



Volunteer Update September 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.

Visit to Belfast Hills

As usual the Saturday Conservation Volunteer Group is blessed with good weather (well except for that day when it lashed at the wetlands in Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park, oh and that day we planted the hedge and . . well you get the picture!). The first challenge of the day was to get out of the car park and having a double decker bus get stuck at the bottom of the lane next to the barge only added to the morning's entertainment. Our tour guide Lisa, took us on a very enjoyable tour of the Belfast Hills giving us a wee flavor of some of the sites such as Ballyaghagan, with its wildflower meadows and stunning views over the city, Slievenacloy with its panoramic views to the North and of course Divis and Black Mountain for a wee dander and to take in the rare mountain air and of course tea, coffee and buns went down well. Special thanks to Lisa for all of the fascinating tasters of information about the sites and for her skillful navigation.



Investing in Volunteers Accreditation

The investing in Volunteers Accreditation runs for 3 years and we are now due for renewal. We are working on the application to renew our accreditation and as part of this we have renewed our policies and how we do things. We hope to do a reprint of the Volunteer Welcome Pack this year and have made changes to our volunteer policies bringing them up to date. I have also included a Volunteer Resources page on our website and will be arranging short information sessions to let you know of these.

Funding for the future

As some of you are aware the funding situation for the Regional Park as we move forward is uncertain, however we are dedicated to supporting the volunteer roles for many years to come. We have undertaken a funding review, through a couple of meetings and discussions followed by a workshop for the Park's Committees. We have considered a range of options and may well be exploring many of them over the coming months, as such we continue to welcome your ideas. A predominant line of thought is the fact that Lagan Valley Regional Park is a charity and we need to make more of this.

Annual Report

September is the time of year of AGM's, Annual Reports and Accounts! Just to give you all the heads up we have completed the annual report and I will forward copies to everyone as usual, I will also put a version on our website. Amongst other things I have featured the Saturday Conservation Group and some of the key projects completed this year.

City Matters

Look out for the next edition of Belfast's City Matters magazine, they will be featuring an article on the barge. We are liaising with them and working on the possibility of doing a larger article promoting the site as a whole in a future edition.

Volunteer Heritage Guides

Thank you to all our Heritage Guides, the summer months have seen some healthy numbers on those occasions when the weather has been fine and the cottage and lighter have received their fair share of visitors. As many of you know Nichola hasn't been with us for some time now and whilst we hope to see her back with the team soon Anne, Dan and myself will help wherever we can. Special thanks to all the Heritage Guides who helped out at the European Heritage Open Day and all of you who have been opening up on the last weekend of the month. Due to staff shortages we have had to cancel the last weekend opening, but are still committed to continuing this into the future.

If anyone was feeling left out by seeing that the Saturday Conservation Group had a trip to the Belfast Hills, it will be the Heritage Guides turn next. We have a provisional date of Friday 23rd October and following your suggestions we are going to Clotworthy House in Antrim. We just have to confirm details and will forward invites as soon as we have these firmed up.

Volunteer Rangers

Our Volunteer Rangers have been providing an 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, surveying bird boxes and supporting patrols of the Park, keeping us current with any incidents and updates. I have just been reviewing all of our statistics for the year and was impressed to see that we have been able to support 9 Volunteer Rangers over the course of the year, some of whom have moved on to full time employment or other vocations.

Volunteer Wildlife Surveyors

Thank you to all our surveyors. The butterfly season is coming to an end for this year and the Belvoir transect is one of the longest running transects in Northern Ireland. This sort of consistency over long periods of time is most valuable in ecological study as with the squirrel transects that continue to run through the winter season. We hope to begin new transects this year looking at numbers of water fowl along the river anyone interested should contact Dan.

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. 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. The Saturday Conservation Volunteer programme for the next three months is looking like this (with the proviso that some of these may change):

3 rd Oct 2015	Aftercare of Planted Trees	Belvoir Oak Wood	Belvoir Drive Opp' School	Anne
17 th Oct 2015	Laurel Removal	Derriaghy Glen	Yew Tree Walk	Andy
31 st Oct 2015	Laurel Removal	Derriaghy Glen	Yew Tree Walk	Dan
14 th Nov 2015	Scrub/briar Clearance	Millbrook/Huguenot	Lagan Valley Island	Anne
28 th Nov 2015	Scrub/briar Clearance	Millbrook/Huguenot	Lagan Valley Island	Andy
12 th Dec 2015	Christmas Event	Barge and Cottage	Lagan Valley Regional Park	All