



ORE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

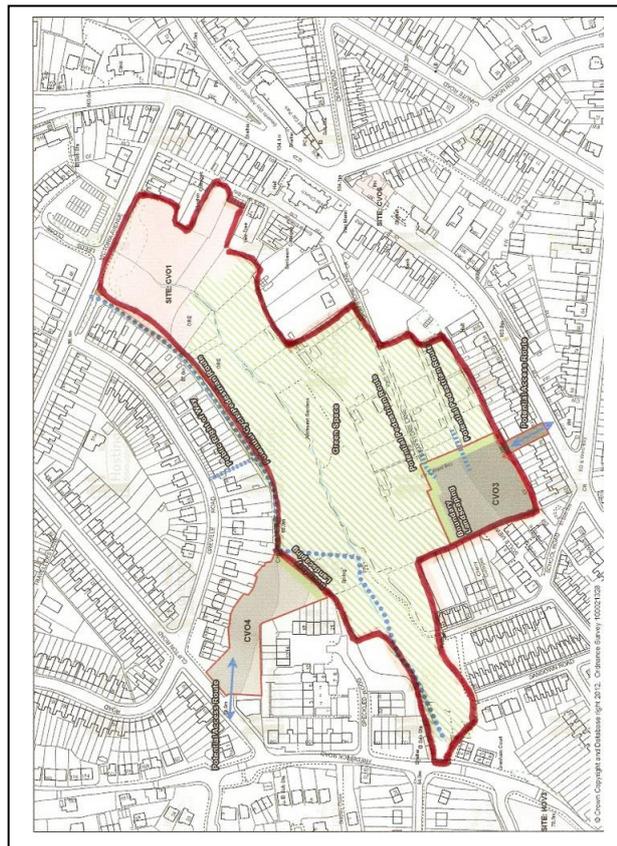
Seeking to acquire land in the Upper Ore Valley to save and enhance urban woodland and green space for community use and to protect animal habitat



ANNUAL REPORT 2014/2015

The Year that Speckled Wood was Saved

This Report covers the period
from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015



Contact:

Ore Community Land Trust, Ore Centre, 455 Old London Road, Hastings, TN35 5BH e-mail: ore.clt@hotmail.com
www.orecommunitylandtrust.org.uk

ORE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

Ore Community Land Trust was formed in 2009 by Ore Valley Action with the

PURPOSE of:

Seeking to acquire land in the Upper Ore Valley to save and enhance urban woodland and green space for community use and to protect animal habitat

It is a charitable (membership) organisation that has built up a considerable body of community support and has developed very good working relationships with many local and Borough wide groups and organisations.

In 2014 the Trust will be seeking to register as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

The Trust is a member organisation of Hastings Voluntary Action

OBJECTIVES:

1. To acquire land to protect and enhance available urban green space, animal habitat and accessible open space for community use.
2. To acquire and manage community land, buildings and associated assets for environmental benefit and sustainable development of community amenities
3. To advance the education of the public in conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment.
4. To provide and assist in the provision of recreational facilities and activities for the public as a whole and for those who, by reason of their youth, age, infirmity, disablement, ethnicity, financial hardship or social or economic circumstances, have need of such facilities.
5. To organise and assist in organising community events and activities associated with the work of the Trust and to promote community development and social cohesion
6. To help in the provision, improvement and maintenance of footpaths and cycle ways for travel to work and education and for leisure and exercise
7. To contribute to the advancement of education, training, work experience and volunteering.
8. To involve the community in the development of the Trust and its work and in planning new projects and initiatives.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 2014/15

Committee members elected at AGM 2014 or continuing their term

Ian Sier	Chair
Tony Polain	Vice-Chair
Becky Sargent	Secretary
Meg Harmer	Treasurer

Ex Officio Committee member appointed in August 2014

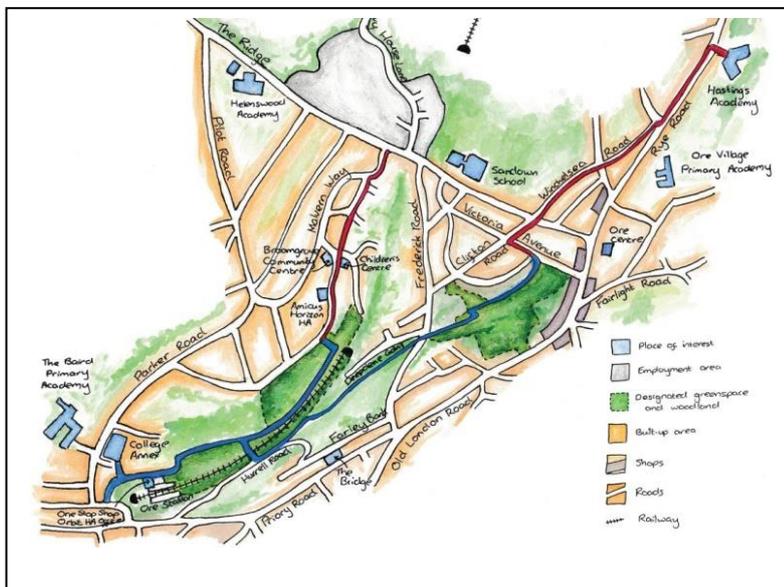
Cllr Tania Charman (Tressell Ward)

MEMBERS

At the end of March 2015 Ore Community Land Trust had 37 members

ORE CLT PROJECTS IN 2014/15

- **Hastings Development Management Plan - Public Examination Submission**
- **Ore Village Green - Survey and Design**
- **Ore Valley Greenway - Route Design Research**
- **Ore Trails (partnership work) - Circular Walking Route Leaflets**



CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to be able to write, in this historic Annual Report, that the final recommendations of the Planning Inspector, who held the Public Examination of the Hastings Development Management Plan, has confirmed the redesignation of practically the whole of Speckled Wood as protected green space.

This is the very best outcome that we could have imagined and makes the 10 year campaign to save this valuable woodland valley worth every hour of time invested by the members of the various groups, supporters and volunteers who worked to clear the footpaths and open up the wood for local residents to use.

It is particularly fitting that the Planning Inspector's preliminary recommendations (now confirmed) were announced within days of the 10th anniversary of the first meeting of the **Speckled Wood Group** set up in 2005 to campaign to save Speckled Wood from development. I was a founder member of the Speckled Wood Group, which joined up with other groups to form **Ore Valley Action** in 2006 to broaden the campaign, involve local residents and work with supportive organisations.

Then, in 2009, **Ore Community Land Trust** was launched by Ore Valley Action as a community membership trust structured to be able to acquire land in Speckled Wood with the aim of creating a community owned woodland for Ore Valley and Ore Village.

This is clearly an occasion to thank the members and supporters of the organisations mentioned above and the volunteers who worked to open footpaths, clear the stream, build steps and dispose of decades of accumulated rubbish. Other organisations that gave their support such as the Salvation Army in Ore, Ore Valley Forum and the Ore Centre.

It is also important to acknowledge the critical contribution made by local councillors, who have all actively supported and assisted us and have undoubtedly been instrumental in convincing senior Council officers of the value of Speckled Wood as a community asset worth preserving.

Ore Valley Action and Ore Community Land Trust engaged fully with the **Shaping Hastings** consultation process to develop the Local Plan from 2006 to 2014 to make the case for removing Speckled Wood from its former planned housing development designation. It was almost certainly the level of public support for the proposal to make Speckled Wood an area of urban green space, during the focused Council consultation exercise in April 2012, that resulted in a series of options for areas of protected green space. This finally resulted in the adoption of the largest protected area on offer.

However, it was the success in persuading the Planning Inspector, at the **Public Examination of the Development Management Plan** in the autumn of 2014, that not only confirmed the Council land protection area proposed but extended this to delete the two development sites that had been left. It was without doubt a very enlightened judgment by the Planning Inspector of the value of urban green spaces for local communities and the importance of environmental interests in the consideration of the future use of land.

I would argue that of crucial importance in securing this outcome was the work that Ore Community Land Trust undertook to demonstrate just what can be achieved to provide new community assets, such as a Village Green, the Greenway route and recovery of the disused allotments for community food growing. This was, of course, underscored by the truly huge level of public support in the form of consultation responses, petitions and publicity organised by all of the campaign groups seeking to save Speckled Wood.

We greatly appreciate the financial contributions made by the Big Local, the Isabel Blackman Foundation and the Ore Community Shop, which made it possible to produce a fully worked up design for the Village Green and start a project to get the Ore valley Greenway routes

researched, designed and costed. This showed that Ore Community Land Trust was serious about making these and other projects happen

This AGM marks the end of the first primary aim of Ore Community Land Trust - to save Speckled Wood from being lost to development. It also marks the beginning of the second key aim - to create a community owned woodland by working with Hastings Borough Council, community groups and other organisations.

This will involve acquiring land in Speckled Wood to maintain, manage and enhance so that it can provide a quiet and attractive woodland for all ages and abilities and can include play space for children, disabled access and a range of other amenities.

In order to achieve this, arguably, even more demanding aim Ore Community Land Trust will need the substantial input of active support from the community in Ore and Ore Valley to strengthen the committee and share the many new tasks that will have to be taken on. If Speckled Wood is to become a community woodland it will need the full support of the community to make this happen. I hope that that local residents will now rally to help with these tasks.

Although I am keen to continue to work as a committee member I will be standing down as chair of Ore Community Land Trust at this AGM. I have spent the last 10 years holding key roles in the three successive campaign groups and it is now time for me to take on a more limited role. I wish my successor continued success and I am sure that he or she will find the challenge just as rewarding as I have.

Ian Sier
Ore Community Land Trust Chair



TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS IN 2014/15

- April 2014 - Tree brought down by storm cleared from Cross Valley footpath
- 12 April - Ore Trails circular walks project launch at Ore Centre
- April to Sept. - Monthly Guided Walks around Speckled Wood
- 10 May - Ore CLT AGM
- May to Aug. - Questionnaire Survey of community views about Village Green
- 14 June - Ore Village Green information and Community Consultation Event
- June - Ore CLT input/opposition to development plan for Clifton Road site
- 2 Oct. - Results of Village Green survey published - 95% of 126 completed survey forms in support of the idea

- Oct. - Village Green survey and design commissioned to produce Design Report
- 6 Nov. - Big Local approve grant for Ore Valley Greenway design project
- 18 Nov. - Start of Public Examination of the Development Management Plan
- 3 Dec. - Ore CLT Presentation to Public Examination Hearing considering Speckled Wood (Ore CLT representatives spoke at several other Hearings during the Public Examination)
- 15 Jan. 2015 - Planning Inspectors visit to Speckled Wood
- 12 Feb. - Planning Inspectors initial recommendations published for public consultation
- Feb. - Ore CLT circulates details of the consultation and encourages support for redesignation of Speckled Wood as protected green space
- 7 March - Ore CLT coffee morning & open meeting to explain DMP recommendations
- March to April - Ore Valley Greenway route researched by landscape architect, surveyor and engineer
- Two Newsletters were printed and circulated during the year



DEVELOPMENT MANAGMENT PLAN - REDESIGNATION OF SPECKLED WOOD

The Shaping Hastings Local Plan Process:

Ore Community Land Trust, and predecessor organisations, spent many years engaging with the 'Shaping Hastings' process to draw up a new Local Plan for Hastings as well as campaigning and lobbying to have Speckled Wood redesignated as protected urban green space.

The previous Local Plan had designated the greater part of Speckled Wood for housing development and planning permission had been given for the site next to Victoria Avenue.

In July 2012 Hastings Borough Council responded to community pressure, supported by ward councillors, by proposing three options for areas of land to be given green space

protection in Speckled Wood. This was contained in the Development Management Plan (DMP), a part of the Local Plan process.

Following a major campaign undertaken by Ore CLT and other groups seeking to save Speckled Wood, involving responses to the Council consultation and petitions, Hastings BC agreed to adopt the option giving the largest area of land green space redesignation. In addition the Council Cabinet agreed to give the protected area Local Nature Reserve status if the redesignation was confirmed at the Public Examination of the DMP.

Following the Public Examination that ran from 18 Nov. to 12 Dec. 2014, the Planning Inspector decided to recommend that not only the area of land in Speckled Wood identified by Hastings BC for green space protection but also the two sites identified for development (CV01 and CV03) should all be given this status. This was a huge success and demonstrated that the Inspector had been influenced by the level of public support for saving all of the woodland valley and the value of this land as a community amenity.

This was part of the Inspectors initial recommendations for alterations to the DMP and was accepted by Hastings BC.

A final consultation process on the Inspectors DMP recommendations was held and, in June 2015, he confirmed his recommendations in respect of Speckled Wood.

What does this mean

Hastings BC will adopt the revised DMP in the autumn and, as noted above, will accept the redesignation of almost all of Speckled Wood as protected green space.

Only the small site next to Clifton Road has retained development status.

It is highly likely that an attempt at legal action to overturn the effect of stopping the Victoria Avenue planned development (granted by Hastings BC Planning Committee) will be made by the land owner. However, it is also hoped that this will not succeed.

However, since most of the land in Speckled Wood is owned by two developers and a number of private plot holders, it is not and will not automatically become publicly accessible, even though most of the area is now used by local people as it had, in effect, been abandoned by the owners. The footpaths can be used and there are 3 areas of Council owned land and one large unregistered area of land running from Frederick Road to the stream bridge.

In order to secure Speckled Wood for community use it will be necessary to seek the transfer of Council owned land and purchase the remainder from the owners. Due to the new status all of the land will have much reduced value and will create a land management liability for the owners in relation to public use

The acquisition of all of the land in Speckled Wood is the second primary aim of Ore Community Land Trust and was the reason that it was set up as a Trust, accountable to the local community. This process will start in 2015



PROGRESS WITH ORE CLT PROJECTS

Ore Village Green

Thanks to the generous grant funding from the Isabel Blackman Foundation and the Big Local, it was possible to engage a local landscape architect, Jeremy Linden, to arrange a survey and produce a very exciting design for a Village Green, that could be created on land below the existing Green off Old London Road. This was produced in record time in order to allow it to be submitted with the Ore CLT presentation to DMP Public Examination

A survey of local opinion carried out in the summer of 2014, had demonstrated strong public support for this idea.

Funding from the above Foundation and from the Ore Community Shop will contribute to the project to create the Village Green once the necessary land has been transferred and purchased. It is hoped that this work can be started in 2015/16

Ore Valley Greenway

A project to design and undertake a full public consultation on this key part of the Hastings Greenway network was taken on in 2014. A project group of local organisations was set up and a successful grant application made to the Big Local North East Hastings fund - finally confirmed in November 2014,

These shared routes for walking & cycling and with disability access run from Ore Station to the Ridge via the Broomgrove Estate on one side of the rail corridor and to Ore Village via Speckled Wood on the other. They have been adopted by Hastings BC and East Sussex County Council for the Hastings Local Plan and the Hastings Walking & Cycling Strategy and future funding for the construction seems to be very likely.

The Ore CLT contribution, working with the Hastings Greenway Group, is to get the design and costings for the routes and carry out community consultation so that a strong case for funding can be made.

Unfortunately the challenges that some of the more difficult sections of these routes and the need for landscaping and engineering solutions to the points where there is a significant land level rise to deal with, have increased the cost of this design work. Applications are being made for additional funding so that the design work can start in the autumn.

Ore Trails

This was a partnership project between Ore CLT, Ore in Bloom, Ramblers and the Hastings Academy using NHS funding for a healthy walks initiative.

This involved the production of leaflets for three circular walks of different lengths starting from the Ore Centre and was formally launched in April. A large number of leaflets with marked routes have been distributed and the walks are proving to be very popular

Previous Project Work

It is timely to note that a Vision Plan for Speckled Wood was produced some years ago by Tim Jemison - landscape architect and supporter of Ore CLT. The original concept of a Village Green for Ore was also his idea and he produced the original Hastings Greenway concept study for the Borough wide network of shared routes.



SUMMARY OF ANNUAL ACCOUNTS (2014/15) AND DONATIONS

	£	£
Starting Bank Balance:		2,250.64
Income:		
Grants - Big Local (for Village Green)	1,000.00	
- Isabel Blackman Foundation	2,000.00	
- Ore Community Shop	1,000.00	
Donations & other	14.05	
Membership	252.00	
 TOTAL Income	 4,266.05	
Expenditure:		
- Village Green Design and Surveys	2,200.00	
- Printing & Publicity	329.28	
- Hall Hire	70.00	
- Post Office Box and Storage	390.00	
- Insurance	252.62	
- Other	9.84	
 TOTAL Expenditure	 3251.74	
 Closing Bank Balance		 3264.95

ORGANISATIONS & GROUPS THAT ORE CLT WORKS WITH

- Big Local - North East Hastings
- Hastings Borough Council
- Hastings Voluntary Action
- The Ore Centre
- Salvation Army (Ore)
- Hastings Greenway Group
- Ramblers
- Ore in Bloom
- Amicus Horizon and Orbit

Housing Associations

- Sussex Coast College
- Hastings & Rother Disability

Forum

- Hastings History House