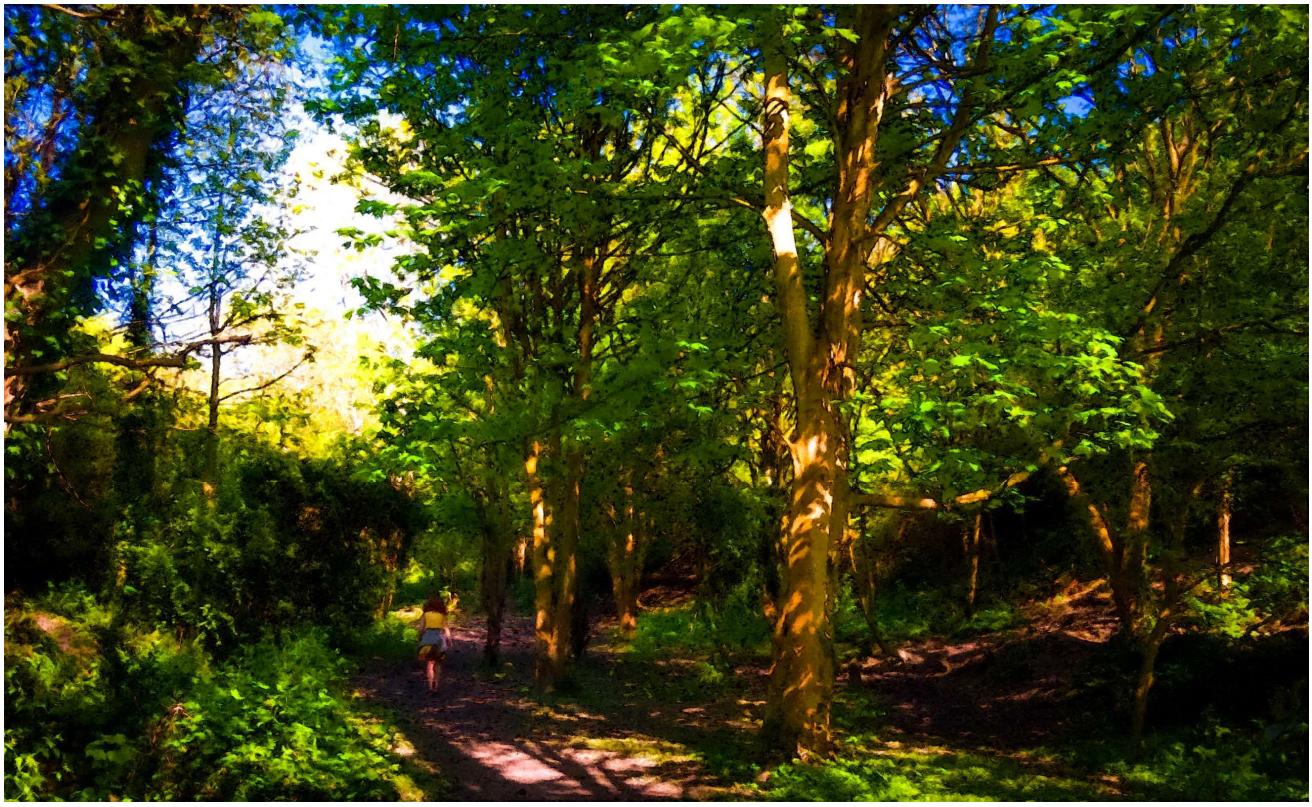
ORE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

Saving and enhancing green space in the Ore Valley

ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018

This report covers the period from 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018



A Community Project to Protect Our Green Spaces

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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 2017 the Trust registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and widened its remit to include any land in Hastings, and in particular, the Ore Valley

The Charity 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 Charity 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 Charity and its work and in planning new projects and initiatives.

Board of Trustees 2018

Elected at Ore Community Land Trust AGM 2017 or continuing their term.

Tony Polain	Chair
Becky Polain	Secretary
Meg Harmer	Treasurer
Ian Sier	Special Projects Officer
Phil Morris	Membership Secretary

Aubrey Ingleton

Co-Optees during 2018

Jim Breeds

Richard Street

Ex Officio Local Council Observer

Cllr Tania Charman (Tressell Ward)

Members

At the end of March 2018 Ore Community Land Trust had 51 members.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Together, we have saved Speckled Wood from being lost to development and now we need to continue that work to create a community owned woodland for all ages and abilities, including play space for children, disabled access and a range of other amenities. There are also questions of long-term management to improve the health of the wood, to combat the negative effect of invasive species and to introduce a greater range of bio-diversity.

However, the greatest challenge facing us is engaging enough of the local community to make these things possible. We desperately need new members to take on some of the hands-on work in the wood and also to become trustees of the charity to ensure its effective management on behalf the residents of Ore.

Tony Polain
Ore Community Land Trust Chair

ORE CLT PROJECTS IN 2017/18

Ore CLT have a number of projects in hand, but progress is currently slow until we are able recruit more volunteers. .

Projects at Planning Stage

- **Reactivate the allotment plots in Speckled Wood**

  Sections of Speckled Wood have been used historically for allotments. We aim to recovery these disused allotments for community food growing.

- **Expanded Ore Village Green**

  In 2014 we commissioned landscape architect, Jeremy Linden, to produce a very exciting design for a Village Green, that could be created on land below the existing Green, off Old London Road.

Projects in Progress

- **Main Site Office Base and Volunteer Project**

  This exciting new project will provide a resource that we have long been wanting to obtain - a place to store our tools and act as a base for volunteers for shelter and refreshments.

  With a grant from the Big Local, we have purchased the site office and it is currently being kindly stored by Heart of Hastings CLT on the old power station site.

The plan is to site the office in an area just below the village green. We are currently in negotiation with land-owners with a view to purchase several strips of land on which to locate the office.

If all goes according to plan this base should be in use from the spring of 2019 and will then allow us to launch a volunteer recruitment drive to involve local residents of all ages in the work to clear footpaths and undergrowth and start a program to enhance the areas of land that Ore CLT plans to acquire. We will be working with The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) to provide training in woodland work and to develop a plan for enhancing Speckled Wood and our projects for community amenities such as the Ore Village Green, the Greenway and the restoration of the allotments behind Old London Road.

The location beside Greystone Lane will allow vehicle access to bring in equipment and remove collected rubbish and cleared undergrowth.

- **Satellite Office Base and Volunteer Project**

We are also intending to purchase a second, smaller container to be located on the larger plot of land transferred from Hasting Borough Council ownership in the latter part of last year:

The Council have been very supportive of our projects over the years and we would to thank them for donating these two plots of land in the wood:

The satellite container will house a selection of tools and other useful items to save unnecessary trips across the wood.

The location beside Church Street will allow vehicle access to bring in equipment and remove collected rubbish and cleared undergrowth.

We would like to thank The Conservation Volunteers for their help in the initial clearance of the site.

- **Speckled Wood - Footpaths and Information Leaflet & Ore Trails**

  We are very grateful for a grant we have received from the Hastings Old Town Winkle Club. This is going to be used to have a leaflet produced showing footpaths and access points to Speckled Wood.

  This has often been requested by people who are not sure of the footpath network or how to get into the woodland valley. In fact, there are 8 different access points and an extensive network of footpaths in addition to the much used Church Street track.

  The leaflet should be completed by the end of the year and will supplement the other leaflets detailing the Ore Trails walks from the Ore Centre.
  There are 3 trails starting from the Ore centre and running by North Seat and around the Country Park. Leaflets are available from the Ore Centre and the Ore Branch Library

- **Community Land Ownership - Vital for Long Term Protection of Speckled Wood**

  Land Acquisition Plan –

  The only way to secure the long-term future of Speckled Wood is by community ownership of the land and that is what Ore Community Land Trust was set up to do.

  As a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, we can own land in trust for the community and we are setting out on a program of acquiring land in Speckled Wood with support from Hastings Borough Council.

  The first stage in this plan has already been achieved and Ore CLT now owns two plots of land transferred to us by the council late last year. We are grateful for the help that Hastings Borough Council is giving Ore CLT to meet our aim of creating a community woodland and public amenity space.

  We are in negotiations to purchase several other plots of land in the wood, some of which are quite advanced. We are looking at several sources of funding to help us achieve this, but the situation is complicated by the severity of the Japanese knotweed infestation in parts of the wood. Any funding package will need to include a combined package of both purchase and a 3-year programme to eradicate the knotweed

  We are also in discussions with another land owner over the acquisition of a useful strip of land, which along with the land mentioned above would enable the planned Greenway route through Speckled Wood to be constructed when funding becomes available.

  Apart from the Council owned land, we will need to raise funds for the purchase of other areas of land and associated work and for the knotweed treatment. We will be making grant applications and seeking other sources of funding.

- **Ore Valley Greenway - Route Design Speckled Wood Section.**

  The proposed Hastings Greenway would form a largely traffic-free network of leisure, amenity and utility, walking and safe cycling routes, which will also be accessible for people with disabilities. It would bring huge benefits for sustainable and cheap transport, health and fitness and social opportunities. The planned routes run from the Town Centre to Ore, Silverhill, Hollington and Mayfield and the Conquest hospital.

  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.

  These shared routes for walking and 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 Borough Council and East Sussex County Council for the Hastings Local Plan and the Hastings Walking and Cycling Strategy. Future funding for the construction seems to be very likely.

  Two design reports have been produced to cover the routes in the both the upper and lower valley. The report for the upper valley covered the Speckled Wood section and was commissioned by Ore Community Land Trust, courtesy of funding from the Big Local.

  Ore CLT, working with the Hastings Greenway Group and the Hastings Sustainable Transport Forum, has sought to establish a working relationship with our local MP, Amber Rudd, and the county council in an attempt to secure funding for these routes. We have been successful in raising the profile of the Ore Valley Greenway and gaining recognition of the significance of these routes for the local community. ESCC has acknowledged the benefits of our improved route suggestions and has pledged to work with local groups to find funding to achieve this route, but much to our disappointment did not agree to include any of the Ore Valley routes in the current allocation of Local Enterprise Partnership funding for walking & cycling routes in Hastings. This the subject of a joint campaign with local walking & cycling groups

  We have also formed an alliance with the Heart of Hasting CLT over the Greenway route in the lower valley. They are very interested in the benefits that the greenway could bring for access to that area. There is also the possibility that our project may generate some employment for their members.

We would like to express our gratitude for the financial contributions made by the Big Local, the Ore Community Shop and the Winkle Club. Without the generosity of these organisations, it would not have been possible to make progress on these projects.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

- **Land Acquisition and clearance** – Ore CLT has been fortunate in acquiring its first two plots of land (in "Church Street"), courtesy of Hastings Borough Council.

- **Purchase of Site Office** – with the help of funding from the Big Local, Ore CLT has purchased a site office. The grant also includes monies for the preparation of the site.

- **Speckled Wood Survey** – with the aid of a grant from Building Better Communities, we have a carried out a comprehensive door-to door survey in the area surrounding Speckled Wood. The idea is to encourage the local community to see the wood as a local amenity, find out what activities they would like to see take place, and get involved.

- **Volunteer Land Preparation and Footpath Clearance -** This has been one of the key activities that Ore CLT took on in 2009 and was started by Ore Valley Action back in 2008, in order to open up Speckled Wood for community use. In those days teams of volunteers regularly met to clear overgrown and inaccessible footpaths and remove rubbish.
  Over the years new paths have been created and steps up the valley sides have been constructed so that the wood is now used by many people of all ages. In fact it was this evidence of community involvement that was a key factor in getting Speckled Wood redesignated as protected urban green space.
  Sadly, very few volunteers are left as the original residents have had to give up due to age or health or have moved away and our efforts to recruit new volunteers have been less than successful. This means that footpaths are not being kept as clear as we would like and work to prepare the land we have acquired is not even keeping pace with the growth of brambles and weeds.
  Unless more residents are willing to come forward and offer to help with footpath clearance and woodland management we will not be able to progress our plans, acquire land and develop projects and the future of Speckled Wood could be put at risk. **This is a challenge to the local community Support Ore CLT or Risk Losing Speckled Wood as a community owned woodland**

- **Sustainable Transport Day** - A walk along the Ore Valley Greenway, jointly organised with the Hastings Greenway Group and part of the Sustainable Transport Weekend. A video of the walk was made by the Greenway Group and can be found on YouTube.

- **Publicity** has continued, via the Ore CLT web site and Facebook page, and by the use of the Ore CLT notice board above the Green.

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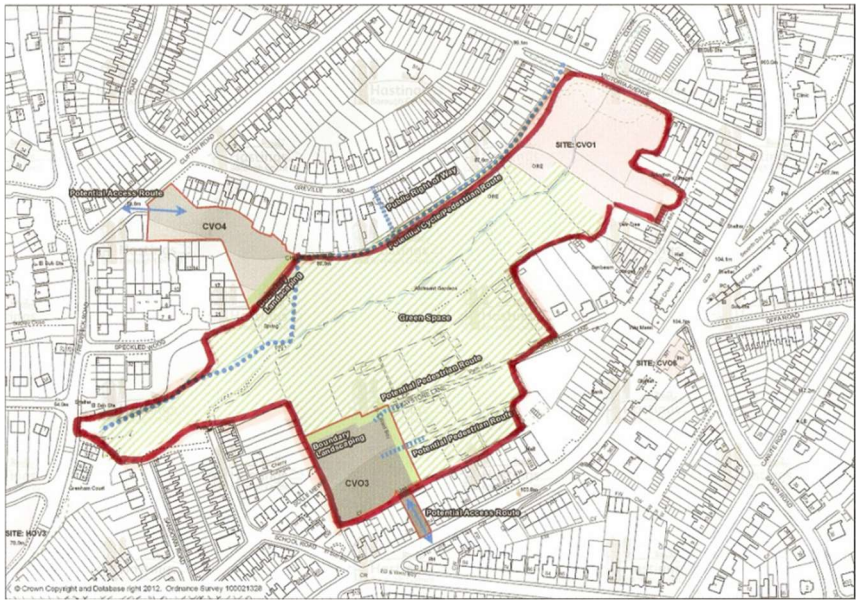
- **Public Meetings** - Ore CLT has held two public meetings. Our AGM last September and a Christmas function last December. Both meetings were very successful and proved popular with the public.

- **Financial Health** - Ore CLT is financially sound and continues to make funding applications for the development of its role and projects and for land acquisition costs and conservation and enhancement work.

- **Ore Valley Greenway** – Meetings with ESCC, HBC, Sustrans, the Hastings Greenway Group, Amber Rudd, The Ramblers, HUB, HARC and Big Local to

promote the case for the Ore Valley Greenway and to challenge (successfully) the circuitous route proposed by the County.

- **Ecology Walk** – A walk was organised to learn more about insect life in Speckled Wood. It was led by Andrew Grace and it is hoped to hold more of these walks in future.



- **Green Gym** – Run in conjunction The Conservation Volunteers, the gym sessions proved to be very popular and successful.

- **Big Local Fun Day** – Ore CLT manned an information table.

- **Newsletters** - Ore Community Land Trust produced various newsletters periodically updating members and the public with details of our activities, events and plans for the future.

- **Charitable Incorporated Organisation** – Policies and procedures have been put in place. These are being constantly reviewed and added to.

- Ore CLT is still actively developing its role and hopes to acquire land in Speckled Wood. In addition, Ore CLT is in liaison with Heart of Hastings CLT regarding a role in developing the lower Ore Valley.

Departing Trustees - a thank you to Ian, Meg and Phil

We want to take this opportunity to thank the following Trustees who are standing down at this AGM

Ian Sier has been a committee member of Ore CLT since it was formed. Ian has been involved in all aspects our organisation from taking minutes, to working in the woods and co-ordinating volunteers, Special Projects Officer to being Chair for a number of years. He was also instrumental in overseeing our transition to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. In addition, his report and involvement in the Public Enquiry for Hastings Development

Management Plan means that he is responsible more than anyone for the saving of Speckled Wood…and for that we cannot thank him enough.

Meg Harmer has been our Treasurer since 2014. Meg has always carried out her duties with the utmost diligence and attention to detail. Her effusive manner has brightened many a committee meeting and shines through in her emails. She…and her cakes and biscuits will be sorely missed.

Phil Morris has been our Membership Secretary for the past two years and seen us through the introduction of GDPR and overall improvement of in the way that we protect our data. He has helped shape the policies and procedures of the Charity. His insight into planning matters has been invaluable and we shall be sorry to see him go.

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
- Optivo Housing Association
- Orbit Housing Association
- Sussex Coast College
- Hastings & Rother Disability Forum
- Hastings History House
- Heart of Hastings CLT
- Hastings Sustainable Transport Forum
- The Conservation Volunteers

Hastings BC Plans for the Transfer of Green Spaces in the Ore Valley

Progress has been slow on the progress of this initiative for securing the future of all of the green spaces in Ore Valley from Ore Station up to Victoria Avenue. HBC has engaged consultants to carry out its due diligence appraisal before being able to move forward. Now this has been completed we are hoping for a favourable decision to be made by HBC's Cabinet in the next couple of months.

The initiative comprises of the following:

- The transfer of ownership of 2 areas of protected green spaces (mostly woodland) in the Lower Ore Valley from Seaspace to Hastings Borough Council and then on to Ore Community Land Trust.

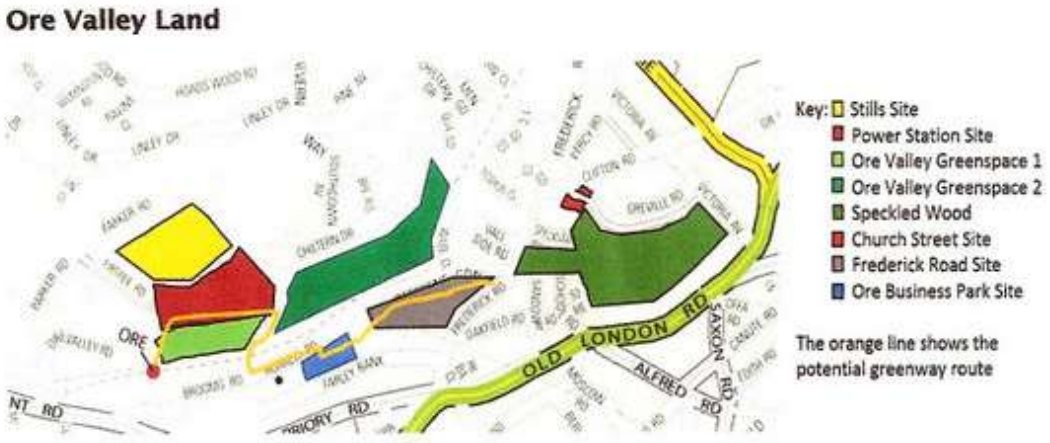
- The allocation of funds held for improving and maintaining green spaces in Ore Valley to enable Ore CLT to tackle this work throughout the Ore Valley. This would be in

collaboration with other organisations, community groups and volunteers already working on environmental projects and public access paths. One area of green space has been fenced off and inaccessible for decades.

- The opportunity to employ a woodland manager and a project co-ordinator to provide the much-needed support for the hitherto entirely voluntary effort and to ensure that the more demanding projects can be embarked on.

Ore CLT is very keen to use this valuable opportunity to extend green space community ownership and to allow it to tackle the task of acquiring land in Speckled Wood and providing amenities for local residents.

We very much hope that the land transfer and release of the funding can happen in the near future.



More information is provided on the Facebook page of the Tressell Ward Councillors - www.facebook.com/tressell

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I would like to thank the organisations that we work with for their support and help, and the ward councillors in Tressell and Ore wards who have been very supportive and provide valuable assistance and information.

In addition, I would like to thank the other committee members for their work and, of course, all Ore CLT members and supporters.