



Ribble Rivers Trust

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RIBBLE'S VALUED WATER WOODS

New woodlands to tackle environmental issues

BROWN TROUT BOUNCE BACK

Populations have increased after a decade of decline

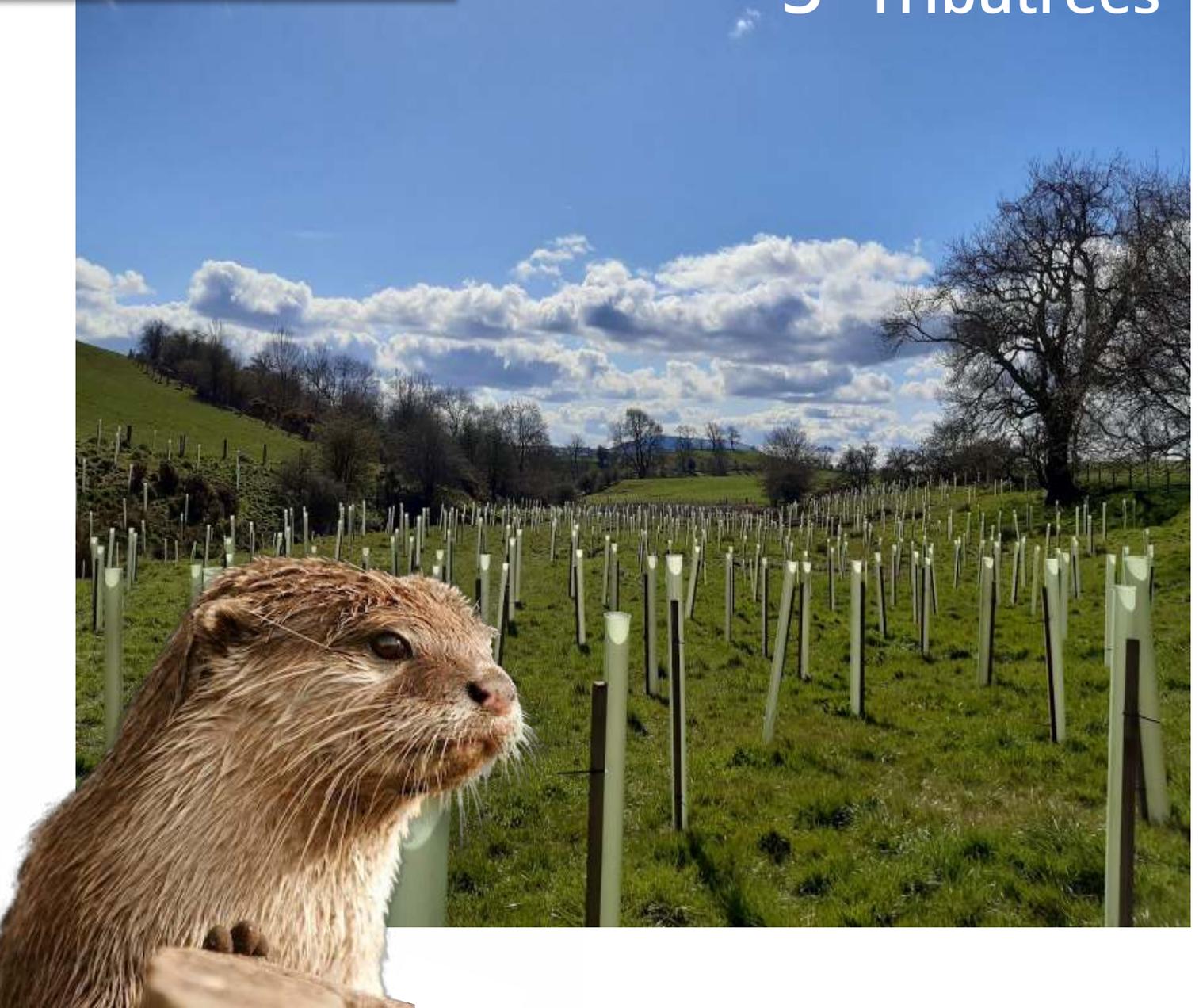
RIBBLE LIFE FOR WATER

Improving water quality & reconnecting habitat across the catchment

HEAL PROJECT

Health and Environmental Action Lancashire

CONNECTING HABITAT - EDUCATION - NATURAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT



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WELCOME

Jack Spees, CEO

Alongside a raft of new, exciting projects, the Trust forges new partnerships to plant even more trees across the catchment.

Much of 2021 felt a little like a re-run of 2020, with changing COVID restrictions impacting on our Trust and our work. But it also felt like a re-run in a positive way, given just how much was delivered! The incredible achievement of our Chairman, Philip Lord, in completing his sponsored walk of over 500 miles and raising over £4,000 for the Trust at the ripe age of 82 marked a particular high point for myself. This, however, was quickly followed by many more: the opening of Primrose Nature Reserve, delivering education activities to over 900 children, removing more weirs and concrete lining of rivers, ongoing peat restoration on Pendle Hill, and of course a couple of awards!

Several projects and programmes finished in 2021, and several more moved into the final phases of delivery. But we were fortunate to start some new projects too. The largest of which is our Health and Environmental Action Lancashire (HEAL) project where, working in partnership with several other partners, we will be delivering a range of activities to promote the enjoyment, use and condition of targeted locations across Lancashire. This project is made possible by the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund, which is administered by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and draws in match funding from a range of sources. Also



supported by this fund, we have started a project, led by Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, called 'Deeper Connections' which will see everything from restored wetlands to new hedgerows across the Long Preston floodplain.

We also began work on 'Valuing Ribble's Water Woods', a Catchment System Thinking grant awarded by United Utilities, where we are trying to better quantify the range of benefits that woodlands provide to the water environment, particularly focusing on how woodlands can reduce phosphate pollution in our rivers and streams.

Woodlands continue to be a central part of our work, as no other single physical change to the catchment provides as much benefit as woodland creation, from water quality improvements, reducing flood risk, as well as providing habitats- fish really do live in trees (in underwater roots and trailing branches!). To that end, we have also commenced work on two partnerships with the Environment Agency (EA) to plant woodlands near Preston and Padiham in support of the upcoming flood defence schemes. 'Tributrees' is another project in partnership with the EA, which is seeking to create a programme of woodland creation across the Ribble catchment, to help improve the water quality status of rivers and streams. More recently we have been working with councils across East Lancashire (Pendle, Burnley, Hyndburn, Blackburn with Darwen and Rossendale) on the Pennine Lancashire Treescapes (PLaNT) project. Treescapes is Forestry Commission funding to create 'micro woods' in urban settings. Ribble Trust will be working with 40 schools to create micro woods in their school grounds and teach children about the importance of trees.

Our woodland creation is led by using data and evidence to



identify priority locations where it is likely to have the greatest benefits, and is focused on large numbers of smaller areas, as opposed large blocks of woodland. The tools we have developed to generate this data and evidence are of the highest standard, and we are seeing them rolled out locally, regionally and in some instances nationally.

Aside from all the woodland planting, we have worked with over 75 farms in the last 12 months, involving everything from upgrading farm yard infrastructure and reducing pollution, to advice and guidance on soils, including nutrient management, and other forms of habitat creation. We are committed to striving for a habitat mosaic that will provide great benefit to rivers but also the wider environment of our catchment – all whilst supporting sustainable farm businesses.

Some of the changes to farming practices can provide direct benefit to farms, others ensure regulatory compliance, but there are some changes that benefit the environment that need financial incentives

to support the change. This includes things such as carbon offsetting, which we are delivering with several farmers, and there is growing interest in this area.

I am also really pleased that we have seen a marked increase in corporate support over the last 12 months. This is hugely valuable, as government funding for our work is reducing, and there are a greater number of organisations seeking support. We hope to see this continue to increase, helping not only with the challenging funding landscape, but also enabling us to do more. If you own, work or know of a business that wants to support the local environment, and to help local people enjoy their environment please do get in touch.

Finally a thank you to all of our supporters, individuals, angling clubs, donors, grant givers, corporates and volunteers. I hope that the following pages give you a great sense of achievement, that we all share, and that with your continued support we can report even more in 12 months time!

HEAL

Health and Environmental Action Lancashire



habitats will be created including woodlands and a wetland, and heathland and grassland management and restoration will be carried out. Plus, the creation of new footpaths and micro tree nurseries will provide places for people to meet outdoors and volunteer.

We would love local residents to help with all aspects of this project. There will be chance for everyone to work with us – no matter what skills, knowledge, fitness levels, or outdoor experience they have. HEAL aims to get everyone outdoors. Therefore, we'll be encouraging people to get involved with tree seed gathering, growing tree saplings, tree planting, guided walks, invasive species control, and ecological surveys.

Local schools will also have the chance to get involved. So far, over 20 schools and community groups are working with us on the project. Our expert Education Officers will be running education programmes with local children, helping them to learn to connect with the outdoors, develop a passion for nature conservation, and understand the link between accessing green and bluespaces and their own health and wellbeing.

Our delivery partners include: Wyre Rivers Trust, Lune Rivers Trust, Prospects Foundation, Lancaster University, Hyndburn Borough Council, Pendle Borough Council, Forest of Bowland AONB, and the Freshwater Biological Association. Ribble Rivers Trust is the lead delivery partner for HEAL.

Ribble Rivers Trust are proud to be taking the lead on another partnership project. HEAL (Health & Environmental Action Lancashire) is a Green Recovery Challenge Funded project which aims to help with nature recovery and connect people to the outdoors through education, training, recreation and volunteering.

The £661,100 grant comes from the Government's £40 million second round of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund. HEAL will create and restore habitats whilst improving health and wellbeing across Lancashire- specifically the Ribble, Lune and Wyre Catchments.

This project is the result of some specialist research and GIS analysis using our own data and evidence, and data from organisations including Public Health England, the Office for

National Statistics, Ordnance Survey, and NHS Digital.

This software usually helps us to look at various environmental factors like flood risk, land use, habitat type, rainfall levels, and tree cover. The resulting information helps us to discover where our work could have the biggest impact for nature and the environment. However, for this project we also used data on availability of publicly accessible green and blue spaces, mental and physical health, and childhood obesity. This means that we can also target areas which could potentially see the greatest positive impact on Lancashire residents' health and wellbeing.

What will HEAL achieve?

Thanks to HEAL we'll plant 55,000 more trees! New

Our goals, made simple

Nature

- Connect people with nature across the Ribble, Lune and Wyre river catchment areas
- Protect the many and varied species that currently make this area their home
- Create and restore habitats including 15 hectares of heathland, 2 hectares of wildflower meadow and 5 hectares of woodland.
- Plant 17 new woodlands, planting 55,000 trees across 45 hectares
- Create 800m of public footpath to increase access and the appreciation of nature
- Create three volunteer-led micro tree nurseries to grow 4,000 trees

Local economy

- Safeguard and create jobs in Lancashire's environmental sector
- Boost the local economy and help the organisations involved become more resilient
- Strengthen and create new working relationships between local organisations and authorities

Our community

- Encourage a wider range of people to learn about Lancashire's river heritage
- Help people develop new skills
- Encourage people to visit their green spaces, benefitting mental and physical health and wellbeing
- Give people the opportunity to learn about nature and heritage, leading to a change in ideas and actions
- Train 75 people in conservation and ecological skills
- Engage 20 local schools/communities
- Deliver 80 health walks

Ribble's Valued Water Woods



In 2021, Ribble Trust was successful in applying for £50,000 from United Utilities' 'Catchment Systems Thinking' (CaST) fund, which was set up to help improve the North West's watercourses through partnership working and holistic delivery.

The CaST approach looks at a river catchment as an entire system rather than a series of isolated issues and has already brought multiple benefits to Lancashire and Cumbria, such as pollution reduction and flood risk management.

Now, Ribble Rivers Trust hopes to build on those successes by planting new woodlands on a number of different sites around the catchment. These woodlands are designed to provide a nature-based solution to some of the problems that currently affect our rivers, such as by intercepting pollution from farms before it reaches our watercourses, and providing carbon sequestration, which is another valuable step towards tackling the climate crisis.

The potential woodland planting sites have been carefully selected using mapping software called GIS (Geographic Information System), which can layer up several datasets at once, such as data relating to biodiversity, pollution risk, flood risk, air quality and public health, as well as areas of work which are of interest to other partner organisations. By stacking these layers, we can easily see on a map the locations where tree planting would achieve the greatest benefits for people and the environment, and therefore the most cost effective locations to direct our funding.

So far, three sites have been selected for woodland planting: one on the River Roddlesworth in the Darwen Catchment, one on Easington Brook in the Hodder Catchment, and a third on Sabden Brook, a tributary of the River Calder. All the new woodlands will help to reduce the amount of faecal matter entering the watercourses and improve bathing water quality at the coast.

Tributrees

In 2020, the Environment Agency (EA) began supporting our tree planting campaign, Lancashire Woodland Connect, by granting £275,000 over five years to help us identify opportunities and deliver new woodlands around the catchment.

The funding comes from the EA's 'Water Environment Improvement Fund' which is used to support a wide range of projects that help to achieve the objectives of the Water Framework Directive, which is a piece of EU legislation that aims to prevent deterioration of the water environment and improve water quality in river catchments. The directive has been retained by the UK government following Brexit and aims to achieve 'Good

Ecological Status' for all watercourses by 2027.

Sadly, around three quarters of the Ribble Catchment's rivers and their tributaries still fail to meet the standards set out by the Water Framework Directive, for a few main reasons: pollution caused by the water industry, agriculture and land management, and physical modifications to river channels such as weirs and artificial concrete riverbeds.

Thanks to the EA's funding, the Tributrees project will help to address some of the pollution issues around the catchment by enabling us to work on identifying locations where tree planting will be most effective at intercepting pollution pathways before the toxins enter watercourses.

Having chosen our priority areas, the funding will help to support our project officers to visit and agree new woodland planting sites with landowners, and eventually contribute to the purchase of native tree saplings.

While the EA's funding provides vital support to our 10-year Lancashire Woodland Connect campaign, none of it would be possible without the support of the public, through the purchase of tree dedications and volunteering to help plant the half a million trees that we have planned! More about the campaign can be found on page 15 of this newsletter, but if you would like to lend your support, please visit our webpage:

ribbletrust.org.uk/projects/lancashire-woodland-connect





Deeper Connections

The Long Preston Floodplain Project is an ongoing partnership between the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT), RSPB, Natural England, the Environment Agency, North Yorkshire County Council, Ribble Rivers Trust, local landowners and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority.

In 2021, YDMT received a grant of £244,700 from the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund, a multi-million pound boost for green jobs and nature recovery. This funding has enabled YDMT and Ribble Rivers Trust to join forces to launch a new phase of the Long Preston Floodplain project called 'Deeper Connections'.

The Long Preston 'Deeps' floodplain covers 765 hectares along the River Ribble and is a priority habitat for wildlife and

rare flora, with 128 bird species recorded in 2019. Nearly a quarter of the Deeps is designated as an SSSI - a Site of Special Scientific Interest; so it's crucial that the area is protected for future generations.

The Deeper Connections project will create and restore 10 hectares of habitat within the Deeps, focusing on establishing 'wildlife corridors' made up of riverside woodlands, hedgerows, and improvements to river water quality.

As well as the physical improvements to the environment, the project will aim to involve people by improving their access to nature, installing better information boards to improve learning, running volunteering and outdoor events, and providing high quality online learning resources.

As one of the project's primary partners, Ribble Rivers Trust will help to deliver the tree and hedgerow planting by working with landowners and agreeing suitable sites, as well as installing nest boxes for tree sparrows; a species that has suffered a serious decline. We will also help to survey and identify the most suitable areas to plant new trees to replace ash trees which, in recent years, have been lost to the Ash Dieback disease.

Building on the success of the Long Preston Floodplain partnership over the last 17 years, Deeper Connections will help to keep the momentum going by continuing to restore the area in harmony with agriculture, such that the mosaics of different habitats of the Deeps will become better connected.

PROJECTS



Ribble Life for Water

The Water Environment Grant (WEG) scheme was introduced in 2018 as part of the Rural Development Programme for England, funded by the European Union. It aims to tackle waterbodies that are failing to meet European water quality standards (the Water Framework Directive), of which the Ribble catchment unfortunately still has plenty.

The Ribble Life Partnership was fortunate to receive £1.87 million from the fund to help tackle a range of issues around the catchment. From weir removals, fish passes and habitat work, to natural flood management, targeted farm advice and peat restoration, we've been working hard on these projects for over three years to improve water quality, habitat connectivity and biodiversity in some of the catchment's most degraded rivers.

Having already reported on many of the works that make up Ribble Life for Water in the previous issue of this newsletter, here we detail the final projects that see the programme draw to a close.

LONG PRESTON FLOOD BANKS

The flood banks along the course of the River Ribble as it flows through Long Preston Deeps in North Yorkshire were historically constructed by landowners to improve grazing conditions for livestock and to stop their fields flooding so frequently. This, however, has had adverse effects on the natural landscape, taking away the rare, ephemeral wetlands that once supported a huge variety of specialist birds and plants, and replacing it with homogenous grassland.

Ribble Rivers Trust has worked with some of the farmers in the area to help return parts of the floodplain to a more natural state and encourage and support greater biodiversity. With the help of Conservefor, parts of the artificial flood banks have been flattened and reconstructed further away from the riverbank. This solution provides a compromise between the farmers' need for productive grazing, whilst reconnecting the River Ribble to its floodplain, creating a more naturally functioning landscape and helping to reduce flood risk downstream.

Long Preston Deeps has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and this type of work is fundamental to bringing the natural landscape back into favourable condition. The work also supports the aims of the Long Preston Floodplain Project, further detail, of which can be found on their website:

longprestonfloodplainproject.org



3 DESIGNATED SITES POSITIVELY IMPACTED

- Long Preston Deeps Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Ribble Estuary Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)



OLD LAUND FISH PASS

Adjacent to the channel works that were undertaken on Pendle Water at Lomeshaye is a small tributary called Old Laund Clough. Its source is on the lower fringes of Pendle Hill and it meanders through farmland before joining Pendle Water downstream of Nelson. Not far up this tributary was a redundant, derelict weir that was impassable to fish.

Thanks to some extra funding that became available later in the programme, we were pleased to be able to hire Bailey Contracts to construct a rock ramp fish pass over the weir, lessening the gradient and providing greater depth of water for fish to swim up and gain access to the good quality habitat upstream.

It is hoped that the newly naturalised river channel at Lomeshaye will encourage more fish to inhabit the area, and that some of these fish may now make use of the Old Laund Clough tributary for spawning.

LOMESHAYE CHANNEL RENATURALISATION

During the industrial era, almost the entire length of Pendle Water, a tributary of the River Calder, was heavily modified in some way. Whilst a concrete-lined channel at Lomeshaye Industrial Estate near Nelson might have been beneficial in the 1900s when the river was essentially part of the sewage works, it was in no way suitable for any kind of aquatic life to survive, and it has certainly been surplus to requirement for a long time, since the river is nowhere near as polluted.

Thanks to this project and our contractors, Sanctus, we have been able to excavate the concrete riverbed along a 400m stretch of Pendle Water, uncovering natural gravels that haven't seen the light of day for over a century.

We expect natural pools and riffles to form in the newly naturalised riverbed, slowing the flow of water and providing a much more varied habitat, which will hopefully support lots of different species of invertebrates. Larger invertebrate populations will in turn provide a crucial food source for fish and encourage them to use the area for spawning, bolstering their numbers and improving their chances of survival against other stressors like pollution and climate change.



WHAT HAS 'RIBBLE LIFE FOR WATER' ACHIEVED?



85km of watercourse improved for biodiversity



72km of watercourse improved for fish passage



13km of watercourse improved for water quality

2.7ha of flood storage / natural flood management



7.5ha of degraded peatland restored



3 feasibility studies completed to inform future choices



PROJECTS



NATURAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT

Padiham & Preston

Thanks to funding from the Environment Agency in 2021, we were able to plant 3,000 trees alongside the River Calder at Crow Wood near Padiham, with the help of volunteers.

A second grant agreement with the Agency will see us further our flood management efforts in 2022. We hope to plant around 10,000 trees at a site alongside the River Ribble at Fishwick Bottoms, near Preston, where

The trees will help to improve the soils ability to absorb water, improve soil structure, and intercept and slow runoff of rainfall, soils and nutrients, improving water quality and reducing flood risk downstream.

PADIHAM WEIR

Funding from the Environment Agency in 2021 made it possible to undertake a feasibility study for a fish passage solution on a gauging weir on the River Calder in the centre of Padiham. This structure is one of the last major barriers affecting fish migration on the River Calder to be addressed, and has the potential to improve access to 40km of diverse river habitat upstream. Unlike Padiham Power Station Weir in 2010, a full removal of the weir will not

TAWD WETLAND

Ribble Rivers Trust has teamed up with West Lancashire Borough Council and the Environment Agency to build a wetland and footpath in the Tawd Valley Park in Skelmersdale, which is home to the River Tawd as it flows northwards towards the River Douglas.

The wetland, one of four sustainable drainage sites proposed in the park's 2017 Masterplan, will provide habitat for insects, amphibians and birds while improving the water quality of the River Tawd. Currently being designed, the wetland will be constructed in 2023. You can keep an eye on its progress via the website: www.tawd.net



be an option, as the structure protects an active wastewater pipe. The site is also complex, owing to the position of the road bridge, adjacent buildings and an existing flood defence scheme in the town. The feasibility study has identified several alternative options for improving fish passage, one of which being a rock ramp fish pass, for which detailed designs have been developed. The next stage will be to secure funding to enable the works to take place.



PLanT

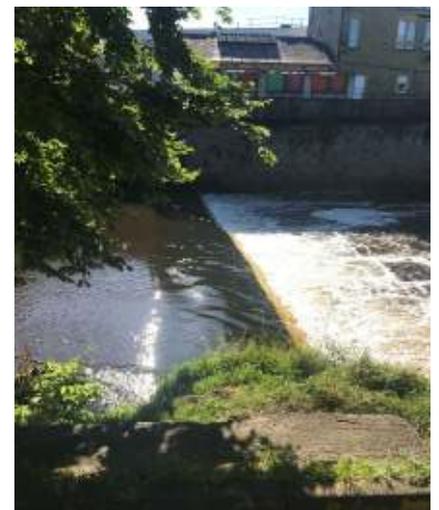
The Nearly 40,000 trees were planted across Pennine Lancashire in the winter of 2021/22 to help combat historic and ongoing losses of trees caused by urbanisation, pests and diseases.

Ribble Rivers Trust (RRT), Prospects Foundation and Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle and Rossendale Borough Councils teamed up with local volunteers to plant the trees in parklands, urban areas and school grounds.

The trees could help to reduce flood risk, sequester carbon, reduce concentrations of air pollution, and create and link up habitats for wildlife.

Ribble Rivers Trust and Prospects Foundation helped over 1700 children from 40 schools to plant nearly 4,000 native and fruit trees in their school grounds. The children also learned about the importance of trees for the environment, wildlife and people, and what their trees need to survive.

This project was possible thanks to nearly £160,000 of funding from the Forestry Commission's Local Authority Treescapes Fund and £11,000 from Trees for Cities.



GROW BACK GREENER

The Ribble Trust has partnered with the Woodland Trust to support its 'Grow Back Greener' tree planting programme, thanks to funding made available through the government's Nature for Climate fund, which aims to breathe fresh life into its pledge to create 30,000 hectares of trees per year across the UK by 2025.

Using our bespoke woodland prioritisation mapping techniques, we're locating the most beneficial sites for these new native trees to be planted and by working closely with the landowners, agreeing suitable locations for the new woodlands.



TREES FOR WATER

In 2019, the Missing Salmon Alliance launched their plan of action to tackle the alarming decline in the numbers of Atlantic salmon in the UK, with funding from The Fishmongers Company, Fisheries Charitable Trust.

As a partner organisation, The Rivers Trust nationally have shared some of the funding between local trusts to provide technical support around tree planting for the whole Rivers Trust movement, enabling us to better address water quality and quantity issues, and restore natural habitats in freshwater environments across the UK. Together with the Missing Salmon Alliance, we hope to build an evidence base that will influence national and international decision makers to regulate activities that adversely impact Atlantic salmon.



MASONS WOOD

Masons Wood is an ancient semi-natural mixed broadleaf woodland near Preston and together with the Woodland Trust, we are working to install natural flood management features that will help to reduce flood risk downstream. A mixture of gully stuffing and timber leaky dams are being placed in the small watercourse that flows through the wood to slow the flow in a natural way before it enters Savick Brook. It is hoped that works will be completed in spring 2022.



OUR Douglas

The River Douglas Catchment Partnership is delivering a three-year programme called 'Opening Up the River Douglas' (OUR Douglas) funded by the European Regional Development Fund and Groundwork.

Several priority weirs have been selected by the partnership to undergo remedial works that will improve fish passage throughout the River Douglas. Having already constructed rock ramps around two of the weirs in 2020, Pincroft Weir was next on the list to be tackled. This weir was installed

in the 18th century to supply water to Hayton Bleach Works. Due to the structure remaining an important abstraction point for Pincroft Works, removal was not an option, and so another rock ramp fish easement was completed by our contractors Wade Group in 2021.

Combined with the works in 2020, we have so far reconnected 19km of river habitat, helping local fish populations access new breeding and feeding habitats in a bid to boost their numbers and improve biodiversity in the Douglas Catchment.



Ribble Life Together

184

KILOMETRES OF RIVER IMPROVED

325

PEOPLE WITH BETTER KNOWLEDGE OF RIVERS

FUNDERS:

Heritage Lottery Fund, Environment Agency, United Utilities, Natural England, European Regional Development Fund, the European Commission's Life Programme via The Rivers Trust, Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, Tesco, Greggs, Arts Council, Prospects Foundation, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, Lancashire Environmental Fund, Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust.

For further information about the projects and activities, and to access to the resources, visit the project website:

RIBBLELIFETOGETHER.ORG

SOCIAL MEDIA

-  Facebook.com/RibbleTrust
-  Twitter.com/RibbleLife
-  Instagram.com/RibbleRiversTrust
-  YouTube.com/RibbleRiversTrust

In April 2017, the Ribble Life Catchment Partnership was awarded £1.6 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Contributions from match funders helped to increase the project value to £3.2 million. Since then, the programme has delivered substantial improvements to our rivers and reached thousands of people across Lancashire and North Yorkshire.

Ribble Life Together is developing new partnerships and improving how environmental charities, public bodies and local businesses work together to protect and improve our water resources and the wider environment. Through practical environmental action, based on science, the project is inspiring and educating communities, and leaving a positive legacy for future generations.

Ribble Life Together has also been a catalyst for other projects, building relationships and creating the conditions for further collaboration, resulting in the Ribble Life for Water project, Primrose Lodge redevelopment and others.

HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS



30

New woodlands planted



14

New wetlands created



16

Kms of livestock fencing



14

New fish passes



52

River clean-ups



327

Volunteer days



EDUCATION

In its final year of delivery, the Ribble Life Together project made a big push to educate as many people as possible across all age groups about the joy and wellbeing rivers bring to people, and their importance for a healthy and diverse environment.

20 primary schools and 1,119 children and their teachers got involved with our Rivers in the Classroom activities, ranging from trout tanks and river simulation tables installed in the classroom, to riverfly safaris and water safety lessons on the riverbank.

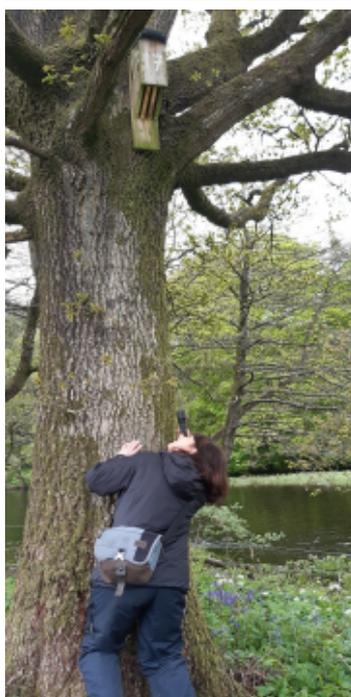
For secondary and college age students, we hosted another work experience placement in 2021, offering a real taste of what it's like to work in our sector in return for some help with our fish surveys and other practical habitat improvement activities.

We also collaborated with an MSc student at the University of Liverpool, who investigated how flood events might have impacted our salmon and trout populations (more detail on page 13). This type of data sharing can help to validate our theories about reasons for change within our river ecosystems and lead to important advances in how and where we deliver our projects.

We invited more adults to learn about rivers and their wildlife by running 15 guided river walks, which were attended by 222 people during 2021, following circular routes of various lengths in locations including the Yorkshire Dales down to Preston Docks, taking in many heritage features and showcasing some of our projects along the way.

Our bat survey training workshops, run in conjunction with Ecology Services UK Limited turned out to be one of our most popular events to date, and while we only had funding for 13 attendees on the workshops in 2021, we hope to run these again in the future.

Finally, to help reach even more of the general population, we held 11 pop-up stalls around the catchment at some of the most popular riverside locations, to help raise awareness of the issues rivers face .



Fish surveys

During summer 2021, we carried out our 14th season of electric fishing surveys, assessing fish populations at 283 individual sites across the Calder, Hodder and Ribble sub-catchments.

Finally, after nearly a decade of decline, brown trout numbers have bounced back significantly. The river conditions over the winter and spring of 2021 were favourable and as a result, 70% of the sites we surveyed saw an increase in the number of brown trout fry (the name for this years young). These results lend further support to the findings of M.Sc. student, Rob Starkie, whose study on declining fish populations in

the Ribble Catchment is summarised in the box to the right.

Sadly, it was not the same story for Atlantic salmon fry. Only a small increase in numbers was recorded, with salmon fry only found in 18% of the sites we surveyed. Given the more favourable spawning and development conditions in early 2021, it is concerning that salmon have not bounced back as well as brown trout.

With the ongoing pressures within freshwater systems, the work that Ribble Rivers Trust and its partners do to improve freshwater habitats is more important than ever in maintaining and enhancing fish populations.



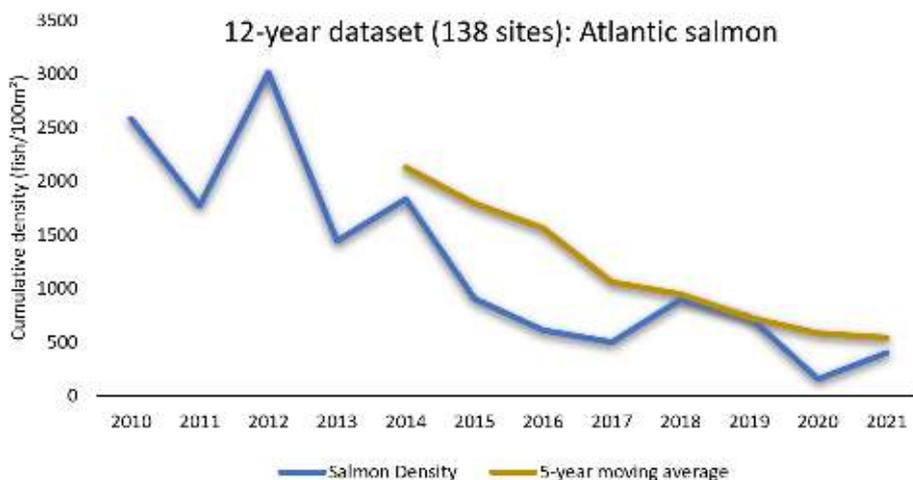
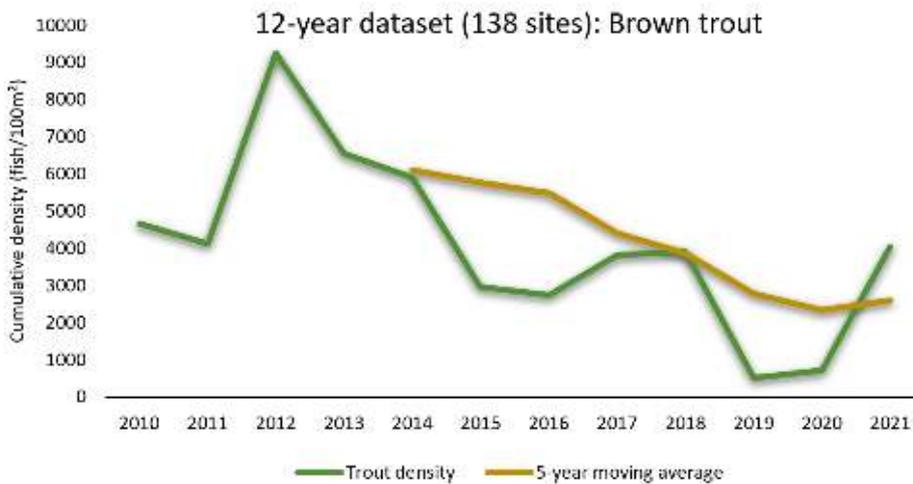
The relationship between high flow events and fry populations on the Ribble Catchment.

Rob Starkie - MSc student at University of Liverpool

For my MSc research project, I looked into the potential reasons for the number of salmon and trout declining in the Ribble system.

By using data from Ribble Rivers Trust's annual fish surveys, I looked at the relationship between river flow and salmon and trout fry numbers. A significant relationship was found between river flow in March and the number of salmon and trout fry found later in the year. Higher flows in March coincided with lower numbers of fry found in the summer that followed, and lower flows in March coincided with higher numbers of fry. This relationship can be explained by the fact that March is the time when juvenile salmon and trout begin to emerge from their eggs and they are more at risk of being washed downstream by high flows due to their small size and limited swimming ability.

The low numbers of salmon and trout seen in 2019 and 2020 can be linked to the number of storms occurring in February and March. In March 2019, storms Freya and Gareth occurred in quick succession resulting in much higher rainfall than expected. This resulted in higher flows, and likely had an adverse effect on salmon and trout fry and contributed to the lower numbers that year.



Riverfly surveys

Our riverfly monitoring programme is a way for us to keep a check on the water quality of our rivers and streams, relying on the dedication of our volunteers who care about the health of our river catchment as much as we do. The results of riverfly population surveys tell us where we need to focus our habitat improvement projects and regular monitoring is also a good way to flag up potential pollution incidents, so that the cause may be identified and prevented from reoccurring.

After a couple of years' break, we ran a couple of training workshops in the summer of 2021, which proved to be very popular amongst our keen volunteer base. Thirty attendees learned how to carry out a 'kick sample', which involves gently moving around

pebbles on the riverbed with your foot, whilst holding a net downstream to capture the invertebrates that are disturbed in the process.

Next, the volunteers were taught how to identify eight different families of riverfly, from the more prolific freshwater shrimp and stonefly, to the less numerous caddisfly and mayfly. The numbers of each invertebrate family found, combined with the family type, gives a score that can be used to determine the quality of the water at the survey site. Mayfly are one of the most sensitive types of riverfly to pollution, so a river or stream where mayfly are found is considered to be in good health. A watercourse where no invertebrates are found, except for perhaps freshwater shrimp, would be



considered to have poor water quality, and this would flag up the need for investigation into potential pollution sources and perhaps improvements to the habitat to promote greater biodiversity.

At the end of the training, the volunteers were given survey equipment and assigned a site each, so that they can carry out monthly checks on the health of their own local rivers and streams.

Mapping

With so many opportunities to improve our rivers, we rely on mapped data and evidence in order to prioritise our conservation efforts. In 2020, having completed her MRes in Ecology at Imperial College London, Leanne Tough joined our team as part of a traineeship funded by the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership project, to assist our Strategic Data and Evidence Manager with our extensive data mapping. Here, Leanne explains more about her work so far.

"My traineeship has so far seen me create interactive maps of projects that RRT have completed, to organising woodland creation in Colne. This variety of work and training has been the perfect start to my career.

"Being a river conservation charity, RRT are very aware of the multitude of threats our watercourses face. Many have been channelised and modified so heavily that they fail national tests of river health. Other threats include pollution, in-river manmade obstacles (e.g. weirs) and

invasive non-native species (e.g. Himalayan balsam). This presents lots of opportunities for improvement.

"But which issues should we work on first? Which ones would have the greatest benefits for the environment, wildlife and people? There is computer software (a 'Geographic Information System' - GIS) that allows us to map all aspects of the River Ribble catchment.

"Using a wide variety of map-based data sets, we can generate computer-based models to map priority locations that need help. This data includes everything from landscape features to the distribution of species and issues that are impacting them. We have combined lots of data to find locations where tackling these issues could provide the greatest benefits.

"Three of the data sets we have are: locations where watercourses have failed their health tests due to agricultural pollution, locations at risk of soil erosion, and levels of obesity, inactivity and

associated illnesses within local populations. What could help to reduce pollution inputs into watercourses, reduce soil erosion, and increase the health and wellbeing of local communities? Planting trees and creating leaky dams are two examples. They help to slow the flow of water and filter out sediment and pollutants before they reach the river. They are also great physical, outdoor activities for volunteers from local communities to involve themselves in.

"Three more data sets we hold are: distribution of fish species, locations of in-river obstacles preventing fish movement along rivers, and lengths of watercourses isolated from each other. We use these datasets to decide which priority obstacles to remove to reconnect the greatest amount of river habitat for fish.

"Used correctly and in conjunction with local knowledge and expertise, mapped data is incredibly valuable to us. With it, we can help make the Ribble catchment healthier for all."



CAMPAIGN



Lancashire Woodland Connect

After a decade of woodland creation we read the Independent Panel on Climate Change's report that set out how much woodland cover the UK needed to deliver by 2030. A quick back-of-envelope calculation, and we realised that we would need to increase our woodland delivery by 80 fold to meet Lancashire's percentage. But never one to shy away from a challenge, we teamed up with our fellow Rivers Trusts of Lancashire and in January 2020 we launched our decade-long campaign, seeking to plant 500,000 trees over the next 10 years.

Little did we know that covid was coming, which caused delays in delivery of works that had been planned for over a year, and then significant price increases. However, by the end of the 2020/2021 tree planting season, we had planted just

shy of 45,000 trees, only 5,000 short of our annual target- which was a huge success given the circumstances. This meant that we have an awful lot to do in the current tree planting season, potentially needing to plant 140,000 trees! However, the ongoing challenges mean that we are likely to see this number reduced, which might seem disheartening, but we should still be well over our annual target and the current campaign target of 100,000.

Our campaign targets have certainly been ambitious, but we're optimistic that we will go above and beyond them. In fact, if all goes to plan, we are thinking about doubling our target for 2030! You may be wondering how we are achieving so much. It is a combination of key elements: a good network of landowners and farmers, who we work constructively with

to achieve a balanced outcome for both parties, and a good network of partners. Not just our fellow Rivers Trusts, but also the Local Authorities who are supporting the campaign, the Forestry Commission, the Environment Agency, Natural England, United Utilities, local charities and community groups, and a more recent development of a larger and longer standing partnership with the Woodland Trust. We may be leading the charge, but we couldn't possibly get there without these valuable partners.

If you know of landowners or farmers who might be interested in not only trees and woodlands, but support in agri-environment and sustainability measures, please put them in touch with us. And if you fancy lending a hand for an hour, a day, or longer, we've got plenty of trees to plant!

Fishing in the Ribble Catchment

ANGLING PASSPORT SCHEME

We've been offering day-fishing tickets for several beats around the catchment for over 10 years. Just recently, we've made it possible for you to purchase your tickets online and have them sent to your device in an instant, making those spur-of-the-moment fishing trips possible.

Whether you want a beat that's easily accessible, or wish to escape to somewhere more remote, we have nine different beats on offer in some of our catchment's most scenic locations. Some beats are located on our main rivers, where game fishing for salmon, sea trout and grayling is possible. Others are on smaller tributaries, which offer opportunities to catch brown trout, chub and other coarse species.

Catch and release is encouraged at all of our beats, and the funds generated through the sale of our tickets help to keep our charity running. In 2021, the scheme helped us to raise over £5,000, which will help to fund future habitat improvement projects and research.

Visit ribbletrust.org.uk/go-fishing for more information and to buy tickets. Please note, you must also hold a valid rod licence to fish all of our beats - these are available to buy from the .GOV.UK website.



OUR BEATS:

- River Ribble and River Calder at Mitton (between Whalley and Clitheroe)
- Two stretches of the River Loud near Chipping in the Forest of Bowland
- Bottoms Beck in Gisburn Forest, upstream of Stocks Reservoir
- Two stretches of Stock Beck, a Ribble tributary near Barnoldswick
- Colne Water, from Laneshawbridge to Barrowford
- Mearley Brook, a tributary of the River Ribble on the edge of Clitheroe
- Bashall Brook near Waddington, on the fringes of the Forest of Bowland.



In 2021...

Litter picks

67 volunteers collected litter at 9 different urban locations along the Rivers Calder, Darwen and Ribble.

Tree planting

212 volunteers planted 26,373 trees at 11 different sites around the catchment.

Fencing

32 volunteers helped to erect 725m of fencing at two farms in Rimmington and Pendleton.

Invasive species control

41 volunteers tackled Himalayan balsam at 5 different locations.

Maintenance

28 volunteers helped to remove over 8,000 tree guards at one woodland in Sabden.

Leaky dams

14 volunteers helped to construct natural flood management features on Simonstone Brook and Pendle Water.

From tree planting, fencing and Himalayan balsam pulling, to litter picks, natural flood management and wildlife surveys, there are so many things you can do to help protect your local rivers and wildlife.

Register for our email bulletins to find out when and where there are opportunities coming up. If you wish to take part, simply reply to the email to let us know. Experience is not required and we provide all the training, tools and friendly smiles!

Sign up today at:
ribbletrust.org.uk/volunteer



Brush bundling

39 volunteers helped to make brush bundles to help stop the excessive erosion of the banks along Bashall Brook.

Plug planting

6 volunteers helped to plant heather and cotton grass to restore the peatland on Pendle Hill.

Become a supporter

Rivers are the heart of the natural world, and the heart of everything that we do.

For over two decades, our dedicated team have been using their vast knowledge of the local area and the natural world to improve over 375 miles of rivers in Lancashire and North Yorkshire.

As a charity, all this work is possible thanks to grants and donations like yours. You can become a supporter and help with this vital work.

When you become a supporter of Ribble Rivers Trust you show your care and commitment to local rivers, communities, and the wider environment.

Although a large proportion of our work is grant funded,

there are some activities that grant funders won't pay for. By becoming a supporter, you can help us to carry out the activities at the core of our organisation. These include project research and development, wildlife surveys, volunteer and staff training, and site maintenance.

In the last 12 months, funds raised by supporters has helped us to access grants for exciting and innovative education projects, urban trees for communities in built up areas, in depth-river surveys which help to gather the evidence needed to support our work, and much, much more.

Your support also means we have a regular, reliable funding source. Funding like

this helps us to carry out a wider range of work, and to plan ahead. This means we can protect your rivers now, and in the future.

Supporters are vital to our work; from conserving and restoring habitats, to helping farmers transition towards greener businesses, to inspiring and supporting children from our catchment's wide range of diverse backgrounds and communities.

Your funds can turn into amazing things.

To become a supporter complete the form at the back of this newsletter, or visit ribbletrust.org.uk/become-a-supporter.



SUPPORT US

Corporate Sponsors



Corporate giving is a great way of showing your business' commitment to the local environment and community, showing your customers and associates that you are a business that cares.

There are many ways your business can support our work. Our bronze, silver, gold, and platinum supporter scheme means that you can donate a set amount each year. Or corporate sponsors can pay for a specific activity or goal that is close to your, or your business', heart.

You can now also support our work through one-for-one donations. One-for-one donations are growing in popularity as a corporate giving method, and are useful as they have a direct link to your sales and your profits.

It isn't just your company image that can be boosted. Why not contact us for some fun in-house fundraising challenge ideas. It won't cost your company a penny, and we can guarantee your staff will have a great time raising money on our behalf.

Showing you care for your environment and your community can really give your business the edge over your competitors and push eco-conscious shoppers towards your company.

So, whether you are a tech start-up, a small independent high street shop, or a major UK company with a multimillion pound turnover, Ribble Rivers Trust can help you to reach your green goals.



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As a charity, we rely entirely on supporters, 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.

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