

Samuel Palmer's Earthly Paradise - The Darent Valley Landscape Partnership

SUMMARY DOCUMENT – November 2014

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What is a Landscape Partnership Scheme?

Landscape Partnership schemes is a funding stream available through the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) that puts heritage conservation at the heart of rural and peri-urban regeneration. Grants of between £100,000 and £3 million are available to help local, regional and national organisations work together to make a real difference to landscapes and communities for the long term. They do this by conserving habitats at landscape-scale, promoting joined-up management, reviving long-lost skills, and much more. HLF-funded projects make a major contribution to work in the UK on implementing the European Landscape Convention.

Current position of the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership

Following an unsuccessful application in 2013, a second application led by the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was awarded a stage 1 pass and earmarked a grant of £2.1 million towards a total scheme cost of £3.65 million. An 18 month 'stage 2' non-competitive development period will shortly begin to prepare the detail of scheme and secure the remaining match funding. If this receives the approval of HLF, it is anticipated that on the ground delivery will begin late in 2016 or early 2017.

Whilst the Partnership is led by the AONB, it is guided by an informal partnership consisting of the following partners:

North West Kent Countryside Partnership; Kent Wildlife Trust; Dartford Orienteering Klubb; Ashmolean Museum; Sevenoaks District Council; Dartford BC; Natural England; Environment Agency; Connect Plus; National Farmers Union; Kent Country Parks; Westerham Town Partnership; KCC Heritage; Farningham and Eynsford Local History Society; Farningham Parish Council; Sustrans; Chevening Parish Council; Sutton-at-Hone and Hawley Parish Council; Otford Parish Council; Explore Kent; Eynsford Village Society; KCC: Flood Risk and Natural Environment; Kent Archaeological Society; English Heritage; Horton Kirby Environmental Studies Centre; Westerham Parish Council; Darent Catchment Improvement Group; Wide Horizons; The Quadrangle Trust; Campaign for Drawing; Bexley Council; Royal Geographical Society; Clean Kent; Butterfly Conservation; Lullingstone Castle and World Garden; Highways Agency; UK Power Networks; Victoria & Albert Museum.

Overview of the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme

Two hundred years ago, influential landscape artist Samuel Palmer described the Darent Valley as an 'earthly paradise'. Today, he would still recognise the special qualities conveyed through his visionary paintings. It remains a landscape of surprising beauty, rich in diverse habitats and with an impressive cultural heritage.

But this is a landscape on the edge. London has expanded to the brink of the valley, bringing multiple and dramatically increasing pressures that are dissolving its natural character. People lack an awareness of this rich and attractive landscape on their doorstep, further threatening the future of the valley.

Our partnership brings together a unique mix of organisations that will work with and empower local communities to ensure the survival of this exceptional area. Through them we will achieve genuinely sustainable conservation of its natural and cultural heritage, with communities that feel emotionally and physically reconnected with their landscape.

The Heritage of the Darent Valley

The River Darent and its valley is the focus for our landscape partnership scheme. The area has been informed by a comprehensive Strategic Landscape Enhancement Plan undertaken in 2014. It covers an area of 133 km² extending from the Greensand Ridge to the river's confluence with the River Thames (see map overleaf).

It is a landscape of remarkable rural beauty with over 60% within an AONB, and just 14 miles from Big Ben at its closest point. It is a landscape that literally wraps itself around London, with the boundary of the project area never more than 4 miles away from the Capital's suburbs.

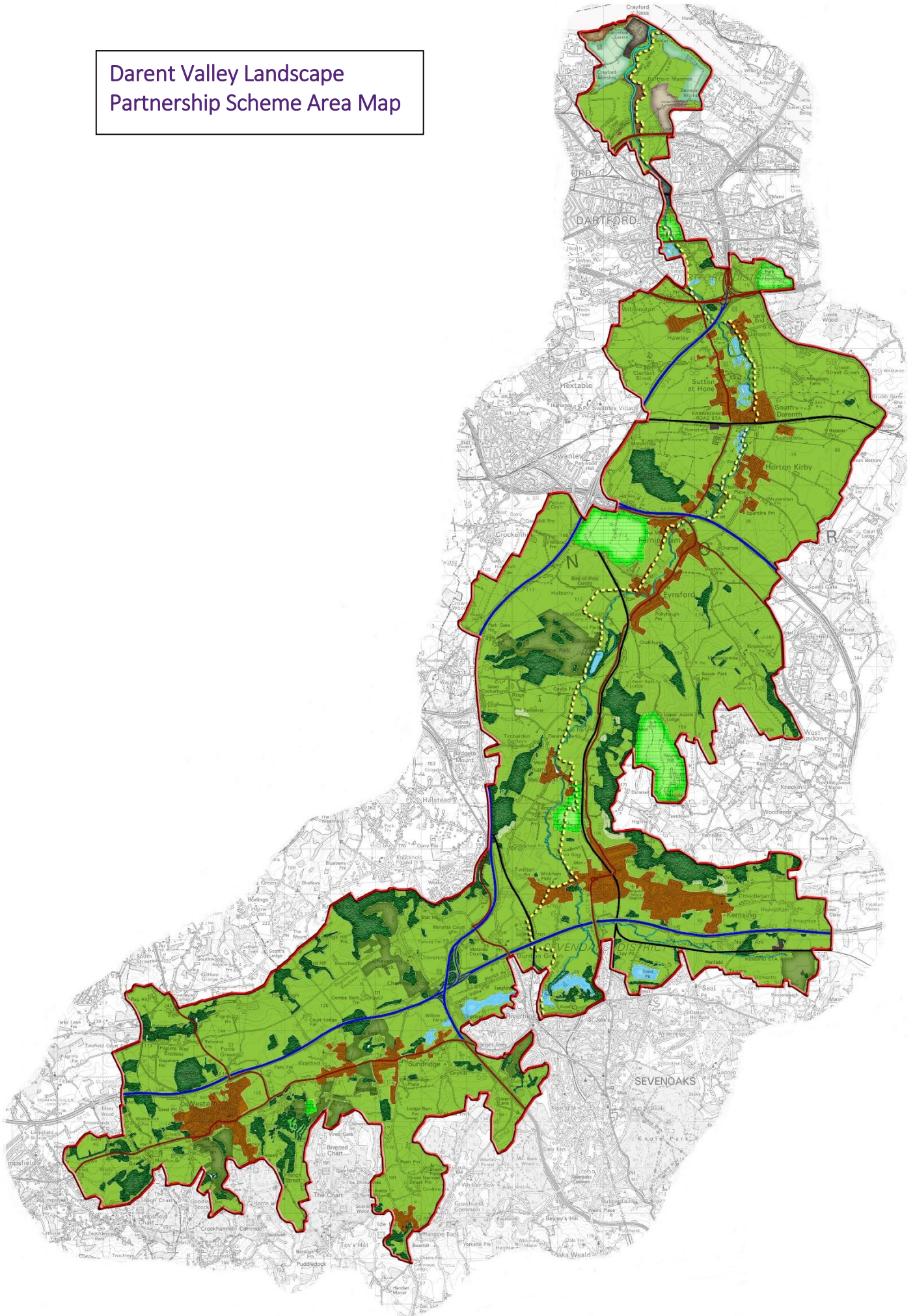
It is a landscape of great aesthetic appeal, emerging as a green oasis upon leaving the outskirts of London. A mix of woodland, chalk grassland and parkland, it is supplemented by arable farmland with the lower reach open marsh and within the Greater Thames Nature Improvement Area. Eight extensive SSSIs are spread throughout the valley and are supported by 29 regionally important Local Wildlife Sites.

There is evidence of Palaeolithic communities near Dartford and it has one of the highest densities of Roman villa sites in the country. Its built heritage includes the flint-walled Eynsford Castle, the Lullingstone Castle Tudor gatehouse and the Archbishop's Palace at Otford that once rivalled Hampton Court Palace. The waters of the Darent also supported numerous mills including England's first commercial paper mill near Dartford.

The legacy of the Darent Valley's heritage is considerable: 28 Scheduled Monuments, 5 registered parks and gardens, 16 conservation areas, 13 Grade I listed buildings and several hundred others at lower grades. This is a landscape of considerable time-depth with a complex untold story to tell.

The valley also has a significant association with the renowned Victorian landscape artist, Samuel Palmer. As a young man he lived in Shoreham and is considered to have produced his greatest works at this time. Palmer felt a close, almost spiritual connection with the landscape, and was something that he tried to communicate to others through his paintings. He described the Darent Valley as his 'earthly paradise', and many of his paintings conveyed an ethereal quality.

Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme Area Map



Why the Darent Valley's heritage is at risk

The Darent Valley landscape is a survival story. In the 200 years since Samuel Palmer painted the valley, London has grown at an exponential rate. This landscape, once considered to be deep in the Kent countryside, now finds itself on the doorstep of London with its lower reaches deeply embedded in the Thames Gateway growth area. And yet it has managed to retain the appearance of a rural valley.

Last year, we stated that the Darent Valley had reached a tipping point. The combined effect of development pressures in the north, anti-social behaviour, increasing visitor pressure, uncoordinated habitat management, changing agricultural practices, transport networks and climate change are all having a combined impact. This 'death by a hundred cuts' makes it difficult to assess when a line has been crossed and the tipping point reached... but we firmly believe we are there now.

The valley has a rich array of priority Biodiversity Action Plan habitats: extensive areas of lowland calcareous grassland, chalk river, lowland wood pasture and parkland, native woodland, standing open water and ancient/species rich hedgerows. Notable areas of coastal grazing marsh and lowland fen are also present. Several woodland and chalk grassland Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) have been assessed by Natural England as being in unfavourable and/or declining condition due to insufficient management and require immediate attention.

The river is slowly recovering from very low flows in 1990s remains extremely vulnerable. This has had an impact on riparian habitats that remain largely in poor condition and are still to recover. Management of veteran and notable trees at one of the most important wood pasture and parkland sites in the county is all but absent, and there is a gradual degradation of the connected hedgerow network in the central valley, and approaching a total loss in the lower valley. Publicly owned countryside sites have highly restricted resources and can only undertake essential maintenance, with little forward planning.

Flytipping is also considered by local people to be the most significant and increasing threat to the Darent Valley's landscape and heritage.

Built heritage in the valley is also at significant risk. Since the submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) last year, the remains of the Archbishop's Palace at Otford have been returned to the 'at risk' register by English Heritage. There is also concern over buried archaeology and hidden heritage away from known sites. The landscape context of the Roman occupation of the valley is not understood well, but the density of known sites and the discovery of new evidence suggest that this lack of knowledge may be meaning that important heritage is being inadvertently lost.

On a landscape scale, there is an erosion of local distinctiveness and heritage 'village-scapes' as modern influences and pressures take their toll. There is also a significant detrimental effect of the motorways on the wider heritage landscape in a more general way. The fading awareness and lack of knowledge of Samuel Palmer's influence on and translation of the valley is also concerning, and is reflected by a declining engagement of young people the landscape. It is this latter point that puts this landscape at greatest risk in the future.

What the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme will do

We have strong and dynamic partnership that is enthusiastic about making a significant change in the Darent Valley and brings together organisations and groups that would normally work independently. We have a common aim, and are prepared to make a big difference.

Our bid is centred on restoring the emotional connection with a beautiful valley, using Samuel Palmer as its inspiration and engaging with the many people and communities that live within and around the valley to become actively involved in not only its conservation but also in its appreciation.

We have taken on and considered the feedback received from our submission in 2013. We have ensured a greater focus on outcomes and tangible outputs, and as a consequence have a highly deliverable scheme that is better consolidated and recognises the limits of what it can achieve.

The delivery of the DVLPS is split in to five programmes:

PROGRAMME 1. AN INSPIRING DARENT VALLEY

This programme will regenerate in communities the deeper understanding of the Darent Valley that was conveyed by poets, writers and painters of the past to culture. It will instil an appreciation for the forces and influences that created the landscape, so that emotional connection is enhanced and there is greater investment in securing its future.

1A: In Search of the Bright Cloud – Creating a Samuel Palmer Trail

The Bright Cloud was one of Samuel Palmer's impressive works and is the inspiration for the creation of a Samuel Palmer Trail. We will work closely with one of our key partners, the Ashmolean Museum, and their foremost expert will guide and support volunteers and other partners in the creation of a well-informed and engaging trail. We will use traditional and modern interpretive techniques to celebrate Palmer's currently understated connection with the valley and open up new areas of the valley for exploration by a wider range of audiences.

1B: Samuel Palmer's Return

It is Samuel Palmer's paintings that convey the special qualities of the Darent Valley, and our partner the Ashmolean Museum is prepared to exhibit these works in the valley. This exhibition will be:

- Hosted at Knole House as part of a much wider landscape exhibition.
- Sit alongside contemporary interpretations of the landscape produced by local people
- Encourage visitors to consider how the landscape has changed, and what aspects of character need to be conserved.
- Supported by on-line tours and shared web-space.
- Target new audiences who have not previously been engaged with art and landscape
- Provide mechanisms to overcome any perceived social barriers to becoming involved.

1C: Inspired Landscapes

We will develop and deliver a programme of inspirational creative events and opportunities that will bring the landscape to life and broaden the reach of Samuel Palmer's work and that of other artists and writers:

- Work with local communities to produce their own 'landscape interpretations' through poetry, outdoor theatre, and music.

- Use large-scale night-time projections of Palmer's and local people's images onto the landscape's heritage e.g. Eynsford Castle and Shoreham Downs.
- Create contemporary performance pieces relating to the Darent Valley's heritage with local community performing arts organisations such as the Riverside Players
- Promote these events to welcome new audiences to the landscape.

1D: Restoring Landscape and Vision

Working with local schools and educational establishments through our partners, the Campaign for Drawing, and supported by the Ashmolean Museum, we will help local people to understand the landscape around them through drawing and painting – learning to think, feel, shape and communicate ideas. It will use the national vehicle of 'The Big Draw' to provide an exceptional community project reaching out to schools in SE London and throughout the valley, and enable children, and adults look at the landscape through new eyes and develop new skills.

1E: Framing the View

The local community agrees that impressive views are the single greatest element that makes the Darent Valley special. We will work with local communities, to identify and record viewpoints for the future. Historic paintings and photographs, as well as poetry and prose will be used to measure how the landscape was valued in the past, assess landscape change and explore what components of the landscape are valued today.

We will develop a community-led and volunteer training project that will identify locations where 11kV overground electricity lines have a detrimental impact on important views. We have secured a strong commitment from UK Power Networks to relocate these lines underground where it will reduce the visual impact. We will also pursue an exciting emerging opportunity for the undergrounding of higher voltage lines and steel frame pylons.

1F. Rediscovering Tranquillity

Tranquillity was a key quality that inspired Samuel Palmer. It has been measured at a national scale by the CPRE using complex scientific criteria and this survey suggests that much of the tranquillity has been lost from the Darent Valley.

Using an established model, we will train and deploy a team of volunteers to ground-truth the results of the national survey and test the hypothesis that large areas of tranquillity remain in the valley. The survey will be repeated to assess changes in landscape quality and measure the positive impact of the DVLPS. The results of the ground-truthing will be handled with care, and will be used as a tool for planning authorities to assess areas of sensitivity.

1G. Cleaning the Canvas

Flytipping has reached a critical level and is considered by Darent Valley communities to be the biggest single detractor of the landscape, and capable of instantly erasing any sense of an inspiring landscape. Research in North Kent has revealed that fear and the visual evidence of crime is a critical barrier to people visiting the countryside.

Working with Kent Police we will develop an effective co-ordinated approach that is embedded in the local community:

- Provide training for local volunteers and form a community watch group.

- They will work closely with enforcement officers and respond to flytipping incidents, collecting evidence.
- Clean Kent will host an apprentice, gaining skills for future employment in environmental enforcement.
- Secure a voluntary Special Constable as a visual deterrent and community contact.
- Vulnerable sites will be subject to 'target hardening'.

PROGRAMME 2. THE HISTORIC DARENT VALLEY

We will take a community led approach to revealing a complex interwoven story, and ensuring that it is not lost to future generations. It will use innovative techniques to engage with new and wider audiences, and work through partners to ensure the long term protection of some of the valley's iconic built heritage features and communicate how they relate to the wider landscape.

2A: Peeling Back the Layers

The complicated trail of evidence left by the physical formation and subsequent exploitation by people is slowly being unpicked by partners such as the West Kent Archaeological Society. However, it is a difficult story to decipher.

This project will address the appetite amongst local archaeological groups to have the tools to reveal the hidden heritage and connect missing elements. We will:

- Commission a LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) survey early in the delivery phase.
- Use its results as an integral tool to engage people in activities across the scheme.
- Provide an innovative online crowdsourcing project to engage a large number of people to interpret information.
- Data will also be made freely available through a purpose built module on the DVLP's website.
- Develop a team of community 'Landscape Investigators' to share knowledge with new audiences from local history and archaeological groups.
- Enthuse a new generation through the Young Archaeologists' Club with the thrill of uncovering heritage secrets, providing new training and learning opportunities.

2B. The Darent's Hidden Roman Legacy

We will use the established focus of English Heritage's outstanding Lullingstone Villa to broaden the awareness and knowledge of the importance of the landscape to the Roman occupation of this area.

There is considerable excitement within local archaeological groups of what LiDAR data might reveal, supporting investigation, and potentially revealing and expanding knowledge of existing sites. We will:

- Community project to investigate and excavate exposed archaeology at Lullingstone Villa.
- Host an educational initiative at Horton Kirby Environmental Education Centre.
- Historical society led volunteer opportunity to draw together existing investigations to understand how the villas interacted.
- A web-based resource produced examining how the Roman's used the valley and will be linked in English Heritage's educational work at Lullingstone Villa.
- Interpreted walking trail, linking the Roman sites and conveying how they interacted.

2C. Eynsford Castle Revealed

We will reconnect people with the past importance of this high status building within the immediate landscape of Eynsford. We will:

- Improve signage to reveal its hidden location.
- Restore the replica of the original bridge across the moat

- Provide audio-visual interpretation (created by local actors) to supplement existing on-site panels
- Re-introduce grazing to the wet grassland around castle to enhance biodiversity.
- Undertake a geophysical survey of the land surrounding the castle.
- Provide opportunities and skills for volunteers to work with local archaeology societies.
- Potential to allow some excavation as part of a community archaeology project.
- Provide on-site animated events performed in the castle interior.

2D. The Hidden Palace - Securing the Darent's own Hampton Court

The Archbishop's Palace at Otford is the hidden heritage jewel of the Darent Valley that once rivalled Hampton Court Palace. In the last year the remaining tower has been returned to the 'at risk' register.

We will:

- Support a community led project to stabilise the tower and prevent any further decay.
- Secure a long term future for it and develop greater community use of the surrounding land.
- Enhance understanding through new training and volunteer opportunities to undertake archaeological investigation work with local archaeological groups
- Provide extensive programme of engaging events and enhanced interpretation (developed through an exciting learning partnership with the Historic Royal Palaces) to enable people to rediscover the palace.

We intend to undertake a structural and condition survey of the tower at Stage 2, but the delicate condition of the tower means that the Otford community is investigating other sources of funding to facilitate rapid conservation work.

2E. Royalty and Silk - Exposing Lullingstone Castle

Lullingstone Castle is considered to be of great significance: regularly visited by royalty including Henry VIII, home to a silk farm producing silk for the current Queen's wedding dress. The main house and garden are open to the public, but much of the history and heritage of the grounds is not communicated or interpreted to visitors.

We will:

- Facilitate a community archaeology project with volunteering opportunities to undertake the investigative excavation of the inner moated gatehouse and restoration of the original Tudor garden.
- Increase access to the Laundry Field via Queen Anne's Walk
- Restore a riverside wet meadow
- Provide enhanced interpretation to improve the public's understanding of the castle grounds.

2F. Gunpowder and Paper - The Working River

At least 38 mills existed on the Darent indicating the importance of the river for local industry. They include Spielman's Mill near Dartford - the first commercially successful paper mill established in Britain in 1588. Many mill structures remain but are in varying condition and several are at risk.

We will:

- Using LiDAR data and ground-truthing and train a team of volunteers to research and record the changing course of the river over time.
- Volunteer surveyors will determine the current status of all mills to build a clearer picture of their history and evolution.
- Retain, restore and maintain mill structures on the river during biodiversity and “fish-pass” works.
- Restoration and interpret the sluices, gates and millstones at Spielman’s Mill next to the Darent Valley Path.
- Interpret a time map of how the river was used for navigation, to power mills, feed watermeadows and provide defence.

2G. Then and Now - Remembering a Changing Valley

Life in the valley has changed substantially in the 200 years since Palmer painted it, but is well documented in photographs held by local historical societies in archives and by local community groups.

We will:

- Support local volunteer opportunities and training to aggregate this information and make available as a community held archive, particularly to those with connections to the valley from South East London.
- Support volunteers from local amateur camera clubs to take modern equivalent photographs to record the change.
- ‘Then and now’ photographs posted together on the DVLPS and Kent Photo Archive websites.
- Provide temporary on-site displays of old photographs at the location of their capture to act as a ‘heritage teaser’ and promote the website.
- GPS enabled application on the mobile version of the DVLPS web site will enable instant access to photographs on site.
- Make the Battle of Britain a particular focus of this project, and we will work with the Shoreham Aircraft Museum to use the results of the LiDAR survey and archive records to research, investigate and plot bomb sites. This will be made available through a web-based portal e.g. www.bombsight.org.

PROGRAMME 3. DARENT VALLEY EXPLORATION

Through this programme we will provide sustainable access throughout the valley to enable greater appreciation and interaction with the landscape and heritage by a wider audience, and reduce pressure where high visitor numbers are becoming unsustainable.

3A. Heart of the Valley - The Darent Valley Path

The Darent Valley Path runs for 19 miles from Sevenoaks to Dartford and is an important sustainable access 'artery'. However, inconsistent investment and poor promotion and hasn't fulfilled its recreational potential.

We will:

- Build on the popularity of the path linking it to train stations and making it better suited as a method of accessing the valley's heritage.
- Improve path quality and address barriers to continuous riverside access created by major roads.
- Extend the route by 7km to follow the upstream section to Westerham
- Provide more opportunities for use by bicycle.
- Review existing interpretation plan for the path
- Enhance waymarking, on-site interpretation and update the Darent Valley Path Guidebook.
- Extending our relationship with Google through their Trekker project providing an internet based 'Street View' walkthrough of the path.
- Image and data capture will be undertaken by trained volunteers.
- Develop a team of Darent Valley Path wardens through Kent County Council's existing initiative with responsibility for addressing small maintenance needs.

3B. Gateways to the Valley

With a location so close to London, country park and formal reserve sites provide a vital and 'safe' way of visiting the countryside, and a stepping stone to accessing the wider landscape. The focus will be on the key gateways of Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, Darent Country Park, Shoreham Woods, and Lullingstone Country Parks, which provide easy access from visitor target areas. Visitor infrastructure will be improved, interpretation reviewed and enhanced, and combined with key capital works in will see habitats, landscape character and heritage features brought into good condition.

At Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, we will create an inspirational gateway for urban communities. The DVLPS will provide new linkage to the Darent Valley Path, an improved path network, and creative interpretation and installations that will inform and link to the biodiversity found there. These installations will be dynamic and interactive, housing content that will enable visitors to discover the stories, the life cycles and the habitats of the wildlife on the River Darent.

3C. Telling the Darent's Story

Informed by the interpretation strategy we will complete the story of the Darent Valley through a comprehensive range of interpretation. Many of the projects within this submission have their own interpretation component, and some sites have existing interpretation. The strategy will inform what is required to replace tired signage, and will identify other interpretive techniques to reach audiences in the targeted urban areas. It is anticipated that there will be increased provision at sites such as Dartford Marshes and Squerryes Park where interpretation is all but absent, but where local people and communities have hidden stories waiting to be told.

3D. Reducing the Pressure

The river is a natural draw for visitors particularly those from outside the valley and high numbers visit the Central Valley between Otford and Farningham where there are a concentration of heritage sites. This often has a negative impact on the villages at popular times. We will work with local communities to identify and create local landscape walks that entice visitors to explore beyond the traditional attractions and into less well known parts of the valley. Volunteers from these communities will research the landscape heritage, undertake waymarking and contribute to the production of leafleted guides that will reveal the local landscape to their visitors.

PROGRAMME 4. DARENT VALLEY NATURAL & HISTORIC LANDSCAPES

The natural landscapes provided the look and feel of the landscape that so appealed to Palmer. We will ensure the long term protection of the key components of this landscape, identifying and recording habitats and species at risk, improving connectivity, ensuring long-term management, resilience and appreciation.

4A. Uncovering the Herb-Scented Scarp - Connecting Chalk Grassland

The chalk grassland resource is largely restricted to pockets on the two escarpments in the southern valley.

We will:

- Address the issues of landowners working relatively discreetly from each other by developing overarching management advice that respects individual landowner's objectives but reflects the importance of the area as a whole.
- We will undertake initial clearance works where scrub and sycamore encroachment has become an issue.
- Reduce fragmentation and enhance connectivity between sites.
- Encourage resource sharing to reduce management costs.
- Capital works to enable effective grazing.
- Support greater volunteering on the smaller-scale sites
- Provide training in survey skills to enable effective monitoring.

4B. Sustainable Woodlands

With the building of two new Biomass CHP plants in Kent bringing increased wood demand there is developing stimulus for under-managed woodlands.

We will:

- Use the Kent Downs Woodfuel Pathfinder targeting and prioritisation tool to identify woodlands that can be brought back into active management.
- Train volunteer woodland assessors to survey the woodlands identified by the tool.
- Provide support to address issues of poor diversity and age structure and address problems of sycamore dominance in SSSI woodlands.
- Create a sustainable demand and supply link with local high energy users willing to install biomass boilers to ensure long term management.
- Provide new access within woodlands.
- Introduce new management where important heritage features exist.

4C. Where Ten Thousand Fishes Once Played - Restoring the Darent

Following the catastrophic drying up in the 1990s, the River Darent is now making a welcome recovery, but still lacks robustness. Through the Environment Agency and the Darent Catchment Improvement Group (CIG) several large-scale river and riparian habitat enhancements have been identified. These proposals include:

- Alteration of river structures to enable fish passage.
- Floodplain landscape and habitat creation.

- Enhancement of water vole habitat.
- Introduction of ditch and water level management.
- River channel modification to improve flow variation.

This will be integrated with a specific citizen science monitoring project at Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, and through a series of new practical volunteering opportunities with the NW Kent Countryside Partnership and Kent Wildlife Trust.

4D. A Designed Landscape - Protecting Parks, Gardens and Estates

Parkland is a strong landscape feature in the Darent Valley and veteran parkland trees were a focus of Palmer's work. We will:

- Work closely with the owners of the five registered parklands to address management issues and share knowledge.
- Train volunteers to assess tree condition and identify required management.
- Identify existing veteran trees and undertake management to prolong their life.
- Identify and record future veterans to ensure that they are protected and conserved for the future.

Many of the golf courses in the valley are on former parkland sites and we will provide an enhanced Environmental Advisory Service to five courses to:

- Introduce management practices that respect landscape character and promote biodiversity;
- Identify heritage features to be conserved, protected and interpreted.
- Provide interpretation (on scorecards, golf apps etc.) of heritage and landscape features.
- Provide part-funded grants to implement works.
- Provide training for green-keeping staff.
- Become Golf Environment Organisation Certified.

4E. On the Verge - Connecting Opportunities

The Landscape Partnership has developed an innovative partnership with the Highways Agency and Connect Plus to influence the soft estate management adjacent to the 25 miles of motorway. Connect Plus is responsible for a wider estate on which there is no statutory requirement for management. This includes extensive areas of scrubby chalk grassland and woodland where there is potential to create linkage with other downland sites. We will work with them to introduce appropriate management at these sites to support and enhance the landscape character.

We will connect an important chalk grassland resource that exists on several roadside verges. Many are designated as Roadside Nature Reserves but which require assistance for their management. We will support work undertaken by volunteers to connect them with neighbouring sites, bring them into good condition and remove existing risks. We will also extend existing sites through manual seed dispersal methods.

4F. Local Landscapes Grant Scheme

With 29 Local Wildlife Sites, and many other non-designated natural and heritage sites, many of the proposals put forward for this scheme by local organisations were relatively small-scale but nonetheless important. We will provide a third party grant scheme that will be available for not only natural landscape projects but anything that contributes towards the wider objectives of the DVLPS.

Precise criteria will be established at stage 2, but will require match funding and a strong element of community involvement.

4G. Restoring the Hedgerow Mosaic

We will provide training to volunteers to undertake a hedgerow condition survey across the valley. This will be based on desktop research of the historic hedgerow network from aerial photographic images and the scheme's LiDAR survey, followed by field condition survey. It will identify required management, specify where new planting will restore the historic hedgerow and reinforce the landscape character. This information will be used to support a restoration and planting programme to be delivered either through the NELMS or directly by the DVLPS. It will be supported by ongoing management advice.

PROGRAMME 5. DARENT VALLEY LEARNING AND FUTURE SKILLS

Through this programme we will ensure that the knowledge and skills are provided to communities, professionals, and delivery partners to actively participate in the conservation of the Darent Valley's heritage, and be able to care for the landscape and communicate its importance in the future. We will particularly focus on children providing the opportunity to enjoy, appreciate and engage with the landscape to ensure long term protection. We have responded to the feedback from our application last year and carried out an initial audit of skills and training needs and provided a more comprehensive integrated provision. This will be further informed during stage 2 development.

5A. Landscape Adventure Learning For All

There is a national concern that there is a growing disconnection between children and their environment. We intend to address this to secure a positive future for the Darent Valley, with a new young generation that has a genuine bond to its landscape and the outdoors.

We will work with country park partners, the Horton Kirby Environmental Education Centre, local schools and the Naturally Active initiative to encourage a behaviour change with the risk-benefit balance of unstructured outdoor play. We will support a new partner, Wide Horizons, whose ethos is 'that every child should have the opportunity to experience Adventure Learning as part of their education and throughout their lives'. Wide Horizons works predominantly with children and young people from South East London and will facilitate over 8,000 child visits to the valley per year.

We produce a risk-benefit toolkit for country parks in the valley; develop the use of Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) concept to encourage outdoor play with a purpose; and the production of reward-led outdoor play objectives such as 'The 20 Highest Places in the Darent Valley', night-time trails, wilderness camping, and becoming modern plant hunters.

5B. In Hop Pickers' Footsteps – Sharing the Valley

From the mid-19th Century, in late summer, residents from East London would travel out to the Kent countryside for a working holiday picking hops. This still exists in living memory and we will re-establish a modern equivalent of this link. Working through our partners who have strong links into large parts of SE London, we will provide enriching outdoor experiences for disadvantaged populations and vulnerable groups. It will include:

- A programme of engaging events in the valley specifically targeted at visitors to provide an introduction to the valley landscape.
- Re-establishment of the Quadrangle's ground-breaking Leapfrog Project for inner city families.
- Re-enactment of the hop-picking 'holidays' at Castle Farm, Shoreham
- Targeted promotion with Southeastern Trains to encourage visits by rail.
- Trained volunteer 'greeters' to provide guidance and confidence for new visitors to the valley.
- Link with 'Our Land' initiative to provide sustainable visitor accommodation within the valley.
- Work with key attractions to encourage visitor behaviour that reduces visitor pressure.

5C. Reading the Landscape

Led by our partner, the Dartford Orienteering Klubb, the project will enable a better understanding and reading of landscape form, and a route to exploring new areas.

We will:

- Provide mapping workshops and exercises in the school grounds to enable children to read the immediate landscape and learn how to use maps.
- Provide opportunities to schools outside the scheme area to use the many existing 'permanent' orienteering courses at heritage sites to provide challenging tests for navigation skills.
- Map new sites (supplemented by LiDAR) to provide new permanent courses
- Create specially designed heritage orienteering courses and events for families.
- Create new heritage 'geocaches' as a stepping stone to deeper independent exploration in the valley.

This project will be volunteer led with a strong emphasis of understanding the landscape and enjoying its qualities and heritage.

5D. Supporting Land Managers - A Collaborative Advisory Service

We will provide a proven Enhanced Farm Environment Service endorsed by Natural England. The service will look to deliver the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme and embrace the anticipated collaborative approach with agreements covering several landholdings and use it to deliver integrated landscape management. We will continue to improve and overcome some of the remaining weaknesses in balancing the management of both cultural and natural heritage assets on farmed land.

This project will provide the opportunity to integrate training for existing conservation organisations to improve the advisory service across the valley and beyond.

5E. Future Skills

We will ensure that the outcomes and outputs can be supported by the local community and maintained beyond the active delivery period of the landscape partnership scheme. We have brought together a comprehensive range of training partners that will ensure that these are embedded within the individual programmes and projects. We have secured a number of key learning centres within and close to the valley and will include:

- Conservation management
- Heritage conservation
- Darent Valley Path and ROW Wardens
- Google Trekker data collection
- River Rangers
- Valley Greeters
- Monitoring Skills
- Flytipping Watch Group
- Historical research
- LiDAR interpretation
- Teacher Training – Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel accreditation

5F. Landscape Apprentices

The DVLPS's range of projects provides an opportunity for young people looking to develop a career in environmental or heritage conservation to gain skills and qualifications to enable employment in this sector. We will provide at least five apprentice opportunities in partnership with Kent County

Council and Kent Wildlife Trust and supported by DVLPS partners. An education partner will be secured at stage 2, and is anticipated to be Hadlow College or Greenwich University.

We recognise that we cannot guarantee that trained apprentices go on to work within the valley, we hope they will take advantage of opportunities that will arise in existing partner organisations and continue to apply their skills and experience to this landscape.

5G. Engaging New Audiences

Direct guided interaction with heritage and landscapes is a highly effective way of communicating the importance of landscapes such as the Darent Valley, and is an important element of this scheme. We will provide an extensive programme of events throughout the scheme's life and take a variety of approaches to engage with a broad section of the community. It will be informed by the interpretation strategy, but will include:

- Presentations from experts in their field;
- Character-led walks;
- 'Animated' events;
- Webinars;
- Events will be filmed and electronic recorded and made available online as audio downloads, videos and other interactive media.

These events will be used as an initial engagement tool with the public, to stimulate interest and entice a proportion to become more actively involved.

5H. Spreading the Word - An Online Resource

We will develop our scheme's online presence by providing micro-site on the KDAONB website. This provides an efficient way of promoting the scheme's work within a site that has considerable flexibility, and will allow the integration of many important elements from other scheme projects. Our scheme will continue to grow its already well-established social media outlets, and a proportion of the investment here will be online marketing to extend the reach of the DVLPS's work.