate team on conservation management of the Trust's unique open spaces and habitats, Ben's role was also to support wildlife awareness within the community and undertake ecological surveying, monitoring and recording. We wish him well for the future.

Finding the hidden signs – how to be a wildlife detective

We can't see them, but they are there. How do we know?

Many of the creatures that live in the river are tiny or shy, but the Trust needs to know the impact of its work. I'm one of the wildlife detectives helping them to do that. For five years, we've counted tiny invertebrate larvae in Bulbourne riverfly surveys. You might have seen us in waders, poring over a tray. Rising numbers and diversity show how well the wetland is working. A pleasing side effect is sharing our fascination with groups of children and visitors at open days and events. We also watch out for invasive species that threaten native wildlife. Mink are ruthless predators that can decimate water vole populations. Paw prints on mink rafts tell us who is visiting an area. Although mink have lived in Gadespring in the past, there are no recent signs. But happily, indications show that water voles are flourishing. The animals are shy, but they leave clear traces: tooth marks on plants, droppings to mark territory, and occasionally paw prints, especially on the mink rafts. In 2014, we put trail cameras in Gadespring. This year,



Photo: Elizabeth Warriner

at last, my hours of sifting through the footage have been rewarded with images of water voles, my favourite mammals.

Elizabeth Warriner, Volunteer

Liz and a number of dedicated volunteers have continued to monitor wildlife through these difficult times and more good news will be published soon.

