

## **Become a Friend of the Common**

The most important conservation partner of the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust is the public itself. Thousands of local people visit the commons on a daily or weekly basis. As they exercise dogs, watch wildlife or ride horses and mountain bikes they are taking advantage of all the heaths can offer. Regular visitors are the additional eyes and ears of our wardens on the ground, enabling us to respond quickly to issues such as fly-tipping and illegal vehicle use.

The Trust was established ten years ago, and with public support can continue to develop. We aim to engage with all those who visit the heaths for varying reasons in ways that are meaningful for them, such as creating a forum for mountain bikers. Focused events for dog owners are planned for later this year.

Becoming a Friend of the Commons is the best way of pledging your support for this important conservation area. It also provides an opportunity of learning more about the ecology and history of this site, and helping to improve it for wildlife and people.

Membership is FREE and if you provide us with an email address we'll send regular updates on what management is happening, and provide advance booking opportunities for events such as talks and wildlife walks, including some for friends only.

In the last year we organised 18 events specifically for 'Friends' of all ages to educate and inform local people about this unique wildlife habitat. Designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Area of Conservation and a Special Protection Area, this area represents one of the most important conservation sites in Europe.

Some people are interested in getting involved further and we are extremely grateful to all our volunteers who undertake a number of vital roles for the Trust throughout the year.

We have a loyal group of volunteers who meet fortnightly and make a valuable contribution through practical work to improve habitat and public access. It is a great way to get to know the area better, stay active and do something worthwhile in glorious surroundings. In the next few months they will be joining volunteers from the Otter Valley Association to double the efforts to remove the invasive Himalayan balsam from tributaries of the river Otter.

Every year we monitor bird and butterfly populations enabling us to plan our management for these important species. Our small dedicated band would love some new faces to help with monitoring of the silver-studded blue butterfly or alternatively with nightjar surveys which would involve a couple of evenings in May/June. No experience needed as full training and support will be provided.

Whether you spend time on the common regularly or whether you've been meaning to explore on a visit soon, do please consider becoming a 'Friend' and help us to make the pebblebeds the best it can be for people as well as wildlife.

To become a Friend of the Common or if you are interested in our volunteering opportunities contact [kate.ponting@clintondevon.com](mailto:kate.ponting@clintondevon.com) 01395 446 918