

Climate Solutions Discussion Group - Report by Kate Bailey

Lots of 'Good News' to report this month:

A two year habitat survey by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire has identified more than 1,300 hectares (3,271 acres) of previously unknown ancient woodland that will now have legal protection from development. These are woods that have persisted since 1600, packed with plant life, fungi, insects and micro-organisms, not just old trees but also ground flora containing a great diversity of species that exist only in ancient woodland.

After the Cumbria Wildlife Trust's success in raising the final £1.25m needed to purchase and recreate Skiddaw Forest near Keswick, we heard of two Wildlife Trust charities buying part of the Rothbury Estate in Northumberland, which has been in the Percy family for 700 years. The Trusts plan to promote nature recovery on a vast scale as well as enable a sustainable future for local farmers.

Elsewhere, the BBC reported that there has been an estimated 97% decline in the number of native water voles in Eastern England since 1950, largely due to predatory mink escaping from commercial fur farms. Since 2003 Natural England has been funding two successful trial projects that have laid hundreds of 'smart cage' traps in waterways in and around Norfolk and Suffolk. The Waterlife Recovery Trust (WRT) believes that the complete eradication of invasive mink from British waters is now a "realistic dream"

So much so that more than 100 water voles have recently been released into the Nene Wetlands in Northamptonshire. Recycled Pringles tubes were used to transport them to the nature reserve where they were kept safely in pens for a week before being released into the wild. A family of beavers will also be released into the Nene Wetlands later this year.

And a clever idea from the Railway Land nature reserve in Lewes, East Sussex where dogs with backpacks are being used to scatter seeds - they cover four times the distance of their owners and visit areas that are hard for human walkers to reach.

Unfortunately there has been no response to the textile recycling idea, proposed in last month's Forum, of a new feature "Offered and/or Wanted" offering or seeking good quality items of clothing. Our group remains concerned that far too many textile items donated to charity shops end up in landfill around the world. We therefore had a constructive discussion about the possibility of facilitating a regular collection of nearly new textiles and clothing and passing them on to organisations supporting people in need - for example, the Barnard Castle 'Hub', "Family Help" in Darlington and hostels for the homeless or victims of domestic violence. Watch this Space - we intend to explore this idea further and report back in the new year.

