Blackmore Vale Farm Group
In August 2016, a small, friendly farm group came together in the Lydlinch area to share ideas and work together to improve their businesses through a range of management practices, events and demonstrations. The group hope to apply for the Countryside Stewardship (CS) Facilitation Fund in March 2017 and help to deliver CS priorities for water, biodiversity, woodlands and the historical environment. The group are currently meeting bi-monthly and at the last meeting farmers discussed future training opportunities covering a range of topics such as Owls—where do you put your box? What bat, where? Help! My hedgerows are getting out of hand! Soils—Save the worm! Water—where have all the fish gone? The next meeting will be held at Lymberghs Farm, Marnhull to discuss water management techniques and maybe see a lapwing! The group is open to all landowners in the Blackmore Vale area and you do not have to be in any agri-environment schemes. If you require further information about the group or are interested in this or future events please contact Emma Tomlin at etomlin@dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk.

Crayfish monitoring
Dorset Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency, Dorset County Council, The National Trust, Wessex Water, Salmon and Trout Conservation UK and several private landowners have been trying to establish the population size of native white clawed crayfish on the River Allen this year. Following an outbreak of the crayfish plague that swept through the Allen in 2014, with disastrous consequences, the group decided to ascertain through monitoring if any small populations survived the plague along the length of the catchment. Ten sites were chosen, and specially designed artificial crayfish refuges were placed in the channel and checked every two weeks over the summer months by willing volunteers from the above organisations. Not all results are back, but initial findings show that native white clawed crayfish were not present in any of the small sections of river monitored. The group are meeting next month to discuss the results and to decide on the best actions forward.

Stour Cream Tea Festival
August Bank Holiday, 1914, Pascoe Marshall’s Tea Rooms and strawberry gardens on the banks of the Stour served tea to over 300 people. 102 year on, the RSPB, Bournemouth Borough Council and Stour Power Women’s Institute at Kingfisher Barn, recaptured the glory days and served 330 cream teas to over 440 guests. The magical event was topped off with the special attendance of Pascoe’s niece, Bea, 97 years old, wearing a summer hat and reveling in the tea room atmosphere. The event had amazing community spirit, with many people coming for the first time. The event was so popular, plans are now underway to have a regular pop up vintage tea room at the centre from spring 2017. Pascoe’s tea rooms closed before the Second World War as people’s leisure habits changed and days out to the river became a thing of the past, until now. Get out and explore the river Stour and at Kingfisher Barn, every Sunday is a wild Sunday and events held weekly, phone 07775 912899 for more information.

#ReFill Dorset Project
Litter Free Coast and Sea is fast growing the network of businesses signed up to the #RefillDorset scheme. Part of the Refill Britain family, #RefillDorset is a campaign that aims to make refilling your bottle as easy, convenient and cheap as possible by introducing refill points on every street. By encouraging people to refill rather than buy single-use bottles, we hope we’ll be able to make an impact on the number of discarded bottles littering our beaches, rivers and open spaces. We’ve simply been asking friendly cafes, shops, hotels and other businesses to display a window sticker and welcome customers in to refill their water bottles with good old tap water – for free! So far, more than 40 businesses signed up across Dorset. Any business who would like to join the scheme or find out more please email litterfreecoastsea@dorsetcc.gov.uk.
Gillingham Royal Forest Project

The vision for Gillingham Royal Forest project is to collaborate with the local community to investigate the potential to restore; recreate and reconnect a historical landscape whilst making an increasing contribution to the sustainable development of Gillingham. One of the main drivers for the project is that Gillingham has the potential to grow from a population of 11,000 to 20,000-30,000 in the next 30-40 years and although North Dorset District Wide Local Plan recognise that trees, woodlands, water and wildlife already play an important part in Gillingham’s quality of life, environment and economy, it also realises that without action, Gillingham’s historical landscape will decline and Gillingham will see a decrease in the contribution that the “Royal Forest” has to offer, which will be crucial for the growth of Gillingham. The project proposal has the potential to deliver other local, regional and national objectives, these consist of; improving access to the countryside, helping to deliver natural flood management, restoring ecosystems at a landscape scale, aiding sustainable economic growth, working with landowners to improve water quality, assisting climate change through mitigation and adaptation (including carbon abatement), promoting and engaging the history and culture of Gillingham Royal Forest to the local community.

For further information about the potential project please contact Emma Tomlin at: etomlin@dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk

Spotlight on: Gillingham

Bug hotels and community day

Dorset Wildlife Trust, Gillingham Town Council, Gillingham Action for Nature Group and Dorset County Rangers held a very successful community day at Jubilee Meadows in Gillingham on the 22nd of October. A number of volunteers, including a local cadets groups, helped clear rubbish, plant bulbs, coppice trees and create a bug hotel to improve habitats and chances for wildlife. A lot was done in such a short space of time and fun was had by all. More work parties will be held over winter and into next year to further improve the meadows and the river environment. For more information look out for working party requests on the G.A.N.G website: http://gang.btck.co.uk/ or Gillingham town council website: www.gillinghamdorset-tc.gov.uk.

Himalayan balsam bashing

Gillingham Town Council and Dorset Wildlife Trust, along with the parish councils of Bourton, Silton and Milton on Stour, organised a number of Himalayan Balsam pulling events this year to start the process of removing this pesky invasive from the upper headwaters of the Stour. This year the group focussed on the Stour catchment – from Stourhead all the way through to Gillingham – in June, July and early August. The hope is, with another couple of years of pulling, balsam can be eradicated from the catchment completely. Another year of pulling events are being planned for 2017 with the potential to expand to other rivers within the Gillingham cluster. A big thank you goes out to all those who helped. If you would like to get involved next year, contact Jacob Dew at Dorset Wildlife Trust: jdew@dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk.

Upcoming events

- **Shooting, Fishing and Wildlife Conservation, Thursday 7th February, 7:30pm** hosted by the Gillingham Action For Nature Group, visit gang.btck.co.uk/Talks for more information.
- **Heritage Craft Morning and Pop-up Vintage Tea Room, Friday 16th December, 10am-4pm** at Kingfisher Barn, bring along your own crafts or be inspired by others with the Stour Power W.I and enjoy a cream tea and recapture the days of the old tea rooms from 100 years ago. For more information call 07775 912899.

www.stourcatchment.co.uk | info@stourcatchment.co.uk