

Our Impact



“No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced.”

David Attenborough



West Cumbria Rivers Trust

West Cumbria Rivers Trust continues to go from strength to strength in its mission to restore and reinvigorate our rivers and their surrounding environments, not only for the benefit of the wildlife living in them but also the people living and working around them.

Our dedicated team of professionals work hard all year round to secure and effectively use funding to allow us to carry out this good work. None of this would be possible without the collaboration of our many stakeholders ranging from land managers who trust us to undertake works to benefit wider flood management for our area, to those who willingly get their wellies on to come and help us to control non-native invasive species and plant trees.

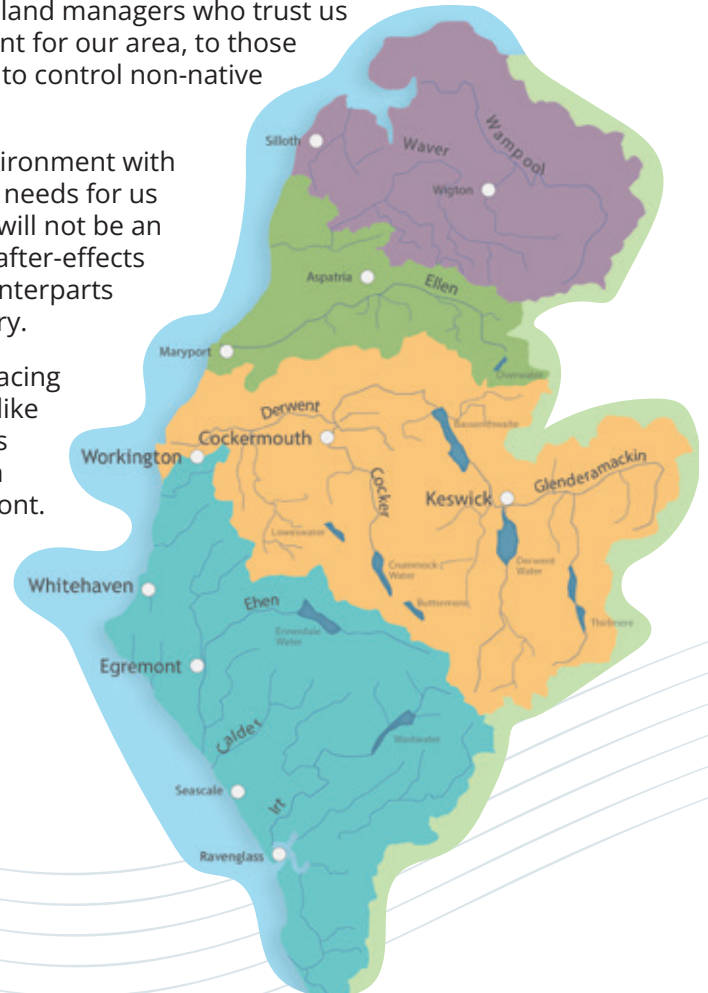
We are facing an unprecedented challenge to our environment with climate change finally beginning to get the standing it needs for us to turn it round. However, there is no doubt that this will not be an easy task in a constrained world recovering from the after-effects of a pandemic. West Cumbria Rivers Trust and its counterparts undoubtedly play a key role in prevention and recovery.

I'm personally delighted to help support the Trust in facing up to this challenge in whatever way I can and would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who help us either through funding or boots on the ground, with a special mention to our patrons, Lord and Lady Egremont.

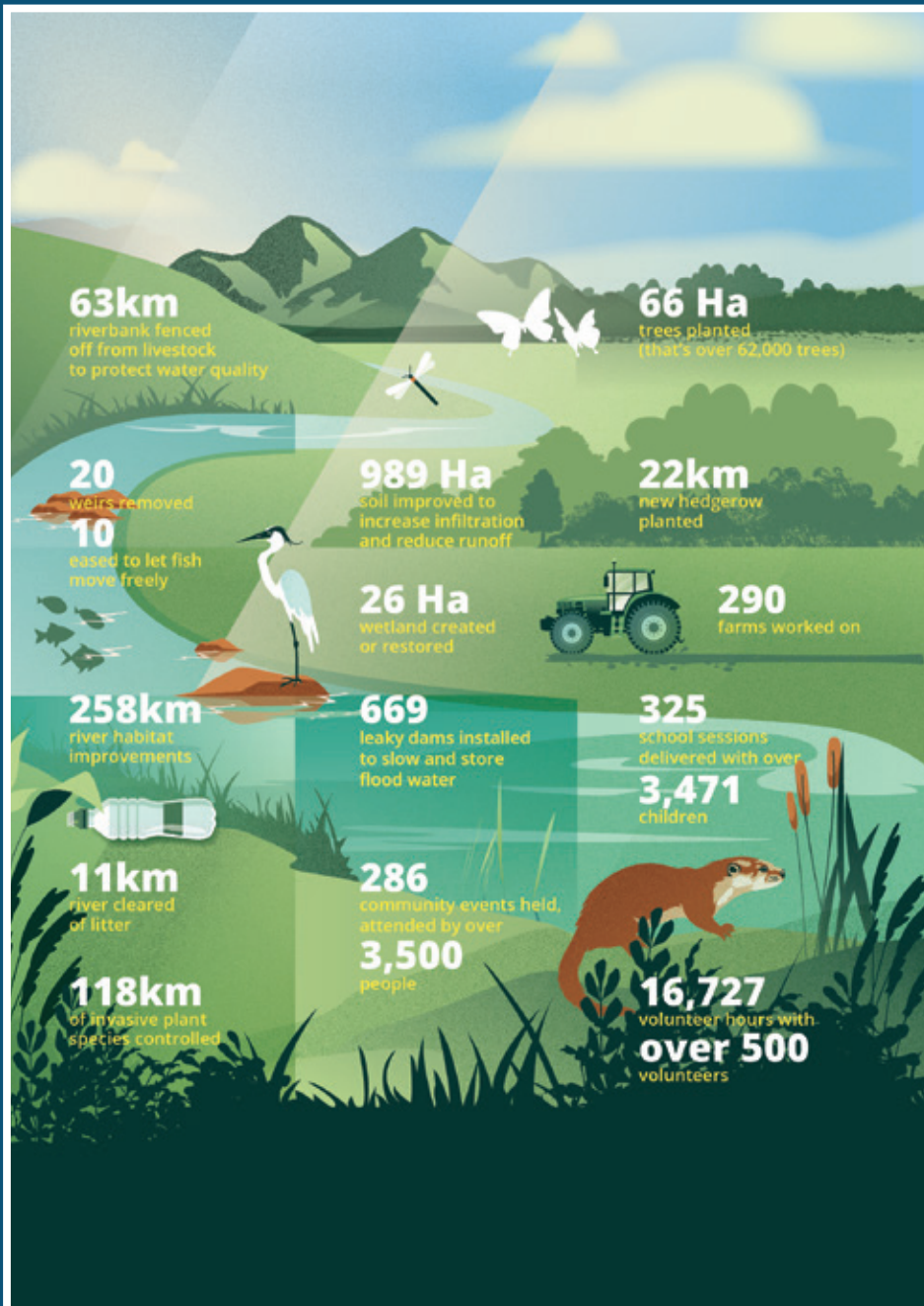


Dr Trish Dunlop

Chair of the Board of Trustees



5 years in numbers



Our top 10 achievements

- 1 For the first time since 2010 we saw evidence of the population of critically endangered freshwater mussels breeding on the River Irt after a lot of hard work supporting the population with habitat improvements and releases of captive bred juvenile mussels.
- 2 We scooped a prestigious international European Riverprize for our pioneering river restoration work.
- 3 We won our first big National Lottery Heritage project (£1.9M) for the delivery phase of 'A wilder Walkmill' at Walkmill Community Woodland near Whitehaven.
- 4 We removed 2.5km of plastic lining from the River Keekle (that's 180 tonnes of plastic – the equivalent of 12 double decker buses!).
- 5 We've worked on 290 farms to deliver projects that enhance wildlife, improve water quality, reduce flood risk and support farm businesses.
- 6 Since 2016, we've supported over 3,000 children and young people in West Cumbria to experience the natural world through child-led, nature-based activities through our Forest School programme.
- 7 We set up our first ever Youth Panel, a passionate group of young people from West Cumbria who want to help the Trust gain new insights. They'll be working with an artist on various exciting projects at Walkmill Community Woodland.
- 8 We have the biggest staff team in our history with 22 members of staff and 4 new apprentices.
- 9 We reached a new annual fish survey high of 268 sites.
- 10 We saw our biggest ever news story flagging the impact of perched rivers (rivers moved from their natural flow) during a drought in Borrowdale. Multiple national press titles covered the story and we made national news (our tweet has been seen by 66,000 people!).



Our mission

West Cumbria Rivers Trust is an environmental charity dedicated to protecting, restoring and improving the rivers and lakes of West Cumbria for the benefit of wildlife and the people living and working around them. Our dedicated and passionate team work hard all year round partnering with landowners, farmers, organisations, local businesses, schools and communities to deliver for rivers and inspire a love for and understanding of our waterways.



Our values

As an organisation we are guided by 5 important values.

Passion

We are committed to improving rivers for people, and nature and will encourage creativity, innovation and dynamism in all that we do.

Teamwork

We work together with openness, integrity and respect, providing support to one another, working co-operatively, respecting one another's views, and making our work environment fun and enjoyable.

Respect

We respect and value those we work with, and the contributions that they make.

Partnership

Working in partnership is at the heart of what we do. No one organisation has all of the skills, knowledge, capacity or influence.

We believe that we can achieve more by working together.

We work together with all those with a role to play, finding solutions and delivering together.

Professional

We aim to achieve the highest possible standards in all activities, holding ourselves accountable for results.

We take full ownership for our actions and their outcomes; we have the courage to make bold decisions, we do what we say we will do - people can trust us to deliver.

Improve and protect

Conserve, restore and enhance rivers and catchments to improve and protect the natural environment.

Our strategic aims

Growth and resilience

Supporting sustained financial security that enables our vision by developing a robust and diverse network of corporate sponsors, donors and individual supporters.

Enhanced reputation

Build on our track record of delivering successful projects, where stakeholder needs are respected and outputs clearly measured, by being a trusted partner among funding organisations, communities, and businesses.

Connect, engage and educate

Engage stakeholders and communities to inspire enthusiasm and commitment to deliver positive proactive change to improve our natural environment.



Case study

Protecting our freshwater mussels

Our freshwater mussels team work hard supporting England's largest population of critically endangered freshwater pearl mussels on the River Ehen, and a much smaller population on the River Irt that's historically been in severe decline.

The freshwater pearl mussel can live for more than 100 years and has a highly complex lifecycle requiring host fish and a very specific set of conditions. Freshwater mussels play an important role in river ecosystems, improving water quality as each adult filters around 50 litres of water per day. Mussels are indicators of good water and habitat quality: if they are at risk, it's a warning that the health of the river is compromised. A 90 per cent decline in numbers of freshwater mussels has been observed over the last century in the UK.

After eight years of works to improve habitat conditions and juvenile releases from an 'ark' to help bolster the population, our team were overjoyed to find evidence of reproduction from the mussels on the River Irt. Works to improve habitat conditions and juvenile releases from an 'ark' to help bolster the population are showing tentative signs of success.

Our team will continue to work with our partners to improve the habitats for the mussels and the fish on which they rely, to ensure the population continues to recover and ultimately thrive once more.



Case study

Our award-winning work

The restoration project to remove 2.5km of plastic lining from the River Keekle is one of the largest and most ambitious projects of its kind any of the UK's 65 River Trusts have ever undertaken. The site was a former opencast coal mine and the river was diverted during mining operations. In 1996 it was restored to its original course; however, as 8 million tonnes of mine spoil were buried underneath the floodplain, a three metre clay cap, an HDPE plastic liner and stone boulder weirs were placed along the river bed before it was put back into its original position. Over time, and following floods, most of the stone was washed downstream and the liner destroyed and exposed in places. There were grave concerns the river was eroding the clay cap and could start entering the spoil waste causing toxic heavy metals to flow into the River Ehen, where it could have decimated fish populations and threatened the largest colony of Freshwater Mussels in England. WCRT restored the river to a fully functioning, ecologically thriving river with good water quality, naturally re-connected it to its flood plain.

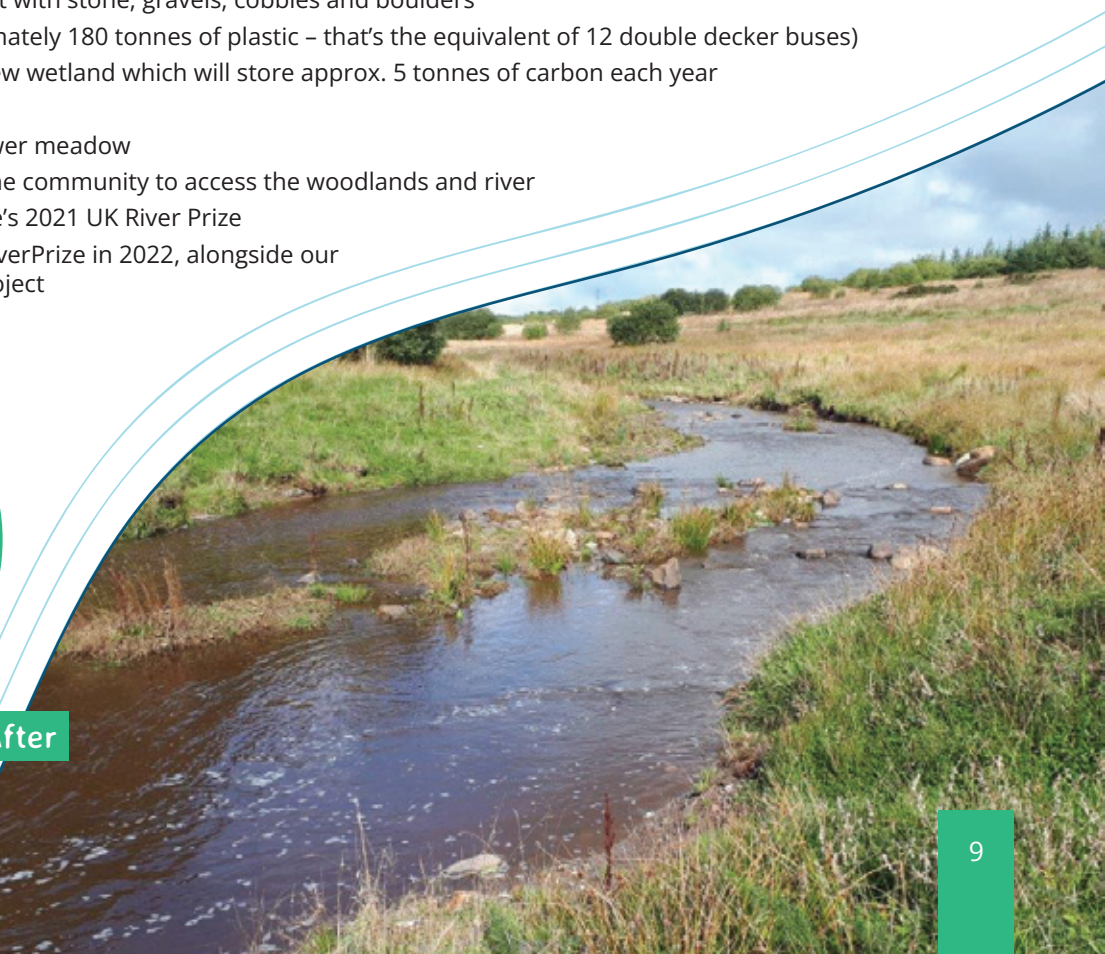
We:

- Removed the liner and replaced it with stone, gravels, cobbles and boulders
- Recycled all of the liner (approximately 180 tonnes of plastic – that's the equivalent of 12 double decker buses)
- Created an additional 1.8ha of new wetland which will store approx. 5 tonnes of carbon each year
- Planted 2000 trees
- Re-seeded almost 1ha of wildflower meadow
- Improved a 1.3km footpath for the community to access the woodlands and river
- Won the River Restoration Centre's 2021 UK River Prize
- Won the prestigious European RiverPrize in 2022, alongside our partners, for our work on this project



Before

After



Case study

Our learning and engagement programme

We aim to inspire our local communities to have an emotional and instinctive connection with the natural world. This connection will help our community to support conservation work and protect their local environment for future generations.

Through our curriculum focused school sessions, we take young people outdoors and into their local river. Learning outside the classroom can help to bring many school subjects alive!

What we offer:

Community events

We offer a range of nature-based activities for a range of audiences including families, groups and other charities.

Natural Flood Management sessions for secondary schools

Designed for KS3, these sessions take place in a classroom session where children discover more about NFM and test out various techniques using our river simulator. They then get to design and test their leaky dams and install them on-site.



Forest School sessions

Person-centred rather than curriculum bound, these sessions develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on experience in a natural setting. The Scandinavian inspired ethos helps facilitate knowledge-gathering and helps learners develop socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually, inspiring a deep and meaningful connection to the world.

“A huge success”

Teacher, St Joseph's Secondary school on NFM sessions



'Wild River Day' programme for primary schools

A full day in the classroom and a full day field trip for KS2 focussing on science and geography, with opportunities to also do some literacy, art and team-work activities. We focus on human impacts on rivers as well as investigating freshwater wildlife.

"Some of these children will have never experienced the freedom of outdoor play"

Howgill Centre on WCRT's Summer Forest School

Practical conservation sessions for all ages

A great way for people to spend time in the outdoors and learn practical conservation skills. Activities can include tree planting, balsam bashing and habitat creation.

Childrens' books, The Adventurous Salmon and Bash the Balsam

We worked with Eden Rivers Trust to create these fun, interactive books for families and to be used in schools.

"We have all absolutely loved Forest School"

SED teacher, St Benedict's Catholic High School, Whitehaven.



Case study

Natural Flood Management

We worked with the landowner at a farm near Keswick to create a large permanent pond on a field that was previously dominated by rushes, drained and over-grazed. The pond is providing fantastic habitat with varying water depths suited to different species. During storm events, the pond is designed to store excess water from a nearby minor watercourse, reducing the amount of water contributing to flooding in the town of Keswick downstream. It then slowly drains into Naddle Beck, ready for the next storm. A collection of similar features across a catchment can really help to slow the flow downstream.

Project benefits:

- Created an estimated permanent capacity of 3000m³ water storage in the pond. Keeping water in the landscape for longer during droughts.
- The raised embankment (bund) surrounding the pond provides an additional 1m of water storage during a high rainfall event, measuring 6400m³ in total.
- 500 metres of riverside fencing was put in place to support natural woodland regeneration and prevent livestock from entering the area, reducing siltation of Naddle Beck.
- The pond is on average 1m deep, with areas reaching 2m deep. This reduces the chance of the water freezing during winter or drying out during summer – giving our amphibians a greater chance of survival during extreme weather events.
- Native wildflower plug planting and seeding was carried out around the pond margins to support a wide variety of butterflies and other pollinating insects.
- Otters have been spotted at the site for the first time.



Before

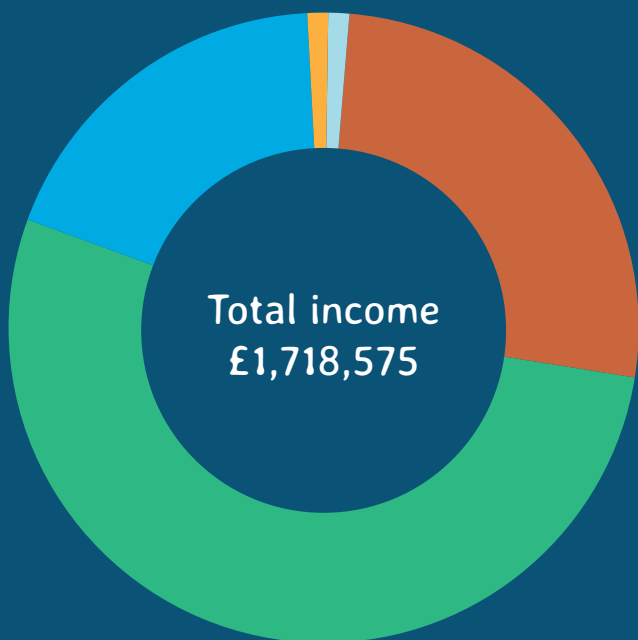
After



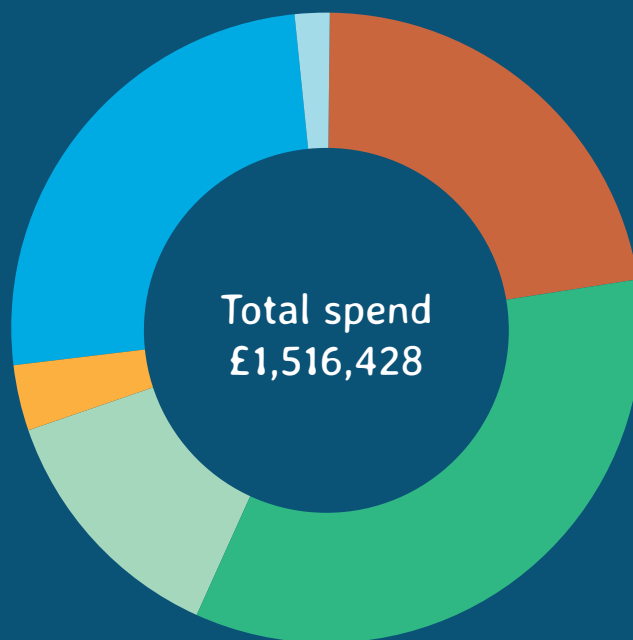
Our money and how it is spent

As a charity we don't receive any core funding to run our organisation and we spend many hours writing funding bids to enable all our fantastic projects to happen and keep our wonderfully passionate team employed. 98% of all income received was spent on our strategic aims; delivering for rivers.

Donations are invaluable as they allow us the freedom to spend on important activities that aren't related to our ring-fenced grant funding. Becoming a River Giver is a great way to support us for less than the price of a cup of coffee a month. See our website for more information and to sign up.



- 1% Donations
- 27% Corporate Grants
- 54% Government Grants
- 17% Other Grants
- 1% Trading Income



- 2% Organisation running costs
- 23% Education & Community
- 34% Conservation
- 13% River Restoration
- 3% Citizen Science
- 25% Natural Flood Management

Volunteers

Local communities

Trustees

Flood groups

Schools, colleges & universities

Our people and partners

We rely heavily on the support of funders, partners, donors, advocates and of course our dedicated team of volunteers, who we keep well supplied with tea and biscuits!

Farmers & landowners

Statutory bodies

such as the Environment Agency & Natural England

Local NGOs

Other local rivers trusts

Our future

When rivers thrive, so do we. We will continue to work towards the Rivers Trust movement's shared vision of wild, healthy, natural rivers, valued by all, and we will do this by:



West Cumbria Rivers Trust's Catchment Plan

Collecting data and evidence

With thanks to our supporters, partners and funders:





West Cumbria Rivers Trust



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