

A year in view

2020 / 2021



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 2020/21 the Partnership carried out hundreds of projects from Newenden in the south west, to Sandwich in the east and Birchington in the north. 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. Our work in 2020/21, like most other organisations, was heavily impacted by the pandemic and as we could not furlough staff we had to introduce new initiatives and bring some work forward. However, we were still unable to deliver some work and as a consequence lost around £40,000 of income for running costs.

Work with local communities



This area of work was affected by the pandemic, however we still supported **17 site based community groups** and worked with **13 other community groups**. Ann Clark, Service Co-ordinator, Canterbury Adult Support Unit, speaking about our help through the volunteers to get their garden back in shape *'I can only thank you again, because your team were the start of making a lovely usable space, enjoyed by all.'*

A community river litter pick in Ashford.

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

Carried out **76 advisory visits to new sites** in addition to advice and support on existing sites. KSCP leads as the Habitat Delivery Body for Natural England's District Level Licensing Scheme for Great Crested Newts on behalf of Kent Countryside Management Partnerships. In this third year KSCP restored or created 29 ponds and undertook eDNA monitoring of 40 ponds (pic to right) for the first time. Natural England were hoping for around 15% of ponds with GCN eDNA from the first two years of work, in Kent we reached 38%.

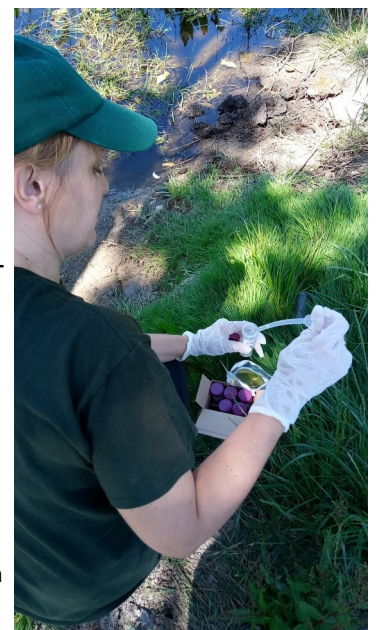
Working for the River Stour Internal Drainage Board we undertook biodiversity and enhancement surveys at Minster, Monkton, Reculver, Stourmouth and Ash.

KSCP in its role as the Natural Flood Management lead for East Kent funded through KCC undertook site visits, community consultation and research in Alkham, Wye, Monks Horton, Mersham and Harbledown and assisted in the north and west of the county.

We carried out water vole, mink and dormouse surveys, and monitored some of our 65 barn owl boxes. In order to gain a better understanding of white clawed (pic below) and signal crayfish distribution in East Kent we started surveying at 8 sites, this will be continued in 2021 at more sites through eDNA.



KSCP facilitated the East Kent Sustainable Farming Group focussing on new farming methods to help the environment and ran one workshop for farmers. Working with KCC, South East Rivers Trust and other partners we delivered the first element of work, in Barham, for Pro-Water, a land management water saving project. We produced printed and downloadable information on 'Using Water Wisely'. Lynne Moore, Environmental Officer, Canterbury City Council commented *'.... this will be really useful, It's a great resource.'*



River work



We completed the fish pass at Olantigh, Wye (pic left, under construction) and undertook enhancement work on the IDB channel at Buxford, Ashford (pic above). The volunteers removed hundreds of bags of litter from the river, pulled up Himalayan Balsam, and undertook other conservation tasks. Only a few of our riverfly monitoring groups did surveys in 2020 due to the pandemic. The East Kent Catchment Improvement Partnership

that KSCP facilitates and chairs met twice. Ben Morris, Biodiversity Officer, Environment Agency commenting on a volunteer litter pick *'Brilliant job. Sad to see that there is so much waste in the river but good to see how much difference a handful of people can make. Well done all.'*

Supporting volunteers of all ages

The pandemic impacted on our volunteer tasks but we still managed **637 work days**. Volunteers carried out a range of practical conservation tasks in woods, meadows and along the river. In addition to our regular midweek volunteer groups we co-ordinate about 50 river wardens who look after their stretch of river. *'Just wanted to add that it has been a pleasure working with you, the other KSCP staff and the volunteers. The work has always been very productive and your expertise invaluable to me, all the best.'* Jack Goodhew, past trustee of Hambrook Marshes writing about our support.

Canterbury group fencing at Hambrook Marshes. Below - taking a break at Brimstone Wood, Pluckley.



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, which 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. Some of our work on Health and Wellbeing was halted by the pandemic. We carried out access work through our volunteers at various sites 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.

Trees help to keep urban environments healthier by, amongst other things, absorbing carbon and providing a habitat for wildlife. KSCP led on planting 14 trees next to the Whitstable Health Centre.

Volunteers about to start work at Ashford Community Woodland.



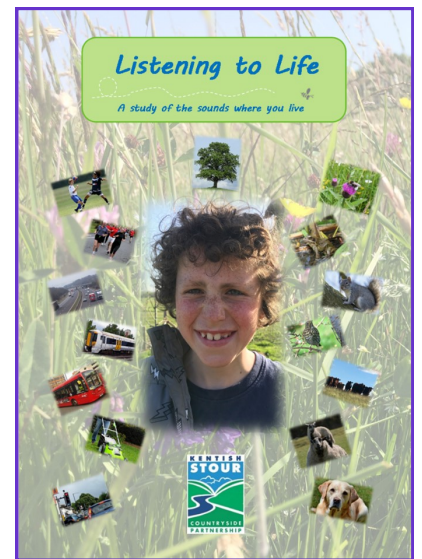
Prioritising sites and species

Although our site based work was greatly reduced due to the pandemic we still managed to work on over **50 sites** with volunteers and contractors. One area of work that we could continue with through the pandemic, thanks partly to our contractors, was our Great Crested Newt work. As the Habitat Delivery Body for Natural England's District Level Licencing Scheme we created or restored 29 ponds. Mr Nick Brandreth wrote 'I thought it needful to express absolute delight on behalf of Kate and myself with respect to the work put in place by Harvey and his team creating a new pond. It is already full. The workmanship is excellent and they were so helpful and have hardly left any impact'. Below, a before and after picture of a restored pond in Smarden. We worked on seven Local Nature Reserves including No Man's Orchard, pic below right, where we did fencing and hedge planting, and nine sites in the Kent Downs AONB including Wye Court Farm where we helped to seed a new wildflower meadow, pic bottom right.



Interpretation, education and events

The pandemic prevented us doing any educational work so we increased our social media coverage, introduced virtual training and produced printed material. We produced a leaflet about the River Stour catchment and all its tributaries explaining the importance of the river and the issues the ecology of the river faces. It is available from local libraries and Visitor Information Centres as well as being downloadable from our [website](#). A [video](#) of the Ashford Green Corridor was commissioned and promoted. It highlighted its wildlife importance, health and wellbeing benefits and the need for management. We were eventually able to start some of the community aspects of the Ashford Borough Council Victoria Park HLF project with 270 children and adults attending 'Nature Treasure' activities, pic below left. The Our Stour webinars resulted in 299 participants learning about the Stour Catchment, 'Hi Lauren, really enjoyable session, can't wait for the next two!!' We started a project called 'Listening to Life' aimed at young people in certain parts of Ashford, which we hope to grow in future years, pic right.



Work with local companies



We continued our good working relationship with **Brett and Givaudan**. We worked with all three water companies in our area. **Southern Water, SE Water and Affinity Water** agreed to fund Our Stour for a further three years following the end of the 3 year Heritage Lottery funding. Through Our Stour we produced 17 interpretive panels at riverside locations throughout the catchment, pic to the left.

Raising our profile

We continued to maintain a high profile locally with our social media coverage, website and various press items.



Partnership finances 1/4/20 to 31/3/21

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	438,776
Roll over from previous year	166,843
Total	£651,619

Expenditure

Running costs	207,285
KCC costs	25,000
Project costs	284,406
Project cost roll forward	123,502
Replacement/contingency fund	11,426
Total	£651,619

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 left to right, hedge planting at Seasalter Church; volunteering on Bus Company Island (Canterbury); crayfish monitoring; installing a Tawny Owl box at Canterbury Golf Club.



The year ahead - 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, and water quality work. We are hoping to start six Environment Agency funded projects.

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 and work with Ashford Borough Council on their Victoria Park Heritage Lottery project.

Health and Wellbeing

Work with partners on mental health initiatives. We are still seeking funds to produce a new Great Stour Way leaflet that incorporates information about river wildlife. The popular previous leaflet went out of print in 2019.

Natural Flood Management and Nutrient Neutrality

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. Assist local authorities, developers and landowners to introduce schemes that remove nitrogen and phosphate from land and water.

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

Work with Farmers

To enhance land and water for biodiversity. 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. Complete the update to the 2010 Biodiversity Action Plan.

Our Stour

Develop the River Warden network and riverfly monitoring groups. Get back to doing educational work. Undertake practical work such as litter picks and work more closely with all 3 water companies.

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.

Stour Valley Creative Partnership

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

New Education and Biodiversity Projects

Produce a report following the consultation on the idea of a Stour Valley Regional Park. Develop the 'Listening to Life' from your doorstep project. Run 'Experience' projects as part of the Kent Downs Interreg funded scheme. Seek funding for a 'Road Verge Awareness' initiative. Assist Canterbury City Council in delivering the Canterbury District Pollinator Plan.



LOTTERY FUNDED

