

# A year in view

## 2023 / 2024



KSCP is the principal organisation conserving, enhancing and promoting the countryside and urban green space of the Stour Valley. It is one of seven countryside/coastal partnerships in Kent and covers the largest area. In 2023/24 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



Kent Plan Tree paid for KSCP to acquire watering equipment. In use here at Kingsmead Field, Canterbury.

Wildflower meadow creation for Beverley Meadow group in Canterbury.

We supported **20 site based community groups** and **13 other community groups** with advice and practical help around conservation work. We worked with **19 schools & Colleges**. Alison from St Stephens Residents Association wrote *'we were delighted to have Emily & Olivia lead an informative pond dip in 4 local ponds.'*



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

Carried out **33 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 sixth year KSCP restored 18 and created 17 ponds, the most we have done in a year, and undertook eDNA monitoring of 105 ponds created through the scheme. Kent maintained number one position nationally with the highest % of ponds positive for GCN through the eDNA surveys.

Working for the **River Stour Internal Drainage Board** we undertook biodiversity and enhancement surveys on 8 watercourses. We helped with an application for funding to restore an area of peaty land connected with the North/South Streams near Deal. KSCP in its role as the **Natural Flood Management** lead for East Kent funded mainly through KCC completed works at Wichling/Doddington. 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, carrying out surveys, including traps, eDNA and torchlight. 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. We provided habitat surveys for partners and for the **Upper East Stour Farm Cluster Group** which we help to facilitate, resulting in reports for 7 farmers. We supported our **10 Riverfly monitoring** groups. KSCP supports the **KCC Plan Tree initiative** both through assistance with tree planting and watering but also advice to landowners - *'Thanks Jon Really helpful advice - Vicki.'*



Riverfly training.



Great crested newt eDNA surveying.



## River work



Volunteers removed 189 bin bags of litter and 104 large items from the river (pic above from Wye). On the Delf in Sandwich we assisted with narrowing the silt laden channel for a 2nd year so producing a new shelf for aquatic plants. Volunteers pulled up himalayan balsam and undertook other conservation tasks. The East Kent Catchment Improvement Partnership that KSCP facilitates and chairs met 3 times with a total of 64 attendees. Volunteers undertook riverbank work at Sainsburys/St Radigunds in Canterbury which should help to prevent erosion & encourage plant life. We were successful in an application for funding for a 4 year project on the Little Stour/ Wingham Chalk Streams. We will be working with local groups and landowners to monitor and improve the river. A panel was installed explaining the work we undertook at Barton Mill in Canterbury (see below) to place more water in a connecting channel.



## Supporting volunteers of all ages

We managed **1239 work days**. Volunteers carried out a range of practical conservation tasks in woods, meadows and along the river. Sarah from Pluckley Nature Reserve wrote *'Another great effort by the KSCP team, who made me very welcome and put me to shame with their vigour!'* In addition to our regular midweek volunteer groups we co-ordinate about 50 river wardens who look after their stretch of river. We also had 254 volunteer workdays undertaken through Kent Plan Tree and we host student placements & Volunteer Officers.



Volunteers clearing invasive parrots feather near Birchington, and below scrub clearance from Tankerton Slopes to maintain the rare hogs fennel plant.



## 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. A comment from one of our tree planting days *'Thank you Andy, we enjoyed it, it was our first time and we'll definitely be doing it again next time. You're doing a great job - Vani.'*



Bridge and step building at Tyler Hill Nature Reserve.



Clearing a footpath at Bishopstone, Beltinge.



## Prioritising sites and species



We worked on over **300 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 National Landscape. Pic left - elvers found on a river dip with Our Stour. KSCP warden seven Canterbury City Council owned nature reserves including Reculver Country Park, where the uncommon corn bunting breed, pic below. Below right, the rare fishers estuarine moth, which requires the hogs fennel plant for its life cycle, found on Tankerton Slopes and



Long Rock in Whitstable.

Matt Hyland wrote *'I would like to thank you both very much for your advice and expertise and for an excellent job, both leading up to and over the actual 4 days planting.... is treating this as the massive kick-start needed in expanding the habitat potential around Manston Business Park, and where more natural "edges" can be created wherever possible, rather than the earlier more formal landscape approach taken.'*

## Interpretation, education and events

The Our Stour project engaged 545 school children and our work with the Godinton Estate and others engaged another 208, all in outdoor education. Zoe from Worth Primary School wrote *'Hi Lauren Thank you every so much for a wonderful morning yesterday. The children would not stop talking about it and thoroughly enjoyed it. It was pitched and delivered so well, it was perfect.'* Below, a bug hunt at Givaudan, Ashford. We had 1015 people attending events mainly through the Ashford Borough Council Victoria Park Heritage Lottery Scheme such as Easter Bunny Hunt, Art in the Park (below left), and river dipping. We helped the Canterbury Society and Canterbury BID in the publication of a leaflet about Canterbury's riverside 'wild' spaces and river wildlife. We produced four posters about the chalk stream nature of the



River Stour, below right, and we held lots of community river engagement days in Canterbury and Ashford. A lot of our interpretation and leaflets can be seen on our [website](#).



Pic credit—Rebecca Levy



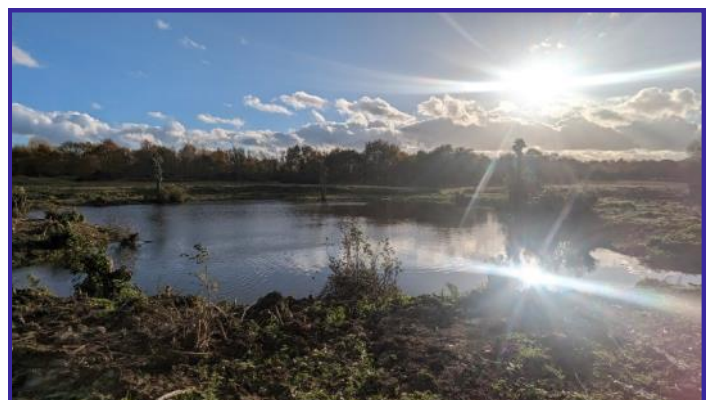
## Work with local companies

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**. Staff from local companies helped out on a variety of projects. At Kent Gliding Club, Charing, we advised on and co-ordinated the planting of 1000 trees (pic below). We planted a total of 5680 trees through Kent Plan Tree.



## Raising our profile

We continued to maintain a high profile locally with our social media coverage, website and various press items. Our logo appeared on a national publication about creating and restoring ponds. Three large ponds were dug at Charing, pic below. Commenting on a riverside event that Emily ran *'Thanks so much for your attendance on Sunday – the kids were having a great time!'* Julie Holness, Canterbury Whitefriars.



## Partnership finances 1/4/23 to 31/3/24

### Income

Kent County Council (inc. in kind)	42,000
Canterbury City Council (for sites)	2,000
Ashford Borough Council (for sites)	5,000
Other project income inc. Environment Agency and Natural England	345,589
Roll over from previous year	166,637
<b>Total</b>	<b>£850,417</b>

### Expenditure

Running costs	231,076
KCC costs	30,000
Project costs (of this, £221,131 to other CMPs)	361,738
Project cost roll forward	175,252
Replacement/contingency fund	52,351
<b>Total</b>	<b>£850,417</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, tree planting at Manston, Thanet and scrub clearance on Wye National Nature Reserve.



## 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, & water quality work. The Environment Agency are funding 4 schemes & we are looking at a further 4 potential projects.

### Work with Community Groups

Continue our community work with groups such as No Man's Orchard, Jumping Downs Trust, Canterbury Riverside Group and Friends of Victoria Park. From April we will be managing Hambrook Nature Reserve on behalf of Love Hambrook Marshes Trustees.

### Ashford Green Corridor (AGC)

Carry out projects in the AGC and review the 2017 plan.

### 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.

### Work with Farmers

To enhance land and water for biodiversity. Assist the Upper East Stour Farmers Group and work with landowners in the Little Stour/Wingham catchment.

### 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  
Emily Davies - Partnership Officer  
Beth Holt - Partnership Officer (PT) to November  
Andrew Craswell - Partnership Officer from January

Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership

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### River Stour Internal Drainage Board

Deliver drainage channel enhancements for the River Stour IDB. Deliver leaky dams as part of the LAPSIP project on the North South Streams.

### Our Stour

Co-ordinate riverfly monitoring groups and river wardens. Undertake educational work with schools and practical work such as litter picks and work closely with all 3 water companies. Continue a focus 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 restoration in Kent. In 24/25 we will only be able to undertake pond restorations due to complications nationally with planning and Biodiversity Net Gain.

### 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. A priority will be to find a grazer for Wraik Hill.

### 'Restore' Heritage Lottery Fund application

To submit a application to National Lottery for landscape, biodiversity, community and access work. This is work connected to the Regional Park concept.

### New Education and Biodiversity Projects

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.

