

A YEAR IN VIEW

2025/26



OVERVIEW

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 2025/26 the Partnership carried out hundreds of projects from Wittersham in the south west to Sandwich in the east and Birchington in the north and across the Stour Valley. KSCP continues to work closely with landowners and local communities to promote both landscape and nature conservation and develop opportunities for appropriate access and informal recreation.



*KSCP Team members at River Fest Litter pick
September 2025*



*Canterbury volunteer group taking a well earned break at No
Man's Orchard, May 2025*

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.

Advising on Land and Water Management, Surveys, Monitoring and Plans

KSCP continues to offer advisory visits and management support to new and existing sites. We completed the River Stour Internal Drainage Board's (IDB) 5-yearly review of their Biodiversity Action Plan. We continue to lead as the Habitat Delivery Body for Natural England's District Level Licensing Scheme for Great Crested Newts with 28 new ponds established and a 64% positive result for GCN eDNA monitoring over 161 surveys. One landowner commented that *"The ponds are fantastic. We think we might have seen some GCN eggs"* – Nicola Smith, July 2025. We have completed numerous reports for local communities and partners including at Preston Parade, Whitstable and Old Thrustbore, Deal (IDB). We continued our relationship with Hatch Park SSSI in Ashford and completed a volunteer task day removing sycamore saplings after ancient hornbeams were re-pollarded (see photo right). The Our Stour project continues to monitor the river thorough our river warden volunteers and riverfly surveys. We have begun the process of creating a Charter for the River Stour which Rory Harding (Catchment Advisor for South East Water) said was *"The call to action needed"* following a Rights to Rivers presentation at the Canterbury City Council scrutiny committee meeting.

Healthier Lifestyle and Access

Our volunteering programmes offer countless opportunities to get out and get healthy both in terms of the physical health benefits of a task day, and the mental health benefits of being part of a community. Our Tuesday Hambrook Marshes volunteer group continues to complete habitat management and access tasks on the Marshes as part of our wardening duties for Love Hambrook Marshes. This includes activities like mowing, fencing, footpath upkeep and other ongoing maintenance of the Great Stour Way.



Kent Fire and Rescue litter pick,
June 2025



Ashford volunteer group at Hatch Park,
spring 2026



Work with local companies

We continued our ongoing positive working relationship with Brett, Givaudan, SE Water, Southern Water, and Affinity Water and we worked with local work places to plant trees and clean the river. 20 volunteers from Ashford Fire Station completed a litter pick at Pledges Mill, removing 2 skips full worth of rubbish from the river (see photo left).

Working with Local Communities

We have worked with and supported 42 community groups with advice and practical conservation projects. We installed 50m of fencing at No Man's Orchard over 2 task days. We continued our partnership with Givaudan completing meadow work, laying a native hedge that was planted by KSCP many years ago, and running our yearly education sessions on site for Willsborough Junior School. We also worked with landowners and local organisations to plant 1780 trees as part of Kent Plan Tree's planting initiative, and 6935 trees as part of Campaign to Protect Rural England's (CPRE) Hedgerow Heroes project. Lucy Babins from ADR Consulting brought her team to a Hedgerow Heroes planting day in February (see photo right) and said *"Everyone said how much they enjoyed the day and how well it was organised. It has brought a lot of awareness to everyone regarding our impact on the wildlife and how to improve our local environment."*



ADR Consulting team hedgerow planting, February 2026

Following a tree planting task day the Director of CPRE commented that she *"was VERY IMPRESSED with Emily's organisation and volunteer supervision. The intro demo' and information she gave was brilliant. That's probably one of the best intros to a volunteer task day that I've seen."* - Andrea Griffiths, Director of CPRE.



(above and right) Newlands School's newly created nature area, June 2026

In June we created a nature area for the Newlands School in Ramsgate (pictured left and below), this included a pond and a planting area which the pupils will maintain and use to learn about biodiversity, conservation and habitats.



River Work

KSCP continues to both advise on and complete in river work to restore habitats and boost biodiversity in the Stour catchment. In September KSCP installed woody dams to restore the channel's natural gravel bed on the Little Stour in Garrington (see photo right) and planted native Black Poplar along the bank. We also completed many in channel litter picks in the Stour and its tributaries over the year, removing over 1298 bags and large items from the river for proper disposal (see photo right). KSCP continues to chair and facilitate the East Kent Catchment Improvement Partnership.



Volunteers conducting water quality testing on the Wingham, February 2026



The Ashford Volunteer Group enjoying their Christmas do, December 2025

(Picture right) Installing the posts for the woody dam, September 2025



(Picture left) A volunteer removing a pink bike from the river during a litter pick, September 2025

This year KSCP delivered a presentation on the Little Stour Wingham to 30 attendees which kickstarted a new commitment to improving the the Wingham river. This was followed by a river water quality training session (pictured left).

Supporting Volunteers of all Ages

From retirees to Trainees KSCP offered volunteering opportunities for all ages throughout 2025/26. Whether they're looking to learn new skills, help out in their local space, be part of our community, or take action for nature, all our volunteers were able to gain something from the physical and mental benefits of countryside volunteering with us. Over the year we completed over 1329 volunteer task days over our Ashford, Canterbury, Workshop and Hambrook volunteer groups. We also welcomed multiple students from various settings for work experience and hired both our Trainees, Lucy and Pip, from the previous year into part time paid employment at KSCP.

Priortising 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 sites in the Kent Downs National Landscape. We successfully eradicated the invasive Parrots Feather from Wademarsh. We installed chestnut paling fencing to support Skylarks at Reculver. We continued to install and maintain Barn Owl boxes across the catchment area. Andrew installed 13 Swift boxes in Canterbury, offering vital habitat for this declining species (see photo top right). Emily and Diane successfully obtained a White Clawed Crayfish conservation license issued by Natural England in January 2025 to process the translocation of White Clawed Crayfish, an endangered native species, for the Crayfish Comeback Project (see photo bottom right).

We were visited by Tony Juniper and Marian Spain, the Chair and Chief Executive of Natural England, at Biddenden Vineyard to view one of the 194 Great Crested Newt ponds KSCP had dug over the last 7 years up to May 2025 (see photo right) and celebrate the 4000th pond nationally as part of the District Level Licensing scheme.



(Above) Installing Swift boxes on homes in Canterbury, May 2025



Natural England's visit to a Great Crested Newt Pond, May 2025



White Clawed Crayfish caught during a survey, September 2025

Interpretation, Education and Events

This year the Our Stour and other education projects engaged with 26 schools and youth groups totalling over 1164 students engaged in river based education activities (see photo below left), one scout leader commented that *"The scouts were raving about [river dipping] all the way home"* - *Canterbury Beavers June 2025*.

We also ran multiple education days at Godinton Estate including workshops about bats, river invertebrates, bugs, and spring time! River Fest had another successful year, KSCP held a riverdipping event for local children (see photo right) and had a stand at the fair.

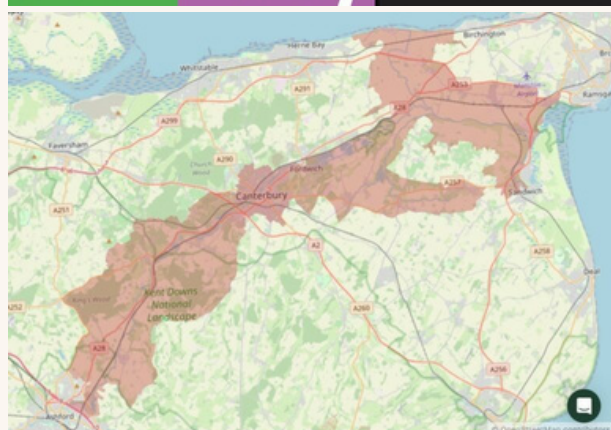


Riverfest river dipping activity, September 2025



Our Stour litter pick, February 2025

Stour Valley Restore



Map outlining the project area,
<https://kentishstour.org.uk/major-projects/stour-valley-restore/>

Raising our profile

We continued to maintain a high profile locally with our social media coverage, website, talks and various press items. In November we submitted our National Lottery Heritage Funding Application for Stour Valley Restore, a bold new major project which will work with partners to restore landscapes, boost species recovery, improve access, and discover and share heritage through art and education.

Costs

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

River Restoration - 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 two new schemes in 26/27 including on the East Stour. Five other projects are ongoing including Little Stour Wingham Chalk stream and Crayfish Comeback.

Community Groups - Continue our community work with groups and develop a sculptural seat on the Crab and Winkle Way at the Winding Pond with Whitstable Improvement Trust and Crab & Winkle Line Trust and others. Develop educational opportunities at Hambrook Nature Reserve on behalf of Love Hambrook Marshes Trustees.

Work with Farmers - To enhance land and water for biodiversity. Target work in the Wingham valley, East Stour and Wantsum/Sarre Penn areas.

River Stour Internal Drainage Board - Deliver drainage channel enhancements for the River Stour IDB. Survey watercourses and start species surveys including water vole.

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 two water companies. Continue a focus on Chalk Streams with the production of a chalk stream leaflet. Develop the River Stour Charter on behalf of the local community. Develop further citizen science work.

The Year Ahead - Continued

Great Crested Newts - Operate as the lead Habitat Delivery Body for the District Level Licensing scheme with Natural England to deliver about 47 ponds. Undertake eDNA monitoring of 127 ponds.

Stour Valley Restore - Develop the project with two new staff with the funds agreed with National Lottery Heritage Fund and other partners aiming to submit the full application in November 2027. This is work connected to the Regional Park concept. Take on the management of Stour River Fest and include more events outside of Canterbury.

Volunteers - Maintain a range of projects achieving practical work but also providing health and wellbeing opportunities. Projects will include step building, tree planting, river based work for crayfish and mowing meadows in Ashford.

Staff, KSCP Details and Partners

Chairman of Steering Group - Barrie Neaves

Staff:

Jon Shelton - Partnership Manager

Diane Comley - Senior/Partnership Officer (PT)

Annie Thurgarland - Partnership Officer (PT) until January 2026

Emily Davies - Partnership Officer

Andrew Craswell - Partnership Officer

Milla Timms - Our Stour/ River Officer until September 2025

Hallie Rounthwaite - Our Stour / River Officer from September 2025

Pip Daws - Partnership Officer from January 2026 (PT)

Lucy Mangnall-Green - Partnership Officer from January 2026 (PT)

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