

# A year in view

## 2021 / 2022



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 2021/22 the Partnership carried out hundreds of projects from Rolvenden 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.

### Work with local communities



Training for Friends of Beverley Meadow, Canterbury.

Undertaking work at the new Pluckley Nature Reserve, supporting Pluckley Parish Council.

We supported **17 site based community groups** with help managing their land and with **12 other community groups**. We worked with **12 schools** on environmental education. Cara Brogan-Jones said '*Lauren is always organised, fun and professional. The children really enjoyed the afternoon and learnt a lot.*'



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

Carried out **57 advisory visits to new sites** in addition to advice and support on existing sites. Barry Brooks from St Clement Church, Sandwich said '*Thank you for braving the elements yesterday. The feedback that I have had from everyone has been very positive. Never underestimate what, for you as the expert, appears obvious, as for us amateurs it is mind-changing! Thank you for all of your insights, we will always be very grateful.*'

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 fourth year KSCP restored or created 29 ponds and undertook eDNA monitoring of 58 ponds, Kent maintained number one position nationally with the highest % of ponds positive for GCN. Working for the **River Stour Internal Drainage Board** we undertook biodiversity and enhancement surveys at Richborough, Hoath, Lampen Stream, Wye and Upper Stour. We also renewed the 10 year Biodiversity Action Plan. KSCP in its role as the **Natural Flood Management** lead for East Kent funded through KCC undertook site visits, community consultation and research in Lyminge, Postling, Monks Horton, Linton (Maidstone) and assisted in the west of the county at Stansted (Sevenoaks) where we installed leaky fences and grips.

We carried out **mink** surveys and monitored some of our **75 Barn owl** boxes. We continued as the East Kent lead for **White clawed crayfish** by surveying 5 sites and undertaking eDNA testing at a further 10 sites, the results of which will guide us in looking at Ark sites and undertaking habitat work. We started surveying for the invasive plant **Azolla** in the Lower Stour, funded by the Environment Agency and the IDB, with the intention of releasing a species of weevil to control the plant in 2022. Working with KCC, South-East Rivers Trust and other partners we delivered work in Barham and adjoining parishes, for **Pro-Water**, a rural land management water saving project, (pic bottom left is a site visit to a farm with European partners near Barham). Finally, we supported our **10 Riverfly monitoring** groups, pic bottom right.



## River work



We completed the fish pass at Olantigh, Wye and undertook enhancement work on the IDB channel near Godinton. At Buxford fish pass we undertook coppicing of a large area of alder, installed a rail to reduce trampling by people in the summer and repaired some of the pass (pic above). The volunteers removed 295 bin bags of litter and many large items from the river, pulled up Himalayan Balsam, and undertook other conservation tasks. Pic left - volunteers working in the river at Godinton. The

East Kent Catchment Improvement Partnership that KSCP facilitates and chairs met virtually three times. Through Pro-water we carried out soil assessments, installed probes and seeded cover crops and wildflower areas.

## 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. 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.

Installing waymarker posts in the mist at Pent Farm, off Stone Street.

Taking a break on one of the Train Ride to Ramble surveys.



## Supporting volunteers of all ages

We managed **900 work days**. Volunteers carried out a range of practical conservation tasks in woods, meadows and along the river. *'I just would like to thank you and the KSCP group for a delightful first experience of volunteering, on this occasion on the railway embankment of the Hambrook Marshes. It was very friendly and welcoming,' Elizabeth Spence.* In addition to our regular midweek volunteer groups we co-ordinate about 50 river wardens who look after their stretch of river.

Ashford group installing a barn owl box.



Below - Planting trees at Kingsmead Field, Canterbury .



## Prioritising sites and species

We worked on over **100 sites** with volunteers and contractors. Speaking about our Great Crested newt work 'Hi Sarah, the pond is terrific! It has slowly started filling and I guess has about 2ft of water in it now. The landscaping by Toby is very good and we have a "Vintage" mix of meadow grass seed to go down in the next few days. We are really delighted with all this, and thank you and KSCP for a well commissioned project.' Mark and Mary Taylor, Pluckley. Below, a before and after picture of a pond created in Brook.

We worked on Local and National Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and many sites in the Kent Downs AONB. Pic below right -hedge planting in the Kent Downs funded by National Grid. Volunteers removed scrub on Wye National Nature Reserve to benefit a species restricted in the UK to the Stour Valley, the Black-veined moth (pic below).



## Interpretation, education and events

The Our Stour project engaged 412 school children and our work with the Godinton Estate engaged another 334, all in outdoor education. Our Stour ran webinars again this year with 221 attending on-line. The Ashford Borough Council Victoria Park Heritage Lottery Scheme was in full swing and KSCP had 1057 people attending events such as Easter Trail, Bio-blitz, and Scarecrow Trail (see below). We helped to produce two interpretive panels for Pro-Water explaining how we are trying to hold more water back for the chalk aquifer and nature (see below right). A lot of our interpretation and leaflets can be seen on our [website](#).



## Work with local companies

We continued our good working relationship with **Brett and Givaudan**, meadow management at Givaudan below. 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 to 2026.



## Raising our profile

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



S.O.S Save Our Stour



## Partnership finances 1/4/21 to 31/3/22

### 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	519,252
Roll over from previous year	134,929
<b>Total</b>	<b>£700,181</b>

### Expenditure

Running costs	213,439
KCC costs	25,000
Project costs (of this, 178,540 to other CMPs)	359,585
Project cost roll forward	87,983
Replacement/contingency fund	14,174
<b>Total</b>	<b>£700,181</b>

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, removing the invasive Parrot's feather at Wademarsh, Birchington; volunteering on Bus Company Island (Canterbury); installing a stile at No Man's Orchard; and bird box building at the workshop.



## The year ahead - 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, and water quality work. The Environment Agency are funding 5 of these 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 Imago on providing active schemes in Ashford and Canterbury as part of a local Well Being Service. 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

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) to January

Diane Comley - Senior/Partnership Officer (PT)

Lauren Baker - Our Stour Officer (PT)

Martin Thomas - Partnership Officer

Annie Thurgarland - Partnership Officer

Sarah Harrington-James - Partnership Officer

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### Work with Farmers

To enhance land and water for biodiversity. Facilitate the new Upper East Stour Farmers Group. Complete work on 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.

### Our Stour

Develop the River Warden network and riverfly monitoring groups. Undertake educational work with schools and 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 work with local artists and local communities.

### New Education and Biodiversity Projects

Following the report produced in 2021 continue to build on funding with a target to prepare a HLF bid for the Stour Valley incorporating a Stour Valley Regional Park. Assist Canterbury City Council in delivering the Canterbury District Pollinator Plan and possibly their Tree Strategy. Install new Barn Owl boxes with support from the Martello Fund.

