

Medway Smile Living Landscape Scheme



The landscape in and around the Medway towns is steeped in history – a hub of activity which goes back several centuries and includes many of the industries which have provided Kent with some of its greatest wealth. It is also one of the most densely populated areas of the county and faces ever-increasing pressure from development.

Nevertheless, immediately adjacent to this industrialized area, stretching around the south of Medway like a smile, there remains a distinctive landscape of ancient woodland and chalk grassland, interspersed with wide arable fields and leading down to the wetland habitats of the River Medway. This area falls within the

Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and supports some of Kent's most unique wildlife. Over the last two decades, conservation organisations, statutory bodies and landowners have built up a number of nature reserves and designated sites which provide a core of wildlife-rich areas and have the potential to enrich the wildlife value of surrounding habitats.

The aim of the Medway Smile Living Landscape Scheme is to make these areas for wildlife bigger and to work with local landowners and local communities to make the surrounding land better for wildlife, creating a connected network of good wildlife habitats.

Kent Wildlife Trust is working to restore chalk grassland, enhance and recreate species-rich hedges, improve habitats for farmland birds and bring ancient woodland into conservation management. By working with local people, volunteers and a range of partners, the Trust is providing management advice to landowners, working with local farmers, and involving young people in looking after their environment.



Projects include:

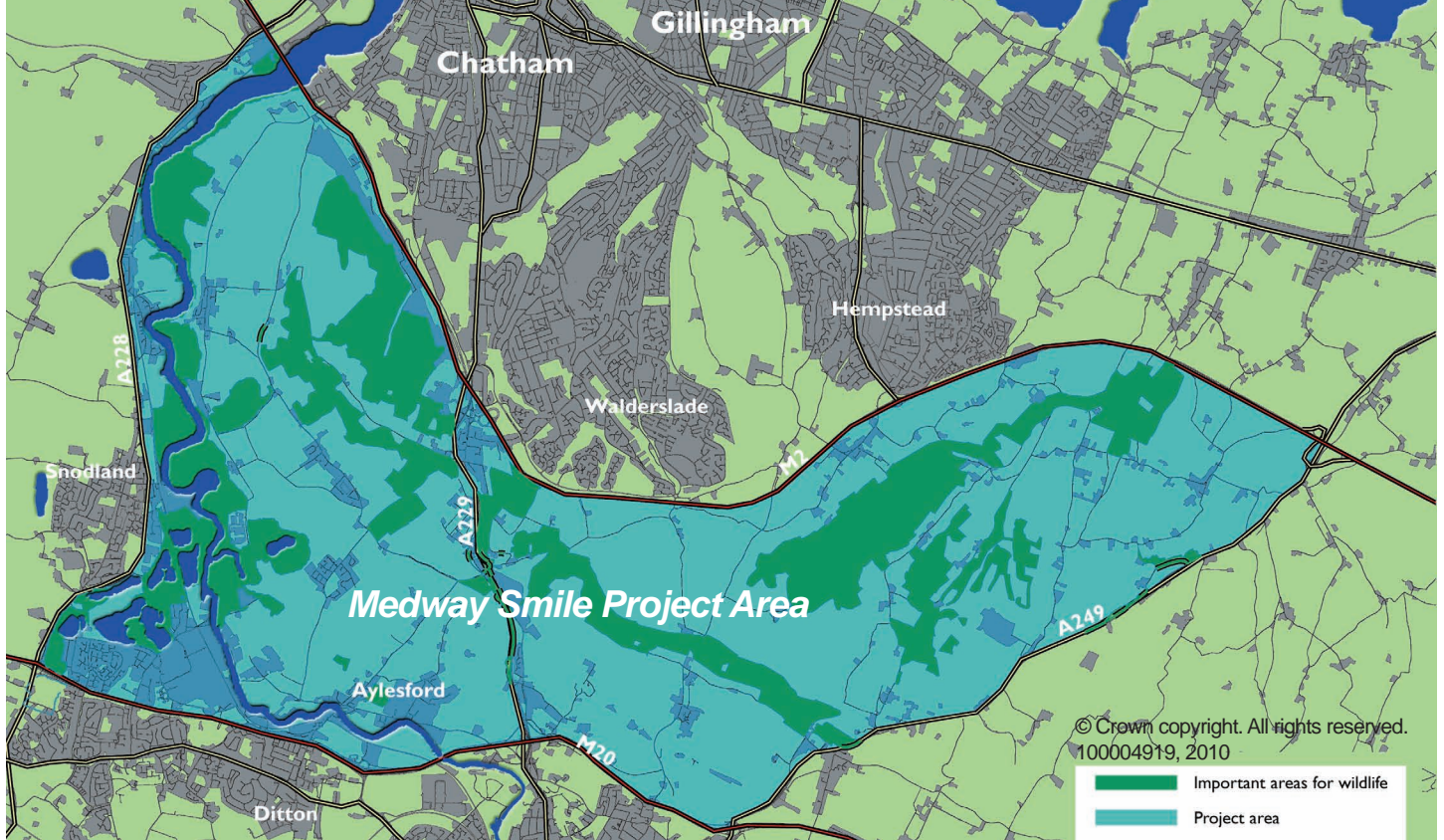
- Extending and enhancing our existing nature reserves and creating a new nature reserve at Nashenden Down.
- Helping local people to restore the management of Bredhurst woods, improve footpaths and help combat the problem of antisocial uses of the woods.
- Implementing a conservation grade lamb project, supporting local businesses and contributing to more sustainable local food production.
- Working with Borstal Young Offenders Institute to provide training and improve biodiversity within the prison grounds.
- Working with local people in Medway to create a corridor for wildlife through the heart of the urban area.
- Working with the Valley of Visions partnership to deliver a range of landscape and wildlife enhancement projects.



Nashenden Down Reserve © Kent Wildlife Trust

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Queendown Warren sheep © Kent Wildlife Trust

Special Reserve Lamb

The diversity of flowering plants and delicate grasses of chalk grassland is due to the dry and nutrient-poor nature of the soil on which they grow, which prevents faster growing 'coarse grasses' from establishing and overwhelming them. This habitat has traditionally been lightly grazed, and this is still the best way to manage it. But many modern breeds of livestock need a richer diet of those 'coarse grasses', and this is not compatible with maintaining a flower-rich grassland. It is therefore difficult for farmers to make conservation grazing cost effective. At Queendown Warren, Kent Wildlife Trust is trialling a project using a special breed of lamb which does thrive on the diverse grassland of our reserve, and will be sold at a premium price by a local butcher. This project will make management of the reserve more cost effective as well as supporting local business and reducing food miles.



Bluebell woodland, Bredhurst © Kent Wildlife Trust

Bredhurst Woods

Bredhurst Woods had the potential to form an excellent recreational resource for local people as well as being an important ancient woodland habitat for wildlife. The wood suffered from neglect, high levels of fly-tipping, and illegal off-road motorcycling. The fact that a number of years ago much of the wood was sold off in small parcels made it difficult to manage the woodland effectively.

Concern about the levels of damage and disturbance to this woodland led to the formation of the Bredhurst Woods Action Group by local residents keen to secure the future of the woodland. BWAG are taking on much of the management of the wood, with advice and assistance from Kent Wildlife Trust, who have produced a management plan and are supporting BWAG to implement management tasks.

The woodland is linked to other habitats through a network of hedges and surrounded by chalk grassland and arable farmland. Kent Wildlife Trust is working with local landowners to restore chalk grassland and bring land into environmental stewardship.

