



RIBBLE RIVERS TRUST

Annual Newsletter: Issue 12 | 2016
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RESTORING our NATURAL HERITAGE

New Ribble Life Together
project unveiled

BATHING WATERS

River restoration
is good for your
health!

RIVER DARWEN

First fish passage
projects completed

SEPTIC TANKS

What's lurking in your
back garden?

ECOLOGICAL MONITORING - WATER FRIENDLY FARMING - EDUCATION PROGRAMME



Day ticket fishing from £5

Photo: Rod Calbrade

Game and coarse fishing at several locations around the Ribble Catchment, including the main Ribble and Calder rivers.

The Angling Passport scheme aims to highlight the importance of maintaining a clean and healthy river as a valuable asset to recreation and the local economy.

Proceeds from the ticket sales are invested back into the conservation of the Ribble Catchment's rivers and streams.

**Buy your tickets online at;
www.ribbletrust.org.uk/go-fishing**

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name of the Ribble Catchment
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Welcome

A word from our Chairman and CEO

Over the last 12 months we have continued to deliver significant physical improvements to the catchment, focused on 'multiple benefit' projects, which tackle more than one problem facing the environment and importantly the people and wildlife living within. The objectives are primarily improving water quality, habitat quality and connectivity, and water quantity using ecosystems. Our monitoring has shown significant improvements to invertebrate populations where we have delivered fencing and tree planting, and also salmon and sea trout have ascended into upper parts of the Calder catchment following fish passage work.

Working with farmers is an ever increasing aspect of our work as farmers, and the land they farm, have the greatest propensity to provide benefit to our catchment. This work takes many guises from advice and guidance, to farm yard infrastructure and habitat improvements. This work seeks to find the places where we can increase farm productivity *and* improve the environment, but also in the places that provide the greatest benefit to the public. For example our Tidal Ribble project seeks to aid in protecting and improving bathing waters, which are a crucial asset to the economies of Blackpool.

Farmers are not the only group we need to work with, as the catchment has a population in excess of 1.25 million people and many of the communities are affected by the river directly or indirectly. We began working with communities in earnest in Burnley and now we are looking to expand that across the catchment through our Ribble Life Together project, aiming to highlight how healthy rivers can benefit people, but also what communities can do to help rivers.

Through Ribble Life Together we hope to galvanise our catchment partnership to combine and increase improvements to the environment that won't just provide riverine benefits, but also to other habitats and species such as wading birds and increased woodland coverage and connectivity.

When we began writing this newsletter we were yet to experience the storms that hit the Ribble Catchment (as well as the whole of the North of the UK). The horrendous storms and the resulting flooding and damage caused us to have a slightly different perspective on 2015, and perhaps a different future. For many years we have been working to ensure that 'slowing the flow' or 'natural flood risk management' is integrated into our wider objectives. This is now more important than ever to help do whatever we can to reduce the scenes we saw over Christmas and New Year 2016- which were experienced first hand by a member of our team.

I hope that you find the latest newsletter an interesting, maybe even an inspiring read and hope to see you at some of our events in 2016.

Jack Spees, CEO and Philip Lord, Chairman



News in brief



Civic Trust Award

In November 2015, the Ribble Trust was presented with an award from Burnley



Civic Trust in recognition of outstanding work in the improvement of Burnley's local river environments, including educational and community schemes, following the successful completion of the Heritage Lottery funded *Urban River Enhancement Scheme* (URES). The Civic Trust were part of the project's Steering Group and helped to shape the initiative to achieve the best outcomes for Burnley and its communities.

Rivers Trust Spring Conference

Ribble Trust was delighted to host the Spring Conference in Burnley at the culmination of the 4-year Heritage Lottery funded *Urban River Enhancement Scheme* (URES) in March 2015. Rivers Trusts from across the UK attended the 2-day event and enjoyed a showcase of partnership initiatives aimed at reaching the various communities in Burnley and engaging with them about the importance of their town's rivers and the things they can do to take care of them. Topics covered included naturalising highly modified river channels, the constraints of improving habitat in an urban environment, ecological monitoring, engaging communities and educational programmes. On the second day of the conference, attendees were taken on a tour of the in-channel works and interpretation installed around Burnley town centre, as well as a visit to Colne to see the fish easements that were constructed using the Environment Agency's Catchment Restoration Fund.

Project Gains International Recognition

On November 18th, Ribble Trust CEO Jack Spees travelled to Bern University of Applied Sciences in Switzerland to present at a conference about flood control, sedimentation and river restoration. He showcased the Trust's *Keeping Rivers Cool* project, which has been ongoing since 2011, explaining the multiple benefits that can be derived from tree planting adjacent to watercourses, including mitigating the effects of rising temperatures caused by climate change.



Staff Away Day

The angling community has always been a huge supporter of the Trust's work, however most of the staff have never had a go at fishing themselves. In June 2015, the whole team headed out for casting tuition on the River Ribble at Mitton, led by the highly esteemed AAPGAI instructor Jim Fearn. A good day was had by all, including the fish, who managed to evade our efforts for the entire day.



Salmon Make an Impressive Return



An incredible discovery was made at the start of the fish survey season in June 2015 – salmon fry were found in both the River Calder at Towneley Park and Colne Water above the town centre, meaning that the fish passage works carried out in 2014 had enabled at least two pairs of salmon to migrate upstream and spawn successfully. The news brought both elation and astonishment at their rate of response to the alteration works.



Ribble Life began in 2011 as a Defra funded, Water Framework Directive (WFD) focused pilot scheme aimed at exploring better ways to engage with the public and organisations to improve the water environment at a catchment level.

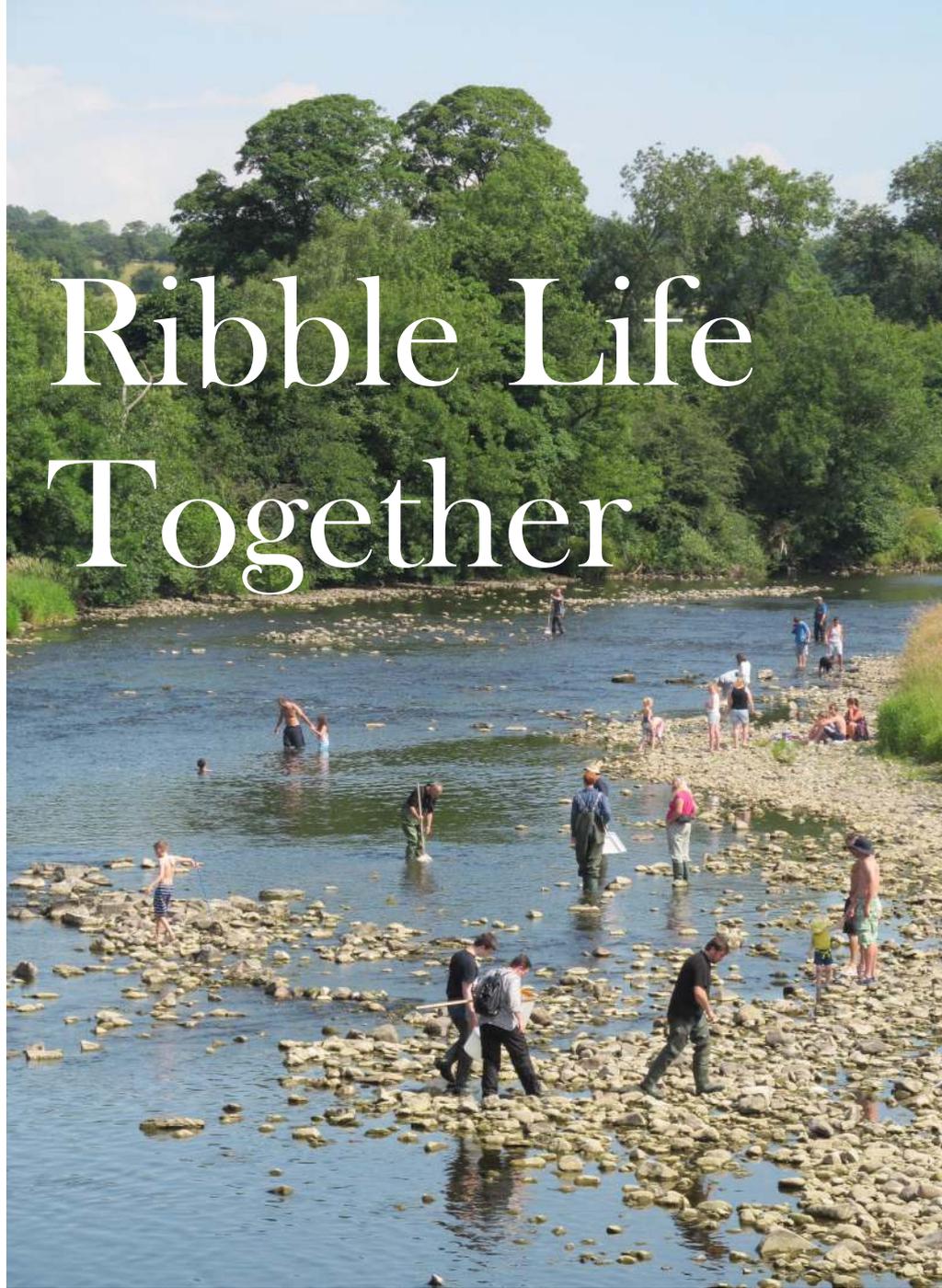
In October 2013, Ribble Life adopted Defra’s Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) and continued to progress towards writing and implementing a Catchment Action Plan. The partnership was awarded a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund in March 2015 to fund the development of its first project, *Ribble Life Together*.

The Project

Ribble Life Together is an ambitious project that brings together all the members of the Ribble Life Partnership to initially develop (from May 2015 to November 2016), and then deliver (from April 2017 to November 2020) a range of activities that will significantly improve the Ribble Catchment for people and wildlife.

The project will use an ‘ecosystem services’ approach (benefits that people derive from nature) to identify where in the catchment improvements are required that can be delivered through natural processes, providing a service to both the public and the environment. For example, wetland creation can help to reduce flood risk or woodlands can result in better bathing water quality.

The partnership aims to improve the way in which the catchment is managed, its condition, what people know about their catchment and how all of the information about our river heritage is recorded. To do this, it will work with communities and stakeholders to provide opportunities for people to learn about their heritage, develop skills through volunteering and enjoy their river heritage. This will help to change people’s behaviour, reducing negative environmental impacts and aid in making the catchment a better place to live, work and visit.



Ribble Life Together

The project aims to;

- **Improve water quality** by reducing diffuse pollution to improve coastal bathing waters.
- **Improve biodiversity** by increasing and reconnecting habitat.
- **Contribute to natural flood mitigation** using natural processes.
- **Promote recreation** by improving access and information for people to relate to their rivers and streams.
- **Educate people** to increase awareness, engagement and understanding of river heritage.
- **Provide training**, volunteering and other opportunities for all to become involved in improving their rivers.
- **Boost the local economy** through increased use of the catchment for tourism and recreation, as well as working with local businesses.
- **Mitigate the effects of climate change** by planting trees, increasing carbon sequestration and shading of streams.
- **Work better as a partnership** by aligning activities to achieve multiple objectives.

The project’s partners include; United Utilities, the Environment Agency, RSPB, the Forest of Bowland AONB, the Forestry Commission, Natural England, the Woodland Trust, the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, NFU, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Ribble Fisheries Consultative Association, LOVEmyBEACH, Lancashire County Council, local councils and a number of community groups.



Project Activities

A range of activities has been proposed to help achieve the aims of Ribble Life Together;

Restore & Reconnect Habitat

At the highest priority locations, the project will address 15 barriers to fish passage, either through the construction of fish easements or the complete removal of weirs. At least 30 new woodlands will be planted and 30 wetlands constructed, which may be anything from farmland scrapes and ponds, to moorland restoration and flood attenuation features.



Improve Access and Interpretation

Not only do we want to improve people's access to rivers, we want to promote it and get more people out there enjoying all the benefits that rivers have to offer. From footpath infrastructure improvements to better interpretation, we're looking to develop 15 circular routes for a range of physical abilities that take in rivers and allow people to get closer to nature. Walk guides in both paper and smart phone format will help to promote the walks. In addition interpretation panels at points of interest along the way will help people learn more about their rivers as they go.

77% of people said they'd visit rivers more if there was better access

Forge a more effective partnership

Throughout the course of the Ribble Life Together project, the partners will strive to better align their objectives, share their data and evidence, improve communications both internally and with the public, and closely monitor and evaluate the project's impact so that the most effective techniques may be implemented in future projects.

Information Hub

As part of the project, we want to create a one-stop web based resource where the public can go to discover the catchment's areas of special interest, historical information about its rivers, summaries of the condition of each sub-catchment and their distinctive features, as well as a place to share data and evidence to improve the management of the catchment.

80% of people surveyed did not know the health of their local river or stream

Educate

To involve more people in looking after and improving our river environments, the project will train professionals in catchment management techniques, such as identifying sources of diffuse pollution from agriculture. It will also train volunteers in various aspects of ecological monitoring, including wildlife surveys, habitat condition assessments and restoration techniques. 'Rivers in the Classroom' will be developed with more primary schools and a secondary school initiative will be fostered too, both linking to aspects of the National Curriculum.

Reach more people

The project seeks to engage with more audiences than ever before and there are several proposals for how this can be achieved, including the development of smartphone apps, creating short films to reveal the hidden underwater world of rivers, tactile art installations and audio guides, and catchment-wide pop up events with interactive displays to help bring rivers to the people.

78% of people surveyed would like to see more interpretation about rivers

Bathing Waters

In summer, thousands of visitors flock to Blackpool, Lytham St Annes and Southport to enjoy the fresh sea air, sandy beaches and have a paddle. The sea is much cleaner now than it was 20 years ago, however it is imperative for public health and wildlife that we all do our bit to keep our coasts clean and pollution-free.

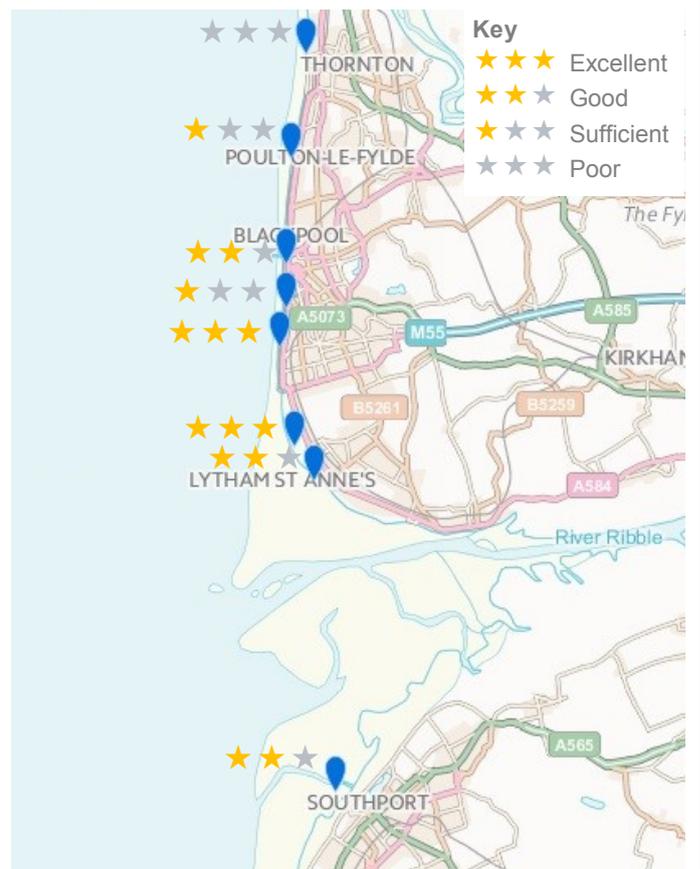
Bathing waters are stretches of sea, lake or river that are popular swimming or paddling areas. In order to protect public health, the Environment Agency monitors the water quality at each of these designated locations across England to check whether they meet the standards set by the European Bathing Waters Directive.

Water samples are taken weekly from May to September for each of the bathing water locations and are analysed for bacteria such as E.coli and Enterococci. Although the water quality can fluctuate throughout the year, the data collected over a four-year period provides an overall annual classification of excellent, good, sufficient or poor - the latter being the point where swimming or paddling in that location is not advisable.

If high levels of bacteria are discovered in a sample, the data can be analysed further to try to identify the sources of the pollution, a technique known as source apportionment, to gain a better understanding of the nature of the pollution.

The bathing waters along the Fylde Coast are often subject to short term pollution caused by heavy rainfall events washing faecal material from fields, sewage systems' storm discharges and urban drainage into rivers and streams. The polluted water flows out through the estuary and is washed back inland by the tides. Usually the water quality will return to normal 1-3 days after a heavy rainfall event.

The Ribble Trust has used data from the Environment Agency to help inform the Tidal Ribble project.



Map of the Fylde Coast showing bathing water classifications in 2015. Up to date bathing water quality data is freely available for anyone to view from the Environment Agency's website; environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/



Pick up your **litter** and clean up after your **dog**

Think **before you flush**
Only flush the 3 Ps—pee, poo & paper

Take proper care of your **septic tank** callofnature.info

Check your home for **misconnected plumbing** connectright.org

Tidal Ribble Project



The Tidal Ribble project was set up in 2015 as a partnership initiative with United Utilities, the Environment Agency, Catchment Sensitive Farming, the NFU and Blackpool Borough Council. It aims to work with farmers and communities to protect bathing waters and shellfish waters along the Fylde coast that are impacted upon by the Ribble estuary.

It has been identified that faecal matter entering watercourses from both urban and rural sources is one of the major causes of poor bathing water quality, with diffuse pollution from agriculture and discharges from private sewage treatment systems being the highlighted problems. The tidal area of the Ribble is thought to have the greatest effect on bathing water quality due to its proximity to the coast and is therefore the focus zone for this project (as above, highlighted in green).

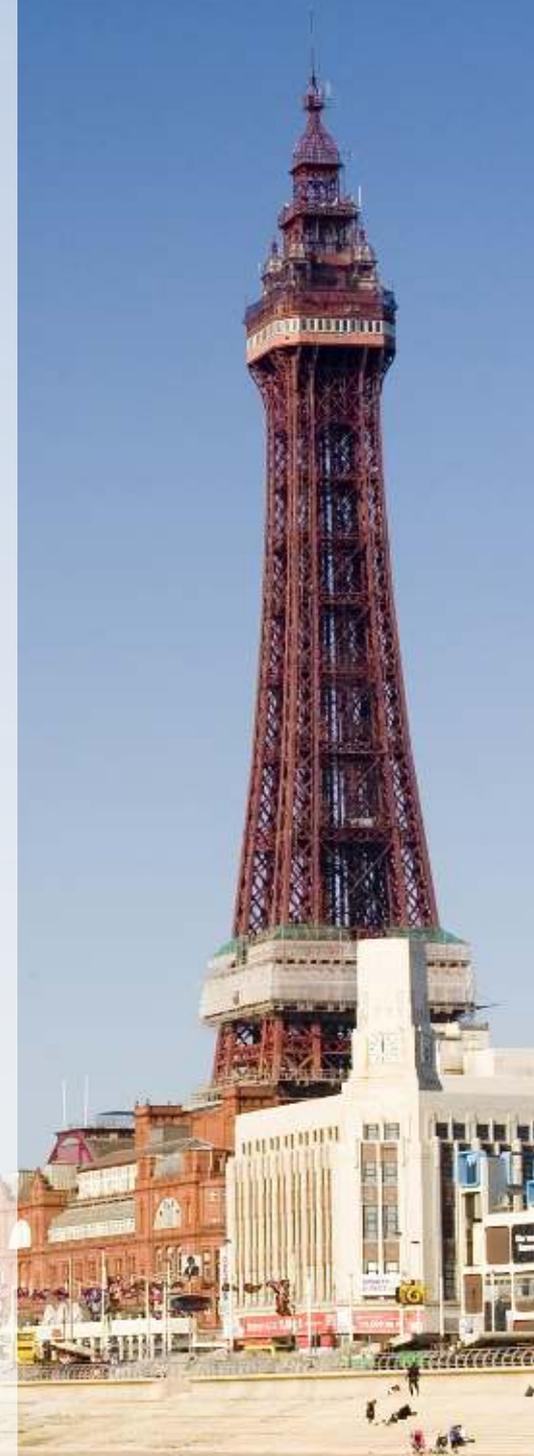
In 2015, 20 priority farms were visited within the Tidal Ribble area and PINPOINT plans were produced to identify opportunities where faecal inputs from agriculture could be reduced, such as separating clean and dirty yard water, improving slurry storage and fencing off watercourses. Naturally, these opportunities must also be compatible with the farm business and result in other

environmental benefits too. The delivery of the identified actions will take place between 2016 and 2018 with funding from United Utilities and Countryside Stewardship grants.

Locations have also been identified where dwellings are likely to have private sewage treatment systems like septic tanks, so that a targeted engagement campaign can be delivered to help owners understand how to manage their systems and how often to have them serviced and emptied. A series of engagement days are planned with community groups, as well as pop up stalls, a dedicated webpage and associated social media, a leaflet, information boards and activity days in schools.

Over the course of the project, water sampling will be carried out to assess how well the measures taken to address faecal inputs have performed. An exciting citizen science project is also planned which will involve the general public in monitoring water quality using a simple sampling kit provided to them by the Trust. Participants will be able to test for the presence of washing machine detergents in streams, which could be indicative of failing private sewage treatment systems. Their results will then be shared online.

Help out with a **beach clean** with LOVEmy BEACH



For more ways to help visit lovemybeach.org



Septic Tank Campaign



#CallofNature

Call of Nature is a brand new campaign aimed at preventing pollution in our rivers and lakes from poorly maintained off mains sewage systems.



3 THINGS YOU CAN DO to look after your sewage treatment system...



REGULAR MAINTENANCE

It's recommended that sewage systems are inspected and emptied once a year by a specialist company, regardless of whether they're full or not. Make sure any ports or manholes are kept easily accessible to ensure thorough checks can be carried out. It is a good idea to keep a maintenance record, in the same way you would for your car, to remind yourself when your next inspection is due and to pass on to new owners if you sell your home.

LOOK OUT FOR TELLTALE SIGNS

There are a number of telltale signs that can indicate your system isn't working properly. Are your drains slow to clear or is your toilet backing up? Is the drainage field swampy or smelly? Is the discharge in the inspection chamber dark in colour and smelly? It should be odourless. If you notice any of these issues, it's time to call in a specialist to help.

THINK BEFORE YOU FLUSH OR POUR



It's crucial that you only ever flush the 3 Ps—pee, poo and paper. Everything else, from sanitary items and plasters, to cotton buds and cotton wool, should go in the bin, as they do not disintegrate and will cause blockages in your system. As for kitchen waste, use a sink strainer to catch food scraps and don't pour fats or oils down the sink. Instead, pour them into a container to cool and then dispose into the bin (yoghurt pots are handy for this).

Since the beginning of 2015, the Ribble Trust has been involved in a regional campaign to help people recognise and address issues with their private sewage treatment systems in a bid to reduce pollution of watercourses.

These miniature sewage treatment works store and treat the wastewater from homes that are not connected to the public sewer network. A properly functioning system should not cause the homeowner any problems, however poor maintenance can have a serious impact on the environment.

The campaign is being led by the Morecambe Bay Partnership, who were awarded a £50,000 grant from United Utilities' Catchment Wise Fund towards the cost of the project. Also involved in the campaign are Lune, Wyre, Eden, South Cumbria and West Cumbria Rivers Trusts, Healthy Waterways Trust and British Water.

A year of consultations with members of the public aided in the development and piloting of a draft toolkit for use by the public, consisting of literature, a web based resource and a short film, before being launched in early 2016.

A properly maintained, fully functioning sewage treatment system is crucial for a safe and healthy environment. **If it fails, it'll start to smell, spread disease to humans and animals and pollute rivers,**

lakes, coastal waters and groundwater.

A failing system could also result in enforcement action being taken by the Environment Agency if nothing is done by the homeowner or business to address the issue.

Many people are not aware of what to do to look after their sewage treatment system, nor do they realise the impact that a failing system can have on the environment,

"The North West has the highest numbers of septic tanks in the UK"

especially those who have newly inherited a septic tank after moving house.

'Call of Nature' has been set up to try and engage with the public on a smaller and more targeted regional scale, to try to help people avoid an unpleasant and potentially costly mess from a failing system.

Paul Henbrey, who oversees United Utilities' Catchment Wise grant fund says: *"The North West has the highest numbers of septic tanks in the UK. Imagine the benefits to the environment if every one of them was working as it should."*

callofnature.info goes live in spring 2016. If you have a sewage treatment system, you need to visit this website!



Long Preston

Floodplain project

Photo: YDMT

By Dave Tayler, Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust

An ambitious partnership project was set up in 2004 to enhance important wet grassland habitats of the Ribble floodplain between Long Preston and Settle – also known as the ‘Long Preston Deeps’. This Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is noted for its typically lowland, meandering river morphology, but is located in an upland setting. It is currently classified as ‘Unfavourable Recovering’ due to problems such as over-sedimentation, poached riverbanks and a disconnection of the river from its floodplain, amongst others. The project is called the Long Preston Floodplain Project and partners include ourselves, Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, North Yorkshire County Council, RSPB and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. With the vital support of local farmers the project has aimed to:

- Improve the physical and ecological health of the River Ribble and its wet grassland habitat, to benefit wading birds, wildfowl and other wildlife
- Create opportunities for the local economy to benefit from this valuable natural resource
- Improve access to the area for people



Snipe

to learn about the grassland, its birds, wildlife and land management.

Since the start, the project has steadily achieved a number of great successes including 10 water level management schemes and the restoration of 186 ha of wet grassland to support floodplain birdlife. The bird numbers have been surveyed monthly by volunteers and in 2015, the information from 50 years of volunteer surveys was written up into a publication entitled ‘*The Birds of the Long Preston Area*’ which gives the status of the 200+ species seen on site. Over a thousand individuals have attended dozens of events and many more connected to the project through websites, newsletters, information panels and walking trails.

The 2010 River Restoration Plan has enabled river focussed conservation projects at four sites with some five kilometres of river bank restored with associated floodplain habitat features re-connected and enhanced. The combination of conservation, education,

training, interpretation and business and social links led to the construction of a bird hide in 2014 and the celebration of the Greener Craven Community Champion Award.

Over the last year a collaboration by the Ribble Rivers Trust, Natural England, Environment Agency and YDMT has focussed on researching priority sites for further river restoration projects in the coming years, based on improving flow, water quality, habitat, biodiversity and control of invasive species to improve the condition of the SSSI. The intention is to apply to Natural England for a facilitation grant for a 3-year project investigating potential improvements in the catchment area up to the watershed. With the severe flooding in the valley in the winter of 2015, this has great potential to bring considerable benefits.



Long Preston Deeps in flood

Water Friendly Farming

Agriculture is the largest single land use in the Ribble Catchment and is a major contribution to the nation's food supply, so it is of considerable importance in terms of its role in safeguarding the environment and rural economy for the future.

The Ribble Trust is continually expanding its work with the farming community to ensure that we are producing food in the most efficient way and that our catchment's watercourses are protected. In this section we detail different initiatives aimed at protecting our water environments from various issues.

Keeping Rivers Cool

There are few that doubt that climate change will result in noticeable changes to the environment we know today and our rivers are no exception. Since it was first piloted with the Environment Agency in 2011, the Ribble Trust has continued to work with farmers to implement the *Keeping Rivers Cool* project in a bid to protect our watercourses from rising temperatures attributable to climate change.

The Threat of Climate Change

Warmer water in our rivers, especially small streams, could have a catastrophic impact on freshwater ecosystems;

- **Oxygen depletion** - warmer water holds less dissolved oxygen, resulting in aquatic species suffering from oxygen starvation with potentially fatal consequences.
- **Fish kills** - high temperatures increase reproduction rates of parasites and disease in water, and at the same time, lower the immune system of fish, leading to mortalities.
- **Low water levels** - increasing temperatures result in greater evaporation rates, so there is less water in rivers and streams. This means that any pollutants entering the water are more concentrated, putting extra stress on aquatic species. Low water also reduces the amount of habitat available and increases siltation of the riverbed.
- **Knock-on effects** - if fish and invertebrate numbers decline, this will also affect bird and mammals that rely on them as a food source, leading to an overall loss of biodiversity. For people, this could result in a reduction in recreation and tourism, and impact on the economy.

The Mitigation Method

Increasing tree cover adjacent to watercourses is one of the most effective methods of reducing climate change effects and results in multiple benefits for rivers. Not only do trees shade the water from direct sunlight, they can also intercept pollutants and sediment before they contaminate the water, not to mention reducing evaporation, providing additional habitat and sequestering carbon from the atmosphere. Tree roots also help to keep riverbanks stable, so that less land is lost through erosion.

In 2015, Ribble Trust was fortunate to secure two grants from SITA Trust's Enriching Nature programme and United Utilities' Catchment Wise Fund to continue to work with farmers in the delivery of the *Keeping Rivers Cool* project.



Farm Advice

In April 2013, the Ribble Trust teamed up with Natural England's Catchment Sensitive Farming team to deliver farm advice and training in the Ribble Catchment. The aim was to reduce the amount of diffuse pollution from farms entering rivers with a view to improving bathing water standards and water quality for shellfish at the coast. Three years and 33 farm plans on, the collaboration has been successful in demonstrating that organisations working together can cover more of the catchment and have a greater impact on a much wider scale.

Each farm visit involves a project officer looking around the farm to identify ways in which diffuse pollution can be reduced, such as excluding livestock from watercourses to prevent direct inputs of faecal matter, or improving the infrastructure of the farm to reduce dirty water run-off into rivers and streams. The opportunities for improvement are written up into a PINPOINT plan and handed to the farmer, along with advice and guidance to signpost them to potential funding sources that could see these improvements instigated in the future. The key is to ensure that the methods used to reduce diffuse pollution are compatible with, and beneficial to, the farm business.

As well as the PINPOINT plans, the Ribble Trust has jointly hosted training events for farmers with guest speakers from the NFU, Farming Advice Service, Campaign for the Farmed Environment and RSPB, to help farmers stay up to date with best practice, legislation and funding opportunities.

A PINPOINT training course was also hosted by the Trust in November 2015 aimed at improving the knowledge and understanding of environmental professionals such that they may also offer advice to reduce water pollution from agriculture in their line of work. Attended by land managers from the Forest of Bowland AONB, Natural England, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and other rivers trusts from across the UK, the training course was hosted as part of a trial exercise under the Ribble Life Together project, to aid in the development of a more bespoke course for the Ribble catchment partnership to implement in the future.



Over
100
farms
visited

River Loud Farmers Group

2015 saw the launch of Natural England's Facilitation Fund, which is aimed at encouraging groups of farmers to work together to achieve a higher standard of conservation management on a sub-catchment scale, rather than operating individually. 19 groups from across the UK were successful in the first round of funding, with the Ribble Trust being one of them, securing funding to work with the River Loud farmers over the next 5 years.

The group consists of 18 farms covering an area of over 2,000 hectares. With the help of the Trust's Farm Training Advisor acting as the facilitator for the group, the River Loud farmers will work together to improve and enhance many aspects of the environment, including managing moorlands to restore blanket bog and upland mire habitats, restoring hedgerows and stone walls to intercept run-off, establishing new wetland habitat and enhancing and expanding woodland cover to improve biodiversity, water quality and aid in flood risk management. The actions will support agriculture, as well as contributing to climate change mitigation and benefitting the landscape character.

Meetings and training events with the group will enable knowledge to be shared and understanding improved.



India Mill, Darwen. Image courtesy of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Cotton Town project.

Reconnecting the River Darwen

Darwen has been an industrial town for centuries. Its location, climate and river made it an ideal place to site mills, in particular those that produced textiles and paper. As such the River Darwen became highly modified as structures such as weirs, mill races and reservoirs were constructed in order to harness its energy. Steam power and subsequently electricity replaced the river as an energy source for powering machinery and the manmade structures were left redundant.

In 2011, the Ribble Trust used money from the River Improvement Fund to carry out a feasibility study on the River Darwen to primarily map barriers to fish passage but also to identify other issues like pollution, invasive species and litter, with the aim of identifying what improvements, if any, could be made to the catchment.

Funding came from the Environment Agency in 2015 that allowed the Trust to make a start on addressing some of the weirs, pictured opposite. Fish tracking studies were carried out prior to the removal of the weirs to demonstrate how the structures were impacting on fish passage before and after their removal.

However the prevention of fish migration is not the only issue that weirs cause. They also disrupt the natural movement of gravel, impounding material above the weir and starving the river of gravel below. Not only does this lead to unnatural and sometimes problematic erosion and deposition of the river's bed and banks, it can also result in a lack of good habitat for some aquatic species such as fish and invertebrates, and can mean that there is no suitable substrate for spawning fish to lay their eggs in. If fewer fish and invertebrates are present because of the poor habitat, this has repercussions for other wildlife such as dippers, wagtails, kingfishers and otters, which are part of the same food web.

Since Darwen is a built up area and many buildings back onto the river, there are significant limitations as to what can feasibly be done. The Trust is aiming to return the River Darwen and its tributaries, where it can, to a more natural state, so that it can support a greater amount and diversity of wildlife, making it a more attractive asset for the communities of Darwen to enjoy.

HOGHTON BOTTOMS



LOWER DARWEN WEIR

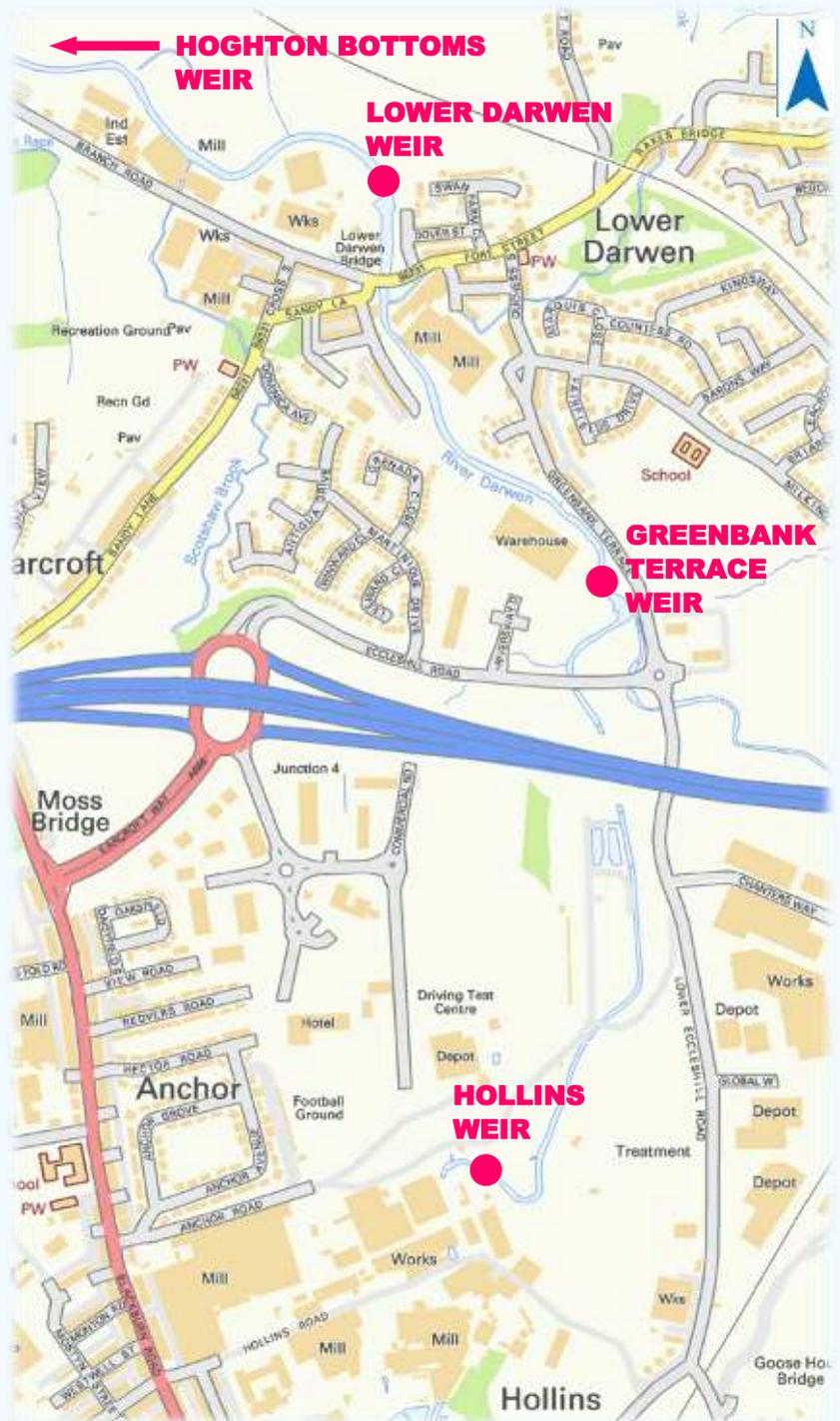


Houghton Bottoms and Lower Darwen weirs pose significant barriers to fish migration and due to their size, any work needs to be carefully planned. The local communities in each of the locations will also be involved throughout the process. Feasibility studies are being carried out and should a way be identified to make these barriers passable to fish, the work will be delivered as part of the Ribble Life Together project.

GREENBANK TERRACE WEIR, partial removal

One of Darwen's many paper mills was built on Greenbank Terrace and operated between 1873 and 1991. Once powered by water from the River Darwen, steam power soon took over, followed by electricity, and the weirs that were built became redundant. The mill buildings have since been demolished.

Greenbank Terrace Weir was identified as one of the reasons for the River Darwen failing to meet the standards set by the Water Framework Directive since it restricted fish migration. As such, the EA awarded the Trust a grant of £4,000 and the removal works were completed on 2nd October 2015.



Map contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016

HOLLINS WEIR, removal

Hollins Mill was originally built to mill corn and later, after the 1820s, it became one of Darwen's many paper mills. Both industries required the use of water, and therefore weirs, to power machinery. Now the site is used for commercial units and office suites, and the weirs are no longer of use.



Work to remove Hollins Weir was completed in September 2015 following a fish tracking study that indicated that the weir posed a significant barrier to fish migration. The work was carried out using a grant awarded from the Environment Agency to enable catchment partnerships to deliver a sustainable 'quick win' project.

Education

We never stop learning about our rivers, how they interconnect with the environment surrounding them and the part they play in our everyday lives. There are endless studies being carried out to gauge how rivers behave and to define the best ways to manage a catchment, and even professionals must continually update and adapt their approaches to ensure that we're only ever doing the things that are in the best interests of the catchment and the people in it. The Ribble Trust aims to educate people of all ages, starting with primary school children to engrain a belief that our environment must be protected from an early age, all the way up to older people, who wish to enhance their existing knowledge and skills.

An alevin (young trout) emerging from the egg. Photo by Paul Peters

Primary Schools

We've been running Trout in the Classroom since 2007, starting small with just a handful of schools and then gradually expanding the scheme across the catchment. In 2014 and 2015 as part of the URES project in Burnley, new ideas were trialled including Mayfly in the Classroom and angling coaching, and new approaches were taken for the children to learn about rivers through art, literature and music. This technique was found to be more valuable to teachers if



Pupils from St Peters in Burnley enjoy angling tuition

it could be tied in better with the National Curriculum, and it helped the children learn about the importance of healthy rivers whilst developing reading, writing and creative skills.

An initiative that draws a class of pupils outdoors to learn about nature is always popular and in addition to the fish releases in spring, we will also be engaging with a local primary school to take the children out to plant trees for a day using funding from the Environment Agency aimed at improving fisheries in the River Loud catchment.

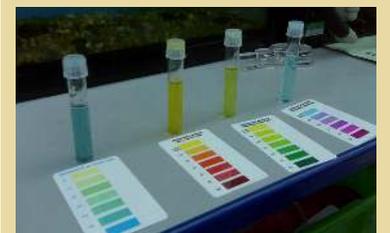
Secondary Schools and Colleges

Every summer, the Trust hosts several work experience placements, allowing the students to assist with fish surveys during the summer months and shadow members of staff. We also welcome young people looking to undertake voluntary work as part of their Duke of Edinburgh or John Muir awards, or simply as regular volunteers looking to improve their knowledge and practical skills.

Future Initiatives

As part of the *Ribble Life Together* project, the Trust is looking to revamp its 'Rivers in the Classroom' initiative even further based on the feedback of teachers, and better integrate it into the National Curriculum and Ofsted scoring system.

Ideas currently being developed include water quality testing of their local streams during science lessons, demonstrations of erosion and deposition using a river modelling table in geography, discovery trails, activity leaflets and a riverside art competition.



Universities

The Trust continues to support researchers of all academic levels, from GCSE work experience students to those studying for a PhD. In 2015, visiting BSc students from the University of Poitiers in France, Adrien Martin and Antonin Maillet, under the supervision of Manchester PhD student Karlina Ozolina, joined us for the summer to undertake a biomedical study of brown trout. Their aim was to closely monitor the physical response in young fish to elevated water temperatures. Following 2014's temperature profiling work under our Keeping Rivers Cool project, Karlina had completed experiments to establish that trout swimming was inhibited and could not be maintained under prolonged warm water conditions. The Anglo-French research interest focussed upon how their hearts responded when placed under thermal stress. The team identified that respiration was compromised where water temperatures exceeded 23°C as a result of physical changes within heart muscle tissues. The research indicates a need to try and mitigate the future impacts of climate change to maintain our trout populations.

Since commencing the development phase of our Ribble Life Together project, our involvement with universities has ramped up in contribution towards its monitoring and evaluation. We will be hosting three PhD researchers from Liverpool University who will investigate the more social elements of our projects' delivery. Thea Wingfield is underway in identifying how catchment partnerships operate to deliver natural flood risk objectives, all the more pertinent



Students from University of Poitiers undertaking fish surveys

given the winter floods of 2015. Using her observations, Thea will create a 'toolkit' aimed at informing practitioners over how natural flood risk management could be more commonly integrated, delivered and effected by policy makers. The collaboration with Liverpool will examine the interactions between farmers, funders, as well as partners. This is in the hope that over the time period of the Ribble Life Together project, a greater focus upon natural water resources will be adopted and there will be a greater collective contribution from all parties. To date, Thea has attended our catchment partnership meetings, shadowed Project Officers in their day-to-day roles and conducted interviews to capture our current position. Emma Thomas and Beth Hammett, also from Liverpool University, are currently completing their Masters studies and will begin working with the Trust on their PhD studies in September 2016.

Adult Learning Professionals

In September 2015, the Trust hosted a Construction Design and Management (CDM) training course as a result of changes in regulations. Attended by 12 other rivers trusts from across the country, the course was vital for keeping professionals up to date with current guidelines, processes and health and safety measures when undertaking construction projects such as fish passage and weir removals.

Another training course was hosted in November 2015 aimed at increasing professionals' knowledge and skills in identifying sources of diffuse pollution from agriculture. Known as PINPOINT, the workshop was delivered over the course



of a week and was attended by staff from Natural England, Forest of Bowland AONB, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and other rivers trusts from across the UK. The course, part-funded by the Forest of Bowland's Sustainable Development Fund, involved a combination of farm visits and classroom learning, and will help environmental professionals to offer farm management advice that will reduce pollution in watercourses, as well as helping the farmer save money.

General Public

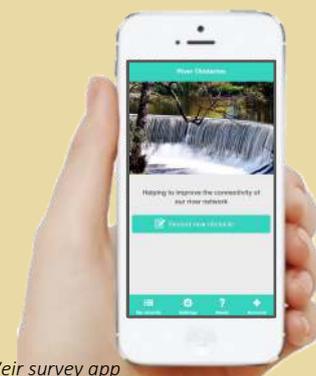
Members of the public often have a keen interest in the environment and ecology and our Riverfly Monitoring programme is always fully subscribed. The one-day course teaches skills in identifying different aquatic invertebrates and the volunteers can then adopt their own area of river to carry out monthly population counts of the riverflies - the more that are present, the better the water quality. The results are fed back to the Trust so we can keep a check on the health of our watercourses and highlight any pollution incidents that may have occurred.

We also educate the public about our conservation efforts via presentations to community groups, engagement at agricultural shows and other events, and informative interpretation panels along public footpaths at project sites. Our website is also a great place to for the public to learn more about the catchment, its rivers and local wildlife.

Future Initiatives

The Trust hopes to deliver more training workshops in the future, both with professionals and volunteers, to increase knowledge and help to deliver monitoring and river improvement activities on a wider scale. Ideas currently in development include;

- Catchment Management course
- a tailored diffuse pollution from agriculture course
- water quality monitoring involving testing for detergents that could indicate sewage pollution
- circular walks with guides and interpretation
- an app that would enable volunteers to be trained to carry out ecological monitoring and weir surveys.



Weir survey app

Monitoring

A lot of river restoration and habitat improvement work is carried out throughout the year, but how do we know if any of it is effective or worthwhile? Monitoring helps us to capture important 'before and after' data so we can see if our methods have been successful or not. It also helps us to identify and prioritise locations that are most in need of intervention, therefore it's a crucial component of our work.

The summer survey season of 2015 saw 12 local volunteers helping us carry out 325 fish surveys across the catchment. The surveys are used to measure the distribution and densities of 'salmonids', the collective term given to species of the Salmonidae family. Within the Ribble Catchment there are three species of native salmonids; Atlantic salmon, sea/brown trout and grayling. We occasionally encounter grayling during our surveys, however we actively target salmon and trout as these are good indicators of stream health.

Fisheries surveys involve a technique called electrofishing, a widely used monitoring tool within the scientific community. Electrofishing is carried out by at least two operators and involves the use of a weak electric charge applied to the water to invoke an involuntary swimming response in the fish, which helps us to capture them with a hand net. The captured fish are placed in a bucket and after five minutes of fishing, the captured fish are counted and measured. From this five-minute survey we can calculate a population estimate, which we can grade to show population health.

The information gathered from each survey site informs us of the progress of established habitat schemes, areas that would benefit from new schemes and highlights areas of good spawning and habitats that are underperforming.

Our 2015 findings seem to indicate an upstream increase in salmon in the Calder system. Fry have been found along the rivers Calder and Colne Water for the first time in living memory owing to a series of fish easements that were constructed over the last five years.



Trout parr captured on Rathmell Beck near Settle

Unfortunately the results indicated an absence of salmon along Ings and Swanside becks and Sabden Brook, tributaries known for reliable salmon fry densities in previous years. Further analysis of the data will try to explain this apparent drop in these tributaries and the catchment as a whole.

Further to our Salmon Tracking Study which concluded last summer, new exploratory electrofishing sites were selected along the main stem of the Ribble between Sawley and Nappa to confirm findings that spring salmon were using gravels along the main stem. The results from these sites have reinforced the findings.

Trout numbers have declined compared to previous years with more noticeable drops along upper Pendle Water and tributaries above Stocks reservoir on the Hodder. Further analysis and research is needed to understand this decline.

Fortunately it has not all been doom and gloom: a trout fry was found in Showley Brook in Clayton-le-dale, the first seen there in five years. The Trust recently installed a riparian habitat scheme along a section of Showley Brook and hopefully this will help contribute to a more diverse and stable habitat leading to an increased fry density.

More detailed results of the 2015 fish surveys can be found on the Publications page of our website.

Our use of specialist equipment to collect data is only one aspect of our ecological surveys. Landowners and the public are vital sources of local knowledge that can shed light on the health of the rivers we survey. They follow the life of their rivers on a day-to-day basis and observations they may view as trivial or common may be the key to understanding the fluctuations in salmonid populations and the health of their river.

*Summer surveys: sometimes not all they're cracked up to be!
Survey Assistant Stephen Harrison completes a fish survey near to the source of the Ribble.*





Kick sampling in Ings Beck

Our riverfly monitoring programme is still going strong. Every year we run workshops for volunteers to learn how to identify different invertebrates and how their populations tell us information about water quality and pollution. With dozens of volunteers taking monthly samples, we're able to keep a close eye on the health of our rivers and streams.



Stem injecting Japanese knotweed

With limited funding, it is difficult for us to survey the entire catchment for locations of invasive species such as himalayan balsam, japanese knotweed, giant hogweed, American mink and signal crayfish, so volunteers and members of the public are crucial. Through the website lancashireinvasives.org people can report any sightings of non-native species while they're out and about.

The Trust has a clear strategy to tackle invasive plants, starting at the uppermost extents of the catchment and working downstream, as watercourses are one of the main ways for seeds to spread. Volunteers are key to us being able to achieve this.



River Ribble at Stainforth before tree planting



River Ribble at Stainforth after tree planting

Using fixed point photography before and after habitat works have been delivered is a highly effective, visual way to see the impact that a project has had on the landscape and is the best way to demonstrate our work to the public and funders.



Volunteer Olly taking water samples



PIT telemetry wire loop



Large woody debris

In 2015 we trialled a small-scale programme of water sampling to enable us to see what impact our habitat improvement projects have on water quality. We also hope to encourage volunteers to join in the sampling as part of a citizen science initiative to tackle urban pollution.

Durham PhD student Mike Forty has been helping us test how much of a barrier certain weirs are to fish passage using PIT telemetry to detect when a fish successfully moves upstream of a weir. Using this baseline data, we can repeat the exercise once a pass or easement has been built to establish how effective it is.

Several university students have carried out studies to see what impact habitat work such as fencing, tree planting and large woody debris installation has had on biodiversity, looking at plants, fish, and invertebrates. To date, results have indicated that our work increases diversity and abundance of species.

The Control Effort Continues

In April 2015, the Trust was awarded a £5,000 grant from Ribbles Valley Borough Council to fund a continuation of invasive species control in the Ribbles Valley. All of the known locations of riverside Japanese knotweed were treated in the area, however many places will need to be revisited as it can take up to 4 years repeated treatment to rid the riverbanks of this persistent weed. Giant hogweed was also targeted at Calder Foot, Dinckley and Hothersall.



Volunteers balsam bashing
Photo: John Siddall

Further afield, three volunteer balsam bashing events were held on Wigglesworth Beck in conjunction with Craven Conservation Group and two Woodland Trust riverside woodlands, Heald Wood near Burnley and Masons Wood in Preston, were also cleared of Himalayan balsam.

Subject to future funding, the Trust will continue its programme of control efforts, working with volunteers and other organisations to maximise coverage.



Masons Wood
Photo: Woodland Trust



Stream dominated by Himalayan balsam
Photo: GBNNSS

Invasive Species

Trialling New Methods of Control

Japanese knotweed is one of the most damaging invasive plants in the UK. It spreads rapidly, preventing native vegetation from growing and damages structures such as buildings, bridges and roads. It is currently controlled by injecting chemicals into the stem which cause it to die back, however treatments need to be repeated year on year, which is a costly exercise.

In April 2015, the Trust teamed up with CABI (Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International) to assist them with further trials of a natural control agent in the form of a psyllid, a small plant-feeding insect, which attacks the Japanese knotweed to the extent where its growth and spread is significantly reduced.

Seven years of extensive research by CABI showed that the psyllid is a specialist and can only survive on Japanese knotweed. The government approved the first trial releases at several small sites throughout England and Wales in 2010, during which their impact was closely monitored and recorded. There were no adverse impacts observed or detected on native flora or

fauna. A second set of trials are now being carried out, including one in the Ribbles Catchment, this time targeting larger areas of knotweed where a population of psyllids can become better established. Monitoring is ongoing but if successful, it will dramatically reduce the cost of controlling this highly destructive weed and allow our native species to flourish.

The Trust is also keen to work with CABI in the future on its trial of a 'rust' fungus to help control Himalayan balsam, another of the UK's most widespread invasive weeds. Himalayan balsam colonises riverbanks, woodlands and wastelands and outcompetes our native plants for space, light, nutrients and pollinators, significantly reducing biodiversity. It can also cause excessive riverbank erosion.

The first trial of the rust started in 2014 in England following eight years of laboratory research to ensure that the rust would not impact on native species. The results of the trial are yet to be seen, however if successful, it could be instrumental in restoring our native ecosystems to their former glory, particularly our river environments.



Psyllid
Photo: Defra/PA



Rust fungus
Photo: CABI

The Crayfish Story

White-clawed crayfish
Photo: Paul Peters



Lifecycle

White-clawed crayfish are found in moderately flowing streams and rivers or lakes, using tree roots and rocks for cover. They can live for up to 12 years and feed on invertebrates and plant matter. They begin reproducing at 3 years old and produce between 20 and 160 eggs per year.

Endangered

White-clawed crayfish are the UK's only native freshwater crayfish and they have become endangered for a number of reasons. One major factor is water quality. White-claws require mineral-rich waters for their shells to form but they are very intolerant to pollution and can only survive in the most pristine watercourses. Another significant factor for their decline has been the arrival of the invasive American signal crayfish in the UK.

Invasion

Six species of non-native crayfish have now invaded the UK's waters. Perhaps the most voracious of these is the American signal crayfish, which was introduced to the UK in the 1970s via crayfish farms. Its subsequent

escape has led to the domination of many of the country's watercourses. Not only does the signal crayfish grow bigger, breed quicker and outcompete juvenile white-claws for food and habitat, it also brought with it a plague, resulting in the decimation of our native populations by up to 80%. If the current pattern continues, white-clawed crayfish will become extinct in England and Wales within 20 years.

Conservation



There is currently little that can be done to eradicate signal crayfish from our waters, without causing harm to other riverine species in the process. However

the best way to protect areas where our native white-claws still have a stronghold is to CHECK-CLEAN-DRY all equipment and clothing before and after entering any watercourses to help stop the spread of crayfish plague. **More information can be found at www.nonnativespecies.org**

Crayfish and the Law

Signal crayfish are heralded by some as a tasty delicacy and why not use them as a food source, since the country's waters have become overrun with invaders? There is however a considerable amount of legislation in place to protect the endangered white-clawed crayfish and other riverine wildlife, and a series of licences are required depending on the intentions of the crayfish trapper, as well as permission from the landowner and angling clubs operating in the area. Trapping signal crayfish has even been shown to *increase* the rate of invasion in some cases so it's imperative that the trapper follows the strict guidance.

Non-native crayfish trapping is prohibited without written consent from the Environment Agency and those found doing it could face prosecution. If permission is granted, only approved traps of a specific design and level of quality may be used to avoid harming other wildlife and a catch record must be maintained. A licence to keep non-native crayfish alive after trapping may also be required. If trapping non-native crayfish to eat, it should only be for your own consumption and not for trade. It is illegal to put non-native crayfish back in the water once caught, so if they are not going to be consumed or kept, they must be killed.

Native crayfish, i.e. white-clawed crayfish, are a protected species and may only be trapped for scientific purposes and not to eat or sell. This requires the individual to register with Natural England for a licence.

Being able to tell the difference between our native white-claws and invasive signal crayfish is imperative. If you're not confident in distinguishing between the two, please do not attempt to trap crayfish.

Whether or not your licence is granted depends largely on environmental factors of the local area. It is advised that applicants contact the Environment Agency first to ask about their local circumstances.

For more information, search the Gov.uk

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	< ENDANGERED >	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
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White-clawed crayfish are classified as endangered on the IUCN Red List

Help improve your local rivers

Volunteer with us!



Volunteers have been integral to the delivery of habitat improvements since the Trust started out. There's no way we could make as big an impact without them.

We work all over the Ribble Catchment so chances are there'll be volunteering opportunities near you. No experience is necessary as full training and equipment is provided prior to the activity.

From tree planting, fencing and wildlife surveys, to litter picks and invasive species control, we offer a range of opportunities to suit volunteers who love the outdoors and want to get stuck in to make a difference to their local environment.

Anyone can get involved, from families and individuals, to colleges and local businesses. We even offer corporate team away-days, which are great for teamwork and enjoying time out of the office.

- **Join the mailing list** to receive all the details on upcoming volunteer events, just email your request to admin@ribbletrust.com
- **Check the website** for updates: www.ribbletrust.org.uk/volunteering
- **Follow us on Facebook & Twitter:** [@RibbleTrust](http://www.facebook.com/RibbleTrust)

“ *Volunteering is a fantastic way to see and help wildlife. You can learn new skills, meet new people and it looks good on a CV! A great sense of satisfaction comes from volunteering and seeing a job well done.* ”

No time to volunteer?

Donate and help us plant more trees by texting **TREE26 £2 / £5 / £10** to **70070**

As always, a huge THANK YOU to all of our members, volunteers, supporters and funders who have helped keep us going over the years. Together, we're making the Ribble Catchment a better place for wildlife and people.





Membership Form

As a charity, we rely entirely on membership fees, donations and grants to continue the vital conservation of our rivers. If you love nature and would like to make a difference, please join us.

STEP 1: Your details

Title _____ Forename(s) _____ Surname _____
Address _____
Postcode _____
Phone number _____ Email _____

STEP 2: Choose your payment

Your membership subscription is a donation towards our work. The more you can afford to give, the more we can do to improve our rivers.

Annual membership: £20 (or £5 per quarter)

or your own amount **£** _____

Life membership: £250

or your own amount **£** _____

STEP 3: *giftaid it* at no extra cost to you

For every £1 we receive, we can recover an extra 25p from HM Revenue & Customs.

Yes I want to Gift Aid it Non-taxpayer and cannot Gift Aid

Name: _____ Signature: _____

You must pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all Charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs will reclaim on your gifts for that tax year. Other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify.

STEP 4: Select payment method

Cheque/cash - please make cheques payable to 'Ribble Catchment Conservation Trust Ltd.'

Banker's order - please fill in your bank details below.

Bank/building society name: _____

Branch address: _____

Postcode: _____

Sort code: ____ / ____ / ____ Account no: _____

Please pay *Ribble Catchment Conservation Trust Ltd.* £ _____

Starting on _____ and thereafter quarterly/annually (delete as appropriate).

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Full name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Instructions to bank/building society

Account name: Ribble Catchment Conservation Trust Ltd.

Sort code: 16-29-34

Account no: 10046013

Address: Royal Bank of Scotland plc, The Butts, Rochdale, Lancashire

Postcode: OL16 1EJ



Please return completed membership forms with payment to;

Ribble Rivers Trust, c/o Hanson Cement, Ribblesdale Works, Clitheroe, Lancashire, BB7 4QF.

Why not join online? Visit www.ribbletrust.org.uk/membership

Help secure a better future for our environment

Become a member

As a charity, we depend on the generosity of our members and supporters, who care about the environment and want to make sure it's protected for future generations. Become a member of the Ribble Rivers Trust today and together we can help make a difference.

As a member you will receive;

- ◆ Annual newsletter
- ◆ Mid-year e-newsletter
- ◆ Water Friendly Homes guide
- ◆ Membership card
- ◆ Member discounts
- ◆ Car window sticker



Complete and return the
membership form overleaf

Membership £20 per year



Photo: Sarah Bolton