



23 January 2020

## Stonebridge Annual Review Meeting celebrates another successful year

A highlight of Wednesday evening's Stonebridge Meadow Annual Review in Marlborough was a screening of video footage showing an adult and two young otters in the river, this is just one mark of the success of the habitat management of the site. Water quality and riverfly life are both markedly better than other river sites in the area, showing that the joint Town Council and Action for the River Kennet management plan is having a positive impact. The 15 acre water meadow is jointly owned by Marlborough Town Council and Action for the River Kennet, who purchased it in 2011 to provide an open space for people and wildlife.

Public access and enjoyment have also increased: during the past year more than 600 children have taken part in organised activities at Stonebridge and ARK's staff, Town Council staff and an army of volunteers continue to maintain the site for the enjoyment of residents and visitors, as well as ensuring a vital refuge for wildlife.

The annual review provides an opportunity to look back on the year and look forward to new projects to come. A new addition for 2019 included a bird viewing screen to allow people to watch birds without disturbing them, and a project the team hope to develop next year is a new footbridge to provide a short circular walk.

Cllr Bryan Castle reminded the audience that 'We are lucky to have such an open space in our town. It provides a vital green lung.' and Shelley Parker, Town Clerk, confirmed that the site was likely to be given extra protection in the new Marlborough Neighbourhood Plan, in which it would be formally designated as a 'local green space' which will help to further protect the meadow from development.

Charlotte Hitchmough, Director of Action for the River Kennet said 'as house building in and around Marlborough increases, the value of Stonebridge Meadow as a refuge for wildlife and a green space for people to enjoy increases. It is vital that we are able to manage it with these priorities in mind.'

At the end of the meeting members of the public had an opportunity to comment and their input, particularly comments around a recent consultation about new access proposals, will be taken forward to the next Management Committee meeting.

**More information:** [www.riverkennet.org](http://www.riverkennet.org) or 01672 512700