

Dear Members of the Planning and Environment Committee:

It recently came to my attention that the City of London is considering building two new bridges in the Medway Valley ESA, as well as 'upgrading' trails. I was surprised, because I think of this location as an area that needs protection from human encroachment, rather than enhancements that would serve to increase human traffic.

Information in the Medway Valley ESA Conservation Master Plan clearly states "The area provides significant habitat for rare, threatened or endangered indigenous species of plants or animals that are rare within the country, province or county". It also states "The area...provides habitat for species intolerant of disturbance or for species that require extensive blocks of suitable habitat". Building bridges, and creating hard surface trails in the ESA, albeit in locations deemed the least sensitive, seems counter to what this area needs in terms of protection.

I will admit to feeling conflicted by this. I appreciate the importance of people communing with nature for the sake of one's mental and physical health, especially in a time when so much interaction is via an electronic screen. However, I believe the health of our Environmentally Sensitive Areas is of utmost importance. Recommendations aimed at mitigating any adverse effects that may come from human disruptions are not as valuable as preventing the adverse effects in the first place.

I believe increasing human accessibility may be detrimental to preserving what is precious in this ESA.

Sincerely,
Sue Russell