

From Beck To Beach

The newsletter of West Cumbria Rivers Trust

NEWS IN BRIEF

A warm welcome to Jonny & Clair

We are delighted to welcome Jonny Kidd and Clair Payne to our team.

Jonny steps in to replace Rosie as the Ellenwise Project Officer delivering this partnership project to sustainably reduce sources of phosphate, in order to improve waterbodies and bathing waters. Prior to joining us Jonny undertook a PhD at Newcastle University looking into the impacts of nutrient fertilisation on grassland and arable ecosystem properties. Jonny has a strong grounding in agriculture having grown up on a Cumbrian dairy farm and has worked on a hill farm in the North Pennines.



Clair is our most recent recruit who joins us to deliver our new natural flood management project in the

Glendermackin catchment of the Derwent, which will deliver multiple benefit projects across the catchment to 'slow the flow' of water running through the catchment and improve water quality and biodiversity. Clair has previously worked as a ranger for the National Trust in the South Lakes and volunteered for The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) in Leeds. She has a degree in Physical Geography from Newcastle University and is keen to use her geomorphology background in this new and exciting role.



A fond farewell to Les

One of our long-standing trustees, Leslie Webb, has stood down after a number of years supporting the trust to allow himself more time to pursue other interests. We would like to thank Leslie for all his hard work and dedication to the trust during his time on the board of trustees and wish him well for the future.



Born survivors

We are really pleased to see juvenile mussels having survived their first winter at our top secret reintroduction site. These juvenile mussels were released last summer after being reared in captivity by the Freshwater Biological Association. Surviving the first winter was always going to be their toughest test. We shall continue to monitor the juveniles over the coming months as we learn more about how these mussels are adapting to their new home.



Flimby Natural Flood Management Project

Over the summer we have been working on a partnership project to address the flood risk in Flimby and have been visiting landowners to draw up natural flood management plans for the catchments upstream of Flimby. We are pleased that there are a number of landowners happy to allow a range of work on their land including kested hedgerows, leaky barriers and water storage areas, which we hope to start delivering over the coming year. These features will all contribute to 'slowing the flow' of water downstream, improve and also enhance the area for wildlife and have water quality benefits.



Leaky dams at Dovenby

This summer we have taken measures to reduce flood risk to Dovenby village whilst improving water quality and habitat. A series of six leaky barriers upstream of the village will hold back water during high flows, bankside fencing will slow runoff and improve water quality, and timber barriers will slow surface runoff through the village. We are grateful to Cumbria Community Foundation, Derwent River Corridors Group and the landowner for making this possible.



Habitat improvement work on River Waver



Following on from the walkover surveys conducted on the Waver and Wampool catchments, work is well underway at one particular site, to try and improve the habitat and reduce diffuse water pollution. This spring over 1200m of riparian fencing was erected at a farm upstream of Waverton. The fencing will keep livestock out of the river, allow vegetation to grow and thus stabilise the banks and reduce the amount of erosion occurring and sediment entering the River. Watch this space for more news as this project unfolds.

Drought in Cumbria

There have been a number of impacts to our aquatic environments due to the dry weather this summer. A number of our watercourses dried up completely, causing direct fish kills, but also water temperatures have been higher than average which causes fish to become stressed and impacts on their long term health. For example, in July, temperatures of the main rivers of the Derwent were on average 19°C compared to around 14°C in a 'usual' year. At 22°C

temperatures become lethal for salmon and trout. Drought is a natural occurrence, but like flooding, it is exacerbated by human activity in our catchments. Many of the watercourses that have been more severely impacted are those which are modified, they have usually been straightened and are 'perched' above the low point in the floodplains; not only are these modified becks at greater risk of drying up in droughts, they also speed up the flow of water (and

gravels) at times of flood, causing greater flood impacts for people and properties. We are working with and encouraging landowners to think about restoring becks to a more resilient and natural state, which has win win benefits for people and wildlife. Trees also help keep rivers cool, so we are encouraging landowners to plant and manage trees to retain dappled shade along watercourses which creates the ideal conditions for fish and other wildlife.

Weir's it gone?!

In June and July, after years in the making, we removed the former Ennerdale Mill Weir from the River Ehen at Egremont, opening up the river to fish migration and improving the long-term prospects for freshwater mussels in the process. The weir has been crumbling for years - it was only a matter of time before it failed completely - and was a barrier to both upstream and downstream migration of fish, including Atlantic Salmon. This barrier is now gone, so fish have a much easier time swimming upstream to lay eggs, this also benefits mussels, who rely on the salmon as part of their life-cycle (during their larval stage, mussels live inside salmon gills).

After eight weeks, working with contractor Ebsford Environmental, we de-mobilised from site, leaving behind a much more natural river, healthier habitat for fish and other species, and no more risk of the weir collapsing. We were extremely lucky with the weather - it

was dry almost every single day of the construction phase, and that meant the low water levels assisted our progress. In fact, the day we completed the project was the start of the recent wet weather.

We'll be monitoring the site over the winter, and are really excited to watch the upcoming salmon migration this autumn.

This project is part of the Cumbria River Restoration Strategy, part-funded by the Environment Agency & Natural England, with special contributions from James Fisher Nuclear (the weir owner) and the European Maritime Fisheries Fund.



BEFORE



AFTER

Adopt a Beck, Kirk beck & Black beck project update

There's exciting stuff going on on the Nugen funded Adopt-a-Beck project on Kirk/Black Beck, a tributary of the River Ehen close to the coast. Our farm projects have been going from strength to strength when it comes to improved livestock management, saving soils and reducing muck getting into our becks. We've fenced off 860 metres of beck; created interventions on farm tracks including laying a concrete cross drain and additional track diverts to take dirty water away from the beck, and we've helped stabilise riverbanks with a further 30 metres of willow spiling and brash bundles.



With hands-on help from our partners Egremont Anglers and the Environment Agency, we completed electrofishing at 14 sites on Kirk and Black becks



health of the river and possible pressures.

Our tree planting volunteers may have been small in number but they were HUGE on enthusiasm and energy! Over last winter we planted a further 300 mixed trees along the riverbank. Tree tube maintenance helps ensure young saplings grow well and are not crowded out by grass or



over the summer. The data collected includes fish species, size and number, and details about river habitat which is crucial to help better understand fish populations while also helping us assess the

other vegetation, while planting trees helps to stabilise riverbanks and prevent erosion.

The talk was seriously dirty at our "Making the Most of your Muck and Slurry" workshop in January! With over 17 farmers attending we had a packed programme delivered by the Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) and Catchment Sensitive Farming. Talks included: techniques for cost effective application, Nutrient Management Plans, Compliance with Regulations and Countryside Stewardship Grants. Big thanks to Terry Dixon who hosted the event and of course the local farmers who joined us to find out more and to share their knowledge and experience.

If you'd like to find out more and get involved in "Adopt a Beck, Kirk beck & Black beck" project, Project Officer Karin would love to hear from you. Email: karin@westcumbriarivertrust.org



VOLUNTEERING

If you'd like to find out more about volunteering with us please see our website at: www.westcumbriarivertrust.org/support-us/volunteer or contact: philippa@westcumbriarivertrust.org

Our Education & Outreach Officer Rebecca talks rubbish

The packaging from pretty much every chocolate bar I have ever eaten, is still out there somewhere on the planet. This fact was brought home to me by a photo of a Marathon bar wrapper with a Best Before date in the 80s, picked up on a beach-clean in Allonby earlier this year (For all those youngsters out there, Snickers used to be called Marathons, oh it makes me feel so old!).

My hero David Attenborough has given a huge boost to the movement of people already thinking about plastic. How we can reduce it, how we can stop it polluting our oceans, and how we increase knowledge about its effects on the environment. I have been much more aware of single-use plastic in my own daily life, and am even more likely to refuse or challenge it, because of the feeling of solidarity this recent publicity has given me.

Rivers are obviously one of the main routes for plastic reaching the sea, and West Cumbria Rivers Trust, with the help of volunteers, are doing their best to intercept it before it gets

there. We run an annual litter pick on the River Derwent, just outside Keswick, which involves kayakers as well as more traditional terrestrial volunteers, and we hold regular riverside litter-picks elsewhere. In April this year, on a 200m stretch of the River Ehen in Egremont we collected 10 bags of rubbish with 80 plastic bottles and around 30 plastic coffee cup lids, in just two hours! We are also involved in beach cleans along the west Cumbrian coast.

We would love you to take action for your rivers too. Here are some things you could do:

- Join a community litter pick (keep an eye on our website for events in your area)
- Pick up litter you find when you are walking and dispose of it responsibly. Even if you pick up a few things each day, it all helps
- If you know of a river or beach with public access that has a particular problem then please let us know and we will try and organise a litter pick.

There are lots of initiatives around Cumbria that you can get involved in to help reduce the impact of plastic on the environment. Here are a few:

- **Plastic Free Cumbria** have a website with a directory of green local businesses, and a Facebook page for discussion and ideas around reducing waste
- **Love My Beach** organise and publicise lots of litter picks on our coastline, and have resources for schools on their website
- **Surfers Against Sewage** campaign on plastics as well as organising beach litterpicks. They also have resources for schools on their website
- **Cumbria Action for Sustainability** have lots of campaigns, events, and ideas on sustainable living.



A year in numbers...

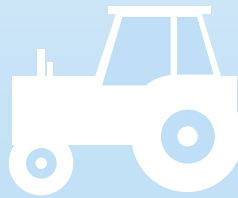
The working year from March 2017 to March 2018 was another fantastic one for the Trust. We employed three new members of staff to bring our team up to thirteen. We've been keeping busy working on over 30 different projects and this is what we've achieved:



2,635

volunteering hours

69
education sessions run,
teaching
over 1100
children about
rivers



59

advice visits
given to
farmers

15

and...
events run on
water friendly
farming

5,477 trees planted

123 Ha
of habitat created
or improved

4.0 km
of riverside fencing
erected

4.5 km
redundant fencing
removed

1
barrier to fish
moving upstream
removed

1140
metres bankside
trees coppiced

6 woody dams constructed
to hold back flood water

1,230
metres of river bank
protected from erosion

22
fish rescues to move
fish away from in-river
construction works

3.2 km
of river cleared
of litter

22 km
of invasive species
controlled

280 km
of river
surveyed

162
electrofishing
sites surveyed

**West Cumbria Rivers Trust**
Caring for our Lakes and Rivers

We couldn't have done it on our own so a big thank you to all our volunteers, land owners and funders. Here's hoping that next year is even better!