

## Project Number : R10 Paddington Meadows



**Project Overview:** This site is one of the few remaining areas of historic riverside meadows in Warrington. This project will re-instate the original riverside path and clear scrub and rank vegetation. Key infrastructure features will be secured for an improved visitor experience. Site interpretation will be installed and the creation of zoned areas for reduced disturbance to wildlife whilst maintaining public use will be created. Improved access with seated areas offering riverside views will be provided.

**Project lead organisation and other organisations involved:** Warrington Borough Council

**Project Location:** Paddington Meadows, Warrington

**Project dates:** June 2017 to June 2022

## Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
7 ha habitat restored	7ha	7ha	Whilst the habitat of most of the Meadows has never really been lost, one meadow is now 50% scrub and further work is ongoing. A new wildflower meadow has been created in 2021-22.
480 m footpath improved	0.48km	0.48km	Large areas of scrub, bramble and blackthorn, had encroached significantly on several of the meadows. Some was removed using hired-in mechanical equipment which also trimmed back hedges. Group volunteers continued this work on the less accessible areas and also improved the footpath network by removing self-seeded trees and bushes and by mowing the grass paths.
Site infrastructure and interpretation improvements	?	10 signs	An Augmented Reality Trail has been installed along the length of the New Cut Trail path. <a href="http://www.carbonlandscape.org.uk/soundbites">www.carbonlandscape.org.uk/soundbites</a>  New interpretation boards and directional signs have been installed along with metal picnic tables and benches.
1 long-term management plan developed	1	1	Co-produced with the New Cut Heritage and Ecology Group, who have taken over responsibility for its update and use it to direct their work tasks.

Number of volunteers engaged	10-12 regular volunteers increasing to 25+ for major litter picks and events		There is also a Wildlife Group comprising 12 volunteers who carry out monthly surveys and report their findings to several national bodies. Volunteers have attended a number of CL training courses who have put their new skills to good use on the meadows. Three skill training sessions of hedgelaying have taken place, with volunteers from elsewhere in the Carbon Landscape attending two of them. Several work parties have been organised to maintain and trim back a large reedbed, again including volunteers from outside the area.
Number of volunteer days delivered	In excess of 6,000 hours		This includes all activities undertaken – weekly work parties, major work tasks, training course attendance. Publicity etc.

### Reflecting on the last 5 years, what's the one thing that you're most proud of that has come from your project being part of the Carbon Landscape?

The greatest achievement is that we have created a hardcore team of dependable hardworking volunteers for undertaking work parties, wildlife surveys and public events, very ably supported by Steve Ormerod and Jenny Griggs from the Project Team. We honestly believe that the New Cut Group would have died a death if it were not for the Carbon Landscape's engagement and assistance with support and training. In particular, hedge laying, reed bed maintenance and the citizen science and willow weaving workshops were of enormous importance.

Prior to that it was just the monthly litter pick. We have expanded in so many directions, with work parties every week, Wildlife surveys every month, Dragonfly surveys from May to September. Also monthly and annual Butterfly surveys. All this is down to the training provided by the Carbon Landscape.

- "Let's face it If it wasn't for the Carbon Landscape my life would be boring and my house would be nicely decorated".
- "Members of the Group meet socially. It been a really worthwhile and rewarding experience and we've made lots of new friends."
- "Remember! You can teach an old dog new tricks."

The introduction of the concept of a bioblitz and providing group members with access to local experts who could come along and identify the species on site was enlightening. Our annual Magnificent Meadow Day was made much more interesting by the visiting displays that the Carbon Landscape were able to put us in touch with e.g., the willow weavers. These events helped to connect with the local community especially children and brought about a lot more interest in the "patch".

Jenny Griggs, Sense of Place Coordinator, comments "The New Cut group overseeing Paddington Meadows is an exemplar of how Landscape Scale restoration should work in microcosm and shows

the power of when nature and people work together. I cannot extol how much I love working with this group.”

## What difference has this project made to the cultural and natural heritage of Carbon Landscape?

The creation of a management plan for the New Cut Trail and Paddington Meadows could not have been created from scratch on a blank piece of paper. The existence of a template of what to include helped to create a bespoke document which has subsequently helped us move forward and improve the access, habitat and information gathering for the site. The creation of our own management plan helped the Group take ownership of our future plans and provided a learning opportunity to understand the site much better.

Wildlife highlights – it is hard to put one at the top of the list. Perhaps it’s the creation of an active wildlife group who attend monthly on-site wildlife surveys and regularly visit off-site venues and undertake wildlife surveys off-site as well.

The Wildlife surveys started with bird watching but now include bees, odonata, butterflies, moths, bats and mammals (mostly foxes, badgers, mice and brown rats) by virtue of regular Trail Camera monitoring. Being able to add photos of the visiting seals which come up river on high tides commands a great deal of excitement.

We loved the annual bioblitz, which we had two consecutive years prior to the pandemic, and plan to reintroduce this year. It will hopefully be a regular feature going forward.

The fact that we are undertaking so many surveys is completely down to the Carbon Landscape and especially the sterling work done by Steve Atkins, who really is one of our heroes, with his work organising the training of so many Group members under the banner of the Citizen Science workshops, (and to have got them for free is even more wonderful!).

Surveys it should be stressed are only as good as the records that you post. If it wasn’t for CL then the information gleaned would be lost - information collected by Group members gets forwarded to RODIS Swift, Carbon Landscape, GMLRC, BTO, iRecord and Birdtrack.

Our dragonflies species list is ever expanding – approximately 30 Red-eyed damselfly were logged last year. We knew that the species were nearby at Woolston Eyes Nature Reserve, but hadn’t seen any until last year, when we were inundated with them.

If it wasn’t for the training organised by CL, I wouldn’t know that such a beast existed. They all get recorded so the database for Cheshire’s wildlife ultimately benefits. A special mention should go here to the courses run by Steve Atkins, Tony Parker and Dave Winnard.

As our group title is Heritage and Ecology we have an active Heritage Group headed by Anne Price and Mike Kenwright, who have collected 100s of photographs of the area as it was. We have a large travelling display of the local history which using gazebos we can take to local community events, something which is always well received. Meeting the people visiting the Meadows for the first

time invariably leads to questions about the history of the site – “what’s that ditch?” gives us an opportunity to talk about the New Cut or Old Cut canals.

The planting of a small, trial wild flower meadow last year gave us a “toe in the water”. Its obvious success has resulted in CL sponsored the new 1.1 hectare wildflower meadow in which we have very high hopes for the future. (See photographic evidence section of this report)

## What difference has this project made to people?

The number of people, and their dogs, using, walking and enjoying Paddington Meadows has increased many-fold. Part of the reason for this was undoubtedly created by the sudden increase in footfall by dint of the restrictions of lock-down during the pandemic, when the need for local attractive walking spaces led to the “Meadows” become a mini-Blackpool promenade at weekends.

If the Group hadn’t already improved conditions and opened up the footpaths new visitors would not have found the Meadows so accessible.

On one typical work party, we saw around 25 people walking and enjoying the area. The work of the New Cut Group trained by the Carbon Landscape in the safe use of equipment and the proper preparation of safe systems of work, has helped to bring Paddington Meadows to the people of Warrington. Numerous visitors who lived on the doorstep told us that they “didn’t know the Meadows existed”.

We have during several years undertaken joint events with our near friends and colleagues at Woolston Linear Park. Anne Price and Trish Leah get heavily involved in undertaking lessons at local schools in heritage and environmental arts projects and Group members have undertaken numerous school outings on board the 1903 steam tug “Danial Adamson” as visiting “wildlife experts”.

## Useful Links

[www.newcuttrail.com](http://www.newcuttrail.com)

[www.newcuttrail.com/bioblitz-2018/](http://www.newcuttrail.com/bioblitz-2018/)

## Future Plans and Legacy

Communication improvements with the local community has been achieved, again largely because of lock down during the pandemic, by the creation of the Group’s Facebook site where we post photographs of wildlife, items of interest, up and coming events, site news etc. which enables us to reach a much wider and diverse audience than simple poster shots and emailing ever could.

We have currently 483 members on the Facebook site’ and 98 persons who receive the monthly Wildlife Survey report by email and which is also forwarded to a local newspapers and magazines.

There is a lot of interaction on the Facebook site like “we never knew we ever had Redstart, Wheatear, Whinchat or Hobby visiting the site” although these birds may only be on site for a day or two every year it certainly helps add interest to the site. Sharing photographs of what was recorded adds interest and keeps the Facebook group members more engaged.

The Community Champions program has been really useful in sharing ideas and visiting other ‘patches’. Joining with neighbouring communities to share activities and training workshops have helped bond the CL wider community.

The new wildflower meadow will be more of a legacy item this year, as the flowers seeded are largely indigenous perennials, but they will hopefully be a site worth beholding next summer. The improvements in biodiversity created by the new meadow, especially in invertebrates and hence forward potentially to the bird and mammal life, is something we are really looking forward to.

## Lessons learned?

The Group’s involvement with the whole Carbon Landscape ethos should have happened much earlier - Covid led to public events having to be cancelled but these are now up and running again. Whist the Group recognises that “we should have grabbed the ball and run with it earlier” we are still in the learning curve with lessons constantly being learned. One example is the 24-hour bioblitz event which puts too much pressure on the organisers in a short space of time and is not conducive to a rewarding day for the participants. Furthermore, holding a Bat Walk in July each year, with the light nights, means that it finishes too late for children, who are in many ways our target audience. Our future bioblitzes have been managed accordingly.

## Photographic Evidence

Photos courtesy of New Cut Heritage and Ecology Group and Tony Marsh



## Paddington Meadows Bio-blitz

Following last year's very successful Bio-Blitz join us again for another day full of interesting surveys and learn just how much wildlife we have on the New Cut Trail and Paddington Meadows. Choose the activities you would like to attend from this list and make a booking.

**Bio-blitz Schedule 13th July 2019**

	Date	Time	Meeting Point	Activity	Bio-Blitz Expert
Saturday Morning	Sat 13 July	6.00 – 7.30 am	Larkfield Ave Gates	<b>Mammal traps inspect &amp; record</b>	Tony Parker, Deputy Curator of Liverpool Museum and Cheshire Mammal Recorder
	Sat 13 July	6.50am – 7.20am	Continuing on from mammal recording	<b>Moth traps inspect &amp; record</b>	Jeff Gorse Lancashire Wildlife Trust
	Sat 13 July	7.30am – 9.15am	Larkfield Ave Gates	<b>Bird Survey on New Cut Trail &amp; Paddington Meadows</b>	Steve Atkins, Deputy Bird Recorder Greater Manchester with New Cut Bird Group
	Sat 13 July	9.15am – 10am	Picnic Tables Woolston Park South	<b>Breakfast Picnic</b>	New Cut Group Volunteers
	Sat 13 July	10am – Noon		<b>Complete Bird Survey route</b>	Steve Atkins & New Cut Bird Group
Saturday Evening	Sat 13 July	5.00pm – 7.00pm	Picnic Tables Woolston Park South	<b>Insects &amp; Flora Survey</b>	Dave Winnard of "Discover the Wild"
	Sat 13 July	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Picnic Tables or Pub	<b>Break for Tea</b>	
	Sat 13 July	9.00pm – 11.00pm	Outside Dog & Partridge Pub	<b>Bat Walk</b>	Harold Green and Mike Smith Merseyside and W Lancs Bat Group

Join us for just one session or as many you like but  
**\*\*\*\*\*Booking is Essential** with [carbonlandscape@lancswt.org.uk](mailto:carbonlandscape@lancswt.org.uk) \*\*\*\*\*

Larkfield Ave WA1 3LU \* Woolston Park South WA1 3NE \* Dog & Partridge Pub WA1 3TZ  
 New Cut Heritage and Ecology Trail Group \* [info@newcuttrail.com](mailto:info@newcuttrail.com)



## New Wildflower Meadow July 2022



## Hedge-laying Session



Small Mammal Trapping with Tony Parker during Bioblitz 2022



# PADDINGTON MEADOWS ANNUAL OPEN DAY 2019

Sunday 7 July 12 pm to 3 pm

Come and visit Paddington Meadows on National Meadows Weekend. Fun events for all the family including Craft Tent, Mini Beasts Hunts, Willow Weaving, Guided Nature Walks. Or if the weather is fine bring a picnic to enjoy out of doors.

## Funding Partners

