



Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership Landscape Conservation Action Plan



August 2018

Transforming the Trent Valley LCAP

Executive summary

Transforming the Trent Valley is a Landscape Partnership Scheme that is bringing together an enthusiastic and diverse team of partners with a real enthusiasm for delivering landscape scale change across this part of Staffordshire and Derbyshire, uniting them through a shared vision for the Trent Valley landscape.

The middle reaches of the River Trent and its tributaries, the River Tame and the River Dove, flow through a landscape that is distinctive in character and unites communities that are facing similar challenges. This is a landscape that is defined by its rivers. The low, flat floodplains creates rich grazing meadows and arable farmland, which have attracted settlers to the area since prehistoric times. The river deposits that have been laid down over millennia provide the aggregates and raw materials that supply our construction industries and this activity has altered the features of our landscape. Industry has grown thanks to the driving force of the river powering watermills, and the deep aquifers of mineral-rich waters supplying the Burton beer industry. Habitats have changed



Cows on the river (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust)

as the intensification of agriculture has drained the traditional wet meadows and the more recent quarrying has created new lakes and wetland habitats.

Over time the river itself has transformed: its course has been altered and straightened by man and artificial weirs have been created that impeded the migration of fish. Expansion of our towns and villages has meant that the river is being more and more contained as the floodplain is developed and the natural ebb and flow is controlled. This has created conflict in the past: the river cannot be tamed for long and flooding becomes a present concern.

The purpose of this Landscape Partnership is to recognise the challenges and opportunities that are presented by this fluvial landscape. We will celebrate the waterways, industries and the communities that are the life-force of this rapidly evolving river valley landscape and which have shaped and continue to influence its form and use. Wildlife-rich rivers, waterways and wetlands will be at the heart of a revitalised, resilient and beautiful landscape that is connected and accessible for local communities and visitors to enjoy and explore as well as providing many opportunities to inspire and re-connect people to the river valley by revealing its cultural, industrial and natural heritage.

Our vision is for *“wildlife-rich waterways and wetlands at the heart of a resilient, accessible, beautiful and culturally rich landscape. Creating a brighter future for people, business and wildlife in the Trent Valley.”*

Over the next five years this partnership will deliver a series environmental, cultural, heritage, education and community-led projects that aim to

inspire communities and protect and enhance natural and cultural heritage, whilst having an outlook to the future, and securing a long-term legacy in the landscape.

This scheme is embedded in national and international strategy: The European Landscape Convention recognises landscapes as *“an essential component of people’s surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity”* and states that there is a need to *“increase awareness among the civil society, private organisations, and public authorities of the value of landscapes,*

their role and changes to them.” Natural England has devised a number of ‘National Character Areas’ (NCA) into which this scheme slots into NCA 69: Trent Valley Washlands, and contributes to all four of the identified environmental opportunities.

We recognise that achieving landscape scale change will not happen overnight, a paradigm shift is needed that will take a generation to embed. The next five years are crucial, and the funding that will be provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund will give us the momentum we need to make the vision a reality.



River Tame at Elford (C Wilkinson)

Contents

Executive summary	1	4.0 Threats and Opportunities.....	122
Contents	3	4.1 Threats and Opportunities.....	123
Part 1: The Scheme Plan	4	5.0 Aims and Objectives.....	129
1.0 Introduction.....	5	5.1 Vision	130
1.1 Introducing our Scheme	6	5.1.1 Purpose	130
1.1.1 Context of the Partnership.....	6	5.1.2 Vision	130
1.1.2 Scheme area.....	7	5.1.3 Statement of Intent	130
1.1.3 Brief history of the Partnership	9	5.1.4 Project connections	132
2.0 Understanding ‘Transforming the Trent Valley’ 11		5.2 Aims and Objectives.....	136
2.1 Defining our Landscape	12	5.2.1 Aims	136
2.2 Changing Hearts and Minds	14	5.2.2 Objectives	136
2.3 The Character of our Landscape.....	19	5.2.3 Outcomes	137
2.3.1 Assessing the Character.....	19	5.2.4 Project outcomes.....	146
2.3.2 Geology and its influence	24	5.2.5 Outputs and targets.....	147
2.3.3 Cultural Heritage.....	29	6.0 Scheme Management	148
2.3.4 Our legends, our stories, our heritage	37	6.1 The Partnership.....	149
2.3.5 Natural Heritage.....	41	6.1.1 The Lead Partner	149
2.3.6 Current Management	53	6.1.2 The Partnership Chair.....	149
2.3.7 Key sites in the Landscape	59	6.1.3 The Partnership Board	150
2.3.8 Access to the Landscape.....	77	6.1.4 Delivery Partners	151
2.3.9 Our Audience.....	83	6.1.5 Organisational Structure	152
2.3.10 Engaging our Audience.....	87	6.2 Delivery of the Scheme	153
2.3.11 Interpretative Themes	89	6.2.1 The Staff Team.....	155
2.4 Consultation	90	6.2.2 Staff Structure Chart.....	156
2.4.1 Public dialogue.....	90	6.2.3 Timetable of Delivery.....	158
2.4.2 Wider Consultation	94	6.2.4 Project Locations Map.....	159
2.5 Strategies, Policies and Local Initiatives	95	6.3 Financial Arrangements	162
2.5.1 High Speed 2 (HS2)	96	6.3.1 How the common fund will be managed ...	162
2.5.2 Burton-Leicester railway reopening	97	6.3.2 Budget summary	163
2.5.3 Housing.....	97	6.3.3 Comparison Budget	164
2.5.4 Garden Villages	98	6.4 Strengths, weaknesses and risks.....	166
2.5.5 Quarrying.....	99	6.4.1 Strengths and weaknesses.....	166
2.5.6 Economic Value.....	100	6.4.2 Risk Management.....	167
2.5.7 Local Enterprise Partnerships.....	101	7.0 Evaluation And Monitoring	171
2.5.8 The Catchment Based Approach and the Transforming the Trent Valley	102	7.1 Evaluation Framework.....	172
2.5.9 The Water Framework Directive	103	7.1.1 Key Topics.....	173
2.5.10 The Trent and Tame River Valleys Futurescape.....	104	7.1.2 The Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit	175
2.5.11 The National Forest	105	7.1.3 Evaluation Plan	175
2.5.12 Glimpses of change.....	105	8.0 Sustainability And Legacy	176
3.0 Statement of Significance.....	106	8.1 Legacy	177
3.1 The value of our landscape	107	8.2 Summary of the report.....	183
3.1.1 Our Natural Heritage	108	8.2.1 Lead Author, Contributors and Consultees	183
3.1.2 Our Cultural Heritage.....	109	8.2.2 Status of the report and duration of delivery	184
3.1.3 Our Communities.....	112	9.0 References and Sources of Information.....	186
3.2 What is a River Worth?	114	Acronym Decoder	191
3.2.1 Ecosystem Services of the Trent Valley.....	115	List of tables, maps and figures	192
3.2.2 An Ecosystem Approach	117	Part 2: Project Summaries.....	194
3.2.3 Valuing Nature’s Services.....	117		
3.2.4 Understanding how nature works.....	117		
3.2.5 The Value of our Landscape to our Communities.....	119		

Part 1: The Scheme Plan



Washlands Fields (Aimee L. Booth)

1.0 Introduction



Petrichor (n)
the scent of rain on dry earth

1.1 Introducing our Scheme

Our project is defined by its landscape; a landscape that unifies the area and intrinsically shapes its communities. For some, it is linked to cultural and social identity: families born and raised within the valley for generations and taking their schooling, housing and income from within its limits. For others it is a place to visit, to take from it a variety of enjoyments that connect us with our sense of selves. It is a place with a unique history that has been scored upon the landscape, with its own stories and its own lore. But our landscape also provides us with the materials and services we need to live, grow and build; it gives us the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe.

Our landscape partnership has come together in mutual acknowledgement of the importance of the Trent Valley and a common desire to help protect, manage and plan for its future development.

The Trent Valley is a distinctive landscape, but also one of contrasts. It is distinctive by its river corridor: the rivers which flow through the valley create the identity of the landscape. The canals that wend their way across the valley floor are a distinctive feature that contrasts the old, industrial past with the modern, tourist-focused present. The communities that have built up along-side this river provide its character, through place names, built heritage and the use of the floodplain. The communities that make this landscape so distinct also provide the contrast. A large town built on industry lies at the heart of this landscape and celebrates a diversity of people and opportunities. More traditional villages lie along the valley, some with quaint, chocolate box charm and others with a decidedly modern appeal.

1.1.1 Context of the Partnership

Transforming the Trent Valley is an evolution of a pre-existing partnership of Staffordshire-based organisations (known collectively as the Central Rivers Initiative) with an interest in the Trent Valley. This former Staffordshire-focused landscape has expanded to include those parts of Derbyshire with similar issues and encompass a wider partnership base. Covering 200km², the landscape focusses on the River Trent and its tributaries between Rugeley, Tamworth, Uttoxeter and Shardlow.

Transforming the Trent Valley area is a fluvial landscape, focussed on the river with a mix of pastoral farming on the floodplain and arable on the gravel terraces. Remnant riparian habitats provide sanctuary for wildlife and former sand and gravel pits provide opportunity to enhance the biodiversity of the valley. The area is both naturally and culturally rich in character and yet is under extreme industrial and developmental pressure.

Over the last 18 months, the partnership has been working closely together to better improve its understanding of the cultural and natural heritage of the landscape, the physical and perceived barriers to access, and the opportunities for visitors and local people. The partnership has gone out into the communities that live and work in the landscape, speaking to people and encouraging ideas and opinions to better understand the local need.

This knowledge base has helped to formulate a diverse range of projects that connect the cultural and natural heritage together in a way that will inspire indigenous communities, new and establishing communities and visitors to the area to explore, understand and value the landscape.

The scheme will focus on delivering sixteen projects under three themes:

Connecting Communities through Action: a selection of community focused projects that encourage participation, volunteering, education, training and well-being;

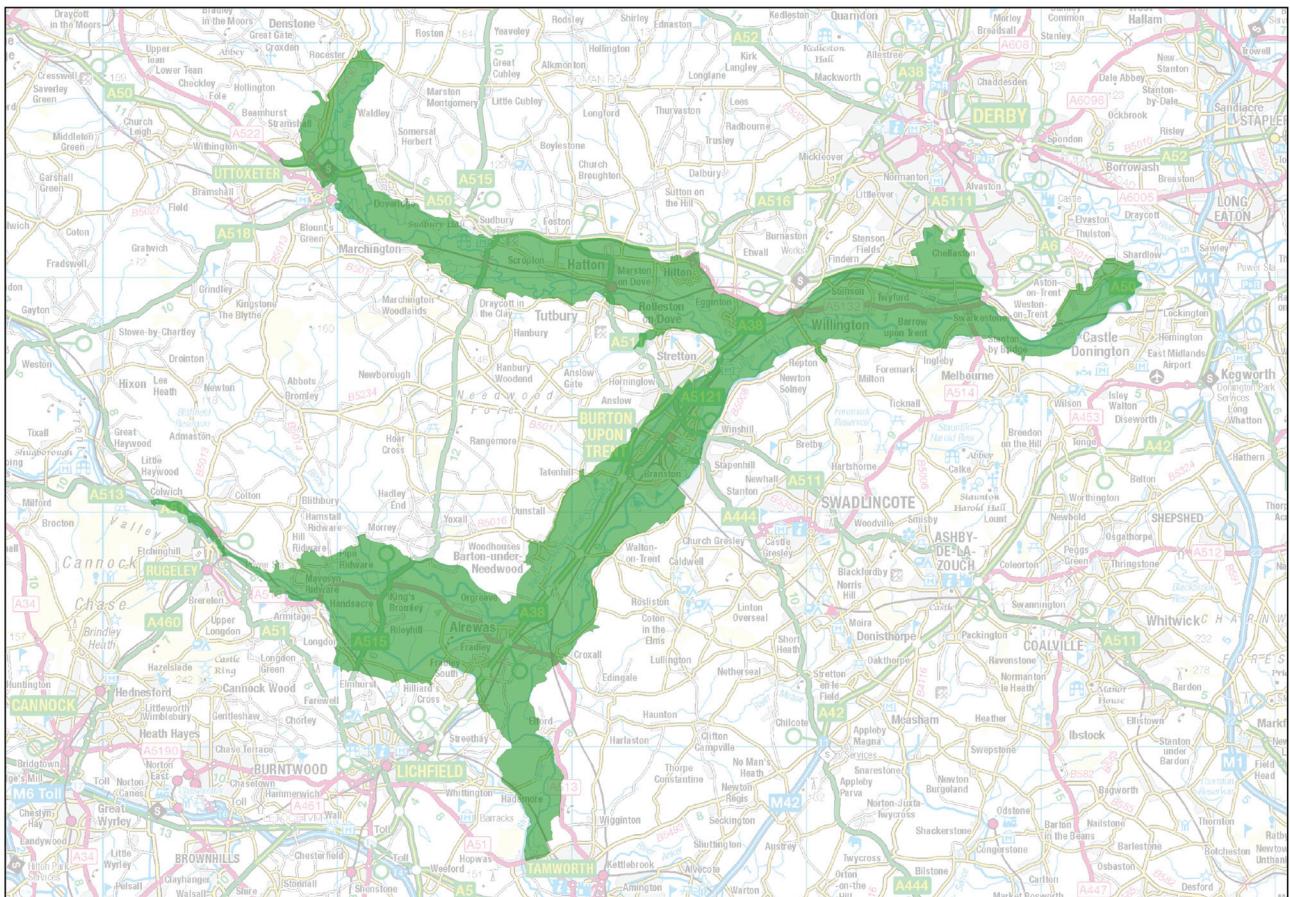
River Valley Connections: projects that focus on the physical and intellectual access to the landscape;

Transforming the Landscape: a range of projects that have the cultural and natural heritage of the landscape at their core looking to preserve and protect these assets.

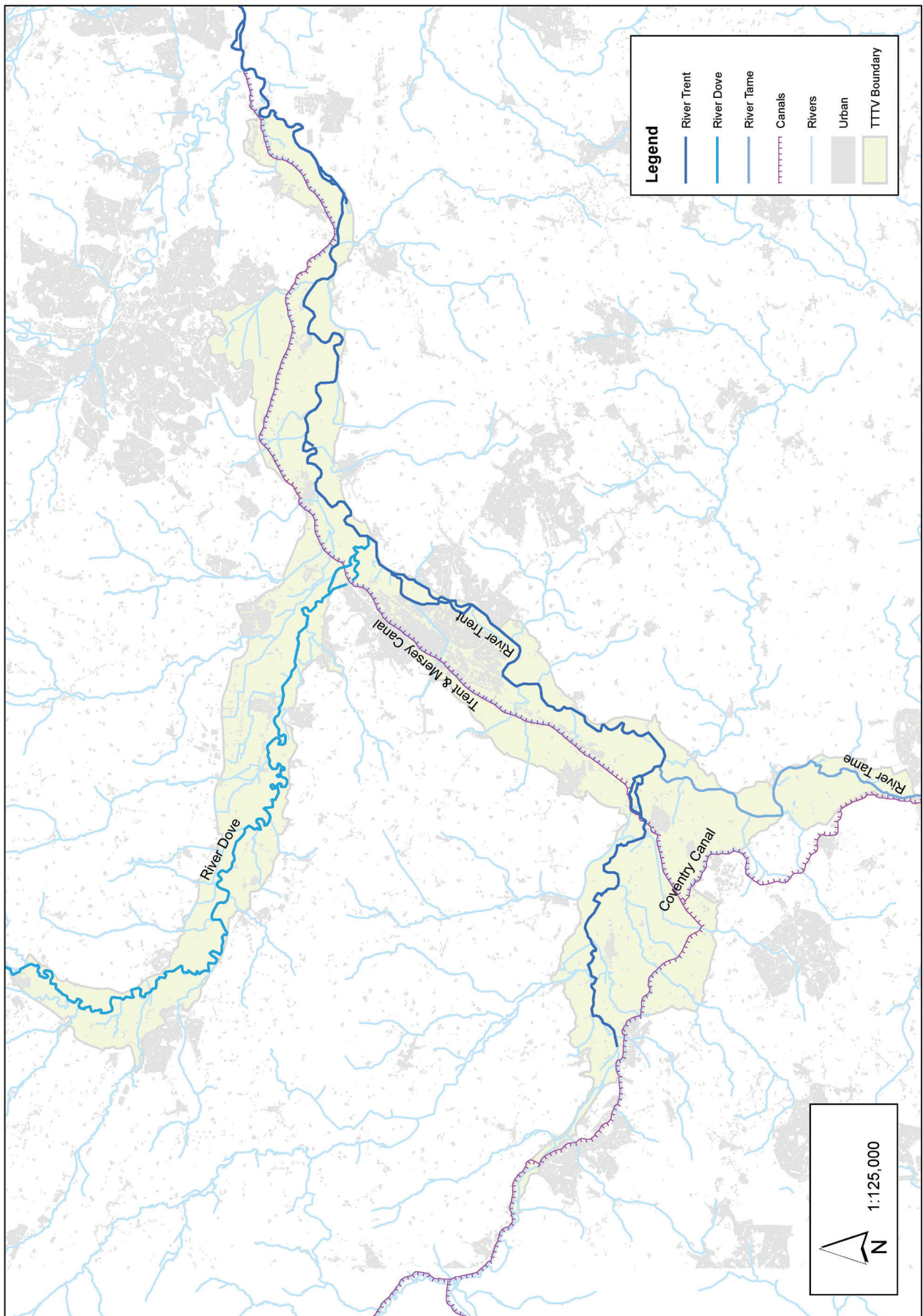


1.1.2 Scheme area

Map 1. Location map of the Transforming the Trent Valley landscape



Map 2. Location of the Transforming the Trent Valley landscape showing the principal rivers and canals



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1.1.3 Brief history of the Partnership

Central Rivers Initiative

The Central Rivers Initiative (CRI) is a broad based partnership representing key interests who are working together to shape and guide the progressive restoration and revitalisation of the river valley between Burton, Lichfield and Tamworth - an area of central England that covers over 50 square km.

The vision is to create and connect beautiful places where people can explore and enjoy water, landscape and wildlife, and to ensure that careful extraction and restoration by the area's many sand and gravel quarries will leave a sustainable network of wildlife habitats, public amenities and agricultural land. The ambition is to inspire and encourage landowners, communities and individuals to get involved in shaping their local landscape.

CRI was established in the late 1990s in order to take a coordinated approach to

the planning issues affecting the Trent and Tame river valleys and to start developing a vision for the whole region. The partners include Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, National Forest Company, RSPB, Sport Across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, quarrying companies and local authorities.

Following an Assessment of Landscape Character and Opportunities for Landscape Enhancement report in 2014 it became clear to CRI that a number of opportunities would require a landscape approach beyond the current scope of the Central Rivers Initiative. From consultation with a wider partnership it was discovered that other parts of the Trent valley network and its tributaries are facing similar challenges and as such the landscape area was expanded to encompass an area significantly larger than the Central Rivers area. Additional partners have joined the existing members of CRI to create a new Trent Valley project board.



Newbold Quarry (Nick Mott)

Transforming the Trent Valley

Our landscape has been refined and expanded from the original Central Rivers area to ensure a landscape with a consistent character that is resulting from the action and interaction of communities, economic pressures and the environment.

Our landscape mirrors part of the Trent Valley Washlands National Character Area and is a landscape identified through Derbyshire County Council's Landscape Character Descriptions and Staffordshire County Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance.

A new Landscape Character Assessment has reviewed the distinctiveness, the topography and the cultural features

of the river valley to enable us to refine and define an area that would benefit the most from a coordinated, landscape based approach to tackling the issues and opportunities that arise in a modern, evolving landscape.

The resulting area is physically distinct as low-lying floodplain and river terraces, common in character as a worked landscape and historically and culturally significant; in medieval times it defined the north from the south; it formed the basis of early travel and trade and became the location for early settlement. Now heavily influenced by development pressures and industry the landscape is constantly changing, and as such, it can be viewed as a frequently altered palimpsest.



Wychnor Historic Water Meadows (Nick Mott)