



# RIBBLE RIVERS TRUST

## Summer e-newsletter

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## Ribble Life Together

We are delighted to finally announce that after two years of development, the Ribble Life Together project has secured £1.6 million from National Lottery players, granted through the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Together with £1.6 million of match funding from partners and external funders, the Ribble Catchment Partnership will deliver a series of projects over the next three years that raise awareness of the plight of our rivers and enable people to get involved in restoring them for the benefit of our wildlife and communities.

The news was celebrated at a vibrant launch event at the Wildlife Trust's Brockholes Nature Reserve on 7th July, featuring talks, demonstrations, exhibitions and nature walks.

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the North West, Nathan Lee, said:

"This is a wonderfully ambitious project, which will have a significant impact on the entirety of the Ribble Catchment. From fish passes to new woodlands and wetlands, Ribble Life Together will inspire the local community and drive positive change in the area, and we are delighted that National Lottery players have been able to support it."

30 new riparian woodlands will be

planted and 15 new wetlands will be constructed in priority areas to help increase biodiversity, reduce pollution, provide natural flood risk management and reduce climate change impacts. 14 new fish passes will also be installed on weirs that currently restrict the natural migration of fish. Scientific monitoring will determine how much the rivers improve as a result of these interventions.

At the heart of the project is a determination to establish a better relationship between communities and their rivers by developing people's understanding and appreciation of river environments. People are invited to get involved in the project in a variety of ways, from attending volunteer events and conservation training workshops, to geocaching competitions, guided river walks, augmented reality and artworks.

Schools will also be offered educational visits that will help children learn about the importance of healthy rivers and the wildlife that lives within them, and encourage them to get into the habit of caring for the environment from an early age.

A new website has been set up for the project, [www.ribbonlifetogether.org](http://www.ribbonlifetogether.org), which will act as a hub of information about the project and rivers in general.



On 17th June and 5th August, we ran two more of our riverfly training workshops for 15 volunteers who were keen to keep a closer eye on the health of their local rivers.

The workshop teaches the 'kick sampling' technique to obtain a sample of live riverflies from the river. Participants are taught how to identify the different invertebrate families. A simple scoring system based on variety and abundance of invertebrates indicates how good the water quality and habitat is at that particular site.

Surveying their sites on a monthly basis enables the volunteers to see how a river's health might change over time. Are they seeing a gradual improvement in their results? This could be a result of habitat restoration works nearby. Have their results suddenly worsened? Perhaps a pollution incident occurred upstream that requires further investigation.

The Ribble Trust employs a small team but our catchment is vast. With volunteers like these, we can keep a closer watch on our rivers to ensure they're looked after for our wildlife and communities.

Want to get involved? Send an email to [admin@ribbletrust.com](mailto:admin@ribbletrust.com) and ask to be added to the waiting list for our next workshop.

# Water Friendly Farmers



## River Loud Farmers' Group

**A grant from Natural England is enabling us to establish, facilitate and support a farmers' group working together in the River Loud catchment to improve the natural environment at a landscape scale, benefitting rivers and wildlife. Midway into the five-year project, we recap on the group's progress so far.**

The River Loud, a tributary of the River Hodder, flows through the Forest of Bowland AONB. The catchment suffers from poor water quality owing to elevated levels of sediment and nutrients entering watercourses, which is having a detrimental effect on fish and invertebrate populations. The river and its tributaries also flow through a protected area for the conservation of wild birds.

The farmers' group had 18 members when it was originally set up in April 2015. Membership has now risen to 28 farms covering an area of 4,000 hectares. Land management practices impact not only

individual farms but also neighbouring properties, so by working together, the farmers have an opportunity to collectively improve their valley and its watercourses.

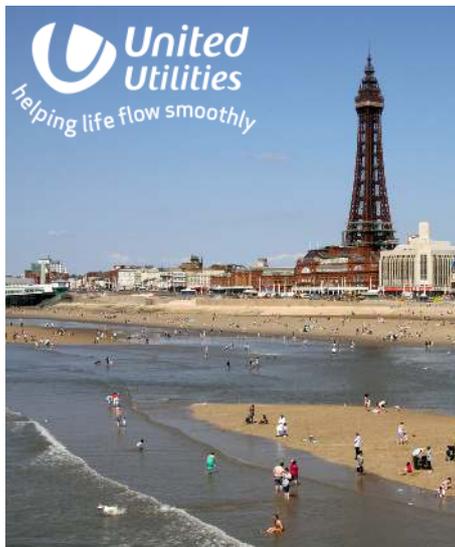
The farmers meet several times a year to discuss what improvements are needed within their catchment and identify where funding or training is required. A map of the catchment was produced to help the farmers identify areas at risk of erosion and flooding, and pollution pathways. The Ribble Trust's group facilitator organises meetings and workshops to help meet the group's requirements.

So far the group has undergone training to help them understand more about soil and nutrient management, diffuse pollution pathways, how to improve their farm for pollinators and biodiversity, the benefits of wetlands for rivers and wading birds, the benefits of hedgerows for soil erosion and wildlife, and the application process for Countryside Stewardship grants.

The group has also identified future training opportunities, including manure storage, separating clean and dirty water, livestock management and the safe use of pesticides.

## Farming for bathing waters

**United Utilities has provided a grant to help us to work with farmers in the lower Tidal Ribble area and part-fund improvements to farmyard infrastructure. The aim is to reduce the amount of diffuse pollution entering the Ribble and contribute to an improvement in water quality at the coast for both marine life and people who enjoy the seaside.**



Farms situated on the banks of the lower River Ribble and its tributaries can have a significant impact on water quality at the coast due to their proximity. We're working with 20 farms in the area to carry out works that reduce the amount of diffuse pollution entering watercourses.

Work has already commenced on 12 of the 20 farms, including livestock fencing along watercourses, concreting yards to improve dirty water separation, constructing roofed slurry stores and laying stone in gateways to prevent soil erosion.

We are also taking regular water samples upstream and downstream of two of the farms to determine the level of impact the works have on water quality.

But it's not just farms that can impact on bathing waters, the general public can too, by disposing of waste items incorrectly and causing blockages in sewer systems.

For example, flushing wet wipes down the loo and pouring fats down the sink can clog sewer pipes, causing them to overflow during periods of heavy rainfall and discharging untreated sewage into rivers and subsequently the sea, with the tides washing it back inland onto beaches.

We're running education sessions in 10 schools around the Preston area, as well as doing litter picks, installing interpretive signage and artwork, and leading guided walks to help raise awareness of the issues.

# Long Preston floodplain project

The Long Preston floodplain is a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) but parts of it are degraded. A grant from the Environment Agency has enabled the project partners to carry out works this year to relocate a flood bank and re-establish more natural river processes.



Sandwiched between the Yorkshire Dales and the Forest of Bowland, the Long Preston floodplain has been designated as an SSSI because of its unique hydro-geomorphological features that are particularly important to breeding wading birds such as snipe, lapwing, curlew, redshank and oystercatcher.

Operating for a number of years now, the Long Preston Floodplain partnership comprises a range of stakeholders and interest groups, including the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, the Environment Agency, Natural England and ourselves. The partners' aim is to improve the condition of the SSSI to encourage a greater biodiversity.

Flood embankments have historically been constructed across the area by farmers seeking to improve the drainage of their land to increase production. Since the land is not regularly wetted, some of the rare habitat has been lost and with it, a proportion of the wildlife that thrives in this type of environment.

The project partners identified an eroded embankment towards the lower extent of the floodplain and after negotiations with the landowner, a compromise was reached that would see 500m of the damaged flood bank reconstructed in a new location, 25 metres back from the river's edge.

The relocation of the flood bank will result in a sizeable area of land that will readily flood, helping wetland habitat to become re-established. Stock proof fencing will be erected to allow the new vegetation to mature before livestock are permitted to graze the area. This allows the farmer to retain productive land. The embankment will also be planted with low-crown height trees to provide stability and additional habitat.

Not only will the works benefit wildlife, they will also provide an element of floodwater storage during high flows, reducing the risk of flooding downstream.

**NATURAL**  
OUR WATER. OUR FUTURE  
**COURSE**

78% of rivers in North West England are not considered healthy, and many solutions are found to be too expensive to implement.

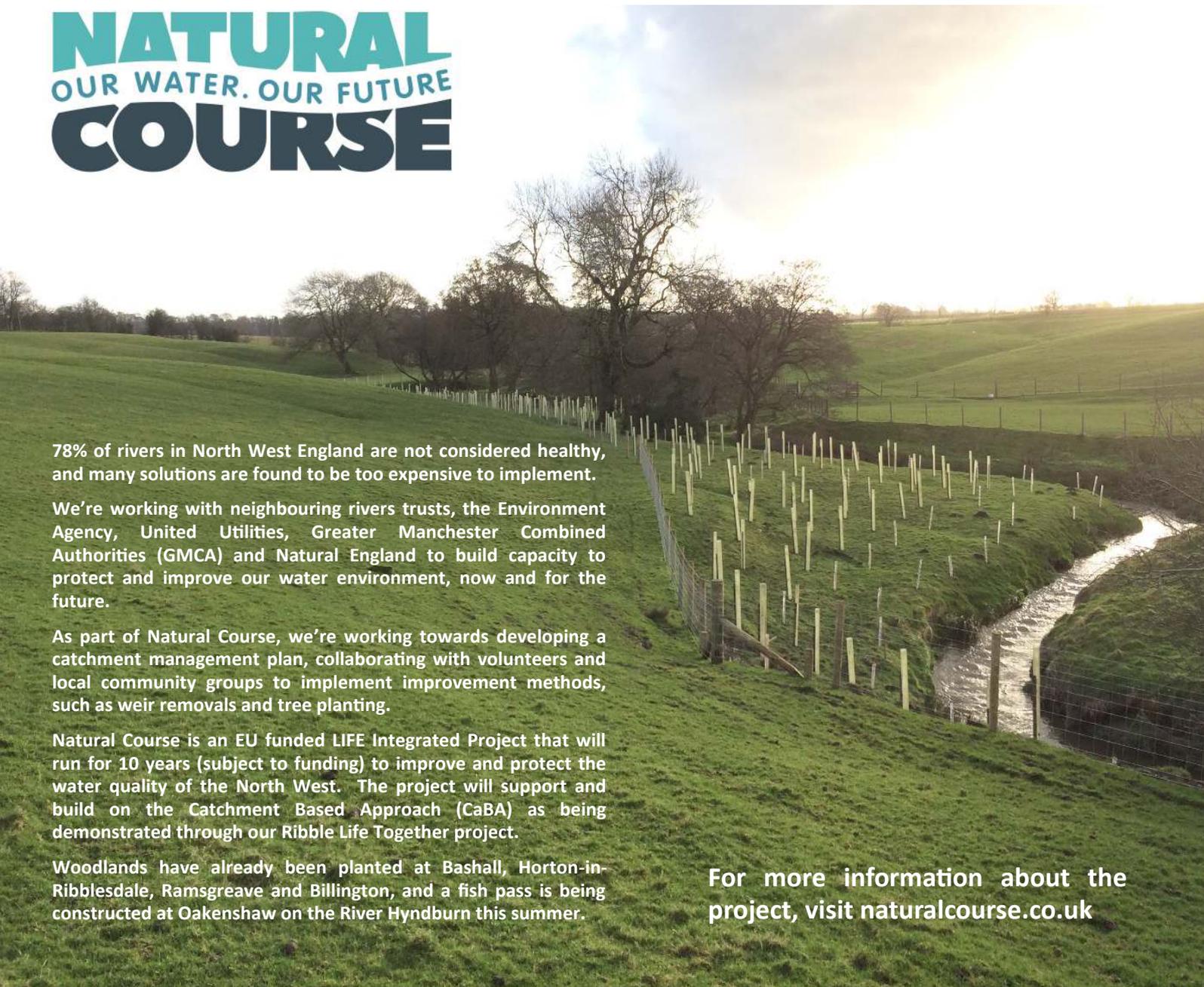
We're working with neighbouring rivers trusts, the Environment Agency, United Utilities, Greater Manchester Combined Authorities (GMCA) and Natural England to build capacity to protect and improve our water environment, now and for the future.

As part of Natural Course, we're working towards developing a catchment management plan, collaborating with volunteers and local community groups to implement improvement methods, such as weir removals and tree planting.

Natural Course is an EU funded LIFE Integrated Project that will run for 10 years (subject to funding) to improve and protect the water quality of the North West. The project will support and build on the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) as being demonstrated through our Ribble Life Together project.

Woodlands have already been planted at Bashall, Horton-in-Ribblesdale, Ramsgreave and Billington, and a fish pass is being constructed at Oakenshaw on the River Hyndburn this summer.

For more information about the project, visit [naturalcourse.co.uk](http://naturalcourse.co.uk)





Before and after

## Bluebell Wood weir removal

**TESCO** Bags of Help

**Bluebell Wood weir, located on the River Calder upstream from Towneley Park, was one of the last remaining structures preventing the natural migration of fish in this watercourse. A grant from Tesco's Bags of Help fund enabled us to not only remove the weir this year, but also to run education and engagement sessions around the project.**

The weir site, owned by Towneley Farm, has an open field with a public footpath on one side and a woodland on the other. The woodland is called Wet Marl Wood, but is known locally as Bluebell Wood.

According to the farmer, the weir was installed in the 1960s to oxygenate the water, which was being heavily polluted by discharge from the mines upstream. This problem is now much less severe and the river is in generally good health, meaning that the weir was no longer necessary for oxygenation.

The weir was a barrier to fish migration, and with all of the downstream barriers having been made passable in previous projects, including Burnley's Urban River Enhancement Scheme, Bluebell Wood Weir was the logical next step.

Our preferred option is always to remove a weir completely, because this enables all fish species of all ages to migrate upstream in any rate of flow. It also re-enables the natural transport of gravel. Thankfully this was an option at Bluebell Wood, since no significant erosion

resulting from the removal was expected and no buildings or infrastructure were at risk.

Education sessions are being run with local schools and the community, beginning with Towneley Heritage Day and coinciding with the first weeks of the new school term. As well as guided river walks and water safety demonstrations, schools will also be able to explore the river landscape using our river simulation table and learn about some of the problems that affect our rivers.



## Photo Competition!

**Are you a budding amateur photographer? We're looking for people to submit their photos of rivers and river-related features or wildlife for a chance to win prizes!**

There are three age categories for submissions; 12 and under, 13—17 and 18+. Photos entered must have been taken within the Ribble Catchment. You can submit as many entries as you like.

Photos can be uploaded to our Ribble Life Together project website [ribblelifetogether.org/competitions/](http://ribblelifetogether.org/competitions/) on or before the 10th September 2017. Please visit the website for full terms and conditions.

## Volunteer with us

**As summer fades into autumn, we're underway with fencing off rivers and streams ready for woodland planting over the winter months.**

With over 7km of fencing to erect and 10 new woodlands to plant, we're looking for all the volunteer help we can get! And with our new Volunteer Supervisor, plus a new trailer to transport tools, equipment and the all-important brew kit, we've never been so well equipped to make your day with us as enjoyable as possible!

Email [admin@ribbletrust.com](mailto:admin@ribbletrust.com) to join our volunteer list.