

Hi everyone,

It's been a couple of months since we last sent an email to you all. This email contains the following items:

1. Major initiatives for this year
2. East Devon National Landscapes – Management plan review
3. OVA Summer Party – book your place now.
4. Annual General Meeting – save the date!
5. Otter Valley Association supporting local wildlife
6. Walks program - 12 walks booklet update
7. Facebook, Web, Newsletters & Email updates
8. RHS project – “Bumbles on Blooms”
9. Volunteers needed

1. Major Initiatives for this year

The OVA recently approved a number of initiatives, aligned to our constitution, for the coming year. We wanted everyone to understand these focus areas and we would welcome anyone who is interested in contributing or volunteering in any way.

The first of these relates to the subject of water quality. We have all seen the stories of sewage pollution across our beaches and estuaries. However, that is just one part of the story. We all have a role to play in helping reduce pollution and education is important to help here. Our aspiration is to help ensure that the River Otter is a clean river. This means rebuilding the thriving aquatic life that used to exist and ensuring clean bathing areas along the river. To do this we need to work with our local authorities and with the farming community up-stream to help reduce runoff that pollutes the river - as well as working with South West Water to stop sewage discharges and ensure our waters are safe and clean to enjoy.

The second of these relates to the history of our community. It is clear from comments and conversations that our history is of interest to a lot of you. We want to work with the community to identify people of historical importance across our villages and work with other local history groups to document and grow our blue plaque presence across the valley. We hope you will be interested - watch out for more information on this. We are looking for volunteers to help

Our third focus relates to the flora and fauna across our valley. We want to encourage everyone to help our garden birds, hedgehogs and insects. We want to promote our valley to everyone - highlighting, preserving and nurturing the local flora and fauna. More on this below.

Of course, we continue with the other areas set out in our constitution - including planning reviews, history research, walks, talks and so forth. More below and more is shared on our Facebook group and website.

2. EDNL Management Plan review

The East Devon AONB has been re-named the EDNL (East Devon National Landscape) and has been restructured. As a partner (amongst others like the District Council and the Wildlife Trust) we were asked to review and respond to their draft “organisational priorities” with our organisational priorities, actions, or targets for the period 2025-2030 as they relate to the East Devon National Landscape and how we might work to achieve them. We provided the following feedback which we wanted to share:

Nature

- From the OVA perspective we are fully supportive of your proposals for Nature & Species Recovery, and the conservation and enhancement of the landscape - particularly in the Otter Valley.
- We would like to see the protection of hedgerows and the promotion of wildlife corridors included as specific priorities in your plan.

- Water Quality monitoring and improvement on the river Otter is a high priority for the OVA. Our members are participating in the Citizen Science project to undertake water quality testing on the river Otter. We see your support of the Citizen Science project on the river Otter and your engagement with landowners and other interested parties as a key priority to achieve sustainable water quality improvements.

Climate

- From the OVA perspective we are keen to support local initiatives to tackle climate change and await with interest the production of your Climate Change Adaption Plan (2028)

People

- We support any community initiatives that promote education, awareness and understanding of the EDNL environment, landscape, and heritage which are also key objectives of the OVA in our area of interest.

Place

- We believe that the appointment of a planning officer for EDNL should be a very high priority to enable the EDNL to fully engage in planning related policy and development management consultations without delay.
- We consider access to the environment one of our priorities and therefore we are fully supportive of your objective to ensure that there is 'ease of use' for all to public footpaths.
- Local Heritage in the Otter Valley is also one of our objectives so we are keen to continue to support a reduction of the number of Scheduled Monuments at risk.

General comments on your priorities and aims for the area

- Overall, we support all the priorities in the Management Plan update but have highlighted above those which we believe are most aligned with the objectives

3. Come join the summer party



Our summer party is taking place on the 8th May at the Budleigh Salterton cricket club. This is open to ALL members and we hope that you can make it.

[Please click here to register](#)

The party starts at 19:00 with a welcome drink and canapes. There will be a fully manned bar available throughout the evening, where further drinks may be purchased.

There is a large car park and should you wish, there are conveniently timed bus services from both the Sidmouth or Budleigh Salterton directions, with nearby bus stops. You can find these on-line via stagecoach.com.

Please contact us via info@ova.org.uk if you have a query.

4. Otter Valley Association – Annual General Meeting

Date for your diaries – we will be holding our annual AGM on the 11th June at 7:30pm at the Peter Hall in Budleigh Salterton. We hope to see you all there. Further details to follow.

5. Otter Valley Association supporting local wildlife

One of the Otter Valley Associations aims is to support our native wildlife and it is particularly keen to encourage the interest of children who are passionate about the natural world. Therefore, the OVA have purchased bird nest boxes for Great and Blue Tits, Robins, Wrens and House Sparrows for three local schools, St. Peters in Budleigh Salterton and the Church of England Schools in Otterton and East Budleigh. All three schools will also receive bee hotels. Hedgehog hotels have also been given to Otterton and East Budleigh schools as they both have wild 'allotment' areas. The schools have also been given a DIY guide so that pupils can make their own House Martin nests.

The OVA is also working with Rick Lockwood, Ranger on the Otter Estuary National Nature Reserve. The Association has donated two Tawny Owl boxes, one each to be sited in wooded areas on each side of the estuary. At Ricks' suggestion, the OVA is also looking for a suitable site in Budleigh to put up five swift boxes.

In order to further support interest in the environment, the OVA is producing leaflets that provide information for those wishing to encourage wildlife into their gardens.



Church of England School, East Budleigh



Church of England School, Otterton

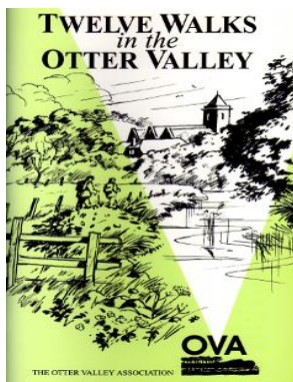


St. Peters School, Budleigh Salterton

This has even been covered in the local press (click here to see our article in the Exmouth Journal entitled "[Wildlife-loving pupils receive bird boxes from OVA](#)"). Here is a picture from the same article.

Alongside this, we are producing a series of new leaflets to share essential information about how to manage not only different types of bird boxes, but also bug hotels, hedgehog hotels and the like. The first of these is called the OVA guide to bird boxes. Click [here](#) to view it on our website.

6. Walks program



Our walks program is charging forwards and we have been delighted with how many of you have joined our recent walks. Here are our next few scheduled walks:

1. Westward Oh on Saturday 9th March. [Click here for details](#)
2. Castle & Commons on Tuesday 26th March. [Click here for details](#)
3. Budleigh to Sidmouth by the coast path on Tuesday 2nd April. [Click here for details](#)

We hope you can join one of these. They are a great way to get out in the fresh air, enjoy amazing scenery, learn a little history, chat to friends, and meet interesting people.

Full details can be found on our web (<http://www.ova.org.uk>), or on our Facebook group ([here](#))

We also wanted to let you know that we are now updating the famous "12 walks in the Otter Valley". If you are interested in helping this project in any way, please do contact us by emailing info@ova.org.uk.

7. Facebook, Web, Newsletters & Email updates

As we evolve our charity, we continue to use different ways of sharing information. We encourage everyone to check out our various forums and engage – whether by liking something, or adding your own article.

- **Printed Newsletters:** We continue to publish a printed newsletter to all OVA members. This is produced quarterly. You should all have received the January issue (optimistically called "Spring 2024"). Our next newsletter will be published at the end of April – cut-off date for articles to the editor is 10th April.
- **Monthly email updates:** We will be sharing a monthly email update to all OVA members similar to this. If you would like anything included, then please contact the editor at info@ova.org.uk.

- **Website (www.ova.org.uk):** Our website is where all material is published by the OVA – including updated walks, talks, articles, newsletters, flyers and publications. Please note that the printed newsletter is not posted online until the following newsletter is distributed – ensuring that all members are able to read the printed copy first.
- **Facebook:** We are building a community on Facebook. Here members can post their own articles and photographs, as well as comments like and engage with others. This community has grown to over 600 people from Exmouth to Sidmouth and from Exeter to Budleigh Salterton. We also have many people joining the Facebook group from all parts of the world – eager to see the photo's and community updates from one of their favourite places.
- **WhatsApp:** The walks team use Whatsapp to share information with the walkers. If you are interested in joining this, please join one of the walks and talk to the relevant walk leader.

8. RHS Project – Bumbles on Blooms



The RHS are calling upon people to help record bumblebees on flowers in gardens and parks. You can become a community scientist by taking photo's of bumblebees on blooms between February and May – to help the RHS work out which flowers bumblebees prefer and how we can all better provide for them.

For more information on how you can help, please visit the RHS website at [this link](#).

9. Volunteers needed

As with all charities, we survive and thrive on the funding and assistance provided by you – our members. We have a number of vacancies that we are looking to fill with volunteers. If you can spare an hour or two a week, or a month, or a year ... then please do get in touch. Any help is appreciated!

- History – we are looking for someone to help us manage OVAPedia – including researching, writing and uploading new articles.
- Talks – we are looking for someone to help us organise our talks schedule. This involves gathering ideas and then working with other committee members and presenters to communicate.
- Events – we are looking for someone to help us manage our upcoming events – such as the members party and talks program.

Please contact info@ova.org.uk if you have time to spare and help us.