

# From Beck to Beach

## WCRT Welcomes its New Director



**Hello readers and welcome to our first newsletter, which coincides nicely with my first editorial! My name is Jodie Mills and I am the new Director at West Cumbria Rivers Trust (WCRT).**

I have a degree in Environmental Science and almost 20 years experience managing projects and charities in the conservation sector. I am thrilled to take up the reigns of this challenging and exciting new role and although I'm still fairly new, I can't believe how much the team have achieved protecting and enhancing the environment of some of Cumbria's most loved spaces – the rivers and lakes which help make the county what it is. I hope to be able to continue this excellent work and progress the charity further, along with the help of the newly promoted Assistant Director, Vikki Salas and the rest of the team.

2014 was a busy year for the trust: we've helped restore a heavily

modified river channel of Whit Beck in Lorton, into a beautiful sinuous river which will greatly improve flood storage and habitat and is already encouraging more fish to spawn. We've almost completed a £90,000 project in Loweswater working with farmers and landowners to reduce phosphate entering the lake and our invasive species project has hit species like Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed really hard and done a lot of work on biosecurity.

With the arrival of our new Ellenwise officer, Rosie Law, we've made real progress in the Crookhurst sub-catchment. Since August Rosie has been working with farmers,

*Continued inside...*



**West Cumbria Rivers Trust**

Caring for our Lakes and Rivers

**Winter 2015**



Continued from front cover...

landowners, local communities and other organisations to reduce phosphorus and bacteria entering streams and impacting on the bathing water at Allonby Bay. With improved nutrient storage, livestock housing, fencing, tree planting and advising on best practice to prevent pollution, the farms will gain huge benefits but so will the local water environment! It's good news for everyone!



Whit Beck

"Our work is to develop projects and raise awareness of what everyone can do to help"

Rivers and lakes, especially here in Cumbria, are part of our lives; healthy rivers are not only essential for wildlife, but they are also central to our thriving tourist industry and critical in the supply of water to our homes. Although they often look

healthy, many of them are in a poor state, due to erosion and pollution. Our work is not only to develop projects to tackle these issues, but it is also to raise awareness of what everyone can do to help. My passion is getting people involved in conservation and education to ensure a healthy watery future for people and wildlife.

None of this would have been possible without the huge support we've had from our funders (see logo's), landowners, farmers and our many volunteers, who've done a lot of the hard work.

2015 is already shaping up to be a great year. We have plans to recruit two more members of staff and even more volunteers, so why not join us to find out more about what you can do for your local river, lake or coast?

## September's World Rivers Day turned into a week!

**Over 150 people in West Cumbria enjoyed a series of fascinating site visits, talks and activities organised by WCRT to celebrate World Rivers Day.**



We checked out what was being flushed down the loo and down the drain at Keswick's shiny new sewage treatment works - would you believe that our sludge must be pumped downhill due to the amount of Fats, Oil & Grease (FOIG) we put down the drains!

We had a tour of Thirlmere dam by John Gorst & Paul Phillips from United Utilities which gave a fascinating insight into how we get water from the hills to our taps and how our precious water resource is managed.



A tour of habitat creation and riverbank stabilisation work along the River Derwent was led by local legend Mike Farrell of the Environment Agency and Ian Creighton from WCRT provided a wonderful tour of our Whit Beck river restoration project. Stuart Morton also from WCRT gave a talk on invasive non-native species so



people could learn about what to look out for and how to control them and Farmers from all over the county learnt about soil compaction and aeration with GrassMaster Charlie Morgan.

Towards the end of the week there was a mass rubbish clearance of the Derwent estuary by British Canoeing, Copeland CC, Workington Sea Cadets & Lakeland CC with an amazing amount of rubbish collected, some of which was recycled. This was followed by environmental training for outdoor leaders led by Friends of the Lake District and the National Trust, and finally Whatta Lotta Otter gave us an insight into Otter movements on the River



"otter poo apparently smells like Jasmine tea"

Derwent. Wildlife surveyor John Martin led us on a journey of discovery into the world of otters; searching for otter tracks and even smelling otter poo, which apparently smells like Jasmine tea! A hectic week but thoroughly enjoyed by all involved, and thanks go out all the Catchment Partners who helped deliver and run an activity. Please keep an eye on our website for upcoming events and activities...

[www.westcumbriarivertrust.org/events](http://www.westcumbriarivertrust.org/events)



## Invaders - near you!

**We have had another hectic season tackling invasive non-native species (INNS) and have a new addition to our Invasive's Team!**



**S**tuart Moreton is working predominantly on the River Ehen, but with the enthusiasm of some wonderful volunteers has managed to get a significant amount of the

main rivers in West Cumbria surveyed for INNS, including most of the Ehen, Irt and Mite. Our dedicated volunteers have also been out and about on their adopted stretches of river or lake in the Derwent Catchment surveying and bashing Himalyan balsam. It's been three years and counting - and they've done an amazing job. In some areas there are only pockets of Himalayan balsam remaining but the struggle goes on.

*"many non-native species spread like wildfire"*

A key area of our INNS work this year has been biosecurity as our rivers, lakes and ponds are under attack! Plants and animals from other countries are finding their way into our waterways after being released from ponds or fish tanks, or by accidentally being transported by people enjoying watery activities. Many non-native species do not cause a problem in the wild, but a few spread like wildfire, as they don't have the natural controls or predators to keep them in check. They can do massive damage to our water environment, and are therefore classified as invasive. We have been working with organisations, clubs and the general public to raise awareness of the three simple steps to stop the spread of INNS between rivers and lakes within Cumbria. The key to stopping the spread is to ensure all equipment is Checked, Cleaned and Dried before moving from one river or lake to another. Some species can survive up to 2 weeks in damp conditions like a wetsuit so you can see how easily these nasties could be transferred from one area to another!



## Pearls in Peril



**F**reshwater mussels are indicators of excellent water quality and they help to maintain suitable habitat for other species, such as salmon and trout. As filter feeders an adult mussel, which can grow to over 15cm, filters more water in a day than we use in the shower!

*"if mussels are at risk the health of the river is declining"*

Mussels have an intriguing life cycle, spending the first few months of their life as a tiny larva attached to the gills of a young salmon where they live and grow without any harm to the fish. If mussels are at risk, it is a warning sign that the health of the river is declining.



The Pearls in Peril (PiP) LIFE Project, managed by WCRT, aims to work with landowners, managers and the community on a range of projects. We are delivering habitat improvements through agri environment schemes, fencing, the stabilisation of riverbanks, the planting of riparian woodlands and wetland creation along with a programme of awareness raising, education and community events. PiP is a partnership project and works with a wide range of organisations to deliver works 'on the ground'. So far we have had fantastic support from landowners and our volunteers, and along with the Woodland Trust we have planted an amazing 4,500 trees!



**An iconic and rare species at risk of extinction; the River Ehen in West Cumbria is home to the largest breeding population of freshwater pearl mussels (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) in England!**

Excess silt from eroding riverbanks is damaging for mussels and fish as it covers the riverbed affecting filtering and also reducing the amount of oxygen available for juvenile mussels and fish that live in the riverbed in the early stages of their lives. To help reduce this excess silt, we used a process known as willow spiling - willow stakes interwoven with willow whips. Both the stakes and the whips continue to grow protecting the riverbank as well as providing habitat for other beasts.



We also attended the 108th Ennerdale show, where kids got to handle pearl mussel shells, measure them and calculate their age. Some of the shells are nearly one hundred years old, which elicited comments like, "Wow! That's nearly as old as my mum!" Good job mum was out of earshot...

We were also lucky enough to film a piece with Liz Bonnin from ITV Countrywise to help raise awareness about freshwater mussels, watch out for this in the Spring!





## 🔥 A Day in the Life...

### Rosie Law, Ellenwise Project Officer

**The 7th October was always going to be a big day, but it just kept getting bigger!**

Everyone was excited about the Whit Beck River Restoration celebratory event in the afternoon and we all worked from the tiny office in the morning to make sure we were ready to deal with any last minute preparations.

My first task (after a mug of tea) was trying to concentrate on writing about the silage clamp I had been discussing the day before on a farm visit. But the phone rang and to my amazement it was a farmer calling me. This means that the word about my Ellenwise project is out. Hoorah! Then it was time to head to Lorton to set up for the big event and my colleague Stuart Moreton was already organising how we would unveil the plaque on the bridge.

Then the guests started arriving, we had invited anyone who was involved in the project and had representatives from Natural England, the Environment Agency, local residents, construction staff, land owners, Woodland Trust, planning authorities, local school children and the press.



Speeches were given and the reoccurring theme was an overwhelming message that this project was only possible because everyone

had worked together. We then all walked up to the bridge and school children from Lorton were asked to unveil the plaque on the bridge while the press took photos.

*"the local farmer was enjoying the remnants of a bottle of Prosecco so his sheep didn't get hold of it"*

Then the bit I had been waiting for, Ian Creighton the WCRT Project Manager gave us a guided tour of the new river channel.



Ian explained how the channel had been designed, dug out and gravel brought in from a nearby site which has a huge excess. Having only started working for WCRT in August, I'm lucky enough to see the results of this project after the years of work that WCRT and others have put in. The finale of my day was while we were clearing up the local farmer was enjoying the remnants of a bottle of Prosecco, so his sheep didn't get hold of it! Everyone's happy!



## 📍 The catchments in our care...



**i** West Cumbria Rivers Trust (WCRT) is part of the national network of river trusts which have played an ever increasing role in delivering environmental improvements throughout the country.

## What is it....?

Can you tell what these people are looking for?



For answers please look on the website in the article 'celebrating world rivers day'.

Photo: Ennerdale Water ©Bas Montgomery

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