

STOUR VALLEY PROJECT

4.5.16 The Stour Valley has potential for a significant recreation and habitat resource as identified in the Leisure Strategy, Green Spaces Strategy and Green Infrastructure Strategy. The Stour Valley runs from Hengistbury Head to Bear Cross and beyond the Borough to the north and west. Fragmented sections of the valley are already publicly accessible, with the Stour Valley Way linking open spaces adjacent to the river. However, more extensive and coherent cycling and walking access through the valley and increased provision for environmentally friendly activities will greatly enhance opportunities for outdoor recreation. The Stour Valley has the potential to provide SANGs, thereby deflecting recreation pressure from sensitive heathland habitats. As Bournemouth continues to accommodate more residential growth, pressures on existing open spaces and sensitive habitats will increase.



Throop

4.5.17 The biodiversity and overall enjoyment of the valley and river would benefit from sensitive habitat and landscape enhancement including sustainable land management such as traditional grazing, natural flood attenuation and local food production. Management Plans have been prepared for Hengistbury Head and the Stour Valley Local Nature Reserve, these address potentially conflicting interests between amenity pressures, conservation and archaeological interests. In order to provide for better defined and more accessible entry to the valley, and to act as focal points for environmental activities and engagement, gateway points should be developed. Where feasible these gateways should provide for visitor centres, educational activities, interpretation and public facilities. The proposed visitor centre at Hengistbury Head will act as a gateway at Christchurch Harbour and there is potential to develop the Stour Acres Barn, in Muscliffe, to provide a similar resource further along the valley. The Multi Area Agreement 'Action Plan for the Green Knowledge Economy' recognises the potential of the Stour Valley to contribute to furthering the aim a providing for a quality 'greener' environment as a key driver of the economy^{4.56}.

Policy CS36 Stour Valley Project

The Stour Valley has the potential to act as a sub-regionally significant recreation and habitat resource. The Council and partners will promote sustainable public access and implement a management plan that considers the following:

- Sustainable access from the urban area, to a continuous walking, cycling and bridleway route through the valley, including links to the north of the River Stour;
- Gateway points in the valley offering education, interpretation and other public facilities;
- A demonstration farm and visitor centre at Hick's Farm, Muscliffe;
- Habitat restoration including floodplain grazing marsh, reed beds, wet woodland and in-stream corridor habitats;
- Opportunities for flood water attenuation and storage; and
- Creating a valley landscape that performs the function of a 'Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace' (SANG).