

Appendix A

Colne Valley Regional Park and relationship with Spelthorne BC

The Colne Valley Regional Park (CVRP) aims to protect and enhance the 43 square miles of countryside to the west of London. Covering parts of Spelthorne, Windsor & Maidenhead, Slough, Hillingdon, Bucks and Herts. The Council's predecessor, Staines Urban District Council, was one of the founding members of the Regional Park in the 1960's. Spelthorne Borough Council was a member of the former Colne Valley Partnership (a partnership of local authorities) from the Council's formation in 1974 up to 2010 and 21% of Spelthorne is within the Colne Valley Park.

The CVRP holds significant geographic importance in Spelthorne due to its proximity to Staines and its accessibility from across the northern part of the Borough. As part of the CVRP, Staines Moor is a vitally important feature of the Borough's landscape, offering an abundance of wildlife and recreation opportunities. Staines Moor feeds into Hithermoor to the north which both alone, and in combination, provide significant areas of green spaces separating the M25 and Heathrow Airport. In addition, the network of reservoirs, the Wraysbury, King George VI and Staines, form part of the CVRP and contribute to the Borough's landscape as well as playing a significant role in local biodiversity and as part of the wider Southwest London Waterbodies Special Protection Area (SPA) network. The River Colne and Wraysbury River connect through the CVRP into Staines Moor and Two Rivers shopping area before flowing into the River Thames. The River Ash branches off from the Colne just south of Staines Moor and runs through the Borough to the south.

The role of the Park as a major player in responding to strategic projects such as the expansion of Heathrow is also a key factor in why membership of the CVRP is a positive to the Borough. In Spelthorne, there is generally a limited amount of countryside and landscape expertise available. Through working with the CVRP this can help bridge that gap in a cost-effective way and allow access to greater advice and knowledge. Through this access, Spelthorne can secure longer-term benefits by participating in projects to improve key biodiversity and landscaping assets in the Borough. Over recent months, various schemes have been implemented to improve parts of the River Ash to enhance its flow and shape this to be of greater benefit for local people, through establishing more opportunities for accessible walks. These, and similar projects, were able to be implemented through being in partnership with the CVRP and were legacy projects from previous membership. However, no further projects are in the pipeline for Spelthorne and to continue to access these, it is of great importance that Spelthorne returns as a committed member of the CVRP.

Over the longer term, there will be increasing pressures on many of the Borough's green spaces. With the anticipated growth in Staines, recreational pressures on Staines Moor will increase and it is important that alternative spaces are provided to alleviate some of these pressures. This can also include the enhancement and promotion of more-underused spaces such as at Church Lammas and Moormede, which link with Staines Moor and the wider CVRP but which can play an important role in providing accessible natural green spaces for residents and help to enhance the use of the Green Belt within Spelthorne. Being in partnership with the CVRP will strengthen our hand in securing improvements to these such spaces for the short-

and long-term benefit of the Borough's residents. This will help to demonstrate to residents the Council's active support for green spaces and countryside, particularly around Staines and Stanwell.

One of the main benefits of membership is the multiplier effect of funding contributions. Through this, the CVRP can secure external funding for environmental projects in Spelthorne. An example of the multiplier effect is through the value of core funding invested into the Park by developing projects and fundraising. In 2020/21 over £14 of projects were delivered for every £1 invested into the Park by Local Authorities and Corporate Supporters. The CVRP carries significant lobbying weight within both the private sector and in central Government and access to this could be highly beneficial. Further to this, the CVRP has been successful in securing a £180k Government 'Green Recovery Challenge Fund' grant. This is currently focussed on Bucks and Hillingdon however by re-joining as a member, Spelthorne could also benefit from this. This grant allows joint-working to identify tasks for the 'green team' of 18–24-year-old conservation trainees to undertake environmental improvement in the Borough. There could be opportunities through this to work with job centres to recruit eligible Spelthorne residents onto this employment support scheme.

By re-joining as a member, Spelthorne would be able to have regular review meetings with CVRP and an officer can be designated as the main point of contact for this. This can allow for the identification of projects to be undertaken and a more coordinated approach to improvements within the Borough. As part of this, it would be expected that the partnership with CVRP is formalised and an annual contribution of circa £5,000 - £8,000 is made. Negotiations are underway to agree to a suitable annual contribution with Spelthorne focusing on agreement at the lower end of this scale – circa £5K to 6K. This will help to secure the benefits referred to above and access to further similar benefits. The relationship between Spelthorne Borough Council and the Colne Valley Regional Park could be defined by a Partnership Agreement and agreement internally will be sought to proceed with this.

Appendix:

Further information on the Colne Valley Regional Park can be seen at:

BBC Countryfile episode, March 2021:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000t18b>

Project work: <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/whatwedo/>

River Ash project: <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/river-ash-improvement-project/>

List of 75 member organisations: <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/who-champions/partners/>