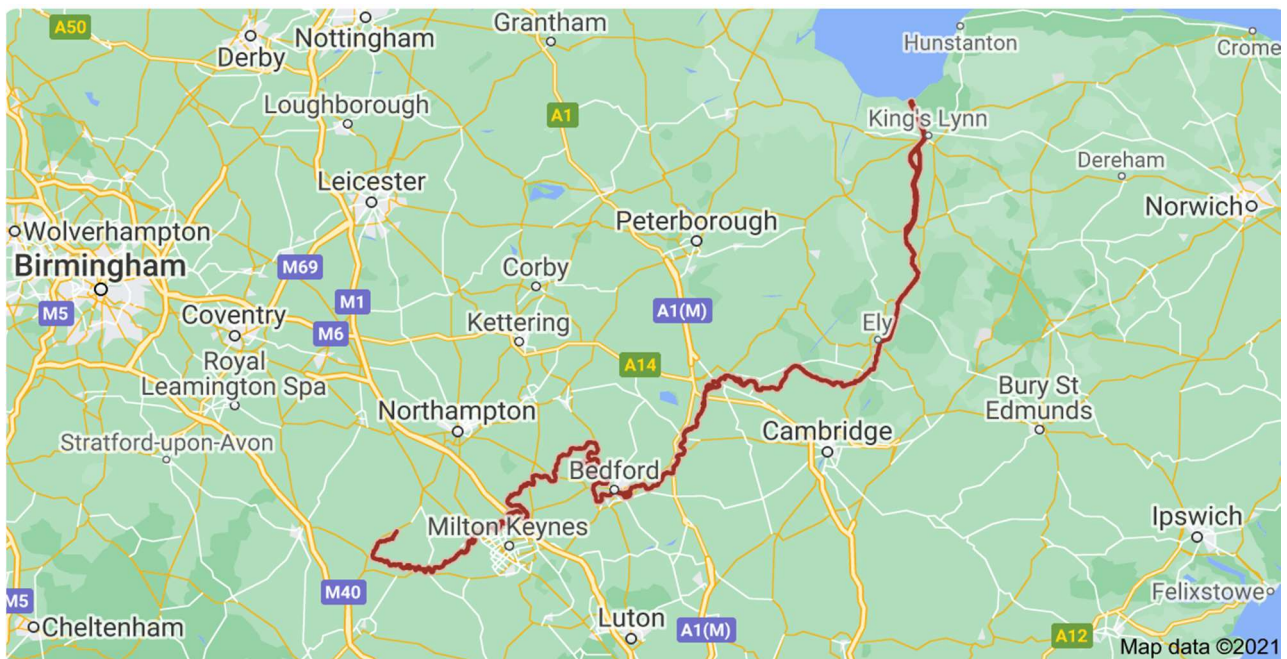


News Update from the Chair June-July 2021

The Ouse Valley Way Challenge

Following on from **Stephen Ferguson**'s historic conquest of the 150 mile Ouse Valley Way from source to sea in a very wet winter we now have another candidate to attempt the walk.

Celia Woolley will start the walk on 14 August and will be keeping a blog of her travels plus posting updates on Instagram and the GOVT Facebook page. The Trust will be following and reporting on her progress and we hope to meet up with her at various points including the half way point at The Waits, St Ives on 22 August. Our only concern is whether parts of the path may be too overgrown to allow free passage. Outside Cambridgeshire it is beyond our control but we are still working with CCC and striving for better maintenance in our area.



The complete 150 mile Ouse Valley Way

Keeping the Ouse Valley Way accessible

In spite of the investment in new signage and way markers there have been problems with the maintenance of the path. Severe cut backs in public spending over many years have meant that the County Council now only carry out two cuts a year when actually several more are needed.

Back in 2019 the County Council, working with the Trust, sent a letter to all the Parish and Town Councils that border the path asking whether in future the simpler maintenance items might be carried out by local councils leaving the major bank and bridge repairs plus removal of fallen trees to the county contractors. Some parish councils were prepared to do this but others were not so keen.

There have been issues this year where the growth of nettles and brambles has left parts of the path impassable. Fortunately teams of volunteers have gone out and dealt with much of the problem. "Green Teams" have been out with strimmers and cutters. Huntingdon Rotary have decided that the task is too much for volunteers and are employing their own contractor at their own expense.



Partner Member's "Green Team" at work clearing nettles and brambles

This problem will not go away. If we hope to encourage local people to enjoy the countryside and use the footpath network we have to ensure that a walk is not abandoned because the path has become impassable. It would be very off-putting to take a family on a walk only to have to turn back before it can be completed. It also provides a poor image for visitors.

It is highly unlikely that the County Council will allocate more funds to allow more frequent path clearance. Hopefully the Trust can organise a system where either parish councils or volunteer groups fill the void and importantly, assist with the technicalities of health and safety and insurance issues.

We have joined the Rivers Trust

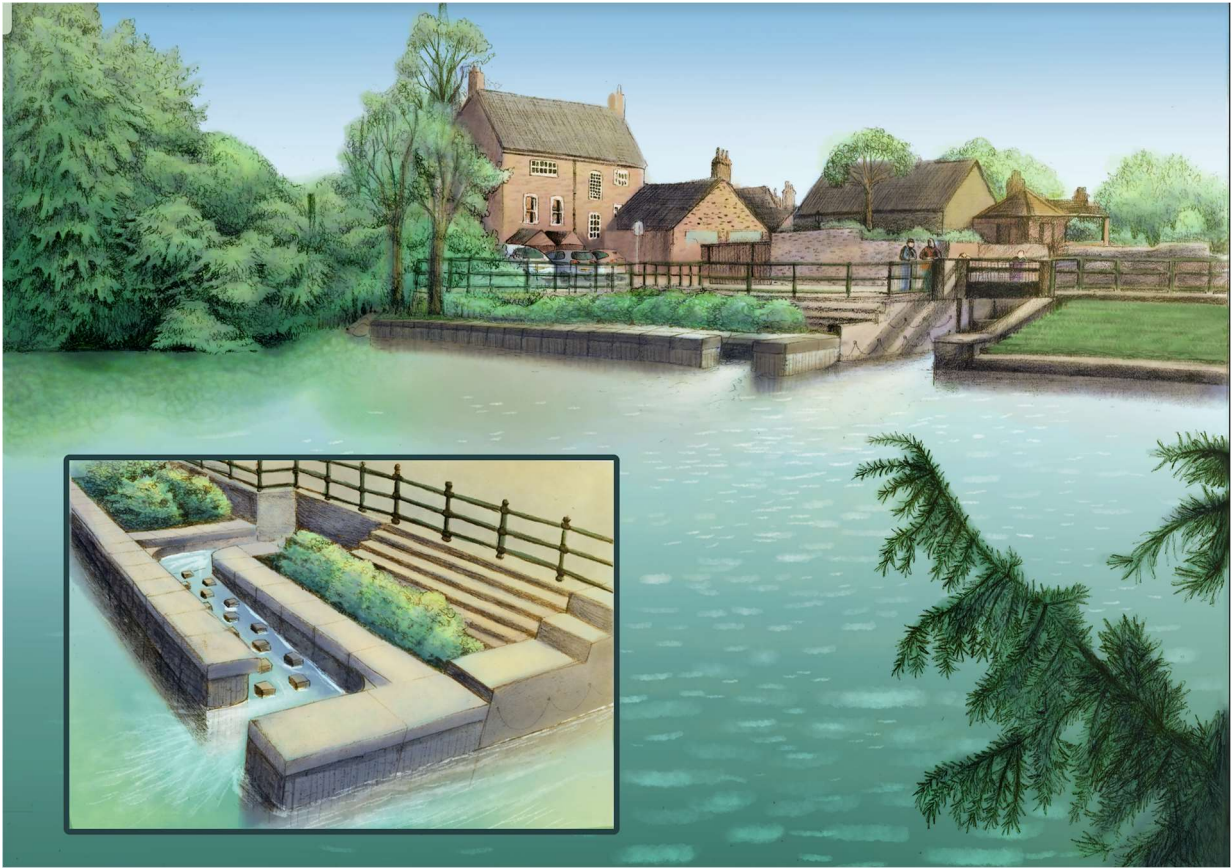
The Rivers Trust is the national body dedicated to promote their vision of "wild, healthy, natural rivers, valued by all." Local trusts carry out the work under the umbrella of the national body. Unlike the River Nene and almost all other rivers in the country, the River Great Ouse has not previously been represented. We hope to fill this gap. Upstream we are now working with the Bedford Great Ouse Valley Environmental Trust and downstream with Cambridgeshire ACRE.

Tree planting supported by Looker Environmental

Looker Environmental have offered the Trust a grant of £560 towards the cost of the tree protectors. More tree planting will take place from November onwards.

Fish Pass at Godmanchester

GOVT has been represented on the liaison committee that is advising on this project. Work has now started and is due for completion in the Autumn. The project will allow fish to overcome the man made obstacles and one metre change in level to swim upstream. After 1000 years of man altering the river to his own advantage with little thought to the effect on wild life, this represents a significant change in our attitude to the natural world. The work is being funded by Huntingdonshire District Council, the Environment Agency, the A14 Legacy Fund and also two of the Trust's partner members, Godmanchester Town Council and Godmanchester in Bloom.



Artists Impression of the new Fish Pass at Godmanchester Mill Steps

New Ouse Valley Way Information Board at St Ives

As well as upgrading all 11 existing information boards the Trust has also installed two new ones. The one at Bromholme Lane Brampton was erected earlier this year and another new one (below) is now installed in St Ives town centre on The Waits next to the Norris Museum.



Could you become a Trustee?

We are looking for new trustees with the enthusiasm to develop our mission. Following the departure of Graham Wilson to take on his new senior role at the County Council we are now looking for new trustees. Please see this page of the website www.greatousevalleytrust.org.uk/index.php/news-events/vacancy-for-a-volunteer-trustee

Partner Members

We are planning another Partner Members meeting when views and ideas can be shared. This will be the first face to face meeting for more than eighteen months. The proposed theme for this meeting will be the progress on landscape designation for the valley. Will this be an Area of Outstanding Beauty or something different? Date to be advised.

Graham Campbell July 2021