



Friends of Our Valley



JULY 2009

# *Vision Statement & Outline Plan*



## Friends of Our Valley

### Vision Statement and Outline Plan

**July 2009**

We are Friends of Our Valley, a wide and varied group of people who have joined together to promote the conservation, enhancement and use of the valley for the benefit of residents, visitors and wildlife.

Our activities are focussed on the section of the Goyt Valley between Strines Dove Cote and Low Lea Road Marple Bridge and its surrounds.

We aim to provide a varied, safe, high quality environment that will meet the needs of the local community, allowing people of all ages and abilities to enjoy both active and passive recreation and encourage the enjoyment and appreciation of the natural and historical environment.

We will work with local residents, businesses, local authorities, public bodies and communities so that we can deliver effectual sustainable improvements that will be embraced and utilised by as wide a section of the community as possible.

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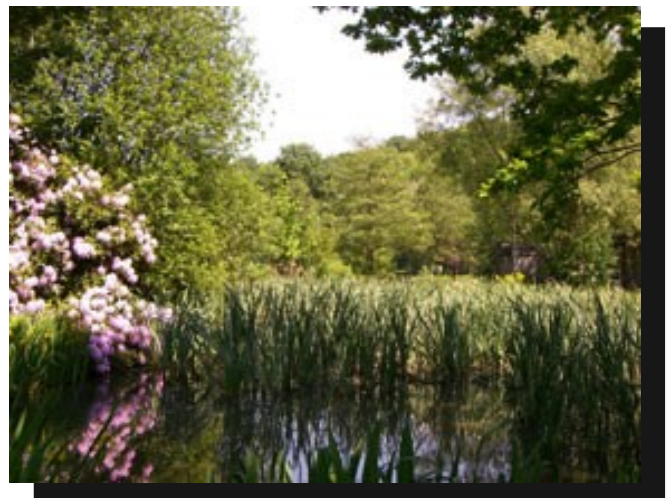
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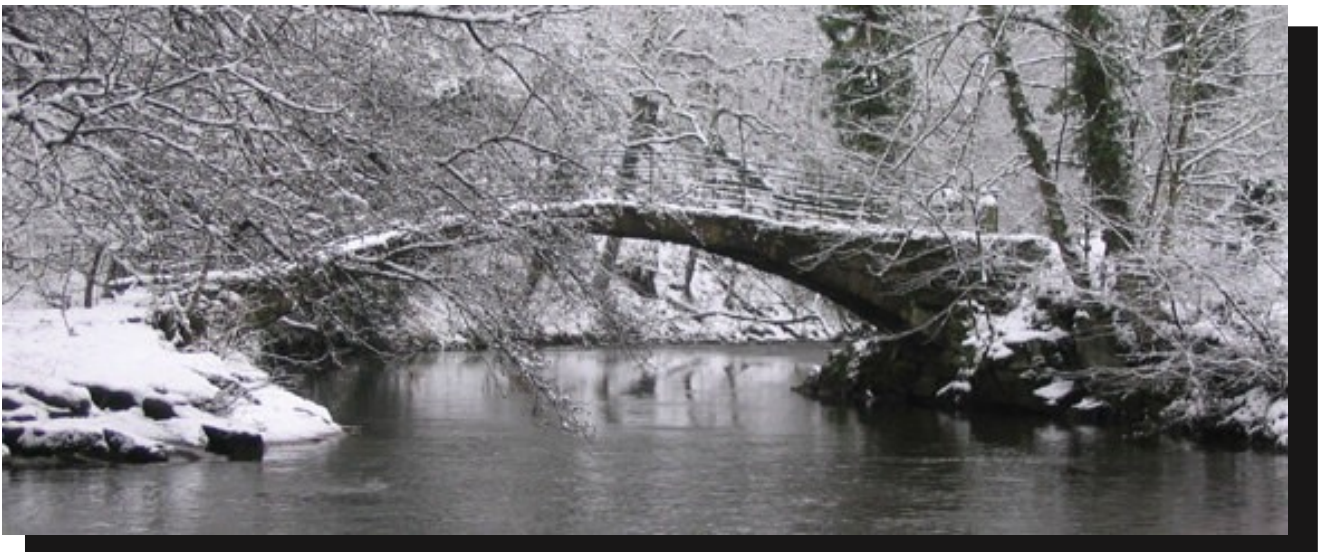
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*All the photos in this document  
were taken in Our Valley by group members*

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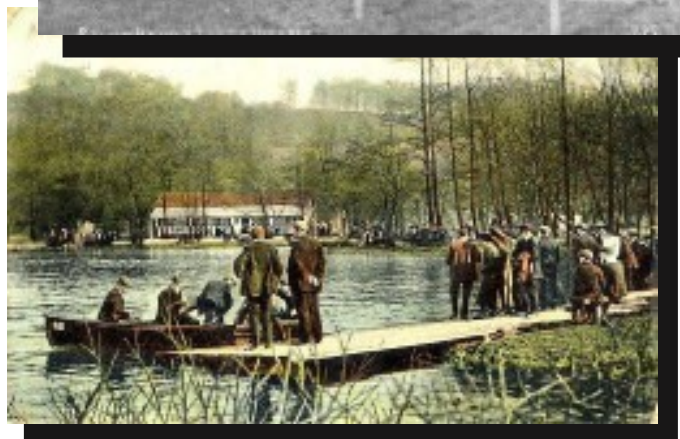
## Summary and Background

The valley has been shaped by the demands of industry and the vision of one of the nations greatest industrialists. Samuel Oldknow's industrial activities stimulated change in the valley and the towns that surround it. He reshaped the natural landscape and created a complex system of millponds, tunnels, channels and wheelpits to optimise the valleys waterpower as it weaved its way through his industrialised structures. He pioneered farming techniques and was responsible for the building of local roads, bridges, coal mines and housing. The valley provides a model example of the demands of industrialisation and the power its economic might had in shaping the landscape of industrial Britain. At its peak in 1804, with 10,080 spindles operating, approximately 550 people were employed at his Mill. Mellor Mill continued operations for 100 years until a disastrous fire on a foggy night in November 1892.

Today, the valley plays host to a myriad of recreational activities and provides a welcome retreat to thousands of visitors each year.

Friends of Our Valley will act as custodian to the valley. We will lead carefully coordinated phased projects that will have social, ecological and economic improvements that will dramatically benefit the wider community and the valley environment.

We will focus on improving access to and around the valley, enhancing the educational and recreational value of the valley and improving and enhancing the valleys ecology, with the aim of enhancing and promoting community interaction and involvement in the valley and its history.



## Introduction

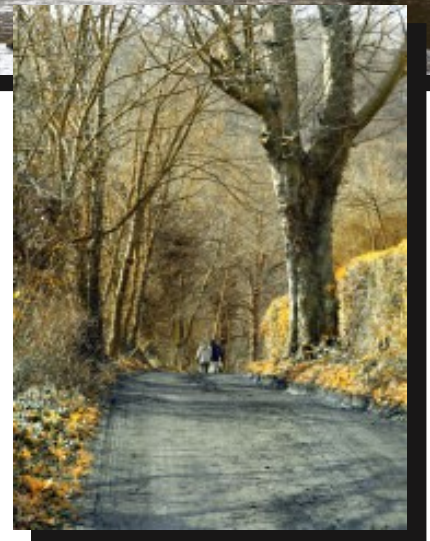
Since Mellor Mill burnt down in 1892 nature has recovered its scarred industrial landscape to the extent that an unknowing visitor would pass through the valleys tranquil surroundings unaware of the past it holds. However, the legacy of Samuel Oldknow's industrial idyll can still be seen today in the sculptured landscape of the valley and through its weirs, sluice gates, millponds and striking archaeology.

The valley landscape is beautiful and steeped in history, it has the potential to educate and involve the old and young in their local area and history. The valley provides rich and varied recreation for walkers, runners, mountain bikers, equestrian users, canoeists, anglers and persons who simply wish to enjoy the beautiful surroundings. The valley benefits from extensive free parking and toilet facilities at the Roman Lakes, complemented with refreshment and picnic facilities.

There is amazing potential within the valley to enhance outdoor recreation and the biodiversity of a uniquely rural aspect within minutes of the urban network, but the valley desperately needs economic and social investment to achieve its full potential.

Poor access routes, fragmented signage, lack of opportunities to interact and involve the public and sporadic habitat management are key factors limiting the valley from being realised as a key local resource. With investment the valley can make a contribution to the green economy and achieve its full socio-economic, ecological, educational and recreational value.

Friends of Our Valley aims to give the valley an identity that will coherently connect its resources. We aim to address the access issues which have effectively denied many the opportunity to interact with their environment and the resources it holds. This document presents our vision for the future of the valley and sets out our strategy for its sustainable and effectual improvement, enhancement and promotion.



## OUR VISION

Friends of Our Valley create an enhanced outdoor space for all by realising the ecological, recreational and educational potential of the valley in addition to enhancing and improving access to and around the valley to the social and economic benefit of the local community.

The project will create a diverse and thriving environment for wildlife, communities living locally and those visiting the valley for recreational activities by:

- Promoting and improving **access** to and around the valley to connect our local communities together with the natural environment and bring varied interest groups together under a common identity.
- Sensitively encouraging and promoting opportunities to partake in **recreational** activities within the valley. We will promote ways in which the public can safely enjoy the natural resources of the valley through enhanced access and better facilities that cater for all.
- We will provide innovative opportunities to interact with the surrounding landscape, ecology and history and thereby enhance the **educational** value of the valley.
- Enhancing the **ecology** of the valley by improving habitat and the potential for wildlife to thrive.

Our project will benefit the valley and the wider area that surrounds it **economically** and **socially** by providing a safe and accessible area that is coherently connected and utilised and enjoyed by all. The Friends of Our Valley Project will help benefit the green economy and positively benefit the quality of life of the local communities that surround the valley area. Successful fulfilment of our aims will involve and integrate the community to the benefit of residents, visitors and wildlife.

We will work with all stakeholders to ensure that where possible we can increase access to the valleys resources and extend the range of recreational activities that our valley can support so that many more people can enjoy healthy outdoor activities alongside a healthy and diverse ecology.



## OUR STRATEGY FOR DELIVERY

The Goyt Valley is home to a wide variety of recreational activities. It has significant ecological and end educational potential. With enhanced access and regeneration of its facilities it could become an outstanding local facility that brings together the local community to its social, economic and ecological benefit.

To achieve the valleys potential we will deliver the Friends of Our Valley Project through a programme of projects that will rejuvenate, promote, enhance and improve the valley and its resources.

Our strategy is to deliver a targeted programme of improvements.

### To achieve this we need to:

- Survey members of Friends of Our Valley and other stakeholders to identify the key areas in most need of improvement. This will help us to outline and prioritise our proposed activities.
- Develop a costed plan of Our Valley's proposed projects that will enable the valley to achieve its social, economic and ecological potential.
- Develop working partnerships with stakeholders so that we can ensure that Our Valley projects are of maximum benefit and embraced by as wide a range of users as possible.
- Seek appropriate levels of funding to successfully realise our vision.

Over the coming year we hope to target our activities in the key areas of access, education, recreation and ecology.



## ACCESS TO AND AROUND THE VALLEY

### Improved access routes to and around the valley

The main access to the valley is along Lakes Road, a long unsurfaced series of interchanging footpaths, bridlepaths and unadopted roads that are often in disrepair. Despite the difficulty in access, thousands of anglers, canoeists, walkers, equestrians, cyclists and visitors to the valley frequent Lakes Road, the sole vehicular access route, to gain access to the parking facilities at the Roman Lakes and its beautiful surroundings.

The Friends of Our Valley project aims to provide a long-term maintenance solution regards access to the valley by vehicle along Lakes Road so that in addition to ensuring that the educational and recreational opportunities at the Roman Lakes are maximised, the Lakes can continue to act as an access point to the surrounding countryside.



We also intend to deal with the disrepair of the nexus of bridlepaths which link the Strines and Marple ends of the valley in order to maximise their suitability for use by foot, mountain bike, equestrians, disabled and resident use. An increased standard of access to and around the valley will enhance local knowledge, appreciation and participation in our rural environment.

### Improve signage of routes and directions to key sites

Friends of Our Valley aim to improve signage of routes and directions to key sites of interest to foot, mountain bike, equestrian and vehicular users. This will benefit the health of the local community by encouraging those unfamiliar with the rights of way network to utilise the abundant local countryside for outdoor recreation.



### Improved parking

Improving the parking provision currently available within the valley will help accommodate those who utilise the Roman Lakes complex as a direct link to the bridleway network. We have identified the particular need to improve the gravel surface of the current parking area in order to better accommodate vehicular traffic and disabled visitors.

### Equestrian Park and Ride facility

In order to better accommodate equestrian users that are not directly linked to the bridleway network, we hope to achieve an equestrian park and ride facility within the valley. This will help maximise access to the valleys bridleway network and the health benefits of outdoor recreation.



## Canoe access platform on the River Goyt

We plan to create a canoe parking and unloading area to accommodate the proposed canoe access platform on the River Goyt. Canoe access to the Goyt within the valley does not at present exist, so this would further maximise access to the valleys recreational facilities and help to provide more consistent canoe access along the rivers length.

## Disabled fishing platforms and paths

In addition to improving access to and around the valley by direct improvements to the main valley access routes, we aim to better accommodate and encourage disabled visitors by the provision of disabled fishing platforms and paths to and around the key features such as car park, toilet, café and recreation areas.

## Disabled toilet facilities

The provision of disabled toilet facilities will encourage the mobility impaired to utilise the valley and its resources. Ensuring we have the right facilities to cater for as wide a section of the community as possible will further enhance the valleys value as a local amenity.



## EDUCATION THROUGH RECREATION

We plan to increase the opportunities for the public to interact and learn from the valley environment by optimising its recreational and educational potential

### Pond dipping station and display panels

We plan to create opportunities for all to become involved in their natural environment through the erection of a pond dipping station and an innovative collection of interactive ecology equipment.

This facility would be accompanied with an informative display panel explaining the ecology of pond life and identifying key features such as weed types and animal life. We hope this facility will create an opportunity to the young to become involved in their surroundings and foster an interest in the natural environment.

### Bird hide, boxes and interpretation panels

An accessible bird hide will encourage interaction and appreciation of the rural environment. The bird hide would be well positioned so as to enjoy an exciting and varied view of the resident wildlife alongside interpretative material that will maximise the educative value of the project. We also plan to erect a series of numbered bird boxes with the potential to have nesting cameras linked to the proposed museum. This will provide an interesting and informative glimpse into the valleys natural ecology.

## History and Nature sculpture trail, information boards & route guides

We plan to create a combined history and nature trail that will be accompanied with sculptures and information boards which relate to significant features or events in the valleys industrial and social past or ecology. Visitors would be guided around the trail using either a free illustrated leaflet or easily available audio guide. This will showcase the valleys varied inhabitants and fascinating past in an accessible and interesting way.

## Museum and teaching room

To complement the history and nature trail, a key aim of the group is to erect a museum and teaching room close to the parking facilities at the Roman Lakes to properly exhibit the valleys immense industrial importance and eventual evolution into a popular local tourist attraction. This will also provide the space for local organised visits to take place and will complement the angling tuition schemes already in place on the site.



The educational value of such a resource is immense and would provide an onsite accessible

presentation of the valleys industrial and social past. A key addition to this exhibit would be the finds found by the Mellor Archaeological Trust and Manchester University during their recent excavation of Mellor Mill.

## Education packs

Targeted education packs would be widely used by local schools and community groups to gain educational value from the valley. The packs will focus on the history of the valley in addition to the valleys ecology and evolving use of the River Goyt for hydropower. The education packs will be complemented by the opportunities for interaction and education created by the other proposed projects.



## Rural crafts and skills teaching facility

We will engage with local stakeholders in order to develop the valleys potential as a rural crafts and skills teaching facility with a focus on traditional crafts such as hedge laying and dry stonewalling. This project will enable us to make aesthetic and ecological improvements to the valley whilst optimising its educational value.

## Outdoor Nature Play Area

We will create an outdoor interaction area aimed at young children to replace the valleys current play area. We will install large locally sculptured creatures and plant life that are native to the surroundings. These sculptures will create a magical spectacle that will engage young children with their surroundings and ecology in an innovative and fun way whilst helping to establish the valley as a destination for young families.

## Hydropower scheme & fish pass & migratory fish viewing platform

A further exciting project is the prospect of the erection of a hydropower scheme on Oldknow's original weir. This scheme would complement the valleys industrialised past and demonstrate the evolving nature of our valley and our use of its resources. A Hydro Feasibility Study by Water Power Enterprises, that the Energy Saving Trust sponsored, deemed the site 'a very good site in which to place a turbine.'

The proposed hydropower scheme is likely to include a fish pass that would enhance the ecology of the River Goyt and create an attractive and educative spectacle during periods of fish migration. The visual nature of this scheme would provide a unique educational opportunity that would be an ideal addition to the valleys museum, enhancing and broadening its educative appeal.

To maximise the potential educational impact of this natural phenomenon we will create a Migratory Fish Viewing Platform beside the weir. This viewing point will be included in our History and Nature Trail, which will ensure that the weir and rivers significance within the valleys history and ecology is made apparent.

## ECOLOGY

One of the key aspirations of the Friends of our Valley Project is to enhance and improve the ecology of the valley. A significant aspect of the valleys ecology is water based. We have the developed and popular angling facilities based around the Roman Lakes and the potential of the River Goyt.

The River Goyt flows through a landscape that was transformed by industrialisation. After years of pollution we are now witnessing dramatic improvements in water quality. Fish are returning to the Goyt accompanied with the wildlife that depends upon the ecology of a thriving ecosystem. However, the river is obstructed by the relics of its industrial past. Furthermore, fragmented habitat management is effectively blocking the rivers full and effectual recovery. Friends of Our Valley Project will endeavour to provide the ideal ecological conditions along the water corridors and angling points within the valley that will ensure that the valley can accommodate sustainable fisheries that will improve angler experience and enhance participation in the local environment.



## Enhance and improve fish habitat

We aim to improve fish habitat in both the River Goyt and the angling facilities at the Roman Lakes. We hope that this will help tackle both habitat and predator problems and ensure that the natural ecology of the valley thrives.

Improving fish habitat together with improved access, will help benefit the angler experience and ensure that angling remains a popular and accessible outdoor recreation for all.

## Targeted habitat improvements and fish pass

We will further enhance the ecology of the river by making targeted habitat improvements to sections of the river and valley. The need to create a fish pass on the weir at the River Goyt has already been identified by the Mersey Life Project as a top '12 priority weir on the Mersey, Bollin and Goyt.'



## Simple community measures

The improvements to the valley ecology and appearance will not be limited to the water margins. We will make targeted and continual improvements throughout the valley through simple community measures such as conducting regular litter picks along the pathways and water margins and hedge planting and cutting with the Friends Group volunteers.

## Land management

The valley project also aims to instigate land management schemes that will aid the local green economy as well as benefiting the ecological and educational aspirations of the Valley Project.



MAP OF THE AREA COVERED BY FRIENDS OF OUR VALLEY



MAP OF GREATER MANCHESTER



STRINES STATION

## SUCCESS

The Friends of Our Valley Project will make a positive dramatic impact on the valley area. It will achieve success by providing a better place for:

- People to play and learn
- People & Wildlife

For our Project to be successful we will need to interact and involve a wide range of experts who possess the appropriate expertise in their fields of study.

The Friends of Our Valley Project will have recreational, educational, social, economic and ecological benefits.

## BENEFITS OF CREATING A PLACE FOR PEOPLE

### TO PLAY AND LEARN

- Being in the countryside reduces stress and helps encourage participation in outdoor activities such as walking, cycling or canoeing. By enhancing access to recreational and educational opportunities within the valley we will be providing a key local area where people can relax, exercise or learn.
- By promoting access to and participation in physical activities (which can lower the risks of coronary heart disease, type II diabetes, hypertension and colon cancer) a positive benefit on the well being of the local community can be achieved.
- Rural tourism is worth approximately £770 million per annum to the North West Economy.<sup>1</sup>
- Twenty one million days were spent fishing in 2007, contributing to £3.3 billion to the national economy.<sup>2</sup>
- For every young person guided away from a court appearance through schemes such as Hooked On Fishing, the saving to the taxpayer is £2500 and, if prevented from detention, up to £160,000 per year.



- Fishing is the most popular participation sport in the UK attracting over 4 million people.<sup>3</sup> It is available and accessible to all sections of the community and therefore promotes social inclusion.
- Local communities benefit from enhanced recreational facilities which improve their quality of life, attract wildlife and tourism.
- Raising awareness of the valleys ecology and history through a museum and teaching room within the valley will maximise the valleys potential as an educational tool that interacts and involves all.
- Promoting opportunities to utilise the valley as an educational facility for rural crafts and skills will ensure that the valley environment aesthetically and ecologically benefits from the Project's proposals that are also of educational and recreational benefit.
- By encouraging both healthy outdoor recreation and providing a free accessible and safe area for all to exercise, Friends of Our Valley Project will help the Department of Health (DH), the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to achieve their Public Service Agreement (PSA) target on obesity on a local level.

<sup>1</sup> The Economic Benefits of the Natural Environment – a review of the evidence base for economic value of investing in Green Infrastructure – (ECOTEC Oct 2007)

<sup>2</sup> The Mersey Life Project Vision Statement and Outline Plan – (Environment Agency, March 2008)

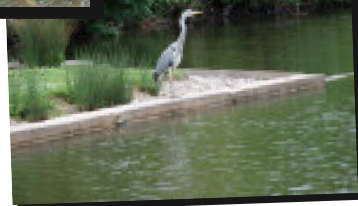
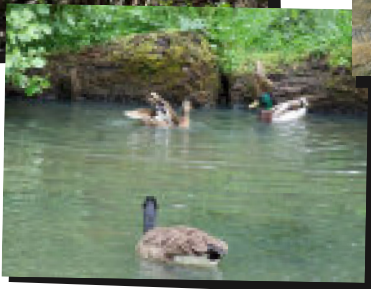
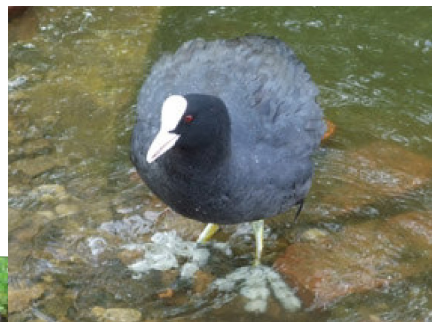
<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*



*Our Valley, taken from Marple Ridge*

## BENEFITS OF THE VALLEY PROJECT TO PEOPLE & WILDLIFE

- By restoring and enhancing the valley environment, we will make an important contribution to biodiversity and the survival of wildlife as well as providing aesthetic improvements and educational and recreational opportunities that will benefit the wider community.
- Improving and developing fish migration opportunities along the River Goyt will allow internationally important conservation species such as salmon to reach their breeding habitats.
- Creating more complex habitats that will improve the biodiversity potential of the valley and promoting the recovery of fish to the river will benefit the wildlife within the valley and the potential educational and recreational value of the valley.
- Ensuring habitat management and improvements are incorporated into educational opportunities that can help encourage people to interact and become involved in their local habitat and environment will maximise the potential educational and social benefits of the Valley Project.
- Encouraging the utilisation of the valleys water areas for canoeing and angling will promote the valley as a healthy outdoor recreational facility that boosts the economy through angler spending.





## How to get involved

Having a wide and diverse group of people supporting our work, just by becoming members, will really help us and demonstrate your support for our group. It is only £1 to join and will help ensure a positive future for this beautiful local amenity.

You can pick up a membership form (and pay your £1) at Pads, Paws and Claws pet shop in Marple or at the cafe at the Roman Lakes.

## What you can do

Those members who wish to play a more active role within the group are encouraged to attend our organised task days, where we will rally our volunteers in a bid to conserve, maintain and promote the valley and its resources.

We hope to gain guidance from local experts to ensure that all our activities and planned projects are of maximum benefit to the valley, its visitors and wildlife.

Through regular task days we can enhance and promote community interaction and involvement in the valley and its history.



## Raising funds

We are currently working on applying for grant funding for some of our more adventurous aims, you can keep up to date on our latest activities by visiting our website [www.ourvalley.org.uk](http://www.ourvalley.org.uk)

Donations towards our group are welcomed. All contributions can be addressed to 'Friends of Our Valley' and sent to the address below.

**We hope that with your help our project will help provide an outstanding local facility that is safe, accessible and used and enjoyed by all.**

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For any further details please contact - Friends of Our Valley  
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FRIENDS  
OF OUR VALLEY

**rural economy**

**access**

**community**

**history**

**education**

**nature**

**ecology**

**wildlife**

**recreation**

**sport**

**bio-diversity**

**conservation**

**environment**

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