

August 2010



"Milton Creek - nature on your doorstep"



**Welcome** to the third edition of the Milton Creek Gateway Landscape Project Newsletter. This project is about transforming Swale and revitalising a unique asset that has lain fallow over the years. The Creek will eventually become an attraction for Swale residents, visitors and its wildlife. This project also affirms Swale Borough Council's commitment to a cleaner and greener environment. The Council received £2 million from the Homes and Communities Agency to fund this project and an additional £250,000 was received from Kent County Council.

We welcome your views and thank you for your contributions and support so far. Our email address is [miltoncreek@swale.gov.uk](mailto:miltoncreek@swale.gov.uk), or call on 01795 417399 / 07827 310189. You can also view any updates or post comments via Swale Borough Council's website.

*Phoebe Adefeso, Project Manager*





## Project update

Due to how the funding was distributed and to make the project more achievable, the project was divided into two phases. Phase One covers the Church Marshes area and will be completed in August 2010. Phase Two covers the area around the Creek and this should be completed in March 2011.

**Phase one works:** Jackson Civil Engineering has made remarkable progress on the site. The work around the event area and car park will be completed by 31 July.

**Phase two:** The consent to the planning application for this phase was unanimously agreed by the Planning Committee on 27 May 2010. The tender process started on 26 May and submission was on 31 June. A full tender report will be presented to Swale Borough Council's Strategic Management Team on 3 August and to the Executive Committee on 25 August for a decision to award the contract. The contractor will commence work from 31 August 2010.

David Simmons, portfolio holder for environment and rural affairs, said, "Improving the environment of Milton Creek will be a great benefit to the area and will present itself as a huge environmental asset to the Borough of Swale.

"The project provides an interpretation of the natural as well as historical features of the area. It will also improve and enhance habitats along the creek and into the Church Marshes Country Park.

"The new green space will be great for visitors and residents of Swale to enjoy, as the project will create a green heart for Sittingbourne bringing new life to the area.

"The project will also help in creating a cleaner, greener environment, which is something that Swale Borough Council has been committed to for some time."

*David Simmons, Portfolio Holder for Milton Creek Gateway Landscape Project*

## Community Engagement

We have now held four community events. The fourth event was on Saturday 14 August, where a local artist engaged young residents in series of informative artistic activities including cardboard crafting of different animals and fruits. The aim of these events is to get residents informed of, involved in and committed to the Country Park. In the future Local residents will need to be involved in the parks future and its sustainability

The next event will take place on Saturday, 13 November from 10.30 am to 1pm on the site.

The quarterly newsletters cover updates on the overall project, and includes information about wildlife, history, Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road, Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway, etc. Please email [phoebeadefeso@swale.gov.uk](mailto:phoebeadefeso@swale.gov.uk) if you would like a copy.

**Site visits:** Delegates from Natural England visited the site on Wednesday 18 May 2010. The purpose was to showcase a North Kent Parklands Project to Natural England's Advocacy and Partnership Teams. Various presentations were given by representatives from Swale Borough Council, Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway, and Sheils Flynn. The visit was a success.



A site review visit was also undertaken by officers from the Homes and Communities Agency on 22 June. They were received by Swale Borough Council's Director of Regeneration, officers from the Regeneration Team, Sheils Flynn and Jackson Civil Engineering. Due to the complex nature of the site, and the biodiversity issues that have had to be considered, the positive feedback received has been particularly pleasing.



## Your Park needs you, please get involved today

The Friends of Milton Creek is a group of local people with a keen interest in conserving and developing the area around Milton Creek. The group was originally formed as the Friends of Church

Marshes Country Park when the development of the Church Marshes Country Park began, but has now grown to encompass the entire area around Milton Creek beyond the Park boundaries.

The Friends Group offers an opportunity to get involved in the development of the Park and to become involved in conservation and volunteering opportunities.

The Group is free to join and open to anyone with an interest regardless of age or experience. If you are interested in joining or simply want to know more about volunteering opportunities, please call 01795 417155 or email [anita.brunt@btinternet.com](mailto:anita.brunt@btinternet.com)

*Friends of Milton Creek*

## Open Spaces, Open Minds



A group of students from local Swale schools will be taking part in a 13-week conservation project at Milton Creek Country

Park and the Gunpowder Works in Oare in September, which is being organised by Connexions Kent.

'Open Space, Open Minds' will provide the opportunity for the students to take part in range of practical activities to learn about their natural environment. They will be spending one day a week at Milton Creek clearing shrub land, building paths and planting trees to improve the local habitat for those living in the area.

On completion of the project, the students will be awarded their ABC Level 1 Certificate in Practical Environment and Conservation.

Open Spaces, Open Minds is funded by Natural England as part of its Access to Nature programme.

Connexions Kent provides information, advice and guidance to 13-19 year olds and up to the age of 25 for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road

The Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road works are proceeding well, after the autumn and winter bad weather. Jackson Civil Engineering is working with its sub-contractors to recover some of the lost time so that the programme can be completed as scheduled. Local residents will be pleased to know that the driving of pre-cast piles to support the road will be completed in early July 2010, ahead of schedule. The embankment on the north side of the light railway is being built up, with the second stage of fill being placed in late June and early July. The embankment needs to settle as it goes up so construction will seem to stop and start. At Milton Creek the temporary works for the piers in the creek are well advanced and piling will start soon.

With the summer holidays near it is a good time to remind everyone that construction sites, with excavations, heavy machinery and stored materials are not playgrounds. Please keep off the works sites and take care when using parts of the Saxon Shore Way that have been temporarily diverted and also be very careful when crossing between parts of the Country Park.

*John Turner, Kent Country Council*



## News from the Steam Railway

On 7 May, the old Sittingbourne Mill, Wharf and Service Corridor sites were sold by M-Real to Essential Land LLP. The Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway (SKLR) had a positive meeting with Essential Land LLP about the future of the Railway.

In a statement to the Kent Messenger a spokesman for Essential Land stated: "We also recognise the importance of the railway line and are currently in negotiations with the SKLR, in an effort to provide them with an opportunity to re-open this tourist attraction to the public and celebrate its 40th anniversary in public service. We can confirm no demolition is taking place on the viaduct, only removal of asbestos around the station."

Further good news is that ASDA has been granted planning permission for the extension to its store at Milton. As part of this process it is making a substantial donation to the Railway so that they can improve their station at the site. Recent work in connection with the Country Park Project has seen some bushes alongside the line cut back and fencing erected along the boundary of the park.

*Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway*

## A bit of history

In the Iron Age, over 2,500 years ago, small-scale skilled trades existed in the area surrounding Milton Creek. Archaeological evidence found in the Creek surroundings confirmed man's existence in ancient times and also evidence of various unique skills like pottery, metalwork, woodwork and numerous others crafts. These skills later developed into different areas of specialty which were used for building homesteads, fishing, livestock, farming, grain and food crop production.

One thousand years before Sittingbourne was established, Milton was a centre of local activities. The settlement later called Milton Regis was first located on or around the current site of the Milton Creek Country Park. To be continued in the next Newsletter.

*Rob Risbridger, Resident and Historian*

## Artlands and Art at the Centre Public Realm Commission

The public realm commission has been developed in response to the Milton Creek Landscape Project and aims to:

- Frame and articulate the existing and aspirational character and qualities of Milton Creek within the context of the Parklands scheme.
- Engage audiences with the heritage and future of the site, making connections between the existing internationally protected natural landscapes and its future as a space for recreation and tourism.
- Encourage a sense of ownership amongst the communities who live and work around Milton Creek, creating multiple opportunities to re-engage with the landscape.

The commission will be an artist-led interpretation which will allow the artist(s) the freedom to develop and deliver a work according to their practice, expertise and conceptual thinking.

## Contacting Swale Borough Council

The **Customer Service Centre** deals with all enquiries across the Council; it should be your first stop when contacting us.

Copies of this newsletter are available on the Council website [www.swale.gov.uk](http://www.swale.gov.uk) If you would like further hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request. Please contact the Council at:

Swale Borough Council, Swale House,  
East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT  
**Customer Service Centre 01795 417850**

