

## Wilder Kent Awards

2022/2023

### Towns, Cities & Villages

#### Westerham Town Council's submission

**Westerham Town Council (WTC)** is the level of local government closest to those who live and work in the town and its surrounding areas, the Town Council strives to improve the quality of life in the area; it provides important services within the community and represents the views of local people in all matters which affect Westerham. Westerham is a small town and the parish is made up of Westerham and the village of Crockham Hill with a population of approximately 5,000 and a Precept of £293,000.

Its 13 Councillors work through 5 committees to carry out its responsibilities: the Allotments, Playing Fields and Open Spaces Committee, the Finance and General Purposes Committee, the Highways and Lighting Committee, the Planning and Development Committee and the Youth and Community Committee.

Central to everything it does is communication and engagement with the community, ranging from detailed consultations on specific issues, to a wide ranging survey on which was based the current 4 year strategy. It is constantly seeking new ways to engage with its residents and businesses and works closely with other community organisations.

WTC has approved an ECO Policy with each Committee having an ECO Action Plan that is monitored and reviewed at each Committee Meeting. WTC is developing an Action Plan to becoming carbon neutral.

WTC carries out a great deal of partnership working as due to the size of the Council we do not have the resources to carry out many of these projects by ourselves.

#### Update on events/Agenda 2022 since our last submission

- o **Review** of our **community consultation** (postcard) **responses** – results to be announced of seed ball winner June 2022 ✓ **completed**
- o **Bat talk and walk** with WTC giving out **free bat boxes** ✓ **completed.**

#### **Bat Walk and Talk – update**

One of the outstanding actions from our Kent Wilder Awards submission 2022 was to hold a Bat Talk. The Town Council had asked Kent Wildlife Trust if they could help with organising a Bat Walk, which they agreed.

This was held on Tuesday 23rd August 2022 at Hosey Common between 7.30 and 9.30 pm. 25 people, including five families, had signed up for the walk and the weather was perfect.

The walk was led by Paul from the Kent Wildlife Trust and supported by Susan - Sevenoaks Greensand Commons Assistant Project Officer. The Town Council had purchased eight bat boxes which were given out at the beginning of the walk to those interested in putting a bat box up, with some top tips from Paul about installing them.

The first part of the walk involved a really interesting talk from Paul about all things 'bats', from interesting facts to listening to different bat calls.

Once it had got dark enough, we set off into the woods. It was surprisingly easy to see and a few people had torches for when the paths were a little challenging! Paul had given out some batometers set to a certain frequency

The talk before the walk!



so we could hear the bats. We heard a few bat calls but maybe not as many as we thought we would.

It was a really enjoyable and interesting evening and I will not be worried about bats flying into my hair again after leaning all about senses!



A bat box made up by one of the attendees, after the talk, prior to installation.

- **Investigating** having a **Swift bird box** at our Groundsman Hut ✓ **completed**. The area had been reviewed by the local Swifts group and the outcome was it was not a suitable location for Swifts. Whilst this was disappointing for us St Mary's Church in the Town was suitable and swift boxes have been installed together with a swift caller to encourage roosting in the bell tower.
- **Bug box** to be installed at our Council office garden ✓ **completed**  
We have installed a wildlife hotel at our council office garden and one at our Bee and Butterfly garden at King George's Playing Field and will monitor them throughout the year.



*Wildlife Hotel at our Council Office garden*



*Wildlife Hotel at our Bee & Butterfly Garden, King George's Playing Field*

- Investigating **Electric Charging points** in the town ✓ **completed**  
We have been working in partnership with Kent County Council to deliver 2 electric charging points through the Parish EV ChargePoint Scheme. In March 2023 the Town Clerk met with the KCC Transport Planner to discuss siting charge points at our Costells Meadow Car Park at King George's Playing Field in Westerham. Following a site visit the Town Council completed an expression of Interest form, which was followed by an electrical audit to see if the site was suitable. The site has now been selected and the legal agreement with KCC has been signed, work should commence on providing two EV charging Points **by summer 2023**.





An example of what the site will look like.

- o **Community event making bird feeders** using recycled materials with our Forget me not café attendees ✓ **completed**

On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2022 Angela Howells, Town Clerk ran a session at the Westerham Forget-me-not Café making bird feeding stations out of used and washed juice cartons. Sticky back plastic was purchased and cut into lengths for the attendees to stick on. Hooks and small bags of wild bird seed were provided. Everyone loved making them and we had over 25 made.





### UPDATE ON OUR NEST BOXES

We are thrilled to learn that birds are nesting in one of our community bird boxes made last year.





## Community consultation – update

In 2022 we asked the Community for its views; postcards were given out at the 2022 Annual Town Meeting, at a stall at a local community event in May, circulated on social media, and sent to all local organisation to complete.






### You Said –



## Continued Community engagement and partnership working:

**We're talking to District and County Councils about**



- ❖ Maintain green spaces - especially the Commons
- ❖ Keep the town clean
  - ❖ Wash the pavements - especially Market Square
  - ❖ Remove the litter from all roads
- ❖ Development:
  - ❖ No more housing or offices
  - ❖ Limit development on green sites
- ❖ Sustainability
  - ❖ Recycle more - especially food waste
  - ❖ Strive for better air quality
  - ❖ More electric vehicle charging points
- ❖ Parking !!
  - ❖ No change to parking charges
  - ❖ More parking
  - ❖ Residents/disabled parking in Croydon Road
  - ❖ Free parking in Darent car park for walkers
  - ❖ Make Darent the car park of choice
- ❖ Pedestrians and cyclists
  - ❖ More traffic calming and pedestrian areas
  - ❖ More zebra crossings and pedestrian paths
  - ❖ Improve pathways in and around the town
  - ❖ Cycle paths
- ❖ Grass verges
  - ❖ Manage grass verges to allow for wild flowers: eg Croydon Rd, London Rd, opposite Wolfe Garage
  - ❖ Manage for wild life and wild flowers: observe no mow May
- ❖ Traffic
  - ❖ Enforce speed limits
  - ❖ No diesel vehicles
  - ❖ Bypass for traffic
- ❖ Development
  - ❖ Use landfill site for housing or big park

**We are continuing our work with our Eco Action Plan See our [website](#) [Green Agenda - Westerham Town Council](#)**



## Greensand Commons Project

The Town Council has worked closely with the Greensand Commons Project which comes to a close after five years and **WTC committed 5 years of funding** towards this project. WTC helped advertise for volunteers and for the Commons events and volunteer task days. Cllrs and numerous residents have taken part in the events.



One of our Cllrs Deborah Coen attended part of the Greensand Commons Conference on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April in Sevenoaks and reported 'I attended the second half of the Greensand Commons Conference on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and listened to talks on Conservation Grazing, a volunteer's journey with the project and the Darent Valley Landscape Recovery Project. The Conference ended with a short film of a day of volunteering and pieces to camera by the volunteers saying what they have gained by being involved.

The overwhelming sense amongst attendees was concern about the NLHF funding ending in June 2023 and if another sponsor is not found all the hard work and

effort of the last 5 years will have been for nothing. The National Heritage Lottery Fund cannot do a repeat funding - their spokesperson said that all projects have a finite time and the Greensand Commons Project has actually had an extra year due to the pandemic. However continuation of the Project is at risk if significant funding is not found quickly. The plea from Charles Dymoke, the volunteer who spoke, was for Sevenoaks District Council to work with Kent Wildlife Trust to continue to protect this lowland heath. The value of the space being available to the public is, in his view, immense and the impact on social and mental wellbeing cannot be underestimated.

The film was very powerful in conveying a sense of fun, inclusivity and camaraderie amongst volunteers whilst doing essential work in our countryside and it could not fail to attract more members of the community.

I will be raising this with the relevant Town Council Committee to see if we can help.'



This is now culminating with the Greensand Commons Project hosting a celebration of the 5-year project. The festival took place on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> May, 12pm – 5pm on the Town Council’s Memorial Playing Field, Dairy Lane, Crockham Hill.

The **Greensand Commons Festival** has been organised to celebrate the community-led conservation project, which has seen the careful management of eight Commons in West Kent over the past 5-years, largely by a team of dedicated local volunteers. The event will include opportunities to learn more about the project and wildlife in West Kent, fun fair games, free face painting, free archery and axe-throwing, free arts and crafts, stalls from local businesses, charities and artists, food vendors, live music and more!

We have advertised the event on our community noticeboards, social media pages and to local community groups. Crockham Hill Primary School have sent round to all parents and staff on their Parent mail system.



## Kent Wildlife Trust

On 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022 the Deputy Clerk attended Fungi Task Day at Hosey Common Woods.

'On Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November, despite the heavy rain and cold I had a very interesting and fact filled time exploring Hosey Common Woods with the Sevenoaks Greensand Commons project volunteer task day group and Kent Wildlife Project Team learning about the importance of fungi, its benefits to nature and an insight into the hundreds of different types and what you can learn about the habitat where they grow. Our guide showed us where they had seen a rare, purple-coloured fungi in Hosey Woods and along French Street - only found in two other places locally. We found fungi that only grows from fir cones, fungi with the common name of jelly baby (see photo of someone holding it in their hand) and a type of fungi that makes the bark of trees smell like Indian spices! Plus, so much more - all on our doorstep. I could go on....!' *Deborah Rogers, Deputy Clerk, WTC*



**The Council will look to incorporate such information on our website relating to all things wildlife and fauna in Westerham and Crockham Hill.**



## North West Kent Countryside – Plastic Pollution

In 2022 and 2023 the Town Council partnered with North West Kent Countryside/Kent Wildlife Trust with Council staff, Councillors, residents and volunteers to count the number of plastic items found in and adjacent to the River Darent in Westerham



Town Clerk



Deputy Town Clerk



**HELP US TACKLE PLASTIC POLLUTION!**

**Darent clean-up event -Westerham**

**Weds 17th May 2023**

**(10.00–2.00 p.m.)**

To book your place please email  
[mark.gallant@kent.gov.uk](mailto:mark.gallant@kent.gov.uk) or text 07740 185228

This project is delivered in partnership with Westerham Town Council and funded through Defra's Landscape Recovery Scheme, and supported by the Environment Agency



Cllrs and volunteers

## Preventing Plastic Pollution – what was collected

### Aug 2022

- 21.6 kg`s of rubbish from the river corridor and banks of the Darent at Westerham's Darent car park.
- Most of the rubbish consisted of plastic drink/water bottles, (41 items), crisp & sweet packets (89 items) and drink cans (75 items), assorted plastic (55 items) and wet wipes (27 items)
- a push bike from the river corridor and 8 traffics cones

### February 2023

26 x large plastic shopping bags  
36 x small plastic freezer/vegetable bags  
38 x food containers (Inc. fast food)  
51 x plastic drink bottles  
34 x plastic caps and lids  
285 x plastic crisp and sweet wrappers  
14 x plastic cups  
27 x items of plastic cutlery etc.  
122 x items of plastic sheeting and packaging  
94 x pieces of polystyrene  
18 x plastic plant pots  
4 x condoms  
36 x wet wipes  
31 x nappies  
37 x bagged dog faeces  
18 x items of rubber  
68 x metal drink cans  
25 x glass drink bottles

1, 261 items of rubbish removed from the environment

Total amount of rubbish collected 14 bags weighing 49.55Kg`s

## OTHER PARTNERSHIP ACTIVIES

- In March 2023 WTC's Cllr Bird undertook to trial a walk in Crockham Hill for Kent Wildlife Volunteer Adrian who is creating some mapped walks across their sites. Cllr Bird provided feedback and said that the walk was very easy to follow.



## River Dipping Event at the River Darent at King George's Playing Field

- o Kent Downs Countryside Partnership – River Dipping event at River Darent at King George's Playing Field 14<sup>th</sup> February 2023



This event was well publicised by the Council as it took place at half term. Cllr Thompson attended and the Deputy Clerk took her family and friends to the event and it was very well supported.

- o Signed up and promoted CPRE's Hedgeline help out 1 -31<sup>st</sup> May 2023 - to help build a nationwide picture of how healthy our hedgerows are.



The  
countryside  
charity

## **New walking trail - Walk to Hill Fort**

The Town Council has been working with the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme and the North West Kent Countryside Partnership, on a Kent Downs AONB Project the 'Local Landscape Trail Project'. The Project is funded through the Heritage fund and Interreg EU France (Channel Manche) England Experience European Regional Development Fund.

The project involves creating a new 6km walking trail within the Darent Valley working with the Town Council and the community to find a route. Two of our Cllrs Kay and Coen walked a route with the Countryside Officer which had been identified as a new route which would highlight different aspects of the countryside using footpaths that may need improving. The footpath was deemed suitable for the project and the Town Council is delighted to announce that work on the new walks leaflets is nearly completed. Way markers will be used to mark the walk and there will be a digital version of the leaflet on our website as well as a link to the full walk details through the Darent Valley Landscape website.

Copies of the first leaflet are shown, a small section is being re-written and the WTC logo will be attached. The full route will be shown on the Darent-valley.org.uk website or on the Darent Valley Trails app as soon as the walks information is released.



# Westerham



Westerham is a historic town located in the county of Kent, in southeastern England. Situated on the northern edge of the High Weald, the town is surrounded by beautiful countryside and is known for its charming architecture and rich history

With a population of around 5,000 people, Westerham has a small-town feel, but is just a short drive from the bustling city of London, making it a popular destination for both locals and visitors alike.

The town has a rich cultural heritage, with many historic buildings and landmarks, as well as numerous outdoor attractions and activities. Whether you're interested in history, nature, or just a peaceful escape from the city, Westerham has something to offer.

To explore other local landscape trails in the Darent Valley visit [darent-valley.org.uk](http://darent-valley.org.uk)



This trail is one of many locally curated landscape trails in the Darent Valley.

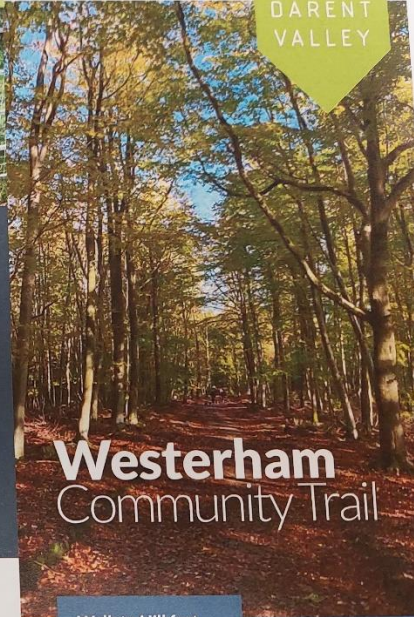
Each circular trail has been created by local communities to reveal under-explored areas, hidden heritage and to share stories about their town or village. This project is part of the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme (DVLPS), part of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). DVLPS works throughout the Darent Valley to conserve the area's rich heritage landscapes and encourage people to enjoy, explore and connect to them.

With up to 25 trails to explore, download the free **Darent Valley Trails app** available on the App Store and Google Play.



2023

DARENT VALLEY



# Westerham Community Trail

Walk to Hill fort

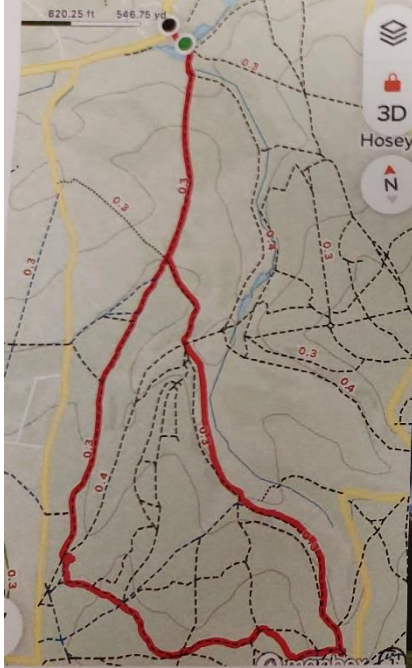


EUROPEAN UNION



Co-financed by the European Union and the European Regional Development Fund.

## Trail Information



Distance of trail  
3,6 miles (5,92 kms)

### The Fort

The hill fort itself is covered with rhododendrons, but you can still see some small banks, remains of the earthworks that one can only imagine were once very magnificent.

There is an interesting bank along the edge of the field at the base of the wooded hill, made more noticeable, perhaps, by the snow. This was probably created by the river, perhaps when in full spate at the end of the last Ice Age, and the way it delineates the bottom of the hill may have seemed fortuitous to the first inhabitants, who may indeed have increased it as part of their defences.

The site's location is perfect: the springs of the Darent are in the meadow at the hill's base, so the inhabitants always had fresh water, and a fertile pasture for their animals. As it leaves the vale, the nascent river describes a bend around a hilly spur, which thus encloses the place, giving it a great feeling of homeliness and safety.

The two mounds that one passes on the way to this place from Westerham are from an air raid shelter.

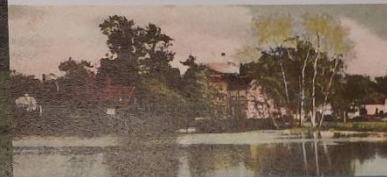
The site's size and location seems to indicate that it was a satellite of Oldbury Hill, which lies to the east.



### Long Pond

Long Pond is a beautiful body of water located in the heart of Westerham. Surrounded by picturesque countryside, the pond is a popular spot for fishing, birdwatching, and nature walks. The pond is also home to a variety of wildlife, including ducks, swans, and herons, making it a great place for nature lovers to visit. Visitors can enjoy a peaceful walk around the pond and take in the stunning scenery, or simply sit and relax by the water's edge.

In addition to its natural beauty, Long Pond also has a rich history. It is said to have been created during the 18th century as a result of gravel extraction, and was later used as a source of water for the nearby Crockham Hill House. Today, the pond is a beloved local landmark and a popular spot for picnics and outdoor activities. Whether you're looking for a peaceful escape from the city or an opportunity to connect with nature, Long Pond is definitely worth a visit.



For more information about Westerham visit [visitwesterham.org.uk](http://visitwesterham.org.uk)



**Recycle plant pots** – the plastic plant pots from our bedding plants have been given to the Churchill Primary School to re-use for planting projects with the children. We look forward to hearing what they have planted.



### Litter Picking

WTC organises **litter picking events** throughout the year involving community groups and the local primary school and lends equipment to residents to carry out litter picking where they live.

#### Crockham Hill residents



#### Hosey Hill resident, Westerham





A litter pick was organised in conjunction with the Big Help out and the Great British Spring Clean on 21<sup>st</sup> March and although the weather could have been better there was a good turnout.



- **Promoted** via our social media pages **local groups and organisations** **eco events/initiates/task days**



- **Submitted an article for Kent Wildlife Trust Parish and Town Council newsletter, Summer 2023 issue** - about WTC's work with the Greensands Common Project with the hope of inspiring others to follow suit.

## Manage our land for nature

- Westerham Town Council manages three allotment sites, where plot holders **plant and grow** their own produce, **flowers, plants**, and keep **bees**.
  - **Water collection** - All allotment holders are encouraged to collect rain water, information sent with their 2022/23 rent renewal letters.
  - Actively **promote** the District **Garden Waste collection** to get rid of garden cuttings the environmentally friendly way.
  - **Reduction of pesticide** – continued reduction from 3 to 1 treatments per annum on hard surface areas within Town centre.
  - Continue to provide a high-quality **weed control fabric** that can be purchased at cost from the Town Council by allotment holders as a non-chemical weed suppressant.
  - Took part and promoted - **No Mow May 2023**
- 
- Continue to plant whips to **re-grow gaps in native hedging** at our open spaces and allotments.
  - **Since our last submission we have not had a bonfire.**
  - **Planted native trees** for the **King's coronation and in memory of Queen Elizabeth II.**

## Water Usage

- Public toilet - water usage has been reduced, there is no running water – **all water is on a timer**
- Allotment holders are encouraged to have **rainwater collection**.
- **Water collection** - We are investigating providing water butts to allotment holders to collect rain water.
- **Water Refill Scheme** – new tea rooms/cafes moving into Westerham are approached to join the existing scheme.

## Improving Air Quality

- **20 is plenty implementation around Town** - weekly community speed watch led by the Council using our new speed indication device (SID) is taking place in the 20 mph zones to ensure the speed limit is upheld and to gather data for Kent County Council and Kent Police.



## Energy Use

- **LED sensor** lighting installed in our groundsman workshop.
- **LED lighting** installed in our Council Office chambers
- **All WTC owned street lights** has now been converted to **LED**
- **Christmas Lights** – we continue to use environmentally friendly **low energy** LED
- For a second year WTC held a competition for the local Primary School to design a **Christmas Light**, below is the winning entry made into an **LED** light.



Winning entry for Christmas 2022



## Others

- **Lobbies** Kent County Council to reduce cutting of wildflowers on public rights of way where this is possible
- WTC **opposes** developments which will damage wildlife
- WTC's planning committee expects applications to meet national requirements for energy reduction
- **Promoting** district, county and community events

### **Future events/Eco Agenda for next 4 year term**

- **Working with Crockham Hill Primary School Eco Club**

Two of our Cllrs, Cllr Coen and Davies delivered four bird and four bug boxes to Crockham Hill Primary School before Easter. The School has set up an Eco Club and wanted to put up the boxes so they could monitor the bird and insect activity and would report back to the Council.

Four members of the Eco Club will be attending a meeting of our Youth and Community Committee on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> June to tell us about what they do and let us know how the boxes are faring. The Committee is looking forward to this as it is always exciting to work with the young people, they have such brilliant ideas!

Council has also provided litter pickers and bags for the School to clean up the area around their School. The School is in a rural village with a population of approximately 500 and Crockham Hill is a ward in the Westerham Parish.

Four bird boxes and four insect boxes have been given to Churchill Primary School, Westerham and the Committee will be setting up a meeting to discuss monitoring over the next year.

- **Establish a monitoring programme for our wildlife hotels and Bee and Butterfly garden**
- **The Youth & Committee will be talking to Crockham Hill School to encourage them to put in an application for the 2024/25 Wilder Kent Awards.**