

A year in view

2019-2020



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 2019/20 the Partnership carried out hundreds of projects from Smarden in the west, to Deal in the east, to Birchington in the north, and Ruckinge 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



Stowting Primary School on an Our Stour Aqua lab session in Wye.

Supported **17 site based community groups** with practical help managing their land. Worked with **20 schools** carrying out environmental educational work, and worked with **15 other community groups**. Margaret Douet from Sandwich Bay WEX & Phoenix Group writing about a group visit to the Bird Observatory, *'Thank you Lauren so much, you gave us such an insight into the River Stour & your enthusiasm was infectious. Everyone enjoyed your 4 hour session and we all learned many things about the river, its creatures its problems & its amenity value. Please come again soon to visit us.'*



Working with Friends of Victoria Park to extend Watercress Orchard as part of Ashford Borough Council's Heritage Lottery Fund scheme.

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

Carried out **45 advisory visits to new sites** in addition to advice and support on existing sites. KSCP continued to lead as the Habitat Delivery Body for Natural England's 'Ground breaking' District Level Licensing Scheme for Great Crested Newts on behalf of Countryside Management Partnerships (CMPs) in Kent. The scheme has now gone national, whilst in Kent in the second year KSCP restored or created 29 ponds. Working for the River Stour Internal Drainage Board we undertook biodiversity and enhancement surveys at Stourmouth, Wye, Seaton, North Stream, South Stream, Minster, Godinton and Ashford. KSCP in its role as the Natural Flood Management (NFM) lead for East Kent funded through KCC, undertook site visits, community consultation and research in Wye and Alkham amongst other sites. We carried out water vole, mink, white clawed crayfish and dormouse surveys, monitored 49 barn owl boxes and undertook surveys of two churchyards. Liam Taylor, Data Manager, The Beautiful Burial Ground Project wrote *'I was grateful to see the records on there, clearly a thorough survey - thanks again.'* KSCP facilitated the East Kent Sustainable Farming Group focussing on new farming methods to help the environment and ran three workshops for farmers (pic below right). The Our Stour Project ran four workshops for farmers. Working with KCC, South East Rivers Trust and other partners we started planning for the delivery of water saving schemes through an Interreg project called Pro-Water. Our role is to work with farmers in the Little Stour catchment to trial land management practices to result in more water reaching the aquifer.

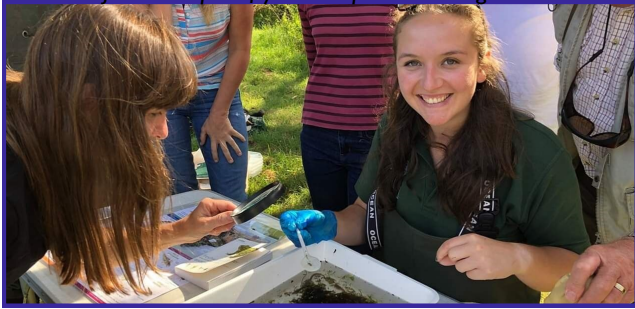


Pic left. KCC Member, Mike Hill OBE (centre left) and landowner, Will Fraser (centre right) with Sarah & Jon at Coldharbour Farm, Egerton, where ponds were restored & created.



River work

Work focussed on planning for fish passage at Olantigh weirs, Wye. The volunteers removed hundreds of bags of litter from the river, pulled up Himalayan Balsam, and undertook other conservation tasks. Ten riverfly monitoring groups were set up through Our Stour, pic below of one such group. Lauren is now a National Riverfly Instructor. KSCP also chair the East Kent Catchment Improvement Partnership. Tom Reid, Environment Agency, writing to a landowner at Seaton 'how fantastic your stretch of the Little Stour has become following the excellent restoration work that Martin, the KSCP and colleagues delivered. The transformation of the river over just a couple of years is quite amazing.'



Volunteers placing rocks for White clawed crayfish at Godinton.



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. We continued a Health and Wellbeing project in Canterbury in partnership with Take Off, the Mental Health Charity. We carried out access work through our volunteers at various sites, building steps, clearing paths and improving drainage. Volunteers also surveyed promoted routes that KSCP lead on such as the Big Blean Walk and Train Rides to Ramble. Working in partnership with Caring for Gods Acre we undertook community volunteer wildlife surveys at Petham and Goodnestone Churchyards. Mark Kilbey, Director, Take Off, wrote 'Thanks Sarah, very pleased with our joint work to date. It has been great to see the pleasure people get out of this both through these surveys and Martin's group. Look forward to doing more in the future and exploring joint opportunities. Thanks again.'

Volunteers working to improve drainage on the North Downs Way at Chartham Hatch.



Supporting volunteers of all ages

1119 work days! We ran over 120 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. Jenny Webb, Mayor of Ashford 'Just a big thank you Diane for arranging the litter pick. Please pass on my thanks to the volunteers who came along. Very much appreciated.' In addition to our regular midweek volunteer groups we now have about 50 river wardens who look after their stretch of river.



Ashford volunteers, unusually working in Canterbury, carrying out a makeover of the Adult Support Unit garden. Below - volunteers planting hedging, as part of the National Grid funded KSCP Living Grid programme in the Kent Downs AONB.



The fourth and final year widening a woodland ride at Dering Wood, Pluckley for the Woodland Trust, to benefit woodland plants and invertebrates.



Prioritising sites and species

Worked on over **100 sites** with volunteers and contractors. Over two years nearly 100 ponds have been created or restored for Great Crest Newts by CMPs in Kent. 20 new barn owl boxes have been erected by working with Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust, National Grid, landowners and volunteers (pic below right). John from SBBOT 'Hi Martin Just to say many thanks once again for organising and installing the Barn Owl boxes at SBBOT for us. It was a great job well done. Your team of volunteers worked extremely quickly and efficiently and worked so well together. We all enjoyed our day with you. Appreciate it. Best wishes.' We worked on ten sites across the Kent Downs AONB, including Wye NNR, below. We planted 12,750 hedging trees, 2.55km, on four sites.

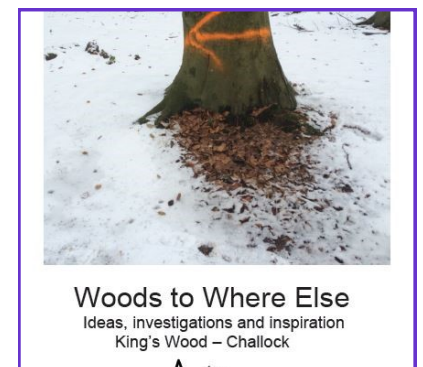


Interpretation, education and events

The **Our Stour** project worked with 833 schoolchildren making use of the Aqua Bus. It also ran events through rivers in focus, flow film, pic below, river warden and landowner training programmes. The educational programme at **Godinton Estate** along with other programmes involved a further 399 schoolchildren. Two interpretive panels were produced for the Forestry Commission at King's and Clowes Woods to replace some previously produced by KSCP, pic below. Two customers below writing about KSCP publications, the first one at the end of March, 'I picked up your Discover Wild Sites booklet a while ago at the Beany and only got around to reading it tonight. I wanted to thank you. In a month of chaos, I was reminded about the place I live, alive with colour, beauty and life!' 'My granddaughter and I visited Canterbury on Monday 2 September on the last day of the school summer holiday and we found by chance the explorer trail and had a wonderful time. My granddaughter is seven and enjoyed finding the Roman markers and taking the brass rubbings and following the discovery trail and read all the various information markers. It was a tired young girl who caught the train home to Rainham.'



The University for the Creative Arts, Suspensions Exhibition in May drew quite a crowd; enjoying a walk around King's Wood and the diverse range of student art installations. The Woods to Where Else publication published in 2019 brings together artists experiences and ideas around art in the landscape broadly and the Woods to Where Else project particularly. It is packed with artwork, investigations and ideas, including a practical Pop-out which can be used by artists of all ages to engage creatively with King's Wood or other environments.



Work with local companies

We continued our good working relationship with **Brett**. We worked with all three water companies in our area. **Southern Water** and **Affinty Water** sponsored the Our Stour project. **National Grid** funded two projects. We celebrated 20 years of working with **Givaudan**, pic below of Diane with Neil Vincer from Givaudan and Cllr Buchannan from Ashford Borough Council. Jane



Heyburn, Executive Assistant at Givaudan wrote 'Givaudan hugely value KSCP's advice and expertise and would highly recommend KSCP for this type of conservation, working with the community on educational visits and very hands on type of project work.'

Raising our profile

We continued to maintain a high profile locally with various press items, website and social media coverage. Pic below, Jon with Natural England Chairman, Tony Juniper CBE, looking at ponds restored through District Level Licensing.



Partnership finances 1/4/19 to 31/3/20

Income

Kent County Council (inc. in kind)	37,000
Canterbury City Council (for sites)	4,000
Ashford Borough Council (for sites)	5,000
Other project income inc. Environment Agency and Natural England	392,573
Roll over from previous year	233,763
Total	£672,336

Expenditure

Running costs	196,275
KCC costs	25,000
Project costs	284,218
Project cost roll forward	137,514
Replacement/contingency fund	29,328
Total	£672,336

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.

Below, hedge planting on top of the downs. Centre, Our Stour litter pick in Canterbury. Right, Cummins staff helping out at Hambrook, Canterbury. Bottom of page, UCA student, Melinda Winter, installation, Surrender, in King's Wood.



The year ahead - ten key activities for KSCP - covid 19 dependant

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. Olantigh Weirs fish passage will be a major project in 2020.

Work with Community Groups

Continue our community work with groups such as Love Hambrook Marshes, No Man's Orchard, Jumping Downs Trust, Canterbury Riverside Group and Friends of Victoria Park.

Ashford Green Corridor (AGC)

Carry out projects in the AGC including at South Willesborough, Buxford and Little Burton and work with Ashford Borough Council on their Victoria Park Heritage Lottery project. Seek funding to better manage the meadows in the AGC. Promote the AGC through a video.

Health and Wellbeing

Continue to work with Take Off on mental health initiatives. Seek funds to produce a new Great Stour Way leaflet.

Natural Flood Management

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.

Chairman of Steering Group

Teresa Bennett

Staff

Jon Shelton - Partnership Manager
 Debbie Reynolds - Senior Partnership Officer (PT)
 Diane Comley - Senior/Partnership Officer
 Lauren Baker - Our Stour Officer (PT)
 Martin Thomas - Partnership Officer
 Annie Thurgarland - Partnership Officer
 Sarah Harrington-James - Partnership Officer

Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership

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 www.kentishstour.org.uk
 www.wildsites.org.uk

East Kent Sustainable Farming Group & work with farmers

Expand the EKSFG to include more members. Develop sites for the Interreg funded Pro-Water initiative on behalf of KCC.

River Stour Internal Drainage Board

Deliver drainage channel enhancements for the River Stour IDB. Focus surveys on de-mained channels. Update the 2010 Biodiversity Action Plan.

Our Stour

Maintain the Our Stour Project beyond its 3 year Heritage Lottery Fund grant. Install 17 interpretive panels, produce a leaflet about the Stour watercourses and hold a summation event.

Great Crested Newts

Operate as the lead Habitat Delivery Body for the District Level Licensing scheme with Natural England to deliver pond creation and restoration in Kent. And start eDNA monitoring of ponds dug in the first year.

Stour Valley Creative Partnership

To secure funding to develop the Partnership work with local artists and local communities.



LOTTERY FUNDED

