

# From Beck To Beach

SPRING 2018 ISSUE

## News in brief...

### New Assistant Director

We are chuffed to welcome Luke Bryant to the team as Assistant Director – Project Management. Luke previously worked for an environmental contractor specialising in river restoration and habitat management, and has spent much of the last 10 years managing projects across Cumbria and the EU ranging from land management, environmental improvement and habitat restoration through to educational projects aimed at promoting access to the outdoors. Luke joins us at a very busy time and is excited to be helping the Trust deliver their programme of River Restoration throughout 2018 and beyond.



### Irt Bank Stabilisation Update

The bank stabilisation completed on the River Irt during summer 2017 has certainly been tested over the winter. The brash and the regraded bank are working well by dissipating the river's energy. This has reduced the amount of soil being washed into the river, thereby improving the habitat for fish and freshwater mussels. Over the winter volunteers helped us plant trees to further stabilise the banks and improve the habitat.



**Biffa Award**  
Building communities. Transforming lives.

**FBA**  
Freshwater Biological Association

### Natural Flood Management Research

Following a successful bid to the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), Lancaster University, JBA consulting and the Rivers Trust, we'll be undertaking research to better understand how much natural measures can reduce flooding from NFM-feature scales up to large catchment scales. Part of the research will focus on the whole Derwent catchment and we're thrilled to be a project partner. We look forward to working with the team over the next three years to further quantify the evidence for the natural multi-benefit flood measures we deliver.

**NERC**  
SCIENCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

**Lancaster University**



**JBA consulting**

**The Rivers Trust**

### Natural Flood Management Projects

Following successful bids to a DEFRA Natural Flood Management Fund, we are now looking to undertake natural flood management interventions on the River Cocker and River Glenderamackin catchments, upstream of Lorton/Cockermouth and Keswick.

We'll be talking to farmers and landowners in these catchments to discuss undertaking measures such as leaky dams, offline flood storage areas, tree planting, peatland restoration and soil management opportunities. These measures should help to reduce the speed at which water flows down the catchment, reduce flood risk, improve water quality and biodiversity.

We'll be working with a wide range of partner organisations, such as the Woodland Trust, Cumbria Woodlands, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Farmer Network and Iggesunds, alongside the local communities.



### The Adventurous Salmon

Towards the end of 2017 we worked with children from St Herbert's C of E Primary School in Keswick, United Utilities and design company Fuzzy Duck, to create a beautiful Christmas-themed window display for our office and information centre as part of Keswick Tourism's Live Advent event. The pictures were inspired by characters in the children's story 'The Adventurous Salmon' written by our Education and Outreach Officer, Rebecca Neal. The window was then officially opened by the school choir and following a public vote, we were the lucky winners!



### Competition Winner

Emily has won a signed copy of "The River Singers" by Tom Moorhouse for her amazing poster to prevent littering and fly-tipping next to rivers. Emily's poster shows some of the litter she has seen next to her local river in Egremont and some of the problems litter can cause to wildlife. The prize was kindly donated by Tom Moorhouse in support of the work of the Rivers Trust and the story is about the lives of young water voles.





## Rivers Corridor Group Project Success

What a difference team work makes! West Cumbria Rivers Trust Project Officer Ian Creighton in conjunction with individuals from the Derwent Owners Association, National Trust, Environment Agency, Natural England, Lake District National Park Authority and Woodland Trust successfully completed 24 river habitat improvement projects in 2017 on the River Derwent and its tributaries. This small but dedicated team aims, with the support of numerous landowners, to improve the habitat for our fish to help improve their survival rates and therefore their densities.

In addition, these projects help reduce diffuse agricultural pollution, the incidence of flooding as well as provide wildlife corridors for our birds, mammals and amphibians to name just a few of the wins.

Many projects involve erecting fencing to create buffer strips, this helps stabilise river banks and allows marginal vegetation to establish and in turn increasing cover for fish. The additional planting of trees and shrubs further strengthens the banks and provides berries for birds and mammals and a safe route for them to travel through. Other projects included; planting riverside woodlands, stabilising rapidly eroding banks, securing woody debris and re-seeding gravels (lost to historical dredging) so fish can spawn.

Trust Director Jodie Mills is delighted with the year on year achievements of this long established partnership and commented 'With such focused individuals, it proves it is possible to achieve so much for our rivers, their wildlife and communities in a short space of time'.



## River Derwent Electrofishing Surveys

The 2017 survey report was released in February and it is safe to say that the 2017 surveys were, despite the copious amounts of rain, a huge success. We managed to survey a total of 120 sites across the Derwent catchment.

Results show that Trout (*Salmo trutta*) Fry numbers are doing well across the catchment, unfortunately the same can't be said for Salmon (*Salmo salar*) Fry. Fry is the name given to Salmon or Trout juveniles less than one-year old. Where we did find Salmon, mainly in St John's Beck and Whit Beck (a recently restored meandering river in Lorton), numbers were good. Predominately few Salmon Fry were found in the smaller tributaries, which is for various reasons, including poor numbers of adult salmon returning from the sea.

Unfortunately, due to what seemed like never ending rain causing high river levels throughout last summer, we didn't manage to survey the main river sites, and this is where we might expect to find the vast majority of the Salmon Fry.

These results couldn't have been obtained without the help of our many volunteers. This year we had a record 24 different volunteers out and about with us, ranging from students looking for work experience, working professionals, fishermen from the local fishing clubs, and retirees looking for something practical and purposeful to do.

We also held a community workshop electrofishing day on Dash Beck for Bassenthwaite Rotary Club who have adopted the beck as part of our 'Adopt - a - Beck' scheme. We also held an environmental survey day out for employees of United Utilities which has led to over 650 voluntary hours towards the project, which is fantastic. So a big "Thank You" to all those who gave up their time to volunteer, we couldn't have done it without you! If you would like to get involved this year please email: [ruth@westcumbriarivertrust.org](mailto:ruth@westcumbriarivertrust.org).





## Natural Management of Flood Risk in Dovenby

Flooding is a frequent problem in Dovenby village, with homes being inundated and the road becoming impassable. The water quality and habitat condition of Dovenby beck are also in need of improvement. So when we were contacted by Dovenby Flood Action group we were keen to try and help tackle the issues.

With funding from the Woodlands Trust we undertook walkover surveys to identify ways to reduce the flood risk whilst improving the water quality and habitat of Dovenby beck. Together, West Cumbria Rivers Trust and Dovenby Parish Council have secured nearly £30,000 of funding from Cumbria Community Foundation and the Derwent River Corridors Group.

With help from local landowners we are developing plans for leaky dams to hold back water in the stream channel, flood water storage areas to hold back runoff and sediment, bankside fencing to stop cattle getting into the watercourse and tree and hedge planting to 'slow the flow' and increase habitat diversity.

Flooding in the village occurs very rapidly after heavy rainfall and water levels drop quickly after damage is done. By holding water in the landscape, even for just a few hours, we can spread out the water going through the village and help the drainage systems to cope. This is just the beginning of what will be a long process to manage flood risk.



## What's happening on the Waver & Wampool?

It's still early days for the Trust's most recent catchment acquisition - the Rivers Waver and Wampool in the North West of Cumbria. Some funding from the Environment Agency has meant that since July 2017 Project Officer Katie Milburn has been busy putting in the miles conducting walkover surveys across both the main river Wampool and its tributaries, and the tributaries of the River Waver.



The walkover surveys are still in progress, but preliminary results have identified areas of poached ground that could benefit from fencing and bank stabilisation; Invasive Non-Native Species (namely Himalayan Balsam) that could benefit from control measures; Litter/fly-tipping that would actively benefit the watercourse if removed; and runoff where simple measures could prevent accidental watercourse pollution.

Since January 2018 Ruth Mackay took up the helm as the Waver & Wampool Project Officer. Ruth is delighted to further the exploratory work that has already taken place last Summer and Autumn. Ruth tells us she is "really looking forward to getting stuck into this project, meeting the local landowners, developing good links with them and



completing some habitat improvement works in the area." Further updates will be shared as they become available in 2018 and fed into the Environmental Agency's plans for a Water Level Management Board in the area.





## The Call of Nature

We have been working with Love My beach to relaunch the Call of Nature Campaign. This was timed to coincide with World toilet day - a UN initiative which took place on the 19th November with the aim to improve global sanitation. Although the majority of West Cumbria's waste water is safely treated, risks to local rivers and seas are still prevalent through privately maintained waste water treatment works.

The Call of Nature campaign has been designed to inform occupants of septic tanks, cesspits and package sewage treatment plants about the risks their tanks pose to animals and the environment if their facilities are poorly maintained. Poorly maintained tanks are often incidental in nature with owners simply forgetting that the maintenance of their tanks is due. We have suggested that World Toilet Day in November each year is a notable date for future checks.

The information pack and website ([www.callofnature.info](http://www.callofnature.info)) contains everything owners

need to know about septic tank maintenance and also includes some top tips on efficiency such as only ever flushing the 3p's; Pee, Poo and Paper and avoiding any fats and food going down the kitchen sink. For those owners who are on top of their maintenance the website provides insight into new regulations that come into force in 2020.

We work a lot with farmers to ensure agricultural practices don't impact water quality in our patch but while we are out and about we often see a number of poorly maintained household septic tanks. It would be great if householders could do their bit to protect our rivers and seas by checking



annually that their facilities are connected right and maintained properly. If you are interested in helping keep to our beaches clean please check the Love my Beach website [www.lovemymybeach.org](http://www.lovemymybeach.org) for all the beach cleans in West Cumbria and beyond.



## What is willow spiling?

Willow spiling is a traditional green engineering technique used to stabilise eroding riverbanks. Locally sourced willow is preferable where possible. Willow rods are weaved horizontally between live willow stakes that have been driven vertically into the riverbank at regular intervals by hand; machinery is not necessary. Spiling is carried out between November and April while the willow is still dormant. In larger, flashy rivers it is best to do it just before it starts to grow in the spring to reduce the risk of it being ripped out in winter floods.



As a living structure that will continue to grow and mature, it must be maintained and cut approximately every three years; it can then be sold or re-used elsewhere on the same site. Sites need to be carefully selected to ensure its success; it doesn't work everywhere (please note that a consent from Natural England is required on legally protected sites before work commences). Spiling has many benefits; it reduces damaging excess silt input to the river and it protects riverbanks from eroding further, giving them the time and space to revegetate and stabilise. It also provides habitat and shade for lots of animals and looks great too!

## Volunteering dates

We are also pleased to announce our brand new super exciting volunteer programme...

February 22nd - Willow Staking @ Longlands Lake

March 29th - Tree planting @ Beckermert

April 26th - River Watcher Workshop @ location TBC

May 24th - Balsam Pull @ Whit Beck, Lorton

June 28th - Balsam Pull @ Loweswater (followed by a BBQ)

July 26th - Balsam Pull @ River Ellen Catchment

August 30th - Litter pick @ Borrowdale

September 27th - Greater wood-rush planting @ location TBC

October 25th - Litter pick @ River Irt, Wasdale

November 29th - Tree planting @ location TBC (National Tree Week)

December 20th (a week early due to Christmas) - Rhody Bash @ River Irt, Wasdale