

Hi everyone,

We wanted to provide a brief update to you all on activities from the Otter Valley Association. Following feedback, we have separated this email into two parts – a quick overview, and then more detailed information for reading at your leisure.



This email update contains the following items:

July Newsletter

- Did you receive your copy? If not, please let us know. Please also provide feedback – positive or negative.

Walks Update:

- Recruiting a new walks co-ordinator. Jane is sadly leaving us and we need a replacement. Can you help?
- Two extra walks for September have been added. So, we now have three walks on the 10th (starting in Newton Poppleford), the 19th (starting at Clayhidon) and 25th (starting at Brampford Speke).

Initiative Updates:

- Water Quality group. Five working groups setup for Testing processes & results, Agricultural runoff mitigation, South West Water discharges and engagement, Partnerships of agencies, citizen scientists and others, Planning & it's impact on the river. Survey run on our facebook group showing 61% are "afraid to swim due to possible contamination".

OVA Talks

Final dates for October & November are confirmed. Please mark your diaries and come to our talks!

- OVA Talk 1: Wednesday 23rd October. Doors open at 7:00pm (Speaker: Olly Watts, OVA; Title: How climate change affects us all).
- OVA Talk 2: Wednesday 20th November. Doors open at 6:30pm (Speaker: John Polly; Title: London's New River).

Photographic Competition

- Reminder that closing date is 30th September. So NOW is the time so start submitting any photographs. Please spread the word – anyone who is on our facebook group or a member can enter!

Heritage Open Days

- 6 - 15 September 2024. There are many events and buildings being opened in and around Exeter, also churches and at the National Trust properties. In addition Salem Chapel in East Budleigh will be open on 14 and 15 September for Smuggling Heritage stories.

Silk Factories in East Devon!

- Who knew that we used to have silk factories in East Devon! An enquiry came through the OVA website recently and our chairman, Haylor, provided an explanation and a guided overview. Full details below!

Have your say

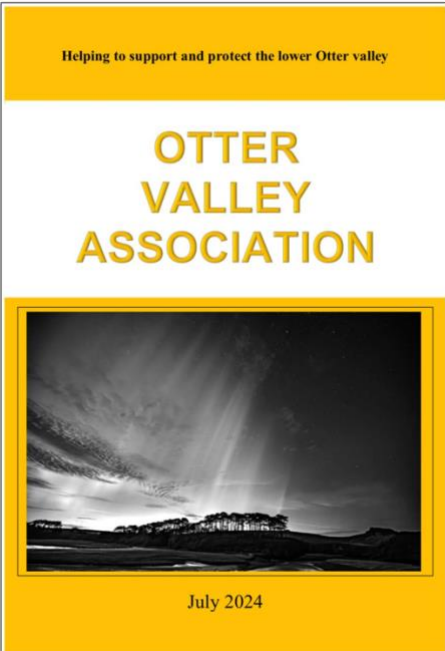
- Trees, Hedgerows & Woodlands; East Devon public consultation relating to trees, hedgerows and woodlands closes on 6 September 2024 and can be viewed at: <https://eddcreehedgeandwoodlandpublicstrategyconsultation.commonplace.is>
- National Planning Framework - an eight-week consultation has started, with the adoption of the final document planned for late September. The consultation comprises 106 questions, covering a wide range of topics related to the planning reforms. Details below of where to go to provide your input if you so wish.

Village Reps, Talks & Volunteering

- We are delighted to welcome Olly Watts and Michaela Manning as village reps for East Budleigh and Colaton Raleigh respectively. We are still looking for a volunteer to help at Newton Poppleford. Also, we are delighted to welcome Keith Grundy who is now helping us deliver our monthly talks program.
- We are looking for a walks co-ordinator and an events organizer – can you help?

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. July Newsletter – did you receive your copy?



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Our Cover Photo
A monochrome view of the Aurora Borealis and stars over the Otter mouth pine trees.

The July issue of our newsletter was distributed recently to all OVA members. If you have not received it, please do let us know. Furthermore, we are always on the lookout for feedback – both positive or negative. Do you like the newsletter? Are there topics which you would like covered in more detail? Please do let us know.

2. Walks Update: Recruiting a new co-ordinator

Walking with the Otter Valley Association



Sadly, Jane Connick is standing down from the role at the end of 2024 and we are looking to replace her! If you would enjoy a voluntary role which you can fit in at a time to suit you and enjoy co-ordinating, liaising and planning this could be for you.

We are looking for a walks co-ordinator that will work with the walks committee of 4 members. 3 of these are experienced walk leaders who offer invaluable pragmatic, useful advice when needed.

The walks committee usually meet once per year (over coffee obviously) and everything else is usually sorted either by email or chatting on a walk. It is a dynamic and active team who are also involved in the current project to update and re-launch the booklet '12 walks in the Otter Valley'

Tasks Jane is involved in:

- Produce 4 walk programmes per annum (to fit in with the OVA newsletter deadlines)
- Liaise with the walk leaders, by email, on walks / dates etc
- Upload the programme to the OVA website (no I hadn't done it before either – it is easy)

Jane has always found support from the walk team, leaders, and IT whizz Martin. They will all support and advise the new co-ordinator if necessary.

If you would like more details of the role – email Jane at: walks@ova.org.uk

Please join us all in thanking Jane for her amazing leadership – our walks program has been, and continues to be, a crown jewel in the Otter Valley Association.

3. Walks Update: Two extra walks for September

Our walks team are offering two additional walks for September. Please mark your diaries. You can find full details on these by visiting the OVA website or the OVA facebook group ... so we now have THREE walks in September as follows:

Tuesday 10 September – 10.00am – 6 miles. 3hours. *'Fire Beacon, White Cross and the riverpath'*

Meet: Newton Poppleford recreation ground car park (OS 115, SY 0882 8995) what3words:slap.///menswear.cavalier

This is a simple route going up and along East Hill then down and along the River Otter. There should be good views of the Sid and Otter valleys. Mostly tracks and footpaths. Bring lunch.

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway 01395 488739 / 07887936280

Thursday 19 September. 5 miles and optional pub lunch *'Walking the Blackdown hills'*

Walk from Clayhidon, Devon in the Blackdown Hills and lunch at The Half Moon, Clayhidon afterwards.

Walks Leaders: Paul and Fran Dike 07977 057546 / 01297 20695

Further details to follow on the website

Wednesday 25 September. 7.75 miles + picnic + coffee. *'Bramford Speke, Devon'*

Bramford Speke, Devon, Parking in Stoke Woods car park.

Walk Leaders: Paul and Fran Dike 07977 057546 / 01297 20695

Further details to follow on the website

4. Initiative Update: Water Quality

The water quality team, led by Geoff Porter, have been working on a number of initiatives. We wanted to give you regular updates on the various initiatives that the OVA is undertaking. Today, here is an update on "river quality". Please do contact us if you have questions, comments or would like to help.

The goal of the group is to improve the ecological quality of the river Otter. We want to maximise the bio-diversity to be good for nature, and to be good for people.

We have agreed five initiatives that will be tracked and owned by members of the OVA as follows:

- Testing processes & results
- Agricultural runoff mitigation
- South West Water discharges and engagement
- Partnerships of agencies, citizen scientists and others
- Planning & it's impact on the river

As a result of this, we have updated our charter for this group.

Online Facebook poll

In addition, we put a simple poll up on our Facebook group using a recent article from the Guardian newspaper and asking about people's views. It was a very simple experiment, but shows that there is clearly concern among our members about the quality of the river. 61% of people who responded would like to swim, but are afraid to do so. Here are the results: 430 people viewed the poll. 5 commented and 65 people voted:

- 14% say they have swum, or do swim, in the Otter
- 4% say they would like to swim in the Otter, and see no reason for not doing so
- 32% say they would like to swim in the Otter, but are concerned about the water quality
- 29% say they would never swim in the Otter specifically due to the water quality
- 18% say they would not swim in the Otter simply because "it's not their thing".

We are continually looking for volunteers to help our initiatives. If this is something that you are interested in, why not volunteer? There is no pressure to commit to specific hours or anything like that. But if you can help with a few hours here or a few hours there, then please let us know.

Please find below a link to an article from "Which" magazine providing a broad overview of the state of our rivers and seas and ask the question "Why is our water so polluted"?

We are obviously well aware of the issues with South West Water, but do take a few moments to read about other issues affecting our waterways – including agricultural runoff and chemical / plastic pollution.

While the article does not go deeply enough into discussing the commercial and political reasons underlying everything, it finishes by explaining what you personally can do to help.



Link: <https://www.which.co.uk/news/article/why-is-our-water-so-polluted-axP4l4F6jwVN>



📍 Dogs that have had flea treatment swim in rivers and lakes, where the chemicals wash off and kill wildlife. Photograph: Jayneboo Shropshire/Getty Images

In-line with this article, another article from the Guardian also caught our eye – this one asking the question "Are some of your household products killing insects and wildlife". It's a very disturbing thought and one that we urge everyone to consider.

Link: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/aug/09/household-products-killing-insects-wildlife>

5. OVA Talks are back!

As mentioned in our last printed newsletter, we are delighted that the OVA talks are coming back. Please find here final details for our October and November talks – we hope you can join us for what look incredibly interesting topics !

OVA TALK 1: WEDNESDAY 23RD OCTOBER.

Speaker: Olly Watts, OVA

Title: How climate change affects us all

Doors open at 7:00pm, talk starts at 7:30pm

Olly's talk will follow the path of his career working on climate change and nature for more than 20 years at the RSPB.

This started with developing the early science of climate change impacts on the UK's biodiversity, which led to the development of nature conservation responses to address these impacts at national and international levels. He will move on to how adaptation has been taken up by the nature conservation community, and the frustrations of getting the step-changes required to be implemented.

This will include a look at people's mindsets about climate change and the constraints of language that are holding back the forward looking responses that we need to put nature in a healthier place than today, as the pathway of climate change increasingly influences the world around us. We'll conclude with an optimistic outlook of change that we can all adopt to build a future that is healthier and richer for us all.

TALK 2: WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 20TH

Speaker: John Polly

Title: London's New River

Doors open at 6:30pm, talk starts at 7:00pm

John tells the story of how an idea of Captain Edmund Colhurst of creating a channel from Hertfordshire to the capital to bring fresh water to its expanding population became a reality. He also goes on to explain how modern projects such as the building of the M25 and the Piccadilly Line have meant changes to the still existing scheme.

6. 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.

7. Heritage Open Days

6 - 15 September 2024. There are many events and buildings being opened in and around Exeter, also churches and at the National Trust properties. In addition Salem Chapel in East Budleigh will be open on 14 and 15 September for Smuggling Heritage stories. An amazing number of events – for example (not exhaustive):

- Exeter's underground passages – 12th to 15th Sept
- Powderham Castle – 7th to 15th Sept.
- Castle Drogo's Hydro Turbines day – 15th Sept
- Hemyock Castle – 8th Sept
- South Devon Heritage railways – 14th & 15th Sept.
- Exploring Exeter Cathedral's Library and Archives – 11th & 13th Sept

8. Silk Factories in Newton Poppleford

Who knew that we used to have silk factories in East Devon! An enquiry came through the OVA website recently and our chairman, Haylor, provided an explanation and a guided overview.

If you see a Mulberry bush nearby, it's probably a descendent from this story! Wow 😊
So ... here goes ... there were many water powered mills along the River Otter in the past. Most, modest in size, were for grinding grains for flour and animal feed, but two, situated at Ottery St Mary and Newton Poppleford, were working factories that started out processing wool **and moved on to silk**.

The original factory at Ottery still stands, but scarcely a trace remains of the one at Newton Poppleford. This second one stood beside the River Otter at the eastern end of the town, on the west bank. Present day Millmoor Lane which leads off the A3052 was the route many of the mill-workers would have taken to work. This is called Factory Lane on the Ordnance Survey First Edition series map of 1888 (where the mill is labelled 'Victoria Silk Factory'). The factory site is now fields.

The mill was always owned by Lord Rolle (present day Clinton Devon Estate) and the lessee at this time was Henry Elliott. The mill was newly built around 1790 at a cost of £1200 with the contents valued at £800. It was called Newton Mill at this time.

Easing of high import duties in the 1820s meant that only industrialised throwing of silk became financially viable in this country. Industrial unrest in the areas of the north, where much of the work was still done in homes, followed the increased mechanisation of the processes as workers feared for their livelihoods. Factory machines were efficient and simple so that literally a child could operate one. Pay reflected this lack of any special skill needed.

The centre of the silk trade is often quoted as Macclesfield in Cheshire which had many silk mills by the 1770s although other northern towns also had silk mills. Skilled staff at Newton Poppleford often came from outside the area - probably from the north.

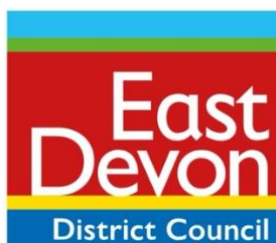
The powered machines in the mill were for throwing silk, which means spinning a thread. Those doing this work were known as throwsters and one place many of these silk throwsters - the majority of workers - came from was Taunton, where there was a silk mill. A much lesser number also came from Ottery St Mary where, as noted, there was another silk mill. So it seems that whilst some workers were local people there was also a mobile workforce perhaps following the fortunes of the silk industry as mills opened and closed.

The 1833 Factory Act banned children under nine from working in textile factories. Children aged nine to thirteen were only allowed to work 9 hours a day and 48 hours a week. Thirteen to eighteen year olds were limited to 12 hours a day and 69 hours a week. All children under eleven to have two hours education a day. The mill stopped working and is now a distant memory. If you want to learn more about this amazing story, checkout OVAPedia here: <https://www.ova.org.uk/article/newton-poppleford-silk-mill>

Finally, attached is a side-by-side image of the 1888 OS section and a Google satellite view showing how completely the land has reverted to farming



9. Have your say: Trees, Hedgerows & Woodlands



You may have seen this East Devon public consultation relating to trees, hedgerows and woodlands. It closes on **6 September 2024** and can be viewed at:

<https://eddctreehedgeandwoodlandpublicstrategyconsultation.commonplace.is>

Everyone has the opportunity to comment - so please do take part if this is something you are interested in.

The OVA attended the first meeting of this new group on 30 July. At the workshop, the attendees worked through a long list of performance targets and KPIs, and how to achieve them - key issues and opportunities. They are following a sustainable resource management approach. There is already a Devon Tree and Woodland Strategy prepared by the Woodland Trust and others, which went live on 18 March 2024. However, this is looking in more details for East Devon only.

10. Have your say: National Planning Framework

New National Planning Policy Framework Consultation now open for public input.

We wanted to share the following in order to provide you with the opportunity to comment should this be of interest. On 30th July, the Government unveiled a major overhaul of the planning system aimed at tackling the nation's acute housing crisis and stimulating economic growth. This ambitious plan includes new mandatory housing targets for councils and reforms to both the planning system and housing policies. An eight-week consultation has begun immediately, with the final document expected to be adopted in late September. You can view the consultation here:

LINK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

Key elements of the consultation include:

- **Annual Housing Target:** In a statement in Parliament, Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner announced that the new annual housing target will be 370,000 homes per year. This new target represents a significant increase from previous goals and aims to address the severe housing shortage across the country.
- **Mandatory Housing Targets:** All councils in England will now be assigned new, mandatory targets to deliver an additional 1.5 million homes. This initiative is designed to address the most pressing housing needs and spur housebuilding in regions where it is most required.
- **Local Plans and Community Engagement:** Local plans will play a crucial role in determining how homes and infrastructure are developed with Raynor indicating in her statement to Parliament that this will be the main area of engagement.
- **Green Belt Review:** Councils will be required to review their green belt land and prioritise 'grey belt' land where necessary. Development in the Green Belt will be governed by new "golden rules," mandating

that 50% of homes built must be affordable. Additionally, developments must enhance access to green spaces and ensure the provision of essential infrastructure such as schools and GP surgeries.

- Definition of Grey Belt: For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, grey belt will be defined as land in the Green Belt comprising Previously Developed Land and any other parcels and/or areas of Green Belt land that make a limited contribution to the five Green Belt purposes (as defined in paragraph 140 of the Framework), but excluding those areas or assets of particular importance listed in footnote 7 of the Framework (other than land designated as Green Belt).
- Grey Belt Land: In areas where councils lack up-to-date plans or fail to meet local housing targets, homebuilders will be permitted to propose developments on grey belt land.
- Brownfield Development: The Government will prioritise brownfield sites for new development, with a clear directive that the default position should be “yes” to brownfield proposals. This is to encourage higher-density housing in urban centres.
- Well-designed or Beautiful: The consultation will also address whether to retain references to well-designed buildings and places but remove references to ‘beauty’ and ‘beautiful,’ and to amend paragraph 138 of the existing Framework.
- Support for Social and Affordable Housing: Reforms will include changes to the Right to Buy policy, granting councils greater flexibility to use receipts for building and acquiring more social homes. The Government also plans to reverse the decline in social rent homes and will detail further investments in affordable housing in the upcoming spending review.
- Local Authority Housing Fund: The third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund will proceed, allocating £450 million to councils to create homes for families at risk of homelessness.
- Infrastructure Projects: The reforms aim to facilitate the development of key infrastructure, including laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, and large-scale wind and solar projects.

Additional reforms will be introduced through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, focusing on strategic planning and streamlining the planning process.

The Government will respond to the consultation and publish revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework before the end of the year, aiming for swift implementation of policy changes.

CONSULTATION DETAILS:

An eight-week consultation has started immediately, with the adoption of the final document planned for late September. The consultation comprises 106 questions, covering a wide range of topics related to the planning reforms.

11. Village Reps, Talks and Volunteering

We are delighted to welcome Olly Watts and Michaela Manning as village reps for East Budleigh and Colaton Raleigh respectively. Our village reps are now:

- Budleigh Salterton: Bob Wiltshire (01395 444395)
- East Budleigh: Olly Watts (07837 861354)
- Colaton Raleigh: Michaela Manning (07718 287480)
- Otterton: Dee Woods (01395 568822) and Geoff Porter (01395 567055)
- Newton Popleford: (position open for a new volunteer)

We are still looking for a volunteer to help at Newton Popleford – can you help?

We are delighted also to welcome Keith Grundy who has volunteered to help arrange our monthly talks program.

We are now looking for a walks co-ordinator and an events organizer – can you help?

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