

# A year in view

## 2024 / 2025



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 2024/25 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

We supported **23 site based community groups** and **15 other community groups** with advice and practical help around conservation projects. We worked with **19 schools & colleges**. Ame from St Anthony's wrote *'I saw the raised beds yesterday. They are fabulous and we are so pleased with them. Thank you for all the hard work. The area looks inviting to begin working with the children.'* (see pic right). KSCP delivered training on behalf of Canterbury City Council for Friends of Groups on habitat management, and meadow creation and management (pic right). Rebecca Booth from Canterbury City Council wrote *'We have had great feedback for both the KSCP led workshops, which is excellent and a big thanks to you and Jon for making the workshops so engaging and enjoyable.'*



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

Carried out **36 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 year KSCP restored 17 and created 8 ponds and undertook eDNA monitoring of 107 ponds created through the scheme. Planning issues connected with Biodiversity Net Gain prevented us from doing more creations. Kent maintained number one position nationally with the highest % of ponds positive for GCN through eDNA surveys. Other advisory visits included for the National Education Nature Park Grant Scheme; river and watercourse based advice; hedge and tree planting, sometime connected to the **KCC Kent Plan Tree initiative**; advice on wildflower meadows; and for the **National Landscape Heritage Pond Project**.

Working for the **River Stour Internal Drainage Board** we undertook biodiversity and enhancement surveys on 8 water-courses and surveyed another 7 for specific issues or proposals. 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, and torchlight, and testing water quality. We produced a report for potential Ark sites. We produced a report for the Friends of Bybrook Nature Reserve on their ponds and we drafted a management plan for Canterbury City Council for Curtis Wood Local Nature Reserve. 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 supported our **Riverfly monitoring** groups and river wardens and we provided training for Ashdown Forest Rangers on Riverfly along with setting up more groups on the Little Stour and Wingham Rivers. Ann from Bethersden wrote *'But what a difference your work makes. The new pond is thriving thanks to Emily and Charlie for doing such a great job.'*

Emily out advising a landowner in the Low Weald.





## River work



We worked with the River Stour IDB to raise water levels on a part of the North South Streams at Northbourne. Six large 'leaky' woody dams were installed and three small ones. KSCP undertook necessary surveys and helped with planning and installation (pic above). With funding from the Environment Agency work was completed at Victoria Park, Ashford on a river restoration project, re-instating a meander to create more in channel diversity and help with movement of silt (pic below). Volunteers removed 142 bin bags of litter and 55 large items from the river. On the Delf in Sandwich we assisted with narrowing the silt laden channel 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 4 times with a total of 72 attendees.



## Supporting volunteers of all ages

We managed **1566 work days**. Volunteers carried out a range of practical conservation tasks in woods, meadows and along the river. Kate from Tyler Hill wrote *'I'm astonished at how much you and the crew got done... we'd love to keep going with the volunteers .. we really appreciate your input and advice.'* On Tuesdays over the winter volunteers undertook coppicing at Larkey Valley Wood SSSI. 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 386 volunteer workdays undertaken through Kent Plan Tree and we host student placements & trainees. We also set up a monthly workshop day, the equivalent of a Men's Shed project.



Volunteers hedgelaying at Givaudan, Ashford, and below scrub clearance in winter, Long Rock, Whitstable.



## 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 a landowner on one of our tree planting days *'Just a short note to let you know what a marvellous job Martin and the team did with all of the tree planting at Each Manor Farm . I was so impressed with the standard of the planting and how Martin handled everyone with respect and good instruction, the two planting areas have improved the farm's conservation areas no end and hopefully will provide countryside protection for many years to come.'*



Trying out the volunteer built boardwalk at Bus Company Island, Canterbury.



Meadow cutting at Ashford Millennium Woodland.



## 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. Barn owl boxes were replaced including at Ivy House Farm, Stourmouth (pic left). KSCP wardened seven Canterbury City Council owned nature reserves including Reculver Country Park, where sandmartin nest sites were counted, pic below



left. Hibernaculums were built on the Hambrook embankment, Canterbury for the viviparous or common lizard (pic below). A GCN landowner Emily worked with wrote *'....proud to be part of it. Long may it continue, and we wish to do as much as you feel our small parcel of land can support.'*



## Interpretation, education and events

The Our Stour project engaged 548 school children and our work with the Godinton Estate and others engaged another 108, all in outdoor education. An attendee on a Our Stour activity wrote *'My husband and I, together with our grandchildren, met your employee Lauren at your recent river dipping at The Tickled Trout, Wye. We all thoroughly enjoyed this experience and would like to thank you for putting on such a well run learning activity.'* We had 588 people attending events. We helped run events for the Canterbury River Festival for the second year. A lot of our interpretation and leaflets can be seen on our [website](#).



A cased caddis which children discovered on a river dipping day at Godinton Park. The children were then given the materials to make their own!

Willesborough Junior School out at Givaudan, Ashford, learning about pond life.



## 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**. We planted a total of 5,500 trees through Kent Plan Tree and a further 2,000 with Thanet District Council. Phoebe from Thanet DC wrote *'It was brilliant working with Andy, thanks so much to him and the KSCP team.'* (Pic below).



## Raising our profile

We continued to maintain a high profile locally with our social media coverage, website and various press items. Our Expression of Interest for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for Stour Valley Restore was accepted and, working with partners, our application will be submitted in November.





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.

## 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 new schemes in 25/26 and we have ongoing work on the Chalk Stream Little Stour and Wingham Rivers Project.



The sorry state of the Wingham River in Ash.



In 2025 KSCP will work with a range of partners to deliver tree and hedge planting like this hedge with Chartham Parish Council in 2024.

### River Stour Internal Drainage Board

Deliver drainage channel enhancements for the River Stour IDB. Survey watercourses and identify improvements for biodiversity.

### 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. Look to maintain funding from 2026.

### Work with Community Groups

Continue our community work with groups such as No Man's Orchard, Tyler Hill Nature Reserve, Canterbury Riverside Group and Friends of Bybrook Nature Reserve. Continue managing Hambrook Nature Reserve on behalf of Love Hambrook Marshes Trustees.



Work at Kingsmead Field with the Friends of Kingsmead Field.

### Great Crested Newts

Operate as the lead Habitat Delivery Body for the District Level Licensing scheme with Natural England to deliver about 30 ponds. Undertake eDNA monitoring of 128 ponds.

### 'Stour Valley Restore' Heritage Lottery Fund application

To submit a application 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.



In 2024 KSCP, working with local farmers, established grazing at Hambrook Marshes, Canterbury and Wraik Hill Nature Reserve, Whitstable.

### Ashford Green Corridor (AGC)

Carry out projects in the AGC.

### Health and Wellbeing

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. Work closely with landowners in the Little Stour/Wingham catchment.

### Chairman of Steering Group

Barrie Neaves

#### Staff

Jon Shelton - Partnership Manager

Diane Comley - Senior/Partnership Officer (PT)

Lauren Baker - Our Stour Officer (PT) to September

Martin Thomas - Partnership Officer to February

Annie Thurgarland - Partnership Officer (PT)

Emily Davies - Partnership Officer

Andrew Craswell - Partnership Officer

Milla Timms - Our Stour/River Officer from January

Pip Daws - Trainee from October

Lucy Mangnall-Green - Trainee from October

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