



Volunteer Update June 2015

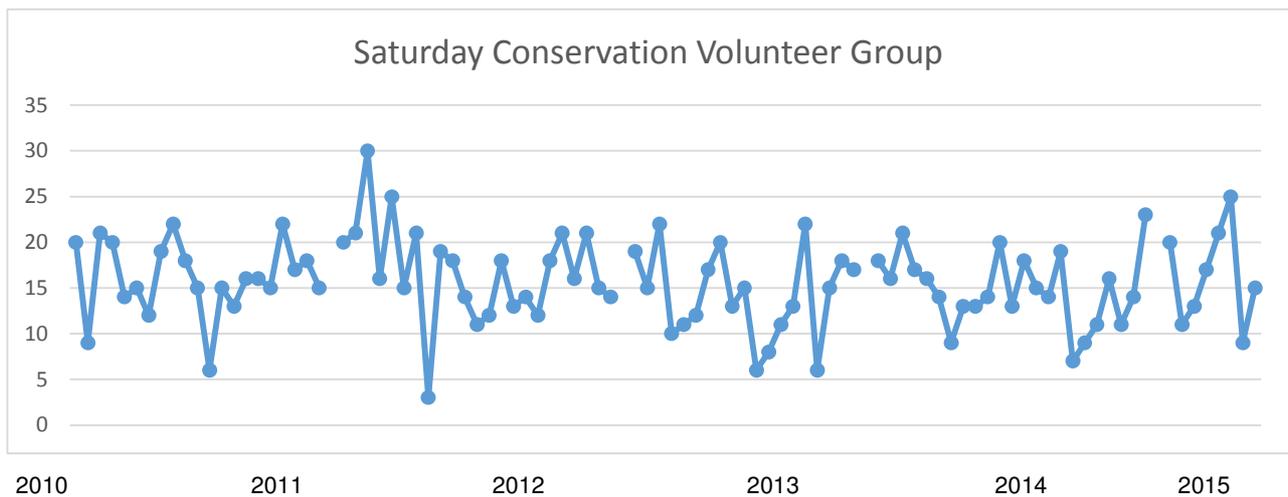
To all our volunteers, a big thank you for the hard work and dedication you have put into the Park and its projects. It would be quite literally true to say we simply couldn't do many of these additional projects without your help. The Regional Park and the visitor experience is greatly enriched by your hard work and dedication.

Volunteer Co-ordination

The final funding from HLF for volunteer support through the Liganscape project finished at the end of March this year and sadly Lisa, who had been looking after the Saturday Conservation group left us. We were however pleased to hear that Lisa has just started in a similar role working in the Belfast Hills Partnership and I'm sure you will all join me in wishing her the very best in her new role.

Looking Ahead

As many of you are aware the funding situation for the Regional Park into the future is uncertain, however we are dedicated to supporting the volunteer roles for many years to come. Anne, Dan and myself will continue to rotate working with the Saturday Volunteer group and whilst it may appear that there is a different task leader each time, we do liaise and plan the tasks between the three of us. Some of you have asked how the Saturday group has been going in terms of numbers, so I have included a wee chart below to show how numbers attending the Saturday group have fluctuated since we started recording them.



Hedge-laying

A big thank you to all who were involved in the hedgerow hopes project. Not only was the training thoroughly absorbing and informative, but now all of those involved can spread the message of the importance of hedge laying for biodiversity and management. And doesn't the finished hedge look fantastic!



Seed Training

Our volunteers attended a seed training event on Sat 7th March. True Harvest Seeds in partnership with Kew are running a pilot seed collection project partly funded through the challenge fund. The project aims to gather store and make available seeds from wild flowers that are locally endemic. Our volunteers will monitor 10 chosen wildflower species and feedback when seeds are ready then collection days will take place with Debbie Gillies from True Harvest Seeds (who will be licenced to collect Schedule 8 seeds).

Volunteer Policy Review

The volunteer welcome packs have almost run out and there have been a few changes to the Regional Park since they were initially printed through the Laganscape Project. We hope to do a reprint later this year and as such this is an ideal opportunity to review and update our Volunteer Policies bringing them in line with any changes to the organisation or changes recommended through Volunteer Now. As many of you know we have an Investing in Volunteer's accreditation from the United Kingdom Volunteering Forum. This is due for renewal this year

Volunteer Heritage Guides

Since the barge was opened in November 2014 we have been recruiting new Heritage Guides. We have increased the number of Heritage Guides from 14 last year and we now have 22 registered Heritage Guides. I would like to welcome all our new guides and wish you all the best in your roles. As well as our usual opening through the week, we have commenced opening one weekend each month and hope to build on this. Nichola remains the main point of contact for new guides, but Anne, Dan and myself will help wherever we can.

Volunteer Rangers

Our Volunteer Rangers provide invaluable additional support to our Ranger Service and have been supporting us on projects such as the river clean up, the Lock Keeper's Cottage garden and supporting patrols of the Park, keeping us current with any incidents and updates.

Volunteer Wildlife Surveyors

By its very nature routine surveys can feel very repetitive and mundane. However, the Squirrel Transects and Butterfly Transects are providing valuable data and the consistency of repeating surveys year on year is building up data sets that are important in being able to assess long term environmental changes or impacts on wildlife populations. We hope to begin new transects this year looking at numbers of water fowl along the river.

Saturday Programme

We always welcome suggestions for tasks, but please understand that any new task must be approved by landowners and meet our strategic requirements. The Saturday Conservation Volunteer programme for the next three months is looking like this (with the proviso that some of these may change):

11.7.15	No task - public holiday			
25.7.15	Garden at Terrace Hill	Terrace Hill	Minnowburn Car Park	Dan
8.8.15	Hedgerow Maintenance	Lagan Meadows	Sharman Drive	Andy
22.8.15	Site Maintenance	Giants Ring	Giants Ring Car Park	Anne
5.9.15	Volunteer Day out	Belfast Hills	Details to be Advised	All
19.9.15	Scrub/briar Clearance	Millbrook/Huguenot	Lagan Valley Island	Dan