



Celebrating a Year of Volunteering



The Countryside Management Service (CMS) works with landowners and communities to develop projects that enhance landscape and biodiversity, as well as encouraging people to understand and enjoy the countryside. The service plays an active role in encouraging volunteer and local action groups to identify and become involved in projects.

The CMS also provides opportunities for informal recreation through events, guided walks, cycle routes linking towns and the countryside, leaflets and interpretation.

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For further news about topics in CMS News and links to activities, see the CMS web site
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/cms

The Countryside Management Service is sponsored by Hertfordshire County Council, East Herts Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, North Herts District Council, St. Albans City and District Council, Three Rivers District Council.



Welcome to our Autumn edition

In essence Countryside Management Service does three things: it delivers land management advice into action on the ground, it engages with hundreds of fantastic volunteers and other community members and enables them to make a difference in their local environment and, it coordinates the volunteer-led Hertfordshire Health Walks.

On rare occasions all three of these areas of activity come together in one big project. To date no project that CMS has been working on has quite reached the scale of that planned for Castle Park in Bishop's Stortford. Success with an application to the National Lottery on behalf of East Herts Council and Bishop's Stortford Town Council has secured investment in the development phase of a project that will, we hope, deliver improvements to the heritage of these two sites, increase the range and number of people making use of the improved facilities, provide greater opportunity for volunteers and educate people about the area. Find out more inside.

We often talk within this newsletter about the breadth of work our Service delivers but rarely reflect on the outcomes that benefit a significant number of Hertfordshire residents. Our traditional focus has been

on improving sites for biodiversity and helping people enjoy the sights and sounds of special places. These green spaces are hugely important

for people as a location for healthy activity and quiet reflection – however, we are also ensuring that they provide other benefits.



We are increasingly looking at how green spaces and the Rights of Way network can work together to provide people with routes to use for active travel, leaving the car at home for short journeys and so improving residents' health and reducing levels of air pollution. Volunteers and participants in our Health Walks programme often report improved health and wellbeing which is inevitably beneficial for those individuals but also helps to reduce mounting pressure on our health and care systems. As such, whilst I usually include a personal thank you to all of the people who volunteer with the CMS, on this occasion it is on behalf of all of the county's residents – Thank You!

Tony Bradford
Head of CMS

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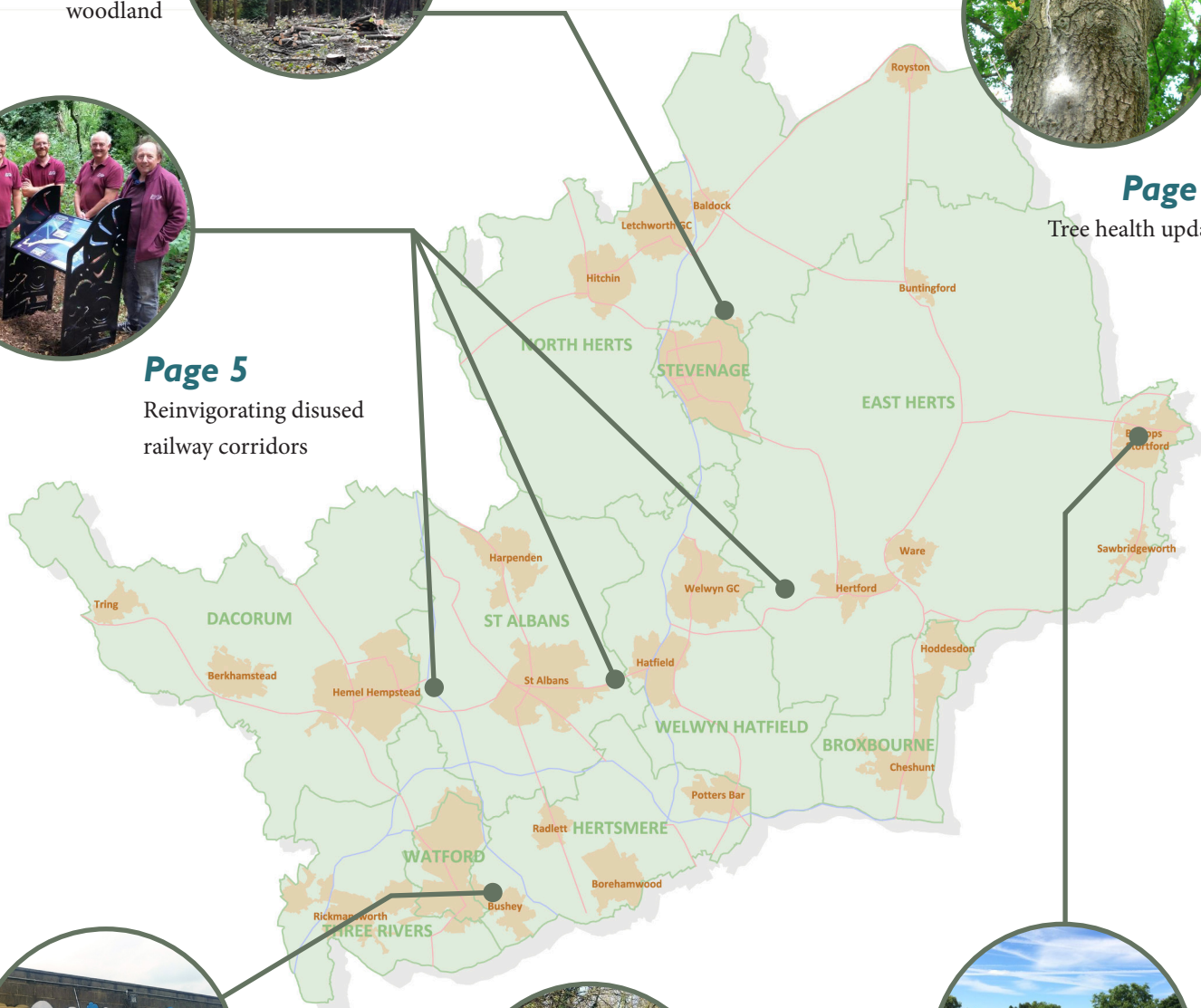
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Right: Charlotte Carter
Far right: Gemma Worswick
Below: Louise Baldwin
and Paul Evans



Hello and goodbye...

We were delighted to welcome **Charlotte Carter** to the Land Management team in October 2016. Originally a native of Coventry, she has come to CMS having spent two years working in California at Watershed Restoration at Groundwork, San Diego as well as a stint at San Diego Zoo Global. Charlotte also has a Ph.D. in Landscape Ecology and is eager to get involved in greenspace management and development in Hertfordshire.

In November 2016 **Louise Baldwin** joined the Communities Team and arrived full of enthusiasm and ideas as to how she would apply herself to the role. Unfortunately, circumstances conspired early on in her employment and an opportunity for Louise and her partner to move to South Africa proved too hard to resist – can't imagine why! We are very sorry to see Louise move on so soon, having proved such a hit with staff and volunteers alike, but wish her the very best of success in her new start in such an exciting location.

In February we were extremely pleased to welcome **Gemma Worswick** to the team as our Tree Health Network Officer, a role created to address the increasing biodiversity and health and safety risks

presented by tree pests and diseases in Hertfordshire. Gemma joins us with a wealth of experience in conservation and ecology including roles with the Wildlife Trusts, a private ecological consultancy and as a National Forest Inventory surveyor for the Forestry Commission.

We were sorry to say a fond farewell to **Paul Evans** who, after a little over 5 years service, departed CMS to take up work more local to his home in Milton Keynes. Paul is moving on having contributed a huge amount to management of numerous greenspaces across the County and leaves behind a very strong legacy of improvements in public amenity and nature conservation on the sites he was involved with. We wish him the very best of luck in all he goes on to do.

We also sadly said goodbye to **Oliver Monaghan-Coombs** following the completion of a very insightful research project into the information we hold on Health Walks participation. Oliver's work has helped us build up a much more complete picture of our Health Walks demographics and where we might focus our attentions to increase and improve levels of participation. Read more about this in our Health Walks update on

page 11. We thank Oliver for his excellent contribution, wish him well in his new post and congratulate him on an astounding achievement in recently completing the epic transcontinental bike race from Belgium to Greece – 2,228 miles in 15days, 11hrs, 7mins – fell off at least once, bitten by dog once but at least he wasn't struck by lightning as was one of the other competitors!





Reinvigorating Herts Disused Railway Corridors

Over the last few years CMS have been involved in projects across Hertfordshire to reinvigorate disused railway corridors for both people and wildlife. Projects have been delivered on the St Albans sections of the Alban Way and Nicky Line.

The Alban Way is a 6 ½ mile long multi-user route linking the historic towns of St Albans and Hatfield. For most of its length it runs along the former route of the Hatfield to St Albans branch of the Great Northern Railway. The route is managed by St Albans City and District Council and Welwyn Hatfield Council respectively. The Alban Way project has combined vegetation management practices, access improvements and interpretation and signage to make the stretch of the Alban Way which lies within St Albans District a more welcoming and user-friendly place.

Vegetation has been cleared to allow more light into the route throughout the year, the old platforms have been restored and railway related infrastructure installed. Access improvements have been carried out along the route to make it accessible for all and on-site signage and dedicated interpretation panels have

been installed to tell people about the history of the Alban Way line. Following the great success of improvement works along the Alban Way within St Albans District, the profile of these neglected corridors as potential alternative routes for sustainable travel has been greatly enhanced. In a region of the country where road space is under ever increasing pressure and where air quality is a very serious concern.

With these considerations in mind and promotion of the project work CMS have been involved with to date, a number of partners have come forward interested in extending enhancements to other stretches of railway line. We are very pleased to announce a number of exciting new projects which are likely to be progressing in the coming months. It has been agreed to extend improvement works, recently completed on the stretch of the Alban Way within St Albans, across the District boundary into Welwyn/Hatfield District to upgrade the entire route.

It is also proposed that CMS extend the management plan for the Nicky Line to take in the entire route through to Hemel Hempstead within Dacorum Borough.

Furthermore, CMS will be involved in the production of a new plan for the future improvement and maintenance of the Cole Green Way, linking Welwyn Garden City and Hertford. It is hoped that substantial improvements to access along this route could incentivise significant numbers of people to consider this route as a viable and sensible alternative to the congested A414. Switching from car transportation to bicycle, will decrease pressure on the road, reduce pollution-causing emissions whilst improving users' own health and fitness and environmental footprint. This route in combination with a multitude of others will contribute toward the development of a network of strategic routes with opportunities for linkages to future housing developments that are in the pipeline.

To find out more about what is proposed here go to: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/colegreenway

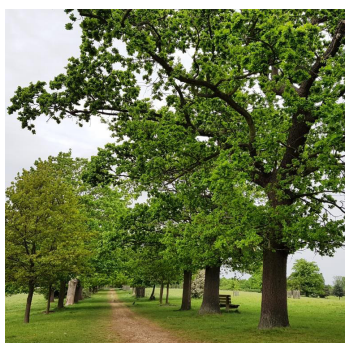
Above – before and after:

*Smallford station platform
on the Alban Way*

Top right:

*One of the new interpretation
panels along the route*

Right: Cutting the celebratory cake, County Councillors Frances Button and Derrick Ashley accompany CMS Volunteers



Heritage of Pishiobury Park

When visiting Pishiobury Park, take a moment to absorb the historic significance of this Grade II* registered parkland. The park has a rich history, with evidence of a Neolithic causewayed enclosure, roman occupation, and a parkland estate once occupied by Ann Boleyn. The original parkland was once six times its current size and formed the grounds of Pishiobury Park House (listed grade II*). Although the house is no longer visible from the park, features of the estate grounds remain and provide evidence for 18th century landscape design likely attributable to Capability Brown. Historical design features include scattered parkland trees, tree groups, woodland belts and tree-lined avenues. Oak Walk, a focal point of the park, marks the former approach to Pishiobury House from the north, and the planted Lime Avenue replicates the original drive to the house from the west.

CMS are in the process of developing a new management plan for Pishiobury Park which will continue to focus on conserving the park's historic significance. Watch out for updates!



Investing in Volunteers

CMS wins Investing in Volunteers Award for third consecutive time



In the last issue we told you that we were going through the rigorous process of assessment for the Investing in Volunteers (IiV) Standard. We're delighted to say we've been successful once again and received the award for the third consecutive time. The IiV Standard is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. This demonstrates our commitment to developing and working with volunteers to achieve best practice.

As it was also the Hertfordshire Year of Volunteering we thought this was the perfect opportunity to acknowledge the contribution CMS volunteers make to our communities. We invited our 400 plus volunteers to join us at one of three events. Two events were specifically for Health Walk Leaders, providing a presentation and motivational speech from Hertfordshire County Council's Public Health team and a healthy buffet. The third event, for Practical Conservation Volunteers, Friends groups and Rights of Way Volunteers, had significantly less healthy refreshments in the form of cake and wine.

At this reception, CMS volunteers and staff joined Cllr Frances Button, the Chairman of Hertfordshire County Council to enjoy a scavenger hunt around Welwyn Garden City Library which was greatly enjoyed by all.

Volunteers play a huge role in many different service areas at the county council and make a real difference across Hertfordshire. The Year of Volunteering has highlighted the amazing contribution local people are making on a daily basis and we have been very proud to share the stories of some of CMS' volunteers throughout this campaign. We would love to hear your story if you have found that volunteering with CMS has had a positive impact on your life. Sharing these stories motivates others to volunteer too and raises awareness of the fantastic work being delivered in our communities.

To find out more about volunteering with CMS go to www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/cms or call 01992 588433.



Tree health update

Trees, their pests and diseases, are largely dormant over winter and so summer provided an opportunity look at the larger picture for tree health across the UK and Europe.

To start on a positive note, the latest update from tree health researchers in the UK reports that native ash trees are likely to be more resilient to Chalara ash dieback (ADB) than European ash trees. A recent study found that a quarter of UK ash trees were genetically predisposed to be tolerant to ash dieback, these trees are expected to display only mild symptoms of the disease and are distributed throughout the country.

The rate of new tree pests and disease entering the UK has increased significantly over the last decade, linked to climate change and an increase in international trade of plants and plant materials. Tree pests and diseases which are potentially on the horizon for the UK include pathogens established in Europe which have recently expanded their distribution and/or host range. For example, Plane Wilt, a deadly fungal disease present in southern Europe since the 1940s, is spreading northward at an increasing rate and has recently reached France. Sweet Chestnut Blight has

so far been successfully controlled in the UK, however this may change as Oriental Chestnut Gall Wasp (which provides entry points for fungal infection) becomes more widespread. *Xyella fastidiosa*, a bacterial species with a wide host range including tree and herbaceous species, was first recorded in Europe in 2013 and has since proven a serious pathogen of olive trees in Italy, spreading into France.

In Hertfordshire, oak processionary moth (OPM) caterpillars may start to emerge from late March. OPM was identified at two sites in Hertfordshire last year but is likely to be more widespread. OPM sightings can be reported to the Forestry Commission through the Tree Alert website: www.forestry.gov.uk/trealert

Photographs: Copyright Forestry Commission, used with permission



Managing Ancient Woodland at Great Ashby

Last winter saw major works to secure the woodland habitat at Great Ashby into the future, from coppicing over-mature hornbeam stools to enhancing tree health resilience by increasing species diversity.

The most substantial operations were in Brooches Wood. With oak, hornbeam and birch, there are many trees you would expect to find in Hertfordshire's ancient woodlands. However, the woodland's historic use for rearing game birds has added a large number of conifers to the mix. Once providing cover, these had grown to the point of shading out the native trees.

By strategically reducing the conifer, we have given native broadleaves the light and space they need to grow, whilst retaining enough conifer cover to maintain the character of the wood.

Elsewhere, CMS volunteers planted 250 native trees amongst an area of coppiced sycamore, which will form a valuable habitat in years to come.



Bishop's Wood transformed

Bishop's Wood Country Park was looking better than ever this summer as a major improvement project nears completion. The network of surfaced paths has been extended, and work has continued to restore its valuable woodland habitats. The five-year project has been funded by landowners Three Rivers District Council, along with grant aid from the Forestry Commission. Work has been managed by the Countryside Management Service.

Last winter, a muddy route into the centre of the wood was newly-surfaced, making even more of the wood easily accessible. Large parts of the main ride network have been opened up, providing sunny corridors for wildflowers and butterflies, and conifers have been selectively removed from particular blocks in the woodland to let in light, allowing native hardwood trees more room to grow. Additionally, midweek volunteer groups have been on site re-coppicing old hazel and alder stools and constructing deer baskets to protect the regrowth.

Why not pop down and take a look yourself?



Castle Park Project Update

Bishop's Stortford project receives major Lottery funding award

This year started with the exciting news that our application for Lottery funding for Castle Park in Bishop's Stortford has been successful. The project, being developed on behalf of East Herts Council and Bishop's Stortford Town Council, will now have an initial £250,000 towards the development of detailed plans for the park. These detailed plans will form the basis of the next stage of the application in August 2018, where we will be seeking around £2m for the capital works.

At the heart of the park are the remnants of Waytemore Castle, set upon a 12m high mound. This Norman motte and bailey castle is likely to date back over 950 years to the time of a Saxon rebellion in East Anglia. However, with access to the castle currently greatly restricted, this important feature feels largely forgotten within the landscape. The castle remnants are also vulnerable to erosion and vandalism. Plans will be developed to protect the masonry of the castle and allow it to be opened up for public access.

The historical interest doesn't stop with the castle mound. The surrounding area (the 'bailey') would once have been the focus

of activity associated with the castle, likely to have included buildings such as stables, barracks and workshops. A prison was located close to the castle mound in the 15th century, whilst a number of mediaeval burial sites are believed to be within the park.

Despite the historical importance of Castle Park, there have been very few recent archaeological investigations. Specialist surveys across the park will be carried out, aiming to discover any lost features of the past and to improve our historical understanding of the site.



It is not just the history that makes Castle Park interesting. With the River Stort running through the middle of the park, the natural heritage is also hugely important. The river is currently heavily shaded by



dense tree growth on the river banks. As a result, it is ecologically poor and largely hidden from public view. A detailed plan will be produced that will transform the habitat of the Stort. A new river crossing and interaction point will celebrate the Stort, becoming a place where people can see and enjoy the river's wildlife.

As with all the projects CMS are involved with, getting the community engaged is something we consider to be fundamental to its success. We have therefore aimed to include something for all parts of society within the park. In the more recreational area to the northeast of the park we will be working with local kids to give them the chance to input into a new space specifically designed for young people, providing them with an interest and a sense of ownership in the park. We are also working with local groups such as the U3A as we investigate options for upgrading the facilities in the current community centre with a new building that will also include a café and toilets.

At the start of June we welcomed Emily Clowry to our team as the Community Engagement Officer for the Castle Park Project. Over the next few months she will be helping us to expand the Hertfordshire

Health Walks programme with a range of new walks based out of Castle Park. She will also be overseeing the establishment of a new 'Friends' group for the park, giving people the opportunity to be directly involved in the development of the park and sustainably managing it into the future. Working with a range of local groups and schools she will also be getting an exciting programme of events up and running.

Project proposals will be open for public engagement from 16th October – 13th November. Full details will be on: www.eastherts.gov.uk/CastlePark

Follow the project's progress on social media www.facebook.com/CastleParkBishopsStortford or www.twitter.com/CastleParkBS

*Above left: Waytemore Castle mound
left: Volunteers work in the River Stort
above: View across part of the park and featuring impressive weeping willow trees*

Volunteer at Castle Park

We have a range of volunteering opportunities at Castle Park, from new Health Walks Leaders, friends group members and people to run events – such as the Bat Walk pictured above.

We need Health Walk Leaders to support new walks. We aim to have First Steps, through to Grade 3 starting at Bishop's Stortford, Castle Park. Whether you can volunteer a few hours a week, or just an hour a month – your time is appreciated. It's really easy to get started and you will receive free, nationally certified training. The next training day is October 17th in Bishop's Stortford. If you are interested in getting involved in the project as a volunteer please do get in contact with Emily Clowry: Emily.Clowry@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Otherwise, keep an eye out for some of the events we have planned, join one of the new Health Walks (see back page) or just pay a visit to the park.



Furzefield Wood

Nestling on the northwest edge of Potters Bar you will find Furzefield Wood and Halfpenny Bottom Local Nature Reserve, Hertfordshire's only surviving continuously coppiced Hazel woodland. This is a small remnant piece of ancient woodland, termed ancient as it is known to have been wooded since at least the early 1600s.

Here you will find carpets of bluebells in the spring, peppered with delicate white wood anemone, the vibrant yellow shades of lesser celandine and primroses and in the early spring, the interesting small flowers of moschatel otherwise commonly known as 'Town Hall Clock'.

The Countryside Management Service has been working on behalf of Hertsmere Borough Council to help return this woodland to a full coppice rotation through contract of a professional coppice worker with some support from our teams of volunteers. It is fantastic to see an area of woodland being managed in a traditional way and on a sustainable basis, generating useful product to be sold on, whilst providing optimal conditions for wildlife to thrive.



Work on our Rights of Way network

In our last issue we announced the creation of new volunteering roles geared towards the improvement of our extensive Rights of Way network. These range from route surveyors to practical team workers, drivers and leaders. Since then, we have been promoting these opportunities, recruiting new volunteers and have held training sessions to instruct people on how to undertake 'Ease of Use' survey work on public paths, as well as inducting others on the use of CMS vehicles and trailers.

In addition to this we are working toward the creation of a new, self-sufficient, practical Rights of Way 'task forces' who will undertake maintenance work to enhance public access across the network. We are preparing a county-wide programme of work for these new teams to deliver. The work programme will be informed by regular volunteer-led surveys identifying access issues, as well as other general reports from users of the network.

Ultimately, our aim is to have volunteers actively surveying the network with representation in all parishes throughout the County and a significant number of people who are practically enabled to deal with any issues that are identified.

These new Rights of Way volunteer roles include:-

- **Footpath Friends** – Surveying existing promoted routes.
- **Route Surveyor** – Recording and reporting problems and undertaking simple maintenance tasks.
- **Driver** – Transporting tools and equipment to practical teams.
- **Team member** – undertaking practical improvements to enhance access on routes.
- **Team leader** – leading teams of practical volunteers.

We are particularly keen to recruit additional group leaders and drivers to enable practical groups to function. If you would like further information on this interesting new area of volunteering for CMS please visit: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/cms and follow the link to 'volunteer with us'.

If you are interested in signing up for one of the specified roles please email: northeast.cms@hertfordshire.gov.uk or call us on 01992 588433



Hertfordshire



Health Walks

Health Walks analysis 2016/17

The team was pleased to welcome Oliver Monaghan-Coombs, a graduate management trainee and data-crunching wiz in August 2016! Part of Oliver's remit was to interpret the wealth of data collected on a daily basis by the Health Walks initiative – through new walker sign-up forms and attendance registers. Oliver uncovered some interesting pieces of learning which will help to steer the direction of Health Walks development activity. These include:

Age of walkers

Sign up data shows 87% of Hertfordshire Health Walk participants are aged over 50. This mirrors other Health Walk schemes in similar local authorities across the country, but CMS will explore ways to encourage younger participants to take part in Health Walks or other walking activities.

Walker background

Using specialised software, Oliver carried out a full analysis of participants and volunteers of the Health Walk, and found the walks are currently underrepresented by more deprived

groups, relative to the general Hertfordshire population. CMS will continue to work closely with local authority partners and community groups to target publicity for Health Walks to residents who could benefit most from taking part.

Inactive people

The data reveals that 65% of the people who signed up to Health Walks in the past 3 years described themselves as doing less than the recommended 150 minutes moderate activity per week. It is great news Health Walks are helping these individuals to meet the target. The most inactive residents in Hertfordshire need a bit more convincing. People who identify themselves as doing less than 30 minutes activity per week when they signed up – only make up 5.4% of total participation. CMS will be exploring a buddy system to help people take their first step and will continue to engage with GP surgeries to signpost inactive people to the walks.

Walker retention

Every year there are over 3,000

individuals who walk with Health Walks, and nearly 1,300 new walkers into the initiative. Though these are great figures, around 50% of walkers have walked 5 or fewer times since they signed up. Over 35% of walkers signed up and then stopped walking after a month. So what's the solution for retaining these walkers and keeping them active? From the walker survey, some people told us they now do other forms of exercise – and that's fine by us! However 15% told us they 'forgot about the walks'. CMS has set up a Walking in Hertfordshire newsletter to update Health Walkers and Walks & More attendees on a monthly basis about upcoming walks and events. You can join the 11,000 residents who have already signed up for this newsletter via www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/updateme. In the future we hope to send reminders about the walks either via text or by email, too.

An update on progress with the work outlined above will be in the next issue of CMS News – watch this space!

Walks & More

Walks & More is a programme of outdoor activities that will inspire you to enjoy and learn about the Hertfordshire countryside.

Up and coming events include the following:

Castle Park Health Walks

Bishops Stortford

Friday 13th October

- First Steps Walk – 10:00 to 10:30am
- Grade 1 Walk – 11:00 to 11:30am
- Grade 2 Walk – 1:00 to 1:45pm

Join us for the launch of these brand new Health Walk events and help us get these fantastic sociable and healthy activities happening regularly. For all walks, meet at the entrance to the park by the Link Road car park.

Autumn Colours Great Ashby Country Park

Sunday 29th Oct, 10am to 12pm

Join the Countryside Management Service for a walk around Great Ashby and Priors Wood, to see the fantastic views and colours of autumn.

Fungal Foray at Woodcock Hill, Borehamwood

Sat 4th Nov, 10:30am to 12:30pm

A guided walk on Fungi and anything else. This site has many common fungi species making it a good site for beginners. It also provides good views and a little bit of history as well.



*Countryside
Management
Service*



Moats and Murals

CMS have just overseen the completion of a couple of impressive pieces of work at the Moatfield greenspace in Bushey, which should greatly enhance the experience of people who visit this site. The first is the construction of a new viewing platform overlooking the moat on the south-eastern side of the site, to enable people to better view some of the resident wildlife. This project was undertaken by a small group of skilled CMS volunteers over the course of two days.

The finishing touches have just been made to the second item of work namely the painting of a visually striking mural on the Bushey Rangers clubhouse which is located on the site. The mural occupies portions of the three walls that surround the changing room block, encapsulating

elements of the site's history and natural heritage value and has massively brightened up what was previously a pretty drab and tired structure.

This mural project was tendered on a competitive basis with many talented artists putting forth interesting proposals. These proposals were then scored according to a number of criteria and there was some consultation with local community groups to ensure that the most fitting proposal won through. The mural has been met with a very positive reception from local people and there has been such an enthusiastic response from the Football Club that they are now in discussions to see if they can get the artwork extended to other parts of the building. Well worth checking out if you're in the area!

