

# Ashford Green Corridor *Youth Groups Activity Pack*



# Introduction

The Ashford Green Corridor is a network of parks and green spaces along the Rivers Great Stour, East Stour and the Aylesford Stream. The area offers many opportunities for youth groups to use local green areas as a resource for a range of activities.

## What is the Ashford Green Corridor?

Nine out of ten people in the UK live in towns and cities, so green spaces in urban areas are very important. They provide a pleasant, relaxing environment for people and habitats for wildlife.

Ashford is lucky to have a haven for people and wildlife, a green space that runs right through the town: the Ashford Green Corridor. The Green Corridor is made up of parks, recreation grounds and other green spaces alongside the rivers that flow through Ashford.

## How did the Green Corridor come to be?

Ashford has been growing steadily since the middle of the 19th century. As the town has expanded, land close to the rivers has not usually been built on, due to the risk of flooding and because the Borough Council have protected it as green space. The resulting undeveloped 'finger's of land reach right into the heart of Ashford - together they form the Ashford Green Corridor.

## Why is the Green Corridor important?

### *Flood protection*

Much of the Green Corridor is within the low lying mainly flat floodplain right next to Ashford's rivers, many of the sites are important in preventing flooding protecting homes and businesses. As the town expands in the future, areas of greenspace will become more and more important in providing recreational areas and habitats for local wildlife.

### *Wildlife*

The Green Corridor brings wildlife to your doorstep and into the town centre! Ashford's rivers are surprisingly natural considering their urban surroundings and do not suffer from some of the problems associated with rural areas such as intensive agriculture. Kingfishers, grass snakes and the banded demoiselle damselfly can all be seen. Singleton Lake is a habitat for wetland birds and Buxford Meadow is wet grassland with an enormous range of plants, insects and other species. Watervoles are present throughout the Green Corridor in the rivers Great and East Stour, although they are secretive and generally hard to spot!

### *History*

From the manors of Singleton and Buxford in the west, to Boys Hall Moat scheduled ancient monument in the east, the Green Corridor is rich in heritage. Victoria Park, with its fountain and commemorative trees, the intriguingly named 'Watercress Fields' and the imposing Pledges Mill, a former flour mill stands on the confluence of the rivers Great and East Stour in the centre of the Green Corridor. Many areas were farmed until relatively recently and there are living links to Ashford's part as an agricultural market town.

## What is a Local Nature Reserve?

Local councils designate Local Nature Reserves. They are places of interest for their wildlife offering opportunities for the enjoyment and study of nature through joining in with local events, education and practical management. They can also provide green spaces and green transport routes. The Green Corridor does all of these things, and runs right through the community of Ashford. Ashford Borough Council officially declared it as a Local Nature Reserve in December 2002.

## How is the Green Corridor managed?

It is important that the Green Corridor is managed to cater for all its different users and for wildlife. Meadows have been created in the Green Corridor at Queen Mothers Park, Newtown Green, Bowens Field and Aylesford Green

to provide new habitats for a range of species. Meadows are areas of grassland allowed to grow long then cut once in late summer removing the cuttings to sustain the meadows. They are excellent habitats for wild flowers and animals such as butterflies, birds and small mammals. Plenty of areas are still mown regularly, to provide space for picnics, games and other activities. So if you see large areas of un-mown grass, this is not neglect, but the establishment of meadows! In addition work to improve and maintain the riverside, trees and ponds takes place each year.

## How to use the pack

The pack is in two parts, the first part gives ideas for activities which can be developed by youth groups and leaders.

The second part of the pack provides more detailed information where necessary for some of the activities listed in the A-Z section and is designed to give guidance to leaders when planning activities.

The pack also has a list of useful contacts for leaders and young people. There is a risk assessment form at the end of the pack and a guide to some of the hazards found on the sites.

See the 'Explore the Corridor' leaflet for a map of the Green Corridor.

## Visiting the Sites

### *Access*

The sites are easily accessible from many points in the town, either by rail, cycling, walking or driving. Parking at the sites is generally free. There is an extensive network of footpaths and cycling paths in the Green Corridor which provide safe routes along the riverside and into the wider countryside following the Stour Valley Walk.

### *Health and Safety*

There are hazards on the sites within the Green Corridor which youth leaders should be aware of. It is recommended that site visits and risk assessments are carried out before embarking on activities within the Green Corridor. See list of Hazards and Recommendations for Activities section.

### *Nearest Hospital A&E*

The William Harvey Hospital  
Kennington Road  
Willesborough  
Ashford  
Kent  
TN24 OLZ  
Tel: 01233 633 331

### *Onsite facilities*

Toilets are located at: -  
Victoria Park  
Vicarage Lane car park  
International Passenger Station

See also the Site Guides for the Activity Pack.

# A~Z Activities List

## *Allotments in the Green Corridor*

There are allotments at South Willesborough and Jemmett Road that lie within the Green Corridor. Allotments provide opportunities to take part in a long-term project. Growing food locally is sustainable and brings about both health and environmental benefits.

## *Bat and Bird Box Making*

Bird and Bats need boxes! There are many places in the Green Corridor where bird and bat boxes can be put up. Boxes are simple to make and do not need expensive materials.

## *Bats*

There are 16 species of bat in the UK, in the Green Corridor 5 species have been recorded, two types of pipistrelle, Daubentons, Serotine and Noctule. The river corridor provides excellent habitat for bats providing plenty of foraging areas.

There are bats throughout the Green Corridor, bats are particularly active around Singleton Lake and Buxford Meadow.

Youth groups are welcome to put up bat boxes in the Green Corridor; contact the Kentish Stour Countryside Project about permissions.

Sites suitable for the erection of bat boxes:

Singleton Lake - in trees around the Lake

Buxford Meadow - in the woodland area

For further information about bats see the Bat Conservation Trust website: [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk)

Kent Bat Group - see Contacts Directory

Bat detectors: these are simple to use and can be purchased from wildlife suppliers. (See contacts directory) In the Green Corridor the most active area for bat activity is Singleton Lake and Buxford Meadow. The best time to visit is June/July/August. Bats are usually active about half an hour after sunset. Kent Bat Group is available to provide advice about bats in the area.

## *Birds*

There are a variety of common bird species throughout the Green Corridor. If you are lucky you will spot Kingfishers along the Great Stour at Watercress Fields and along some of the streams and ditches in South Willesborough. Bird Boxes are simple to construct and can be put up in a variety of places.

Bird Boxes can be put up in a variety of places; contact the Kentish Stour Countryside Project about permissions.

Suitable sites in the Green Corridor for Bird Boxes:

Singleton Lake - in trees around the Lake

Buxford Meadow - in the woodland area

Victoria Park - in the woodland area

Queen Mothers Park - on large trees by the river

Civic Centre Park North - on large trees by the river

## *Cycling and Cycle Routes*

Cycling is quick, healthy, environmentally friendly, cost effective and fun! There are a variety of cycle routes through the Green Corridor. National Cycle route 18 passes through the Green Corridor from Singleton Hill to the Willesborough Road passing through the Green Corridor. There are a number of other cycle routes enabling easy access to Green Corridor sites. Cycle route maps are available from the Ashford Tourist Information Centre. In addition the Kentish Stour Countryside Project Bike Trails by Rail outlines a 26 mile route starting at Ashford Railway Station including parts of the Green Corridor and surrounding villages.

## *Fishing*

Ashford Angling Society provide advice about fishing at Singleton Lake. Alternatively fishing on the river Great Stour is permitted as long as a rod license is purchased. Rod licenses have to be purchased for each rod used.

Licenses may be obtained through the Post Office and cost approximately £23.00

### *Football*

The Green Corridor is a place not only for wildlife but for people, leisure and recreation too. There are a number of areas in the Green Corridor for casual kick abouts.

Large spaces with goals on site: Watercress Fields, Bucksford Park

Medium space with no goals: Church Road Play area, Sevington, Aylesford Green,

### *Graffiti Wall*

There is a graffiti wall in Watercress Fields. On one side the Ashford Green Corridor has painted a wildlife mural. The other side is available for graffiti projects.

### *Giant Outdoor Games*

If you have Giant Games, bring them to the park where there is more room! There are several Giant Outdoor Games that can be made or purchased including:

Jenga

Ludo

Dominos

Skittles

Limbo

Boules

Chess

Twister

### *Kite Flying*

Victoria Park is the safest area for flying kites. There are no power lines in the area. Watercress Fields can also be used for kite flying. It is recommended that kite flying takes place at the Victoria Park end as there are power lines crossing the site at the far end towards Ford Way.

### *Litter Picking*

Litter is a problem in the Green Corridor particularly during the late summer and autumn when the vegetation on the banks has been cut. This exposes the litter hidden in the vegetation for the past year or longer! Litter pickers and other equipment can be borrowed from the Kentish Stour Countryside Project.

### *Natural Photography*

Photography without cameras is an interesting way to learn about the properties of natural materials and can be used to make posters, displays, cards or invitations to events or other activities.

See It Makes Sense Sheet 3 in the activity pack.

### *Outdoor Theatre*

If you have a drama project - why not consider holding the production outside. Outdoor theatre is popular at arts festivals all over the country and may attract more people to your production. Suitable sites include:

Buxford Meadow

Victoria Park

Watercress Fields

Queen Mothers Park

Aylesford Green

Boys Hall

Church Road Playing Field, Sevington

### *Picnics*

There are picnic tables at Watercress Fields and Victoria Park. Alternatively bring a blanket and a picnic and explore the Green Corridor. The best sites for picnics are:

Buxford Meadow

Singleton Lake

Watercress Fields

Queen Mothers Park

Aylesford Green

Boys Hall

### *Pond Dipping*

Pond dipping can give opportunities to learn about aquatic animals and their life cycles. Lack of understanding of the importance of ponds can lead to abuse and neglect. Ponds are vital for a range of aquatic insects, amphibians and reptiles. Smooth newts can be found in 2 ponds in the Green Corridor at Bowens Field and Victoria Park. The best time to see Smooth Newts is in the Spring from March to May. It is possible to catch Smooth Newts using a net. Care must be taken to ensure all animals welfare and all animals must be carefully replaced back to the original pond they were captured from.

See Marvellous Minibeasts Sheet 3 in the Activity Pack

### *Practical Projects*

There are a number of practical projects on sites in the Green Corridor which can be organised through Ashford Borough Council Green Team or the Kentish Stour Countryside Project these include:

Glade creation - Buxford Meadow woodland

Pond Management - Victoria Park, Bowens Field

River Bay management - Watercress Fields

Path Clearance - Singleton Lake, Buxford woodland

Removal of Himalayan Balsam - along the riverside from Liquid Nightclub to Little Burton Farm estate.

Path Clearance in the Spinney, Curtis Road

Litter Picking throughout the Green Corridor

### *Photography*

The Green Corridor has a number of sites and features that make it an interesting area to take photographs for projects or courses. There are photography trails included to help interpret the sites and to give ideas for interesting photographs. These may inspire young people to make their own photography trails.

### *Rounders*

There are plenty of opportunities for informal games of rounders in the Green Corridor! Suitable sites include Bucksford Park (back of Singleton Lake car park), Watercress Fields, Queen Mothers Park, Aylesford Green, Church Road, Sevington. NB: Please use a soft ball only for rounders in outdoor public spaces for health and safety reasons.

### *Running*

There are a variety of long or short routes for running. These are safe and off main roads.

### *Short Walks*

Although the Green Corridor links to the wider countryside, short walks are easy to plan in the parks and green spaces. See the 'Explore the Corridor' leaflet for routes through the Green Corridor.

### *Sponsored Walks*

The Green Corridor provides a resource for groups to do sponsored walks. There are many routes that can be taken either remaining in Ashford or walking into the wider countryside. The walking routes are safe and on well surfaced footpaths within the Green Corridor so the sponsored walks can be as long or short as the group requires.

### *Sculptures*

Sculptures can be made from Natural Materials found onsite or by using inspiration from the local environment to make sculptures from clay or casts. See Contacts Directory for local artist to help with projects.

### *Video Making*

The parks, greenspaces, riverside and woodlands provide interesting locations for youth filming projects. Films can be used to explore a range of issues relating to young people and their environment. Films can provide factual information about the local area or can be a dramatic production. This may be an opportunity for young people to appear in the local media. See contacts directory for help.

### *Website*

The Ashford Green Corridor has a website that provides information about Access, News, Events, Interactive

Map, Community Exhibitions, Wildlife Information, Historical Information and Contacts to other organisations.

### *Wildlife Surveys*

There are several surveys that young people can do in the Green Corridor. The Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre collates information about wildlife in Kent and welcomes records of plants or animals from everyone. A number of local organisations also do survey work you may be able to get involved in. See Contacts Directory.

### *Wood carving*

Wood carving is an activity, which is fun and creative. Wood carving can take place at any site in the Green Corridor as long as the materials are brought onto the site. There are examples of wood carving at Singleton Lake car park where rustic seating has been decorated. Wood carving needs specialist tools and materials so it is recommended that a wood carving expert is contacted for this activity (see Contacts Directory).

# Contacts Directory

The Ashford Green Corridor is managed by:

Kentish Stour Countryside Project  
Sidelands Farm  
Wye  
Ashford  
Kent TN25 5DQ  
01233 813307  
kentishstour@kent.gov.uk

Visit the Ashford Green Corridor website at:  
[www.ashfordgreencorridor.org.uk](http://www.ashfordgreencorridor.org.uk)

Allotments in the Green Corridor  
Ashford Borough Council  
Allotments Officer  
01233 637311

Bats  
The Bat Conservation Trust  
Unit 2  
15 Cloisters House  
8 Battersea Park Road  
London  
SW8 4BG  
020 76272629  
enquiries@bats.org.uk

Bat Walks and surveys  
Kent Bat Group  
Shirley Thompson  
5 Manor Road  
Tankerton  
Whitstable  
Kent  
CT2 5JT  
01227 275439

Birds  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
[www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)

Ashford Bird watching Club  
Mrs Jenny Fairhall  
Beechings  
Sandy Lane  
Willesborough Lees  
TN24 ONJ  
01233 623 354

Cycling and Cycle Routes  
Kent County Council  
[www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk)  
Cycling in Kent Website use search on main KCC website to locate.

Bike Trails by Rail Packs - Ashford Area  
Kentish Stour Countryside Project  
please note there is a small charge for the pack.

#### Football

Ashford Borough Council Football Officer

Please contact Ashford Borough Council for details of local football clubs and holiday football schemes.

01233 637311

#### Graffiti Wall

Graham Upton

Graffiti Artist

07990633063

Please contact the Arts Officer at Ashford Borough Council if you would like to do a graffiti project in the Green Corridor.

#### Fishing

Ashford Angling Society

Keith Adair

07792 244004

#### Long Walks in the Countryside

Ashford Ramblers

Peter Whitestone

Summer Hill

Fosten Green

Biddenden

Ashford

Kent

TN27 8ER

01580 291 596

#### Practical Projects

Kentish Stour Countryside Project

#### South Willesborough and Newtown Environment Group (SWANNEG)

Sue Williamson

49 Gladstone Road

South Willesborough

Ashford

Kent

#### Photography

Laura Thomas

8 Albert Street

Maidstone

Kent

ME14 2RW

01622 679 980

07730 984 892

Rounders

Ashford Borough Council Green Team

01233 637311

#### Walks

Ashford Ramblers

Summer Hill

Fosten Green

Biddenden

Ashford

Kent

TN27 8ER

01580 291 596

#### Sponsored Walks

Charity Choice

[www.charitychoice.co.uk](http://www.charitychoice.co.uk)

Gives information about supporting national charities.

#### Sculptures

To make various types of sculptures from natural materials.

Nikki Dennington

2 and 4 Dimensional Artist

The Hoppers Hut No 2

Gobelands

Gobelands Farm Business Park

Cemetery Lane

Hadlow

Tonbridge

Kent

TN11 0DP

01732 852 675

0789505748

[Nikki@Globalnet.co.uk](mailto:Nikki@Globalnet.co.uk)

#### Video Making

[www.channel7.org.uk](http://www.channel7.org.uk)

Channel 7 is a video production club formed in 1989 to promote video making skills to the community. Primarily a youth based organisation. The website outlines how the group makes community videos.

#### Website

To make contributions to the Ashford Green Corridor website

contact Kentish Stour Countryside Project

Kent Wildlife Trust provide wildlife fact sheets - on-line copies are available.

[www.kentwildlife.org.uk](http://www.kentwildlife.org.uk)

Kent Wildlife Trust Local Group (Ashford and Tenterden)

Mr.Dave.Fogden

01233 861230

#### Wildlife Surveys

Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre

Tyland Barn

Chatham Road

Sandling

Maidstone

Kent ME14 3BD

Tel: (01622) 685646 or (01622) 685780

Fax: (01622) 671390

E-mail: [info@kmbrc.org.uk](mailto:info@kmbrc.org.uk)

#### Wood carving

Martin Brockman

Oakhurst Farm

Kings Hill

Burwash

Etchingam

East Sussex

TN19 7DP

07905 357 283

#### Work Experience placements

The Kentish Stour Countryside project offers work experience placements to school and college students.

Maximum of 2 students during once placement period. The work involves attending practical conservation task

days (i.e work to improve or maintain the countryside around Ashford and Canterbury) and general office duties. Please contact the Project to discuss placement opportunities.

Useful Websites:-

Wildlife

[www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk)

[www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)

[www.abdn.ac.uk/mammal](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/mammal)

Local Information/Community Groups Listings

[www.ashford.gov.uk](http://www.ashford.gov.uk)

[www.goashford.com](http://www.goashford.com)

[www.thisisashford.co.uk](http://www.thisisashford.co.uk)

Other youth facilities in the Green Corridor

Skate Park Sk8teside - Civic Centre car park tel no.

Youth Forum - Contact Ashford Borough Council 01233 637311

Other youth groups - most of the other youth groups in Ashford are listed on the Go Ashford Site.

KCC Youth and Community work please visit [www.kcc.gov.uk](http://www.kcc.gov.uk) and use the main search engine to access the Youth and Community website.

# Hazards on Sites

All the activities outlined in the pack aim to be cost effective and safe for youth groups. However leading groups safely in public open spaces involves responsible management of groups and individuals. Outlined below are lists of potential hazards that may be found on or near the sites or associated with the activities listed in the A~Z section.

It is recommended that a site visit is undertaken before conducting visits to familiarise leaders with the site layouts and any potential hazards. If there are any enquiries about any of the activities please do not hesitate to contact Ashford Borough Council or the Kentish Stour Countryside Project for advice.

## A-Z Hazards on site and Recommendations for Activities

**Arts Activities:** ensure tables are set up safely, use suitable materials for the outdoors and respect other site users.

**Balls/Ball Games:** use soft balls only as many of the sites in the Green Corridor are used by members of the public.

**Cycling:** ensure that cycles are in good working order, plan the route in advance and prepare for any adverse weather conditions (hot, cold or wet). Ensure suitable clothing is worn and beware of major roads. Beware of pedestrians on dual use paths. Take hot or cold drinks and refreshments as necessary.

**Countryside Walks:** plan the route in advance and prepare for any adverse weather conditions (hot, cold or wet). Ensure that suitable clothing is worn. Take hot or cold drinks and refreshments as necessary.

**Dogs:** some areas of the Green Corridor are used for dogwalking, beware of all dogs on sites.

**Dog mess:** can cause the disease Toxicara, ensure that contact with dog mess is minimised. Take hand washing equipment if necessary.

**Fishing:** It is recommended that a site visit and advice taken from the Ashford Angling Club is undertaken before attempting any fishing in the Green Corridor.

**Giant Outdoor Games:** Ensure that the area chosen for games does not interfere with other site users. Beware of dogs.

**Graffiti Projects:** Ensure that advice from a graffiti artist is taken before embarking on projects. It is recommended that face protection is worn if using spray paints. Ensure that suitable clothing is worn and beware that the weather can change during doing a project outside.

**Horses:** If any activities are undertaken at Buxford Meadow, beware that travellers periodically graze horses on the site. The horses are usually there for a limited time and are promptly moved off the site. Beware that the horses may be tethered within reach of the pathways and may not be friendly.

**Hospital:** Nearest Hospital with Accident and Emergency is William Harvey Hospital, Kennington Road, Willesborough 01233 633331

**Kite Flying:** beware of overhead cables, the safest place to fly kites is Victoria Park, please respect other site users.

**Litter:** beware of dangerous items of litter when carrying out litter picks. Dangerous items include those that require manual handling, potentially infected needles and items that may have been covered in river water as well as a variety of other items. Always use litter pickers and gloves. Limit litter-picking sessions to a maximum of 1/12 hours.

**Lone Working:** Always let someone know if you are visiting the sites by yourself. Although most of the sites are reasonably near major built up areas and thoroughfares, some are isolated.

**Mobile Phones:** Always take a mobile phone with you on sites during site visit and activities. It is not guaranteed

that existing phone boxes will be fully operational. Mobile phone reception is generally good in Ashford for most networks.

**Ponds:** Ponds can be dangerous causing slip and trip hazards, especially when debris is being cleared from them or large numbers are accessing ponds for pond dipping or surveying. Please ensure that groups are well supervised around ponds.

**River:** Access to the river is limited in parts of the Green Corridor because the banks are steep. Do not encourage groups to get into the river unless they are well supervised.

**Roads:** Beware of roads around sites, ensure that groups are supervised.

**Toilets:** there are few toilets in the Green Corridor. It is recommended that activities are kept quite short (i.e. 2-3 hours maximum) or the length of the regular youth group session.

**Tools:** Ensure that tool safety talks are carried out if carrying out practical projects in the Green Corridor.

**Toxicara canis** - this is a common worm that infects dogs. Contracting *Toxicara canis* is relatively rare. Variable symptoms are seen on contracting the disease, which is caused by the transmission of the larval stages of the worm to humans. Transmission can cause visual impairment and the possibility of blindness. Hand washing and avoiding contact with dog faeces minimises contracting the disease.

**Walks** - see Countryside Walks

**Wildlife Surveys** - ensure that the leaders are familiar with carrying out wildlife surveys. If the survey is being undertaken in the dark i.e. bats, amphibians ensure that the group is familiar with the layout of the site and potential hazards. Ensure that the group is supervised.

**Weils Disease** - ensure that hands are thoroughly washed after site visits and activities. Weils disease is relatively rare but serious disease which causes fever, nausea, pains in calves and eventually bleeding from tissues. It is transmitted from infected animals such as rodents and foxes through contaminated soil or water. Transmission can occur through cuts or through the nose and mouth if immersed in contaminated materials.