

How and why do we manage the meadows?

Prior to their acquisition in 1999 these flood meadows had not been grazed for many years. This lack of management allowed coarse plant species such as great willowherb to invade the grassland at the expense of the finer meadow plants. Past disturbance of the grassland at the southern end of the meadows resulted in dense stands of nettle and hemlock in this area.

Reintroducing cattle grazing and regularly cutting the coarse vegetation will encourage the spread of meadow flowers and the wildlife that accompanies them.

Who looks after the Ouzel Meadows?

Leighton-Linslade Town Council owns the meadows, which are managed on their behalf by the Greensand Trust Ranger Service.



The Leighton-Linslade Ouzel Valley Park

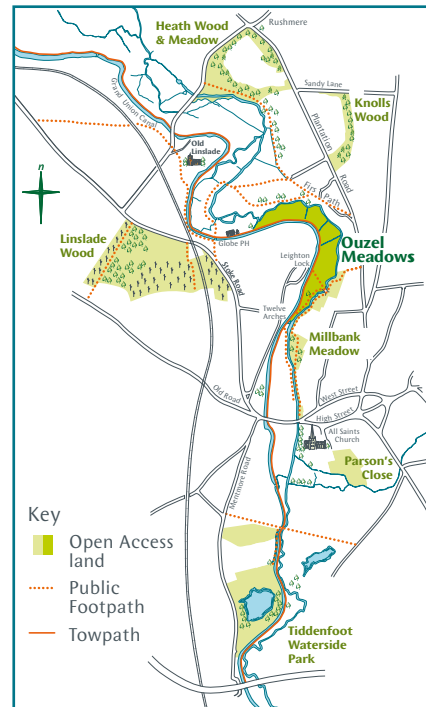
The valley of the River Ouzel contains a remarkable wealth of natural and industrial heritage features, from pollard willows and otters to sandpits, railways and the historic Grand Union Canal. The Leighton-Linslade Ouzel Valley Park is a partnership working for the benefit of people and wildlife in the Ouzel Valley. The partners include:



Ouzel Valley Park

- ❖ The Environment Agency
- ❖ The Greensand Trust
- ❖ British Waterways
- ❖ South Bedfordshire District Council
- ❖ Leighton-Linslade Town Council

For more information about the Ouzel Valley Park please contact The Greensand Trust on 01234 743666.



The Ouzel Meadows



The Ouzel Meadows lie in the floodplain of the Ouzel Valley. As a result of the fertile soils they were traditionally managed as productive pastures, grazed and cut for hay each year.

Why are the meadows important for wildlife?

These are meadows that flood regularly in autumn and winter, but are dry through the summer. This seasonal flooding creates the ideal conditions for a wide variety of plants and animals.

Plants such as meadowsweet and yellow iris that grow in the northern end of the meadows are typical of damp grassland. In spring and early summer look in damper areas and ditches for lesser pond sedge and marsh marigold.

The wide range of plants in the meadows supports many insects and other invertebrates, which in turn are a source of food that attracts birds and other animals.

Watch for herons and kingfishers feeding along the river and canal. On summer evenings you might see Daubenton's bats flying low over the surface of the canal hunting insects.



meadowsweet

