

A year in view

2022 / 2023



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 2022/23 the Partnership carried out hundreds of projects from Wittersham 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



Community tree planting at Neals Place Meadow, Harbledown.

We supported **19 site based community groups** and **13 other community groups** with advice and practical help around conservation work. We worked with **22 schools & Colleges**. Stephen Edwards from Spires Academy said *'...the trees are in and the day went really well. Emily was great and the students had a good time.'* This was one of 10 sites we supported KCC 'Plan Tree' initiative.

Leading the planting of 15 standard trees at Kingsmead Field, Canterbury, with the local community.



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

Carried out **28 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 fifth year KSCP restored 12 and created 15 ponds, and undertook eDNA monitoring of 90 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 on 11 watercourses including one assessing habitat for the rare shining ramshorn snail. KSCP in its role as the **Natural Flood Management** lead for East Kent funded mainly through KCC undertook site visits, community consultation and delivery in Broad Street and Doddington, and assisted in the west of the county at Snodland. *'Dear Annie Thurgarland, Thank you very much for all your endeavours in arranging for the creation of the leaky dams and water holding ponds in the stream that runs through the fields opposite our home... has achieved excellent results and should go a long way to solving the flooding problems that affect Broad Street in very wet weather.'* Donald Broad. We monitored some of our 75 **barn owl** boxes. We continued as the East Kent lead for **white clawed crayfish** by investigating potential Ark sites and undertaking habitat work. We continued our survey for the invasive plant **Azolla** in the Lower Stour and released a species of weevil to control the plant. This work is funded by the Environment Agency and the IDB. 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. We provided habitat surveys for partners and for the **Upper East Stour Farm Cluster Group** which we help to facilitate. Finally, we supported our **10 Riverfly monitoring groups**.



Out on a pond eDNA survey in Ruckinge, meeting the owners. Right - 1km of hedge planting near Doddington. One of a series of measures to prevent flooding in the area.



River work



We completed more work in Canterbury by notching a weir at Stonebridge to improve fish passage, and by increasing the level of overspill from the main Stour into a connecting channel so providing more habitat in this channel. From Olantigh downriver we undertook some tree planting, in river work, and we fenced 400m of riverside at Godmersham to encourage emergent vegetation. We undertook river restoration on the Shalmsford Street Dyke for the IDB (pic above). On the Delf in Sandwich we assisted with narrowing the silt laden channel so producing a new shelf for aquatic plants. Volunteers removed 340 bin bags of litter and 187 large items from the river (pic below from Canterbury). Some of this work was supported by a grant 'Preventing Plastic Pollution'. Volunteers also pulled up Himalayan Balsam and undertook other conservation tasks. The East Kent Catchment Improvement Partnership that KSCP facilitates and chairs met 4 times with a total of 62 attendees. Through Pro-water we carried out soil assessments and ran two workshops on equiculture near Barham.



Supporting volunteers of all ages

We managed **1168 work days**. Volunteers carried out a range of practical conservation tasks in woods, meadows and along the river. Leslie Bidewell writing about a barn owl box *'Morning Diane. I'm so grateful for the job by you and your team last month, which looks terrific and very welcoming! I wish I had a cabin as high up, must be extremely enjoyable, peace and quiet! Thanks for the superb team of lovely people who did such a good job.'*



Volunteers putting down a pond liner in Victoria Park, Ashford, and below hedge maintenance off Stone Street.



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 with 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. Sarah from Friends of Pluckley Nature Reserve wrote *'just managed to get to the reserve - fabulous progress! A huge thank you to you and your team. It was lovely to meet them, if briefly; and we really appreciate the commitment and hard work they put in to our little reserve. I was really impressed with how much you achieved.'*



Meadow work at Charing Heath Chapel.



Checking the Big Blean Walk.

Prioritising sites and species



We worked on over **100 sites** with volunteers and contractors including Local and National Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and many sites in the Kent Downs AONB. Pic left - volunteers working on installing refugia for white clawed crayfish at Godinton. KSCP took on the wardening role for 7 Canterbury City Council owned nature reserves. Green-winged orchid are a key species at one of these sites, Wraik Hill LNR near Whitstable - pic below right. KSCP drafted the City Council Pollinator Action Plan



with support from other organisations and local people. Beverly Paton wrote *'Hi Martin ..., Many thanks for the draft. It is an excellent document - both thorough and interesting to read (I certainly learnt a great deal...).'*



Interpretation, education and events

The Our Stour project engaged 597 school children and our work with the Godinton Estate and others engaged another 333, all in outdoor education. Below, a bug hunt at Givaudan, Ashford. Feedback from teachers for Lauren's Our Stour sessions: *'it was perfect'*; *'We have enjoyed this field trip for many years.'*; *'Superb communication, delivery, engagement..'*; *'you are a star.'* We had 1299 people attending events mainly through the Ashford Borough Council Victoria Park Heritage Lottery Scheme such as Easter Trail, Scarecrow Trail, and river dipping (see below left). We ran



some events for the Kent Downs AONB Geocurious programme including the wreath making workshop at the Forest Studio in Kings Wood, Challock, 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**. 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.



Staff from local companies helped out on a variety of projects including McCarthy Stone at Kingsmead Field, Canterbury (left).

Raising our profile

We continued to maintain a high profile locally with our social media coverage, website and various press items. We had coverage on South-East news with the successful Seaton River Restoration project we undertook in 2017 (below). *'A personal*



thank you, to everyone for all the outstanding work you do to make Ashford an environment to enjoy and be proud of. Best wishes Cllr Jenny Webb, The Worshipful the Mayor of Ashford.'

Partnership finances 1/4/22 to 31/3/23

Income

Kent County Council (inc. in kind)	37,000
Canterbury City Council (for sites)	2,000
Ashford Borough Council (for sites)	5,000
Other project income inc. Environment Agency and Natural England	531,226
Roll over from previous year	102,157
Total	£677,383

Expenditure

Running costs	216,619
KCC costs	25,000
Project costs (of this, 84,845 to other CMPs)	269,127
Project cost roll forward	139,754
Replacement/contingency fund	26,883
Total	£677,383

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, litter pick at Stodmarsh; mowing and raking the meadow at Ashford Community Woodland; Bethersden Primary School entry for the Scarecrow Trail at Victoria Park, Ashford; and installing a barn owl box at Chislet.



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 schemes. A new project is to start on the Little Stour.

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

Run events for the Kent Downs AONB as part of Geocurious, the programme leading, hopefully, to the designation of the area as a GeoPark. 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
 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 to June
 Joanne Bradley - Partnership Officer (PT) to August
 Emily Davies - Partnership Officer from August
 Beth Holt - Partnership Officer (PT) from November

Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership

KCC Office,
 Kroner House
 Ashford
 Kent, TN24 8XU

Tel.: 03000 410900
 E-mail: kentishstour@kent.gov.uk
www.kentishstour.org.uk

Work with Farmers

To enhance land and water for biodiversity. Facilitate the Upper East Stour Farmers Group.

River Stour Internal Drainage Board

Deliver drainage channel enhancements for the River Stour IDB. Obtain beaver license training.

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 closely with all 3 water companies. A focus this year will be on Chalk Streams.

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.

Canterbury City Council Wardening

To help manage Reculver Country Park, Larkey Valley Wood, Wraik Hill and Foxes Cross Bottom, Curtis Wood, Tankerton Slopes and Long Rock.

New Education and Biodiversity Projects

Following the report produced in 2021 continue to build on funding with a target to prepare a Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the Stour Valley incorporating a Stour Valley Regional Park. Assist Canterbury City Council in delivering actions from the Canterbury District Pollinator Plan. Help Kent County Council with their Plan Tree Initiative. Assist organisations in Canterbury with a River Festival in September and possibly a river based leaflet.

