



Celebrating the Hertfordshire Year of Volunteering



The Countryside Management Service (CMS) works with landowners and communities to develop projects that enhance landscape and bio-diversity, 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

For the many of us who enjoy exploring our environment on foot, horseback, cycle, carriage or other means it is easy to overlook the humble Right of Way. Embodied in legislation since 1949, in their simplest terms, Public Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways give us the right to pass over land owned by someone else. Furthermore, they give us the opportunity to explore our natural environment, enjoy physical activity and improve our well-being as well as to travel from A-B.

Hertfordshire has more than 3000km of Rights of Way recorded and maintained by a specialist team working for Hertfordshire County Council. They in turn are supported in their work by Countryside Management Service and our mid-week conservation volunteers. Our three teams of volunteers regularly deliver improvements to routes, constructing steps, bridges and kissing gates where required. These are then promoted through an array of self-guided brochures found on our web site.

But there is more to be done. So that more people can get involved in caring for these shared assets CMS has just launched a range of volunteering roles to further improve Hertfordshire's Rights of Way. We know that some of our regular volunteers want to

contribute more time to the CMS and so we have devised roles for them. Equally, for those with less time or opportunity to join these groups there are ways to play a part whilst out enjoying a walk or a ride. Read on to see how you can help.



As volunteers, so many people make a significant contribution to the work of the CMS be that as Health Walk Leaders, through Friends Groups, as Conservation Volunteers or Footpath Friends. We always try to say thank you in a variety of ways throughout each year. In the Year of Volunteering, Hertfordshire County Council held a glittering celebration of volunteers, requesting nominations for a series of Volunteering Awards. Fourteen nominations went forward from staff and volunteers for people who have made an outstanding contribution to our work and 4 were awarded runners-up. We want to congratulate each of the nominees but also to say a massive thank you to all of you who give up your time to help improve Hertfordshire's environment and the lives of its residents.

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Right: *Oliver Monaghan-Coombs, and Kim Breckon*
Inset below: *Angela Forster*

Hello and goodbye...

In August we were delighted to welcome **Oliver Monaghan-Coombs** to the team who joins CMS as a Hertfordshire County Council Graduate Management Trainee. Oliver is undertaking a range of work aimed at better understanding the business of Health Walks, exploring innovations from other areas and setting the future direction of this fantastic service. Oliver has been working in Hertfordshire for the past two years. During that time he has worked at Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Health and Community Services and Hertfordshire Independent Living Service. We are very excited to have Oliver on board!

In October we welcomed **Kim Breckon** to the post of Assistant Project Officer. Her role involves developing the Health Walk programme specifically within the areas of London Colney and South Oxhey, Mill End and Maple Cross. Kim has a corporate background and joins CMS with a wealth of experience from roles as diverse as promoting corporate social and environmental responsibility to managing volunteers and fundraising. We are delighted to be harnessing Kim's skills and experience in this exciting extension to the Health Walks programme.

Angela Forster

We are very sad to be reporting the departure of Angela Forster who, after putting in a really solid 23 year shift has decided to move on to pastures new.

Angela leaves behind a strong legacy and has made a massive contribution to furthering the aims of our organisation, striving to secure a quality environment for us all to live, work and spend our leisure time in. She has worked with communities across Hertfordshire to help them influence and take an active role in the management of their beloved greenspaces. She has, through her work with the farming community, secured millions of pounds of investment in our county and ensured that investment has produced outstanding results for wildlife and people alike.

Latterly Angela has been the focus for HCC's work to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead for our native tree stocks and has put in place a very solid foundation on which we shall be building a profile and raising awareness.

She leaves us to realise a long-standing ambition to spend a year travelling the wilds of Africa in what can only be



described as a "knackered old Land Rover". We pass on heartfelt thanks to Angela for her very significant contribution and wish her well in this exciting new adventure.

Michael Iseard

We also sadly say our goodbyes to Michael Iseard who, after a year and a half with CMS, has now departed to begin a new chapter of his life in Holland with his wife, a Dutch lady.

Mike, a really popular member of the team, has made an excellent contribution to our work and his own unique impression on staff and volunteers. His love of foraging foods from the wild and producing home-made jams and cakes and tendency to bring these into the office, as well as his very particular brand of sarcastic humour will be much missed around the office. We wish Mike happiness and success in all his future endeavours.



Hertfordshire Year of Volunteering

Launched by Hertfordshire County Council in May this year, the Year of Volunteering aims to celebrate the contribution of volunteers, increase their numbers and demonstrate the strong sense of community enjoyed in Hertfordshire.

As part of this campaign a Volunteering Award was created. HCC staff were asked to nominate volunteers who work with the county council and who have gone above and beyond the call of duty. CMS nominated 12 individuals under various categories. We also nominated our network of Health Walks leaders and our mid-week Practical Conservation volunteers under the 'Volunteer Team of the Year' category. Competition was fierce as Hertfordshire has a huge number of extremely dedicated volunteers engaged in a wide range of roles across the council. Three CMS volunteers and one member of staff were shortlisted from over 80 nominations.

The evening was hosted by County Council Chairman, Cllr. Frances Button and invitees heard a presentation from Cllr. Teresa Heritage, Executive Member for Public Health, Localism and Libraries; the latter made special mention of Arthur Phipps,

now sadly deceased, for his significant contribution to the work of CMS. A glittering array of HCC Directors presented the awards.

CMS volunteers recognised at the awards
Marian Hurlle and Jacky Fitzgerald were runners up in the 'Best Newcomer' category for their work to develop First Steps Health Walks.

Peter White, volunteer CMS News designer, was runner up for the Lifetime Achievement Award (although he says that meeting Deb at his first conservation task nearly 30 years ago, and marrying her a year later, was reward enough!).

Outstanding Staff Contribution
Sian Price, CMS Projects Officer, scooped runner up for "Outstanding Staff Contribution to Volunteering" for inspiring Hertfordshire Health Walk Leaders across the county.

We are forever grateful for the wealth of skills and experience *all* our volunteers bring to our organisation. The awards were a great opportunity to showcase some of the volunteers who make a real difference in Hertfordshire, improving the environment for people and wildlife.



Top row, pictured left to right are CMS volunteers Marian Hurlle and Jacky Fitzgerald leading Health Walks and our longstanding volunteer and newsletter designer Peter White.

Above: CMS Projects Officer Sian Price



HERTFORDSHIRE
YEAR OF VOLUNTEERING

Captions to add



Investing in Volunteers

CMS has a proud tradition of working with volunteers and in 2010 we set out to improve the way we work with volunteers and to reflect this in our policies and procedures. This resulted in us being awarded the Investing in Volunteers (iV) Quality Standard of which we have been very proud. This standard is reviewed every 3 years. We retained the standard in 2013 and now in 2016 we are preparing for another assessment. We'll be working with an independent assessor from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) to identify improvements to our procedures.

We feel this process will ensure that we continue to provide a great service to our volunteers and help us build on the existing good practice in order to better support them.

The assessment for the iV Award will take place in late November. The assessor will choose a random sample of volunteers, from our 350 strong team, to provide some feedback about our performance. Assuming all goes to plan we'll be celebrating our award in February with our volunteers, Cllrs and partner organisations.

Fantastic effort at Studio Way

CMS Wednesday practical conservation volunteers have been busy over at Studio Way Woodland in Borehamwood as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) *Scene Change at Studio Way* Project. Their numbers were boosted with visits by members of the County Council's Transport, Access and Road Safety unit and Environment Agency staff on team building events.

Progress to date has been amazing with hundreds of metres of old rabbit fencing being removed to enable thinning and coppicing of the woodland compartments. The work will create a more diverse woodland structure and allow light to reach the once dark and

shady woodland floor. Large mature oak trees – some of which have made appearances in a number of famous films - are having vegetation removed from around them to giving them more space to grow and stand out as prominent landscape features.

More tasks are planned for later in the year, including: planting young oak trees to become landmark features for the future, restoring old hedgerows, installing signage and interpretation panels. Please contact CMS if you would like to be involved.





Tree health update

Over the last twelve months CMS have published several pieces regarding tree health and the potential impacts of a number of pests and diseases.

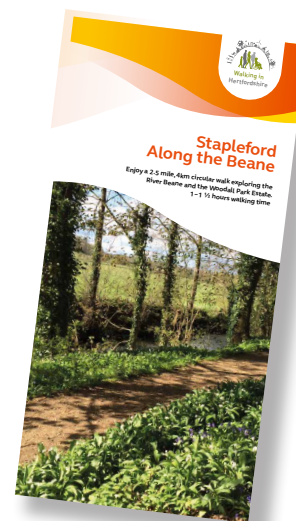
The situation with Ash Dieback has moved on over the spring and summer, CMS staff have been finding confirmed instances from Baldock to Rickmansworth. The latest indications are that the disease has been with us for at least a decade and as such is already widespread throughout our tree communities.

Oak Processionary Moth nests were identified in Hertfordshire for the first time in August. A number of nests were found and subsequently destroyed in the Watford-Hertsmere area; again indications are that this pest has been present for at least two breeding seasons.

Much news was generated last year by the identification of Oriental Chestnut Gall Wasp on a street in St Albans. A rapid response was mobilised and trees removed and disposed of under highly controlled conditions to prevent further distribution of the insects. Subsequent survey work undertaken by the Forestry Commission has identified that this population is also now

more widespread than previously thought. The potential impacts of tree loss may seem obvious. Significant numbers disappearing from our landscape will of course reduce related biodiversity and may affect visual amenity. Start to look a little closer at the issue and the effects could be more far-reaching and dramatic than most people realise. Trees play a crucial role in helping to regulate our environment and are vital in helping us to adapt to the effects of global warming. Trees make very positive contributions to flood alleviation, urban cooling, noise abatement and screening, they help regulate our climate at a local level, remove pollution from the air we breathe and contribute to our mental wellbeing; they also contribute to our tourism economy through their use in townscapes and in landscaping schemes and can increase the value of our properties. In summary, without trees we would all live shorter lives, be less prosperous and be considerably more miserable.

CMS is acting as a central point for collation and dissemination of up to date local information and guidance on issues of tree health. To find out more or keep up to date visit our dedicated web pages here – www.hertslink.org/cms/treehealth/



A legacy for the Year of Walking

CMS have teamed up with Stapleford Parish Council to bring you an exciting new circular walk route through the historic parkland landscapes of the Beane Valley. As part of the legacy from the Year of Walking, CMS are working with five parishes this year to produce new leafleted walks to encourage residents and visitors to get out and discover Hertfordshire's glorious countryside. The first walk to be promoted is in Stapleford near Hertford, called 'Stapleford Along the Beane'.

This circular walk starts from the pretty parish church of St Mary's and is just under three miles in length, taking about an hour at moderate walking pace. It follows a delightful section of the River Beane southwards, a route which is part of the Hertfordshire Way. The trail then ascends north east across farmland and into Woodhall Estate. There is a gentle gradient in the middle section which climbs to the top of Church Lane providing a rewarding view across the Beane Valley and the village below.

Download the 'Stapleford Along the Beane' walk leaflet from the Get Active pages of the CMS website www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/cms



Rediscovering Bishop Stortford's past

Walsworth Common

CMS are currently working with North Herts District Council to deliver improvements to Walsworth Common, a public greenspace in Hitchin, for the benefit of people and wildlife.

We have been successful in a grant application to the "Bags of Help" initiative, run by Tesco and Groundwork. This awards money raised from the 5p bag levy to environmental and greenspace projects. The project has been shortlisted, along with two others, to compete for grants of £8,000, £10,000 and £12,000. In late October, shoppers in Tesco stores in Hitchin, Baldock and Royston will be invited to vote for the project they think should receive the top grant.

The funding will pay for new signage and interpretation, installation of an easy access ramp at a key entrance to the site, and the restoration of an overgrown pond. The work will take place over the coming winter. Our midweek volunteers will also be getting involved, clearing scrub and opening up access routes.

CMS, working alongside East Herts Council and Bishop's Stortford Town Council, recently submitted a £2m bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project to transform Castle Gardens and Sworder's Field in Bishop's Stortford.

If successful, this funding would bring these two greenspaces together under the banner of 'Castle Park', becoming an exciting place where people can discover their town's past. Bishop's Stortford is fortunate enough to have fantastic heritage, including the remnants of Waytemore Castle and the River Stort. However, these are currently hidden away and largely ignored within the landscape. As well as opening up access to heritage, the project would also deliver major biodiversity enhancements, focussed around the River Stort, bringing wildlife right into the heart of the town.

As a recreational space Castle Park would encourage people to get active and healthy, with strong community involvement encouraged through a new friends group.

Castle Park would not just deliver a high quality park for the people of Bishop's Stortford, but would become a hub that connects the town. Improved entrances from the town centre and surrounding residential areas would make the park

easily accessible. An off road sustainable transport route would also connect the town centre with the proposed residential expansion to the north. Within the park itself, a new network of easily accessible paths would provide a functional layout that is accessible to all.

Parks and greenspaces are of great importance to people and communities, offering access to nature, to recreation and improving health & wellbeing. They not only have the ability to enhance a town, but to truly shape its identity. Castle Park would do just that, becoming a stand-out destination that celebrates the historic and natural heritage of Bishop's Stortford.

We will hear if the funding application is successful at the end of the year, so fingers crossed until then!





Hertsmere Greenways project

CMS is working with Hertsmere Borough Council to deliver elements of its Greenways Strategy using infrastructure-support funding from local housing developers, linking existing routes and creating new ones.

Greenways aim to provide safe, traffic-free, sustainable transport links to local amenities enabling users to travel through an enjoyable and pleasant environment connecting people with nature along their journey.

Bushey

The initial greenway route within Bushey aims to connect residents with local primary schools, shops and other local amenities around the Moatfield greenspace. Further afield it will connect to the Bushey Grove Leisure Centre and secondary schools along the Aldenham Road.

The project will enhance existing routes and provide missing links such as crossing points, to make the route easier, safer and more attractive to use. Existing, narrow surfaced paths will also be widened to accommodate two-way, multi-user traffic.

The environment through which the greenway passes will be enhanced with

the painting of murals on the Bushey Rangers Clubhouse building. Overshaded routes will be opened up through selective thinning of vegetation and feature trees will be revealed.

Borehamwood

Borehamwood is ideally set up for the Greenways project as it possesses a substantial network of existing paths and cycleways. Our initial project focus here has been on a particularly well used section alongside Tykes Water, taking in Aberford Park, Leeming Park, Brook Meadow and Haggerston Park.

Our aim will be to improve junctions and create enhanced connections with surrounding areas, ensuring an easy to access and easy to use route. Alongside this we will be 'greening' the Greenway by planting up areas in order to make route users feel closer to nature. Keep an eye out over the next year as these Greenways start to take shape.



Far left: Existing entrance at Aberford Park, Borehamwood

Left: Narrow tracks will be widened to allow two-way cycle traffic

Focus on access as CMS move to 'TARS'

Recent re-structuring work within the Environment Department at Hertfordshire County Council has seen CMS move into the newly formed Transport Access and Road Safety (TARS) team.

We and the Rights of Way unit join colleagues who deliver diverse services relating to bus travel, road safety and driver training to name but a few. We hope that the move will enable us to work in a more joined up fashion on issues of sustainable transport.

Regular readers will probably have already noted a recent focus on this area of work. The spotlight is on provision of alternatives to the car as our road network becomes ever more congested and the future promises substantial increases in numbers of residents.

As usual CMS have responded to this growing need and projects are already underway to improve the Alban Way and Nickey Line, linking St Albans with Hatfield and Harpenden with Hemel Hempstead. A network of interlinking routes through Borehamwood has been devised with the first, at Studio Way well advanced and further projects due to get started in the new-year. See overleaf to find out more about how you can get involved in this area of work though some new volunteering opportunities.



CMS Summer Volunteer Outing

Our annual conservation volunteer get-together took place this year on the 16th August. We were honoured to be hosted by Mr and Mrs Able Smith on the Woodhall Estate near Watton-at-Stone.

Our volunteers were treated to a tour of a portion of the landscaped grounds on a guided walk led by Nick Fox the estate's Head Keeper. This took in some of the interesting natural and historic features of this lovely estate, including a look at some magnificent, gnarly old veteran oak trees with hollowed trunks and branches.

We then wandered along the River Beane chalk stream that flows through the estate and looked at the site of the former 18th Century broadwater which recently drained out when the dam-head failed. There was an interesting discussion around the pros and cons of reinstatement of the broadwater versus allowing the river to return to a natural state.

This excellent event culminated with a very tasty lunch consisting of hog-roast and a mix of salads which was extremely well received!



New Rights of Way volunteer roles

As part of Hertfordshire Year of Volunteering, Hertfordshire County Council has launched a number of new ways for people who love the outdoors and want to make a positive difference to their local environment to get involved.

The new roles have been created by the council's Countryside Management Service, who work with communities across the county to care for and improve Hertfordshire's amazing landscape.

As a county we are well served by an extensive network of public rights of way, giving us all access to the beautiful, varied and productive Hertfordshire landscape that surrounds our homes and places of work.

If you are interested in walking, off-road cycling or horse riding we would like you to help us to manage and maintain our footpaths, cycle tracks and bridleways to a high standard. Simply get in touch and find out how to join our ever growing network

of volunteers and benefit from our award winning approach to training and support.

Roles include:

- **Footpath Friends** – survey existing promoted routes
- **Surveyor** – report problems and make simple repairs
- **Driver** – provide tools and equipment to team working on Rights of Way
- **Team member** – join a small team to make practical improvements
- **Team leader** – lead teams of practical volunteers

For more information visit <http://www.hertslink.org/cms/getinvolved/rowvols/> or call us on 01992 588433.



Hooray for walking!

CMS have long recognised the importance of walking as a means of tackling ill health and improving mental wellbeing. So, we were delighted that Sport England has finally recognised the important role walking initiatives can play in reducing the burden of inactivity in the UK. The new 5-year Sport England strategy is broad in its approach to supporting physical activity initiatives, where traditionally it has focused on competitive organised sport, with walking falling under the radar. Their new focus is to support physical activity in all its forms and specifically, Sport England has announced the availability of increased funds for walking schemes that promote walking for leisure. Opportunities for CMS to apply for new pots of funding to support our Health Walks programme are always gladly welcomed. For a summary of the strategy visit www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/news.

With this shift and the objectives set by Public Health in Hertfordshire in mind, CMS has started a process to really understand the nuts and bolts of our Health Walks scheme. By crunching our data and learning from other schemes

across the country we hope to gain a better understanding of how to support the residents of Hertfordshire to get moving.

For example, we now know that of the new people registering in 2015/16, 29% said they had one or more long term health condition – proof that we do attract walkers who would benefit from increasing their levels of activity. But there's more to prove. Where should First Steps walks take place to target the least active in the county? Who could we partner with to strengthen our physical activity offer? What can we do to retain more of 1,300+ new walkers that join us every year? And perhaps the biggest challenge of all, how can we persuade them to make a permanent change to their activity levels so they can live in good health for longer?

These of course are complex questions and will not return straightforward answers. However together with Public Health at Hertfordshire County Council this is the direction in which we will steer our work in future. Update to follow in the next issue of CMS News.



New walks in St Albans and Three Rivers Districts

CMS has secured funding from Three Rivers and St Albans District Councils to increase walks being offered in South Oxhey, Mill End, Maple Cross and London Colney. To deliver this work and most importantly, develop a sustainable programme of walks, CMS has recruited Kim Breckon to the team in the role of Assistant Health Walks Projects Officer. Kim will be working alongside Sian Price and our dedicated team of volunteers to support people who are currently doing minimal physical activity to get walking in their local area.

South Oxhey already has a successful and popular weekly Grade 3 walk, which has adapted to cater to a wide range of abilities. The plan is to advertise a variety of walks in the area and recruit additional volunteers to support existing leaders.

The expansion of the St Albans programme into London Colney is an exciting development for the programme. The project is also supported by the Parish Council and walks will connect residents with their surrounding countryside to improve health and wellbeing.

Updates will be posted online at www.hertfordshirehealthwalks.org and via Twitter ([@HertsHealthWalk](https://twitter.com/HertsHealthWalk)) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/HertfordshireHealthWalks).

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:

The History of How Wood Saturday 14th Jan, 1:30pm.

Discover some clues providing an insight into this site's interesting history and learn how this helps us plan future management work.

Open Day at Furzefield Wood, Potters Bar Saturday 4th Feb, 10am till 2pm

Learn about coppice management and its contribution to wildlife conservation and meet the work horse extracting timber..

Scrub clearance at Croxley Common Moor – Sunday 12th February.

Join in and help the Friends manage invasive scrub on this very important Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)..

Walk on the Wild Side – Charlton Nr Hitchin – Monday 20th March, 10:30am.

Take part in a stroll through part of the beautiful countryside of north Herts and learn about some of our splendid native wildlife along the way..

For more information on the above, and to find an event near you, visit:

www.hertslink.org/cms/getactive/walksandmore/



Lyme disease

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection, spread by infected ticks from one animal to another including people. Ticks can be found in any area of overgrown vegetation where there are animals for them to feed on for instance woodland, scrub and heath.

Some of those unlucky enough to contract the disease may develop flu-like symptoms early on such as fatigue, muscle pain, joint pain, headaches, a high temperature (fever) chills and neck stiffness. If the disease is not diagnosed at an early stage it can become more serious and lead to the onset of more severe symptoms weeks, months or even years later including pain and swelling in the joints, problems with the heart, the nervous system and inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord (meningitis).

Whilst Hertfordshire is not regarded as a high risk area, cases of Lyme disease have been reported throughout the UK. Readers of CMS News naturally have a close affiliation with the countryside and are regular users of it and as such, should be well informed on symptoms



Sheep tick (*Ixodes ricinus*) on a person

to look out for and seek medical advice if they begin to feel unwell. The following precautions can also be taken:

- keep to footpaths and avoid long grass when out walking
- wear appropriate clothing in tick-infested areas (a long-sleeved shirt and trousers tucked into your socks)
- wear light-coloured fabrics that may help you spot a tick on your clothes
- use insect repellent on exposed skin
- inspect your skin for ticks, particularly at the end of the day, including your head, neck and skin folds (armpits, groin, and waistband) – remove any ticks you find promptly
- checking that pets do not bring ticks into your home in their fur

The key message for all those out enjoying our beautiful Hertfordshire Countryside is to be aware and remain vigilant and if you suspect you may have Lyme disease, seek early intervention!

CMS website gets a makeover

Over the coming months the now slightly dated CMS website is going to be transforming. Hertfordshire County Council has recently updated its website from Herts Direct to Hertfordshire.gov.uk and we are following suit.

All your old favourites like Walks and More, CMS News, Volunteering and Health Walks will still be there but in a slightly different format. The new technologies that are now available to us

will enable us to customise information to suit the requirements of site users.

It will be a few months before the new website is up and running and for some time both websites will run alongside each other, then the old site will be switched off for good. You will be directed from the old site to the new one when it goes live, so why not update your favourites list now with the new address www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/cms