

Hi everyone,

We wanted to provide a brief update to you all on activities from the Otter Valley Association. This email contains the following items:

1. Outcomes of the 45th Annual General Meeting.
2. East Devon Local Plan – deadline approaching
3. Naval history at Budleigh Salterton
4. Water quality issues at Lime Kiln pumping station
5. Initiative Updates
6. OVA Initiative: Flora & Fauna
7. Web Updates
8. Reminder: Photographic Competition



We welcome your feedback – if you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact us through a member of the Executive Committee, or via the web form on our website.

1. Outcomes of the 45th Annual General Meeting

The AGM occurred on Tuesday 11th June at the Peter Hall in Budleigh Salterton. The meeting comprised two parts:

- official AGM business (agenda shown below).
- an excellent presentation given by Sam Bridgewater, director of environment strategy and evidence at Clinton Devon Estates.



In front of a capacity audience of OVA members, the AGM business was conducted successfully. As a result, the OVA now has a new team of officers and trustees. You can find all trustees and members of the executive committee listed on the OVA web here (<https://www.ova.org.uk/executive-committee-0>). All relevant documents from the AGM are also on the OVA web.

Thankyou to everyone who came and joined-in. It was lovely seeing so many familiar and new faces. Also a massive thankyou to those of you who stepped forward to volunteer for various roles and working groups.

LANDSCAPE RECOVERY: HEATHS TO SEA

Following the official business of the AGM, Sam Bridgewater gave an insightful and dynamic presentation entitled "Landscape Recovery - Heaths to Sea". You can find more information about this by going to the OVA website (here: <https://www.ova.org.uk/news/heath-seas-landscape-recovery-project>). You will also find a link on the web page where you can provide feedback to the team at Clinton Devon Estates. Please do so if you have time.

2. East Devon Local Plan – deadline approaching

We wanted to draw to your attention the current state of the East Devon Local Plan. This is a plan that affects all of us with regard to how the East Devon District Council consider planning decisions for future developments across the region. You can view a Youtube video from EDDC explaining what it is here (https://youtu.be/Cu7_agPSMc).

We think it is important that everyone understands what is being considered and has the opportunity to make a comment - should you wish to highlight items that you support, are interested in or concerned with. You can share your thoughts online at <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/local-plan> before the deadline of 5pm on Thursday, 27 June 2024.

Topics include conserving the natural environment and ensuring retail, leisure, and community spaces reflect residents' and visitors' needs. Additional housing and employment sites have been submitted for consideration since East Devon District Council's (EDDC) previous Local Plan consultation in early 2023. We also wanted to share comments (below) that the OVA has submitted this week, following input from various members to the association. We wanted to specifically highlight our concern about the levels of pollution in the River Otter, and the effects this is having on the environment and biodiversity. We would like the emerging Local Plan to address these serious issues, and to do more joined up work on nature recovery

networks. We believe that this would be timely in view of all the survey work being undertaken by the Clinton Devon Estates in relation to their new Landscape Recovery Project - Heaths to Sea.

Green Wedges (Policy 78)

- These areas of undeveloped land are extremely important, almost akin to mini green belts separating settlements. Although they are small in area, they provide vitally important functions, as identified in the policy. In particular stopping the coalescence of towns and villages, providing very valuable wildlife corridors, and open areas of high visual amenity close to built-up areas. Turning to the policy wording, we consider that it is important to set out these functions, and note that this part of the policy has been removed in the new wording. We consider that it should still be included.
- Any proposals to reduce the size of these very important small wedges should be resisted. In particular the proposed housing site on fields to the West of Bedlands Road in Budleigh Salterton. If housing is built on this area, there will be no separation between the village of Knowle and Budleigh Salterton, apart from the small area adjacent to the Budleigh Brook. This area would be too small to fulfil its functions as a Green Wedge. Knowle is a distinct but small settlement, and would lose its identity if joined with Budleigh Salterton.

Coastal Preservation Area - Sidmouth to Budleigh Salterton

- We agree with the strengthening of this policy and the area identified on Map 3, and the proposed changes at Otterton on Map 3A.

Nature Recovery and River Pollution (Chapters 6 and 13)

- Whilst not part of the current consultation topics, the Otter Valley Association wishes to raise matters concerning the protection and enhancement of the River Otter catchment. The levels of phosphate in the river Otter are being monitored regularly and are constantly above the recommended level, leading to a deterioration of native plant and animal life. This is exacerbated in the summer by reduced water levels and warmer water. It is thought that 50% of the Otter's pollution is due to farming practices.
- A major concern is the level of E.coli found at Otter Mouth which are many times higher than recommended. The current problem is identifying the source of these high levels. There are 33 Combined Sewer Outfalls (C.S.O's) on the Otter. Additional building increases the pressure on sewage works some of which are already liable to overflow when combined with heavy rainfall. When river levels are low any pollution such as animal waste, sewage and dangerous chemicals, become much more concentrated and damaging.
- We have noted that potential development along the River Axe is constrained due to the level of phosphates, but this is not being addressed in any way in the River Otter valley. Housing proposals in the ELP along the River Otter (Honiton, Ottery St Mary and Budleigh Salterton) are currently around 900, whilst those for the areas next to the River Axe are about 1,267.
- You will be aware of the recently designated Otter Estuary National Nature Reserve, which is an extension to the Pebblebed Heaths NNR. A new pilot Landscape Recovery Project is being undertaken by Clinton Devon Estates within the Lower Otter catchment. The initial survey work will identify ways to better promote the nature recovery network within the valley. These should be linked to the excellent nature protection policies in chapters 13 and 12 of the ELP. The District Council should look at promoting further national or local nature reserves and county wildlife sites within the Otter catchment to protect biodiversity.
- We would urge you to look into this aspect of the ELP more fully, going forward. We believe that the River Otter valley is of high ecological importance, and should be afforded greater protection for its wildlife biodiversity and landscape beauty.

3. Naval history at Budleigh Salterton

We have been delighted to receive a number of articles from local historian Roger Lendon. These have been added to our OVA website under the history tab. The two articles provide an amazing insight into two historical events:

- Budleigh Salterton Regattas in the 19th Century (read it [here](#))
- Shipwrecks at Budleigh Salterton (read it [here](#))

4. Water Quality Issues at Lime Kiln pumping station

Many of you have commented about the continuing issues that are affecting Lime Kiln pumping station. Not only are there continuous lorries now taking sewage away from the pumping station, but there have been a significant number of sewage discharges from Lime Kiln.

In order to represent our members and to add our voice to the ongoing debate, we have sent an official letter to the CEO of South West Water – copying Mrs Caz Sismore-Hunt - the Budleigh Salterton Town Mayor, Mr. Geoff Jung - Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment, East Devon District Council and Sam Bridgewater - Director of Environment Strategy & Evidence at Clinton Devon Estates. We will provide an update to you all if and when we receive feedback from SWW. Here is the text of the letter:

Dear Mrs. Davey

By way of introduction, I am the chairman of a registered charity in Devon called the Otter Valley Association - we are celebrating our 45th year and aim to promote interest, understanding, conservation and sustainable enhancement of the Lower Otter environment, mainly the area south of Ottery St Mary to the small town of Budleigh Salterton on the coast. Recently the Otter Estuary, alongside your sewage pumping station at Lime Kiln in Budleigh Salterton, has been designated as a National Nature Reserve. The nature reserve has been honoured to be 1 of 25 Nature Reserves in the UK as part of the "King's Series" celebrating the King's coronation.

On behalf of our 700+ members, and the local community, we have been extremely concerned at the situation that has developed at Lime Kiln. We are now seeing tankers moving sewage regularly from Lime Kiln (something that has never happened to our knowledge at such scale before) and far more sewage pollution alerts than in any previous year. We have also seen from the Environment Agency data, dangerously high levels of eColi recorded at the river mouth. According to data provided by the "Surfers against Sewage", there have been 60 significant sewage alerts so far this year at Budleigh Salterton - which is significantly higher than the 47 that occurred in the whole of last year, and greater than 2019-2022 combined (55 sewage pollution alerts). Indeed, over the last weekend in May two sewage alerts were issued on consecutive days - after many days of dry weather.

We have been told by your representatives that the tankers were being used to help manage the flows in the catchment as a result of the prolonged wet weather - to prevent spills into the environment. We were also told that there is infiltration of surface water into the network which is being investigated. Clearly something is amiss since spills are still happening. Our members are very concerned about the impact on swimming, on our tourist industry locally, and on the well-being of our environment. Of particular note is the impact of this situation on the new National Nature Reserve.

We are extremely proud of our valley and the surrounding area. We would like to invite you, or one of your representatives, to come to Budleigh Salterton and explain what has gone wrong at Lime Kiln, what your recovery plans are and the timelines for returning to a well-managed sewerage system befitting your organisation.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience,

*Yours faithfully,
Haylor Lass
Chairman, Otter Valley Association*

5. Initiative Updates:

We now have a number of different initiatives underway:

- We have a working group looking at the subject of "Water Quality along the river Otter". Alongside this, our environment team are setting up a group looking at "the local Flora & Fauna of the Lower Otter Valley". More on this below.
- Our history group is now focusing on candidate blue plaques in the area, as well as welcoming updates and articles from local historians – for example Roger Lendon as mentioned above.
- Our Built committee are continuing to look at planning applications but are also now looking in more detail at subjects that affect the river Otter – such as the East Devon Plan (mentioned earlier).
- We are looking at re-starting our talks program in the autumn with some exciting new subjects.
- Our walks team continue to go from strength to strength – and are looking at publishing an exciting new book on local walks to succeed the famous "12 walks of the Otter valley".
- We are expanding our network of partner organizations that we work with – from our friends at the Fairlynch museum, to other groups such as the River Otter Fisheries Association, East Devon District Council and many others.

As always, we continue to look for more volunteers to help in all these activities.

6. Initiative Update: Flora & Fauna

In addition to our two working groups on "Water Quality of the river Otter" and "Blue Plaques across the lower Otter valley", we are forming a third working group focused on the Flora & Fauna of the Lower Otter valley. If you are interested in helping, please do get in touch.

We are looking for people who are passionate about helping to protect and enhance the plants, flowers, insects, animals and birds across our valley. Here are some of the ideas that have been suggested for this group:

- To document the range of flora and fauna in the valley - including local residents and migratory animals.
- To produce and publicise materials to help with the well being of insects, birds, animals and plants (eg: leaflets for bird boxes, garden animals, bug hotels ... and an updated / new "Guide to the Flora & Fauna of the Otter Valley").
- To encourage participation of adults and children in enjoying the flora and fauna (walks, talks, school efforts, photography competitions etc).
- To help protect and enhance our flora and fauna by re-wilding where necessary, planting trees, protecting hedgerows, protecting rare examples.
- To work with partners to help remove invasive species.

- To work with partners to encourage an understanding and appreciation of flora and fauna - such as CDE, Pebblebed heaths, EDDC etc.

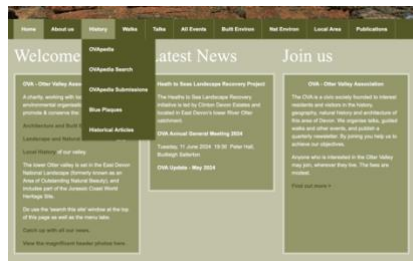
We will be providing an update on the work of these groups in our next printed newsletter. Please also checkout the facebook group for other updates and discussions.

7. Forthcoming Walks

We wanted to remind you all of the next few walks – we would love to see you at any of them:

- 'Silver-studded blue butterflies' on Monday 24 June – 1.00 pm Limited group size. NO DOGS. FULLY BOOKED – RESERVE LIST ONLY
- 'St Boniface Way' – Stage One on Wednesday 26th June – booking required.
- 'St Boniface Way' – Stage Two on Friday 5th July. Booking required.
- 'Raleigh Round' on Saturday 6th July
- 'Silver-studded blue butterflies' on Tuesday 9th July – booking required.
- 'Lyme Regis to Seaton via the inside passage' on Monday 15th July.
- 'Woodbury Wander' on week commencing 22nd July (date will be published closer to walk)

8. Web updates



We continue to make updates to our online presence. Our Website has had some significant updates added that we wanted to share:

- We've expanded the history tab to showcase articles of interest and blue plaques, as well as OVAPedia.
- We expanded the "news" section to showcase multiple items – required given the increased activity we are seeing across our groups. You will see a short summary of the "Heath to Seas" project along with information about our AGM and the latest newsletter.

9. Reminder: Photographic Competition

We wanted to remind everyone about the OVA photographic competition. There are two competitions that you can still enter:

- Children (15 years old or younger, as of September 30th 2024)
- Adults (16 years or older, as of September 30th 2024)

The closing date for this competition is the 30th September. All entries must be submitted via email to Editor@ova.co.uk or by direct message to the editor on Facebook. Each entry must include contact details (name, phone, email), the date of the photograph and the location where the photograph was taken. The winners will be announced in October and included in the winter Newsletter.

We are looking for photographs of any fauna (mammals, birds, bugs) taken anywhere between Exmouth to Sidmouth and from Ottery St. Mary to Budleigh Salterton. Photographs must be taken in the defined competition timeline (May 1st to September 30th). Anyone who is a member of either the OVA Facebook group, or the OVA charity can take part. People can submit up to 5 photographs MAXIMUM. Judges decisions will be final. NO disturbance of habitats is allowed in the taking of pictures. Indeed, for certain species it is illegal to do this. Pictures will be judged in digital form.

==== End of Email Update (June 2024) ====