

25 October 2021

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## **Lee Valley celebrates loyal volunteers whose “willingness has not faltered” despite a challenging year**

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Volunteer litter pickers who kept Lee Valley Regional Park a welcoming haven during lockdown were honoured at Lee Valley Regional Park Authority’s 2021 Volunteers Party and Awards Ceremony.

This annual event, attended by more than 60 volunteers, staff and Board Members, recognises the invaluable contribution volunteers make to the park. This year’s ceremony, held at Lee Valley White Water Centre on Wednesday 20 October, acknowledged the challenges volunteers have faced and overcome during the past 18 months as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Shaun Dawson, Chief Executive at Lee Valley Regional Park Authority expressed his gratitude for the loyalty and dedication of Lee Valley’s volunteers throughout a tough year, remarking that “willingness to volunteer has not faltered”. Lee Valley’s volunteers have contributed an incredible 12,501 hours to the park’s open spaces and gardens during 2020, with their passion and commitment helping the Authority to retain nine prestigious Green Flag awards.

Shaun was joined by Paul Osborn, Chairman of Lee Valley Regional Park Authority to present this year’s Volunteer and Group of the Year.

### **Volunteer of the Year: Chris Dallison from Enfield**

Chris has contributed a phenomenal 1,150 hours in volunteering over the past 12 years, he is very popular amongst his peers and has been instrumental in teaching new volunteers about the park and the Wildlife Discovery Centre. During lockdown, Chris was a great support to the rangers, acting as conservation volunteer and honorary warden for Fishers Green. Chris is also a trained walk leader assisting in the organisation and delivery of guided walks.

Commenting on his win, Chris said “I am delighted to be chosen as Volunteer of the Year 2021, but it’s really an award that should go to all 700 plus volunteers who work throughout the 10,000 acre park. During the pandemic we’ve all realised how important the park is, not just to us as volunteers, but also to the public, young and old, who have discovered beautiful open spaces on their doorstep and a wide range of activities on offer. I am proud to be a volunteer for Lee Valley Regional Park.”

### **Group of the Year: Weekend & Bank Holiday Litter Pickers**

The Weekend and Bank Holiday Litter Pickers worked incredibly hard during the spring and summer of 2020 to manage the vast amount of litter brought about by increased visitor numbers, in common with other open spaces. Thanks to the continued efforts of this regular group of 70 volunteers, our visitors were able to enjoy beautiful open spaces at a time when they needed them most and we were able to protect vital habitats for the diverse range of wildlife living in the park.

Additional winners on the evening included Mike Dent, who was awarded second place for the extraordinary dedication he has shown to the Wildlife Discovery Centre in River Lee Country Park, since it opened in 2020. Mike is extremely knowledgeable on local wildlife and is a champion of the Discovery Room exhibits.

Gill Pointer was awarded third place in recognition of her services at Myddelton House Gardens. Gill has been a volunteer for over 18 years and is extremely hard working and a great role model.

Shaun Dawson was keen to acknowledge many longstanding volunteers who have been unable to volunteer during the past 18 months due to the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic or because sadly, they themselves had contracted the virus. Many of those who have been most affected have since formed a support network, keeping in touch remotely to check on the wellbeing of others and raise each other's spirits.

Jessica Whitehead, Volunteers Officer at Lee Valley Regional Park Authority said "I was delighted to be able to reinstate our important annual celebration which honours our volunteers. It was great to see so many new and familiar faces and finally have the opportunity to thank them in person after communicating with them remotely for so long.

"For several volunteers who were recruited during lockdown, this was their first opportunity to meet fellow volunteers, Board Members and staff face to face. Regrettably some of our volunteers were unable to join us this year but we extend our sincere gratitude to every member of our volunteering community who help us to deliver activities at our award-winning open spaces and venues as well as preserving precious habitats for wildlife".

To find out more about volunteering for Lee Valley Regional Park head to [visitleevalley.org.uk/volunteers](http://visitleevalley.org.uk/volunteers)

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For more information, images and interviews contact:

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### **Notes to Editors**

#### **Nominees for Volunteer of the Year included:**

- Sue Hooper, Wildlife Surveyor at Gunpowder Park
- John Horne, Honorary Warden and Conservation Volunteer
- Simon Chilmaid, Activity Instructor at Lee Valley White Water Centre
- Gill Pointer, Gardener at Myddelton House Gardens
- Mike Dent, Public Information and Wildlife Officer at Wildlife Discovery Centre
- Tony Smith, Litter Picker at Tottenham Marshes
- Stephen Horne, Honorary Warden & Conservation Volunteer
- Chris Dallison, Walk Leader, Honorary Warden, Wildlife Discovery Centre Volunteer & Conservation Volunteer

#### **Nominees for Group of the Year included:**

- Honorary Wardens of Tottenham Marshes

- Myddelton House Gardens Thursday Ornamental Garden Group
- Litter Pickers
- Weekend & Bank Holiday Litter Pickers

### **About Lee Valley Regional Park:**

**Lee Valley Regional Park** stretches 26 miles along the River Lee from Ware in Hertfordshire to East India Dock Basin on the Thames and offers a range of activities from cycling, white water sports and to horse riding, hockey and camping, alongside award winning nature reserves, green spaces and heritage sites, attracting around 10 million visits a year.

- The park was created by a unique Act of Parliament as a “green lung” for London, Essex and Hertfordshire and features 10,000 acres comprised of a diverse mix of heritage sites, nature reserves and open green spaces alongside world class sports venues, attracting over 10 million visitors every year.
- Just over 50 years ago much of the area around the River Lee was derelict, neglected and unloved, home to redundant industry, sewage works, gravel pits, rubbish dumps and railway sidings. Over the last five decades Lee Valley Regional Park Authority has, with partners, led the almost wholesale transformation of the 10,000 acre, 26 mile long, area.
- Our open spaces include eight Sites of Special Scientific Interest, a designation reserved for the most important areas for nature across the UK. Four of these form the Lee Valley Special Protection Area, the designation for sites in Europe with habitats that are important for migratory birds. They also form a Ramsar site, an area which has been globally recognised as an internationally important wetland.
- Nine of Lee Valley Regional Park’s open spaces, gardens and heritage sites were awarded with prestigious Green Flag Awards and one site also received a Green Heritage Award in 2020. The internationally recognised award signifies a quality park or site to visitors and recognises the very best green spaces. Seven sites have London in Bloom Awards.
- Lee Valley Regional Park Authority owns three London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games venues: Lee Valley White Water Centre in Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire which hosted the Canoe Slalom event and Lee Valley VeloPark and Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre in east London’s Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.
- Other recreational activities at Lee Valley Regional Park include cycling, angling, walking and bird watching. Historical sites such as Myddelton House Gardens, Waltham Abbey Gardens, Rye House Gatehouse and Three Mills Green can be found throughout the park.
- Lee Valley Regional Park offers four camping and caravan sites at a variety of scenic locations: Dobbs Weir in Hertfordshire, Sewardstone in north east London and Edmonton in north London and the bushcraft inspired Lee Valley Almost Wild Campsite in Broxbourne which launched in summer 2017.

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