

# Lower Windrush Valley Project

## 2021 update



The Lower Windrush Valley Project (LWVP) works with environmental organisations, mineral operators, landowners and the local community to coordinate initiatives that:

- Strengthen and develop the evolving landscape of the valley
- Protect and enhance the biodiversity it supports
- Improve opportunities for people to access and enjoy the countryside
- Raise awareness, understanding and involvement in the diverse issues that influence the environment in the valley.

### Tar Lakes public amenity lakes

Tar Lakes is part of the Gill Mill Quarry complex and was opened to the public in May 2011 to provide a relaxing open space for people to enjoy the natural world. The main lake has a wheelchair accessible footpath, and rougher grass paths cross the rest of the site. The mosaic of wetland habitats created through the site's restoration that support an increasing diversity of wildlife.

A visitor count and survey conducted in August 2020 by the LWVP found there were on average 22.5 visitors per hour, with the majority living less than 10km away, confirming the site's popularity and importance for recreation locally.

Although there is strictly no fishing on these waters, the upkeep and maintenance for public amenity lakes is undertaken by the team at Linear Fisheries.

### Review of biodiversity opportunities in the Lower Windrush Valley.

The Lower Windrush Valley supports a wealth of biodiversity and is identified in the draft Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Network as a priority area for habitat creation and restoration. A substantial portion of the valley, including the lakes, is also identified as requiring the highest level of biodiversity protection, management and enhancement.

Over the last 12 months, the LWVP have carried out a review of biodiversity opportunities in the Lower Windrush Valley, including producing updated biodiversity mapping of the area, identifying key habitats and objectives, and creating a series of opportunity

maps. This work has been used to create a report that will direct the biodiversity and nature conservation elements of the LWVP strategy. It is also intended to be a tool for local authorities and planners, help direct biodiversity offsetting funds and be used by local land managers to inform habitat management and enhancements.

For further information, or to request a PDF copy of the review, please email [LWVP@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:LWVP@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

### Nest boxes on the Windrush Path

In February, 12 passerine nest boxes were installed along Windrush Path in Standlake to create more nesting opportunities for local bird populations. In their first season, the boxes have proved hugely successful, with 8 showing evidence of use and successful breeding confirmed in 5 boxes. Two little owl boxes were installed in October and we are excited to see their use next season. Linear Fisheries supported this project with a donation of £600.

### Circular walks

In Spring 2020, a project was carried out to improve and promote circular walks in the Lower Windrush Valley. Three routes were marked out using stickers attached to waymarking disks, a route description and map was produced for each, and 3 stiles were replaced with gates in Northmoor to improve accessibility.

### Kingfisher Quest

In June 2020 we launched a three month long Kingfisher survey aiming to increase our understanding of Kingfishers in Lower Windrush Valley and encourage people to engage with their local water environments and wildlife. A total of 39 sightings of Kingfishers were reported, with a high proportion around Witney Lake and Country Park and Langel Common. A full report is available on our website.

For information on the LWVP and updates on our activities, 'like' us on Facebook or visit our website:

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/lowerwindrushvalleyproject](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/lowerwindrushvalleyproject)