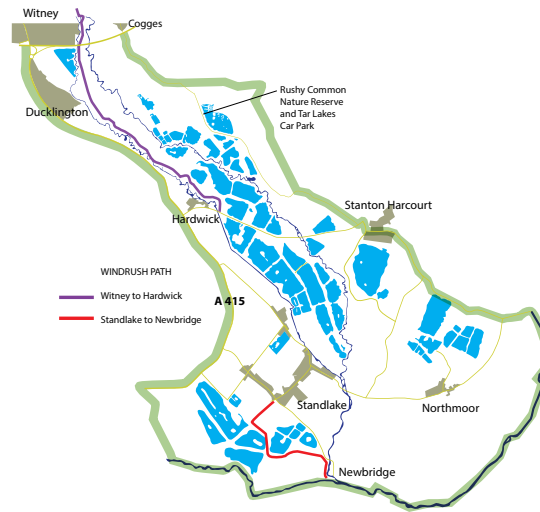


The Lower Windrush Valley Project (LWVP) was set up in 2001 to work closely with mineral operators, landowners and the local community. The LWVP co-ordinates, implements and helps to manage projects that improve the landscape, biodiversity and public access in this special area of countryside.

The extraction of sand and gravel was completed at Rushy Common in 2005 and at Tar Lakes in 2008 and the restored combined site was then opened to the public in May 2011. The site is managed by Smiths Blethington and the landowner in collaboration with the LWVP.

Before mineral extraction the site was grassland with limited biodiversity interest. The restoration, the result of careful preparation and planning by Smiths and the LWVP, has created a diverse range of habitats including standing open water, ponds, ditches, islands, and gravelly shorelines in the nature reserve and open lakes and grassland in Tar Lakes. Regular monitoring will record the development of the site which already is a home to many species of wildlife, some of which are nationally scarce. One hundred and twenty species of birds have been recorded already.

The unique character of this site means that it will be available for many different uses. It will be a priority for the Lower Windrush Valley Project to develop a wide variety of educational opportunities as well as finding ways to help people to take full advantage of the disabled access.



Rushy Common Nature Reserve car park is open at all times. Take the Stanton Harcourt Road at Cogges Hill traffic lights for about one mile, the car park is then on the left on Tar Road.

The bird hide and bird viewing screen can only be accessed by key holders.

To purchase a key, which will also give access to two bird hides at Standlake Common Nature Reserve, contact the Lower Windrush Valley Project.



Rushy Common Nature Reserve and Tar Lakes



ACCESS FOR ALL

A surfaced footpath (250m) with perching posts leads to the gate of the nature reserve and wheelchair accessible bird hide. The path continues across Tar Road to Tar Lakes where the footpath is surfaced round Tar Lake (625m) with a longer footpath cut through the grass round the outer edge of the site.

CONTACT

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Rushy Common Nature Reserve

The Rushy Common Nature Reserve is designed to be a place of tranquillity for wildlife and wildlife watchers alike so, to keep this place special, access is restricted. A key can be purchased in order to access the bird hide and bird viewing screen. If you would like to purchase a key, please contact the Lower Windrush Valley Project.

At times you may see large numbers of birds here as the site is a safe haven for overwintering waterfowl with wigeon and geese and the more unusual red crested pochard and goldeneye. Migrating birds stop off in the spring and autumn when you will often see huge flocks of swallows and swifts.



In the summer coot, grebes, mallard and tufted duck breed here very successfully. Lapwings and common tern make their nests but have not yet been very successful in fledging young. Dragonflies and damselflies displaying their vibrant colours add to the visual excitement of the summer months.

An old oak tree has a barn owl box on the trunk and the young are ringed each year. The presence of the owls shows that the reserve supports good numbers of voles and other small mammals. If you are really lucky you will see a kingfisher flashing by and get occasional, but dramatic, sightings of peregrine and sparrowhawk.



Tar Lakes

The paths around Tar Lakes are open to everyone for walking and quiet recreation. About 625 metres of path is suitable for disabled access and pushchairs.



Grass areas will be cut to different heights; look out in summer for ox-eye daisy and other meadow flowers and for butterflies such as meadow brown and gatekeeper. Brambles and nettles will be left in places for insect food and egg-laying sites

Part of the site has been fenced off as a conservation area to provide a wilder habitat and access is prohibited. Many invertebrates as well as grass snakes, mice and voles colonise the area. Dragonflies and damselflies dash about in summer between the ditches and ponds.

Hedges and scrub provide good cover for wildlife and the berries in the winter attract large flocks of fieldfare and redwing. Trees and bushes will be trimmed, when necessary, to create a mixture of habitats for animals and birds at different stages of their life cycles.

Circular walks

From the Rushy Common car park a three mile walk to the north along the bridleway will take you to South Leigh where you can see the medieval wall paintings in the church of St James the Great.

To the south you can walk to the village of Hardwick and join the Windrush path for a 3 mile circular walk back to the car park via Gill Mill or a longer walk to Ducklington or on to Witney.

