

The Future of the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust

A PROSPECTUS
FOR ACTION

09/2018



Wandle Valley

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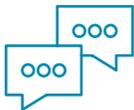
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WHAT NOW?

Foreword

The time has come to restore its unique place in the natural topography of its valley form and townscape hinterland.

Ken Worpole



London's smaller rivers and tributaries of the Thames have often been hidden in plain sight. As with the canal system, the 20th century turned its back on the capital city's extensive riparian network. Today that is changing, and the city's rivers are once again regarded as forming an essential element of London's ecological and topographical infrastructure. Rivers are without doubt one of the most dynamic features in physical and human geography. They attract settlement, trade, human interaction, whilst providing natural boundaries as well as natural gathering places. They can also be very beautiful and enlivening. In the much-discussed art of 'place-making', rivers score top marks on any calculus.

For too long, however, they have been deprived of their mythological powers and near-sacred status, being increasingly given over to the back-office functions of an industrial, intensely urban way of life. They were abused, polluted, stripped of their biodiversity, cast out of mind, and even in some places buried in concrete. No longer. The River Wandle did sterling work during the industrial revolution and certainly paid its dues. The time has come to restore its unique place in the natural topography of its valley form and townscape hinterland. The prospectus that follows is much to be welcomed in its urgency and sheer good sense, as well as acknowledging a number of innovative projects already achieved through real partnership.

Ken Worpole

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Introduction - The Wandle Valley

The Wandle Valley can deliver real value - social, economic and environmental, which can be sustained for future generations.



The Wandle Valley is a growing and powerful cross-borough economic and 'value creation' corridor, hosting a fifth of all London's manufacturing, and will see over 50,000 homes created in the coming years. Investment in the Wandle Valley has the potential to 'supercharge' this process of social and economic growth.

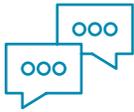
The River Wandle was described as 'Europe's hardest working river' in the 19th century and it remains a strategically important asset for London today - despite the decline of the traditional industries that originally earned that remarkable epithet. Furthermore, the River Wandle is a chalk stream, of which there are only around 200 in the world, and so has global ecological significance as a rare habitat. In recent decades it has made a remarkable recovery from the worst effects of industrial pollution and is now clean enough to support a population of Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*) as well as a coarse fishery.

The river valley extends through four London boroughs (Croydon, Sutton, Merton and Wandsworth), providing the backdrop for significant economic, social and environmental development in South West London. The valley is by no means fully 'urban' - as well as the riverside trail there are many natural and semi-natural areas within the wider landscape.

The challenge is to provide the ways and means to deliver greater access to - and connectivity between - these open spaces and in so doing create an asset that is bigger than the sum of its parts. This is the Wandle Valley 'Regional Park' concept, championed by the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust (WVRPT) and its partner organisations with significant and greatly appreciated support from local authorities, the Mayor of London, the Greater London Authority and other stakeholders.

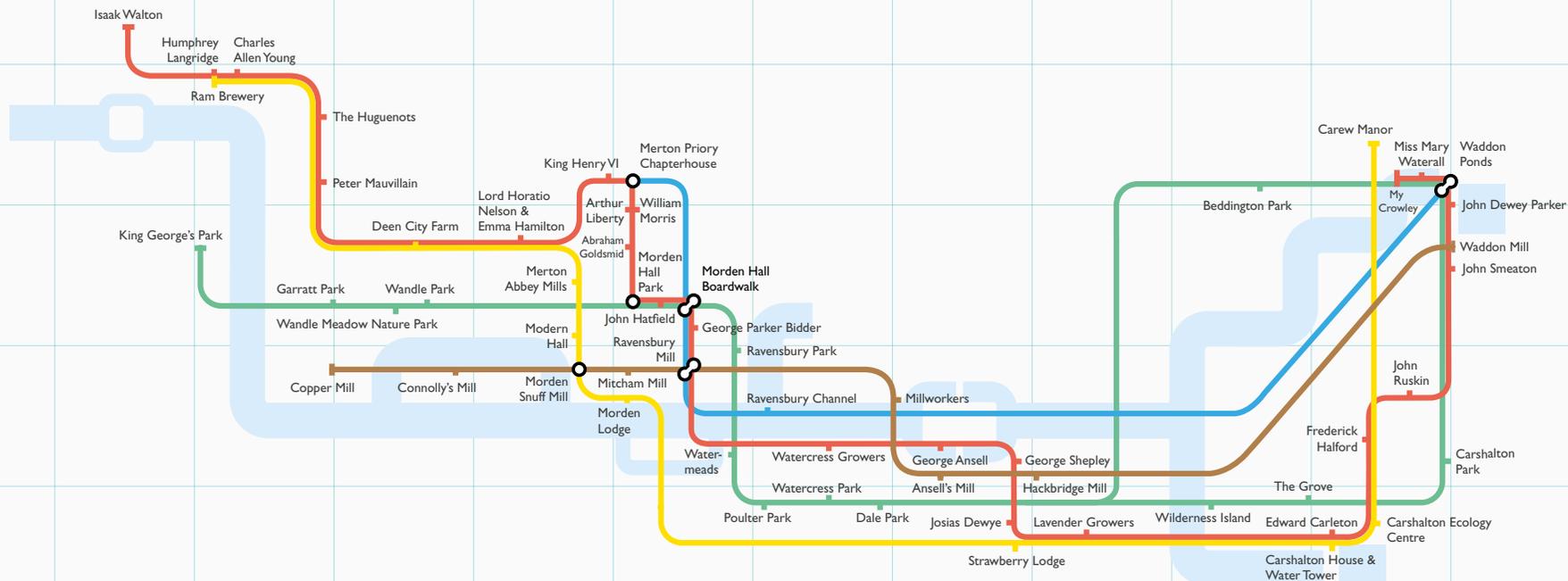
There is now a growing recognition that a Regional Park created around the River Wandle - once fully established as a truly tangible entity - will not only serve as a 'green and blue' asset for the local population enabling climate resilience, but will also act as a major catalyst for regeneration, reinforcing the notion of the Wandle Valley as a great place to live and work through inclusive growth and - crucially - investment. The Wandle Valley can deliver real value - social, economic and environmental, which can be sustained for future generations.

It's time to build on what's been achieved.

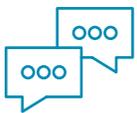


There is a huge amount of enthusiasm for a Regional Park within local communities, with seven partnerships and over 30 organisations actively working on associated projects within the Valley - and it's time to build on what's been achieved and enable a series of bold next steps. Currently the effort is somewhat fragmented, and needs to be supported and steered at a strategic level to make the Regional Park a reality. New governance and organisational arrangements will provide a more effective delivery mechanism in the future - one that not only supports green infrastructure provision but also generates wider social and economic benefits, as set out in the

draft New London Plan - within which we see the Wandle Valley as an important priority. The Regional Park can and should act as a catalyst for inclusive growth and regeneration, delivering real social, economic and environmental benefits. It will help to meet the Mayor of London's targets head-on - supporting not just the effort to make London the greenest global city, but making a significant contribution in other key policy areas too such as Active Travel, Healthy Streets, greener resilient housing, public health, and tackling loneliness. Certainly, the Regional Park should be central to the delivery of the four boroughs' economic growth ambitions.



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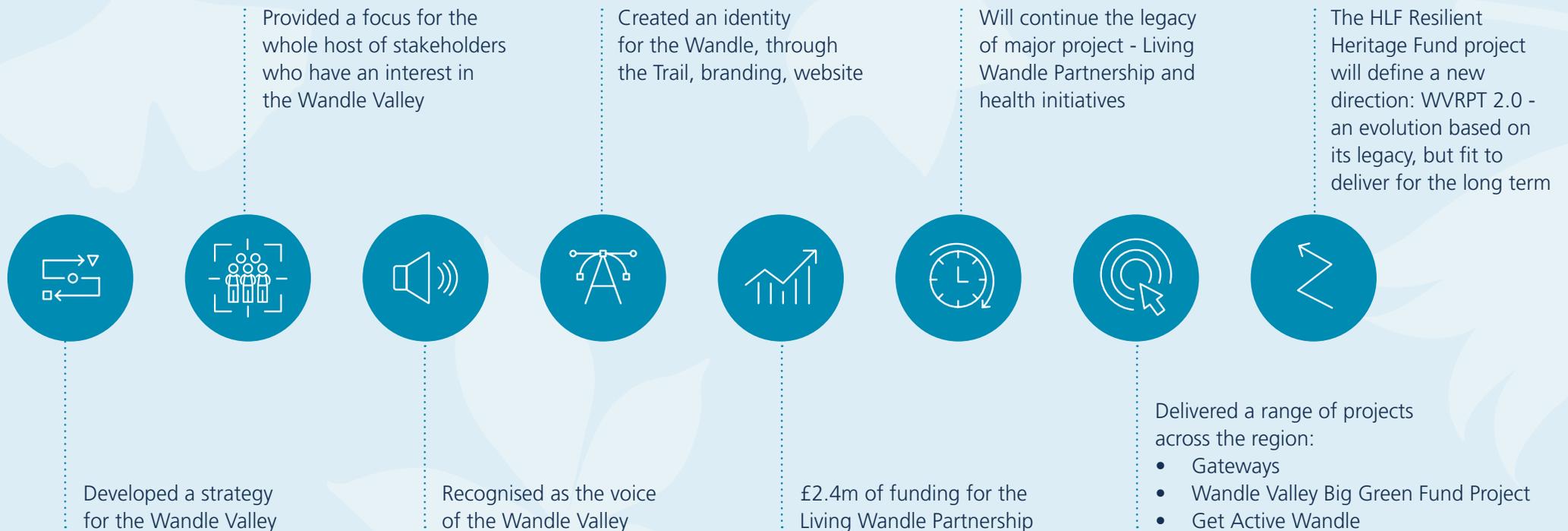


The future

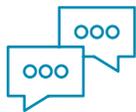
Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust

The purpose of the WVRPT is 'to provide the leadership and co-ordination of an effective sub-regional partnership that will improve the effectiveness, coherence, resilience and quality of the Wandle Valley. Established in 2013, the Trust has worked with many delivery partners to raise the profile of the area, highlight the significance of the river and promote the Regional Park concept. The Trust

helped to set up the successful Living Wandle Partnership (that had a £2.7m project programme), and along with the four Boroughs and other partners, has secured over £1.7m of additional funding for a variety of capital and revenue projects in the Wandle Valley delivering conservation, community, access, and training work.



For the Wandle Valley to be coherent and vital part of London's green space network, creating a place, rich in heritage, where people are proud to live, work and play, that contributes to the economic vibrancy of South London.



The Trust itself recognises the complexity of the context and what is needed to take the next steps towards delivering its stated vision: 'for the Wandle Valley to be coherent and vital part of London's green space network, creating a place, rich in heritage, where people are proud to live, work and play, that contributes

to the economic vibrancy of South London'. That is why the Trust is now planning its evolution into a dynamic and enterprising organisation to deliver on a large landscape scale. The Trust has produced a strategy for 2016-2021 that sets out six 'strategic aims' for the Valley:



Landscape:

The Wandle Valley is a clean, safe, sustainable and attractive natural environment. Its river valley character is protected and enhanced, and its biodiversity, heritage and archaeology are celebrated.



Natural Systems and Resilience:

The natural capital of the Wandle Valley and the River Wandle, with its network of green and blue spaces, is maintained and enhanced and its resilience to climate change increased.



Health and Well Being:

The Wandle Valley is a place for healthy living. It enhances physical and mental health, by improving access and quantity of good quality public realm and greenspace.



Heritage & Culture:

The Wandle Valley's rich heritage and culture (current as well as past and future) is celebrated, preserved and maintained, making it accessible to the diverse local community and attractive to visitors. The Living Wandle Partnership's heritage legacy is enhanced.



People & Communication:

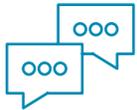
Diverse communities along the Wandle Valley feel a shared ownership of the park, and are actively engaged in its development, management and enjoyment. Local communities, partners, stakeholders, businesses & visitors recognise the regional park and support it through advocacy, volunteering, fundraising & partnership working.



Economic Growth:

The Wandle Valley and the Regional Park becomes a driver of economic growth, and a strong business case develops for investment in heritage and the environment. A collaborative economy develops in the Wandle Valley, that uses the environment to encourage employment, training, apprenticeships and enterprise.

The Trust's future is about advocacy and the facilitation of delivery.



Meeting these strategic aims would ensure the Wandle Valley achieves its full potential as a green space and driver of wider growth, bringing significant benefits in relation to public health, economic activity, resilience, connectivity and placemaking. It requires a series of bold new approaches led by a range of partners. The Trust believes it is well positioned to be a lead partner in making this happen, and, in the process, creating a model for investment in green infrastructure which can be applied to areas facing similar challenges across the whole of London and the UK.

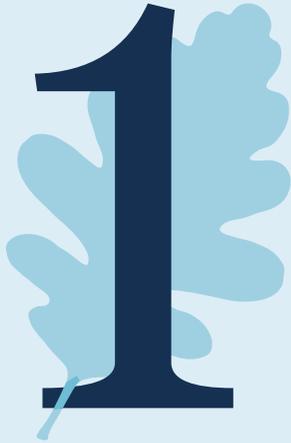
What has become very clear through research, analysis and stakeholder engagement is that there is a vital role and opportunity for the Trust. We now need the endorsement and support of the boroughs and other strategic partners - to create a viable and dynamic organisation that delivers the shared vision. The Trust's future is about advocacy and the facilitation of delivery.

It needs to act at a strategic level: facilitating high-level and high-value partnerships; bringing together delivery bodies; leveraging in investment; and securing funding for projects that support key strategic and shared objectives. And the Trust should promote the Regional Park as a great place to live, work and do business in, and to visit. To support its strategic focus, the Trust should act as a facilitator for action: nurturing, coordinating and sometimes funding community-oriented activities. It is vital that community activity is encouraged and supported, whatever the scale, so that local people have a clear sense of ownership of this remarkable place.

The Trust's Board needs to match these ambitions for strategic impact and delivery, and it needs to have a status and mandate that allows the Trust to influence at the right level, and to shape and oversee operational success.



What we now need

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An agile, high-level governing Board that has the requisite power and influence to drive WVRPT forward successfully

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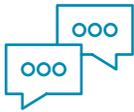
An efficient delivery mechanism that can translate the strategic vision of the Board into positive outcomes on the ground

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Financial sustainability, and the right funding model to achieve this

Drawing on successful models of best practice

Where objectives are shared over a wide area and over the long term, they are likely to have the greatest impact.



Across the UK and globally there are good models that offer potential funding solutions. For example, 40 years of property tax levies in the Zoo Museum District of St Louis have been used to deliver world class cultural institutions and infrastructure (i.e. Zoo, Art Museum, Science Center, Botanical Gardens, Parks and a History Museum) and, closer to home, the North Nottinghamshire Envoy (funded through a levy paid by local businesses) has recently become the UK's first 'super-Business Improvement District', with the aim of delivering a broad range of place-shaping improvement projects and initiatives, and marketing activity, over a 640km² area.

Cross River Partnership, established in 1994, is a public-private partnership that delivers a wide range of multi-partner regeneration projects and provides a good example of a delivery model that has been applied successfully in London. Its success is predicated on sustained senior level support within the local authorities involved. It has a very diverse funding portfolio but it does not have charitable status, so it cannot access certain types of funding that are currently open to WVRPT. This illustrates the importance of carefully weighing up the benefits of potential operating models - and this has driven the plan to retain charitable status for WVRPT.

The Colne Valley Regional Park Community Interest Company is referenced in the Mayor's London Environment Strategy 2018 as an example of a sub-regional partnership (based on the geography of river valleys) that is 'starting to illustrate the benefits of planning and working across administrative boundaries'. It is worth highlighting that WVRPT is also specifically mentioned in this context. The Colne Valley Regional Park Community Interest Company succeeded the Colne Valley Partnership and has members drawn from local authorities, parish councils, statutory agencies, the private sector and landowners, the third sector (charities and social enterprises), community groups, resident associations and park user groups. Membership of the Community Interest Company (CIC) is free except for local authorities who pay a financial contribution to have a Director on the Board, and private sector members who are encouraged to contribute through the separate Corporate Membership scheme. Members of the public can financially support the work of the CIC through a 'Friends' scheme.

These examples demonstrate that where objectives are shared over a wide area and over the long term, they are likely to have the greatest impact. This type of long-term focus would also enable the Trust to position the Wandle Valley as a seedbed for innovation, partnering with UK or international leaders whether for data methodologies to capture preventative health outcomes or for 'green' or 'blue' financial methodologies through water capture and retention.

Clear Vision and Shared Objectives

Delivery activities, partnerships and funding support will accelerate social, economic and environmental development.



By adopting a coherent landscape-scale approach and setting clear objectives that underpin the strategic aims (as set out in the 2016-2021 Strategy document), the Trust will 'supercharge' regeneration activity in the Wandle Valley. Its delivery activities,

partnerships and funding support will accelerate social, economic and environmental development. WVRPT will work in six key areas to achieve its strategic aims:



1. Promotion and Profile:

Promoting the Wandle Valley and the Regional Park in a coherent manner to raise its profile



2. Infrastructure Delivery:

Investing to improve the physical links along the valley and to adjacent communities and build its identity, quality and heritage value



3. Business Case & Funding:

Making the case for the Valley as vital environmental, social, heritage and economic infrastructure for South and West London



4. Sub-regional Partnership & Governance:

Continually working to ensure the organisation and its partners are working in the most effective way to achieve the vision and aims



5. Innovation & Enterprise:

Leading and piloting enterprising projects that contribute to the vision



6. Alignment & Support:

Working closely with partners and stakeholders to secure funding and deliver our shared vision by ensuring projects and investments are working towards the delivery of a common goal



POTENTIAL PROJECT:
**The River as Renewable
Energy Landscape**

- The river system and its subsoil can be fertile ground for innovative renewable cooling and heating systems benefiting both residential projects and employment space or social and leisure infrastructure.
- Individual development projects are already using Aquifer Thermal Energy Storage, such as in Wandsworth Riverside residential developments. By combining this with using surface water from the Wandle as heat - or cooling source, the capacity of such a system could be enhanced - and in summer water quality could be enhanced by reducing its temperature.
- Several projects for such combined surface and aquifer projects now exist.
- The Trust could initiate and coordinate such projects and benefit.





POTENTIAL PROJECT:
**Creating a Flood
Risk-Resilient Valley**

- There are several zones of significant flood risk along the Valley. Conversely, other parts of the Valley face surface water shortages in summer. Managing both require a holistic approach to surface water runoff.
- There have been several pilot projects managing rainwater runoff to drains through SUDS, swales and ponds. Such interventions can also improve local biodiversity and create opportunities for heat island reduction, placemaking and community participation.
- A more ambitious approach to reducing urban hard surface through SUDS and green / brown roofs across the Valley could become a defining feature of the Valley, helping to create uniquely attractive neighbourhoods and places to work.





POTENTIAL PROJECT:
**Connective Tissue
to Enable Movement**

- Connectivity to the Park (i.e. getting to it) - there are a number of great transport links - the barriers appear to be social.
- Accessibility to and within the Park to be improved East to West.
- Connectivity in the Park (i.e. moving within it) – this could be improved - the provision of a continuous linear route safe from traffic is critical in unifying the Park.
- Using this to create tourism, amenity and business impacts.





POTENTIAL PROJECT:
**New Strategic Park for
the Wandle Valley and London**

- Potential to link the assets in the central area (Mitcham Common / Morden Hall Park / Beddington Park / Beddington Farmlands and the Wandle River) into a singular and recognisable landscape-scale 'Park'.
- New central and major central green hub - balancing the east side of the Wandle Valley where there is poor access to green space.
- Re-balance access to Green Infrastructure across the area.
- Long-term development for South London.



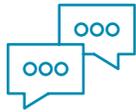


POTENTIAL PROJECT:
**Unlocking Civic
Participation at Scale**

- Green spaces have potential for increasing civic participation. Around London we are seeing a growth in people-planted orchards, neglected plots of land being revitalised by local residents, and vital collaborations with the voluntary and community sector.
- Alongside visible improvements to the landscape and biodiversity, such participation also combats loneliness and mental health issues. Innovative social enterprises like Good Gym show how creative innovation can generate success, whilst pilots in social prescribing show how the mainstream (mental) health and care system could benefit from this.
- The 'Every One Every Day' programme in Barking and Dagenham is a multi-year approach across several neighbourhoods that creates social impact at scale: it supports a wide range of public realm, participative placemaking and community enterprise initiatives. A proactive approach by the Council has levered millions of pounds in funding.



Governance and delivery



The Trust can make a huge contribution to the future success of the Wandle Valley as a whole by bringing project partners together.

The Trust needs to create a small and dynamic new Governance Board, with senior and influential members. The Board will have a structure that provides the drive, expertise and capacity to translate the Board's leadership and direction into tangible and successful action.

There is also a need to establish a new delivery body with a strategic and coordinating role, one which acts and delivers at a sub-regional level. Despite the great achievements and improvements of recent years and the support of many enthusiastic and generous backers and collaborative partnerships, many delivery organisations and landowners in the Wandle Valley operate without appropriate

reference to, or acknowledgement of, a coordinating framework. The Trust can provide this, helping to ensure that opportunities for real added value are not missed or under-realised.

This is a significant opportunity. The Trust can make a huge contribution to the future success of the Wandle Valley as a whole by bringing project partners together, harnessing their commitment and leveraging their resources to deliver multiple and wider benefits. The Trust needs to be in a position to use its expertise and influence to clear the way for action and (building on the invaluable work of the Living Wandle Partnership) ensure that future projects are supported by the Wandle Valley's many and diverse communities. By providing stability, continuity and operational efficiency, and by connecting people and projects, the Trust will transform delivery on the ground.



What Now

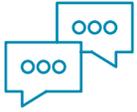
Over the coming months the WVRPT will be working with partners to establish the new structures and operating protocols outlined in this Prospectus. It is the Trust's sincere hope that all Wandle Valley stakeholders, whatever their specific focus might be, will see the clear benefits of what it is seeking to achieve and will lend their wholehearted support to the effort. In particular the Trust is now looking for organisations, consortiums, local partnerships and community groups to submit new project proposals that can help deliver one or more of the six strategic aims and in so doing contribute towards the development the

new Wandle Valley Delivery Plan. If you have a project proposal in mind, please submit details via the online form for Project Ideas: <https://wandlevalleypark.co.uk/hlf-resilient-heritage-project/>

Also, you can get updates on WVRPT's transformation via the Trust's webpages and Twitter feeds.

@wandlevalley – www.wandlevalleypark.co.uk





It is the Trust's sincere hope that all Wandle Valley stakeholders will lend their wholehearted support to the effort.





Wandle Valley

**Wandle Valley
Regional Park Trust**

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