

A year in view

2017-2018



The KSCP is the principal organisation conserving, enhancing and promoting the countryside and urban green space of the Stour Valley. It is one of eight countryside/coastal partnerships in Kent and covers the largest area. In 2017/18 the Partnership carried out hundreds of projects from Smarden in the west, to Deal in the east, to Whitstable in the north, and Aldington to the south. The KSCP aligns its objectives with those of its key partners - Ashford Borough Council, Canterbury City Council, the Environment Agency and Kent County Council, without whose support it could not operate. We would like to **thank** all those involved with the Partnership, and especially our volunteers, for making a real difference to the landscape, wildlife and communities of this part of Kent.

Work with local communities

Supported **17 site based community groups** with practical help managing their land. Brought **20 schools** onto sites to carry out educational work, and worked with **22 other community groups**. We also launched a three year Our Stour project grant aided by the Heritage Lottery Fund and other partners. We established 50 river wardens by the end of March.

Karin Moncrieff, Trust Fundraising Manager, The Caldecott Foundation *'Dear Debbie and Jo, Well, we got there in the end yesterday! Thank you so, so much for all you did to get the team sorted, supervised and indeed, virtually everything planted. It was a huge achievement and we really did appreciate all your help. I know we couldn't have done it without you. The Swiss Re people have been in touch and they were thrilled with the day, but I think there are a few stiff limbs. We are loving working with you both, so roll on the next project! All good wishes and HUGE thanks again for all you did to make the day a success.'*



Planting trees as part of the Caldecott College natural green barrier project with Environment Agency staff.



Mayor of Canterbury Rosemary Doyle looking at river invertebrates on the Our Stour launch day at Godmersham Park.

Advising on land and water management including surveys, monitoring and plans



Carried out **16 advisory visits to new sites** in addition to advice and support on existing sites. Worked with Ashford Borough Council on 10 of their drainage channels to get them maintained whilst taking consideration of biodiversity. We produced two walkover survey reports for the Aylesford Stream and Whitehall Dyke. Carried out water vole and mink surveys and monitored 49 barn owl boxes. Worked with approximately 50 farmers/landowners giving advice, writing recommendations, carrying out surveys and management. Canterbury City Council, KSCP and other partners working together in Canterbury won gold in SE in Bloom and a gold nationally for the 2nd year. KSCP were also successful with a Facilitation Fund bid to Natural England to set up the East Kent Sustainable Farming Group, members of which can be seen opposite on their first gathering in February 2018.

River work

Included major river habitat enhancements in Canterbury and on the Wingham River, and volunteers removed hundreds of bags of litter from the river. KSCP also chair the East Kent Catchment Improvement Partnership.



Improving river habitat in Canterbury, above, and volunteers removing Himalayan Balsam.



'Hello Martin, Please thank the Thursday gang for their efforts yesterday, it really was beyond the normal call of duty, & considering the weather, a good bit of clearance was achieved. I hope there are no serious after-effects' Tony Seymour Jumping Downs Trustee.

Healthier lifestyles & access

Our community work and volunteer conservation programmes offer people a range of options to get out and get healthy. Possibly the recreational walking and cycling routes, such as the Great Stour Way, we initiate, develop and deliver, offer the greatest opportunity to stay fit and healthy. Coming into contact with nature and the outdoors has been proven to improve your health. In 2017 we co-ordinated the Naturally Active For Life Project on behalf of the Kent Countryside Management Partnerships. This project aimed at getting people over 55 out and about and succeeded in getting 257 people walking, cycling and doing conservation work (pic bottom right). We also ran guided walks on behalf of other organisations including the Kent Ash Project on the Wye National Nature Reserve (pic bottom left), and the Kent Downs AONB 50 year celebrations (pic middle).

Supporting volunteers of all ages

1377 work days! We ran over 130 volunteer tasks and volunteers helped with school visits, events and project planning. Volunteers carried out a range of practical conservation tasks in woods, meadows and along the river.



Above, riverside planters at North Lane, Canterbury and below tree planting on Valkyrie Avenue, Whitstable, a joint project with the Whitstable Society, Whitstable Improvement Trust and KCC.



Prioritising sites

Worked on over **100 sites** with volunteers and contractors. Our funding partners have moved our work more into the urban environment in recent years but we still do work in the Kent Downs AONB and on protected sites. We have a priority to work on the parts of our rivers that are declining environmentally or are assessed as poor and to work on watercourses to prevent flooding and where possible increase biodiversity.



Above left, hornbeam pollard at Hatch Park, Mersham, where volunteers cleared scrub around the magnificent ancient pollards. Above, volunteers coppicing at Buxford Meadow Local Wildlife Site.

Interpretation, education and events

At **Westgate Parks** 6709 people attended the events programme, including 3000 people on the open day, right, and the scarecrow trail below. The outdoor learning programme welcomed 761 children. The Roman Wall Discovery Trail Brochure and a site leaflet were produced. Westgate Parks received Green Flag status for the first time in 2017. The **Our Stour** project started to involve school groups making use of the on loan Aqua Bus kitted out with microscopes, computers and monitors to examine river invertebrates. We developed an educational programme at **Godinton Park** which will see many children involved in 2018. One of our volunteers, **Brian Sandall**, received a volunteer of the year award from the Mayor of Ashford, Winston Michael, for all the work he does with KSCP in Ashford, pic right.



The Stour Valley Creative Partnership started the **Woods to Where else** project including a symposium at the University for the Creative Arts. The Forest Studio was well used by students and artists, and there was an installation in King's Wood of sculptures by UCA students. SVCP continues to maintain the sculptures at Kings Wood, helped below by KSCP volunteers and KCC Highways staff.



Work with local companies

We continued our good working relationship with **Brett** and we ran community events for **Givaudan**, below. We worked with all 3 water companies in our area, **Southern Water** and **Affinty Water** sponsoring the Our Stour project. We received a **Tesco** Bags for Life grant for work on little Burton open space in Ashford.



'Hi Jon, I have enjoyed working with you, Diane & the team over a large number of years.... and long may the excellent relationship with Givaudan continue'. Neil Vincer, EHS Projects Manager.



Raising our profile

We continued to maintain a high profile locally with various press items. As well as our main website we run two other websites; **Wildsites** and **Westgate Parks**. We operate three facebook accounts and twitter. Westgate Parks, over the year, is the 2nd most visited place on Trip Advisor in Canterbury after the Cathedral. Below, we produced 14 interpretive panels for the Ashford Green Corridor.

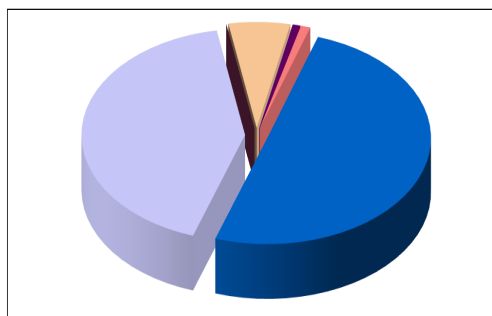
Partnership finances 1/4/17 to 31/3/18

Income

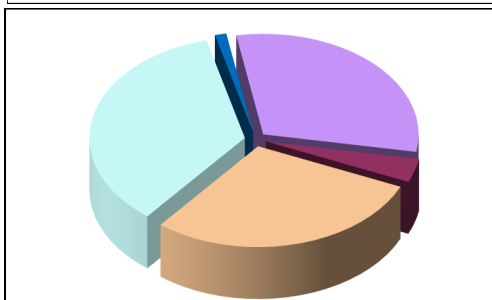
Kent County Council (inc. in kind)	32,000
Canterbury City Council (for sites)	4,000
Ashford Borough Council (for sites)	5,000
Other project income inc. Environment Agency and landowners	263,890
Roll over from previous year	221,479
Total	£526,369

Expenditure

Running costs	160,888
KCC costs	20,000
Project costs	153,739
Project cost roll forward	185,513
Replacement/contingency fund	6,228
Total	£526,369



The KSCP is **highly cost effective** multiplying the contribution from Ashford Borough Council, Canterbury City Council, Kent County Council and the Environment Agency many times over.



The year ahead - ten key activities for KSCP

River Improvements

Working with the Environment Agency, the East Kent Catchment Improvement Partnership, landowners, angling groups and other partners deliver river improvements such as river restoration, fish passage projects, and water quality work.

Work with Community Groups

Continue our community work with groups such as Love Hambrook Marshes, Loudon Wood, Friends of Canterbury Riverside, Sturry Road Community Park, Friends of Bybrook Nature Reserve and Friends of King's Wood.

Ashford Green Corridor

Carry out projects in the Green Corridor including at South Willesborough, Buxford and Little Burton. and work with Ashford Borough Council on their Victoria Park HLF bid.

Health and Wellbeing

Run guided walks in east Kent. Identify any new opportunities.

Work on watercourses for KCC, River Stour IDB and Ashford Borough Council

Deliver work to prevent flooding in east Kent focussed on small watercourses and surface water flooding using the Catchment Based Approach. To improve biodiversity wherever possible.

Cycling/shared use paths projects

Continue to work on cycle routes in the Blean. Seek funds to produce a new Great Stour Way leaflet. Improve existing routes wherever possible.

Westgate Parks

Run an events programme, a programme for volunteering, and learning programme for schools and community groups. Seek opportunities to continue work when HLF funding ceases at the end of 2018.

Our Stour

Maintain the River Warden scheme, schools, training and activity programmes and community projects.

Stour Valley Creative Partnership

Will continue to develop the **Woods to Where else** project. And work to secure funding to develop the Partnership work with local artists and local communities.

Great Crested Newts

Work with Natural England to deliver pond creation and management in Kent

Chairman of Steering Group

Teresa Bennett

Staff

Jon Shelton - Partnership Manager

Debbie Reynolds - Partnership Officer (PT)

Diane Comley - Partnership Officer

Anna Bell - Westgate Parks Development Officer (PT)

Lauren Baker - Westgate Parks Development Officer & Our Stour Officer

Martin Thomas - Partnership Officer

Annie Thurgarland - Watercourse Officer (PT)

Trainees/Placements - Jo Hill (to Dec), Chloe Rowlands (Oct to March),

Laura Bodle (From May)

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