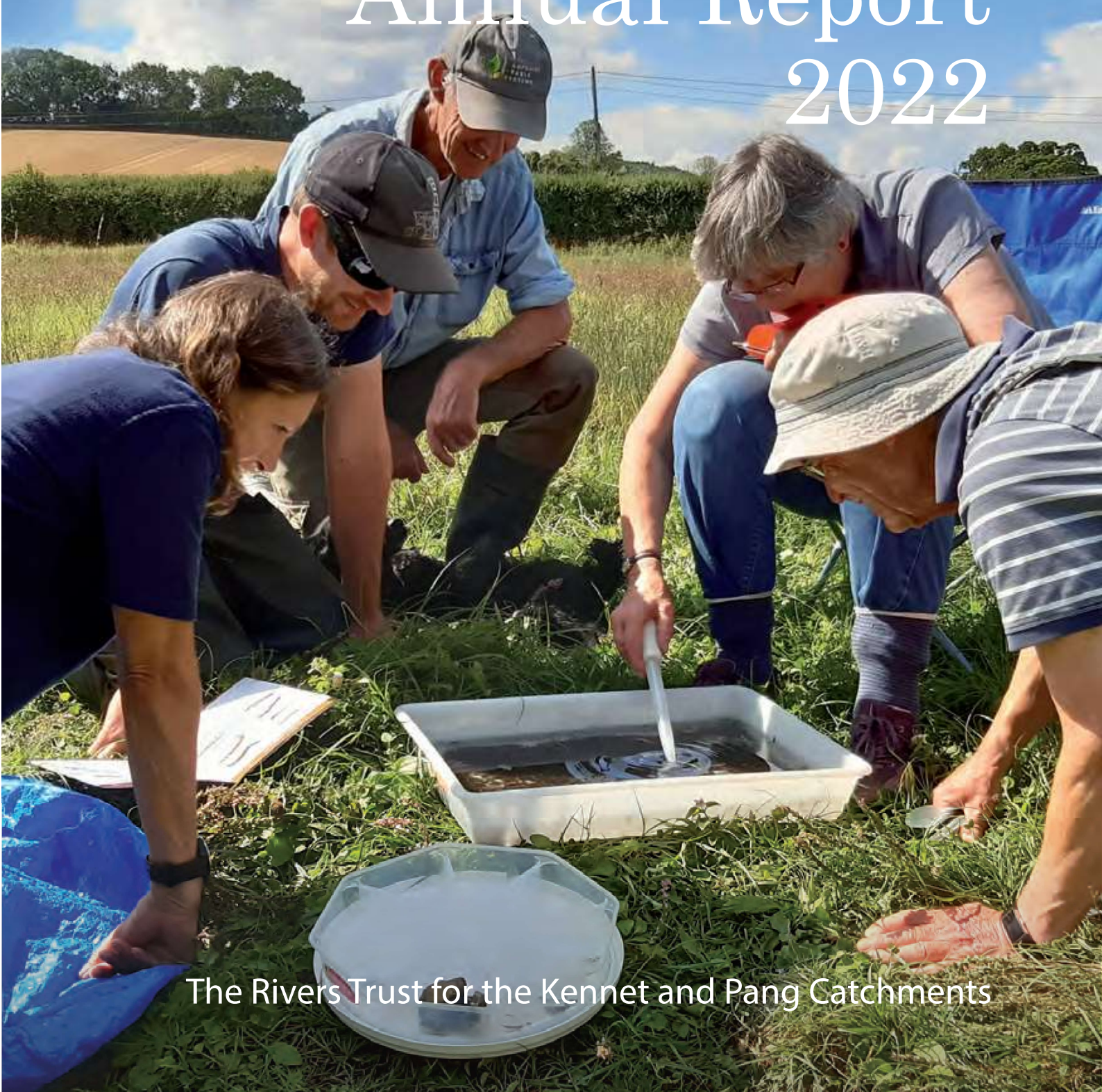




Action for the River Kennet

# Action for the River Kennet Annual Report 2022



The Rivers Trust for the Kennet and Pang Catchments

# ARK's Year 2021-22

## April



### Catchment-scale plans for river recovery

include wetlands; river improvements & rain gardens to slow the flow on the Kennet, Dun and Shalbourne.

## October

ARK volunteers and parishioners work together to improve the river at St George's Church, Preshute.



## May

A Vole Stroll at Stonebridge Wild River Reserve provides sightings for Richmond Fellowship clients.



## November

Dippers are recorded on the Kennet in Marlborough, roosting at a site restored by ARK.



## December

630 metres of native hedging and 3,000 trees are planted as part of the Sparkling Streams project.



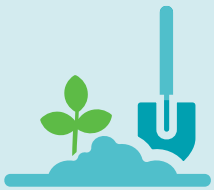
## July

A 14th-century stone lion corbel, discovered by our volunteers in 2015, is finally lifted from the Kennet.



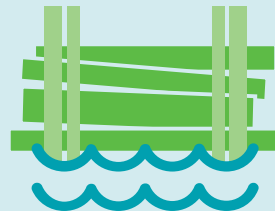
## June

Rain Garden build begins at Shalbourne Primary School.



## January

The Sparkling Streams project installs leaky dams at the headwaters of the Dun.



## February

Community and ARK volunteers plant thousands of native river margin plants on the Lambourn winterbourne at East Garston.



## September

Our Riverfly Workshop at Avington Estate helps train new and existing monitors.



## March

ObstacEELS provides up-to-date data to help improve fish passage.







## Climate Change. Kicking the Can...

In my last annual report I sounded a tone of mild optimism regarding people's new-found respect for the natural world. I talked about how the river Kennet had benefited from COVID because less activity meant less of an impact on its nature and quality.

Unfortunately, my piece this year is going to be far less sanguine. At last year's UN COP26 in Glasgow, where heads of state came together to talk about measures to reduce climate change, I hoped for bravery and strong action. Alas, we did not get the decisive action to mitigate climate change we had hoped for. Instead, heads of state agreed to meet again this year to complete their unfinished business. The can was kicked down the road. I am sure to some participants there was a positive outcome – more regular meetings with more flights and more luxury hotels (and more CO<sub>2</sub> emitted) – but for others it was a bitter disappointment.

This year we have all witnessed climate change manifesting itself in

### Creating a better future for the Kennet through:

- 1 Consolidating Partnerships**  
Read more on page 6–7
- 2 Inspiring Young Minds**  
Read more on page 8–9
- 3 Challenging Pollution**  
Read more on page 10–11
- 4 Working with Farmers and Gardeners**  
Read more on page 12–13
- 5 Acting on Evidence**  
Read more on page 14–15
- 6 Removing Barriers**  
Read more on page 16–17

very real disasters and extremes of weather throughout the planet. We are experiencing unprecedented heat waves across large tracts of the world, torrential rains submerging vast areas and overall the climate becoming less predictable.

Closer to home, the river Kennet has suffered over the last six months. We have seen drought conditions with parts of the river getting close to drying up completely. Very high temperatures have resulted in the water warming and thus in turn threatening species that rely on cooler conditions. And, of course, periodic downpours cause overwhelmed sewage works to release raw effluent straight into our rivers and streams.

During these periods of extreme weather, the media has always been on







hand with helpful advice about 'staying cool during the heatwave' or 'simple ways to avoid being flooded'. They are less inclined to remind us about saving water during drought, preferring instead to bemoan yet another hosepipe ban.

At a grassroots level some of the best advice is common sense rather than rocket science – close your curtains and install a water butt. But where was the common sense when scientists started to sound alarms in 1988 at the UN Toronto Conference on the Changing Atmosphere? And even earlier in the 1970s, what was the common sense in the petrochemical companies saying nothing when they first became aware of human induced climate change? Now, 50 years on, where is the common sense in 'kicking the can' when the world is being gripped by this existential threat?

Maybe the COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh this November will find the answers and make the right decisions. Just in case they can't and don't, what can the rest of us do during this period of spiralling energy prices and cost-of-living crisis?

Above all, we need government not to forget the environment and not to prioritise economic growth over everything else. Economists often describe climate change as a 'market failure' and greenhouse gases as an 'awkward externality'. But the environment, economy and society are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they are critically interdependent. To better understand

that interrelationship, I recommend Kate Raworth's enlightening work on Doughnut Economics (<https://doughnuteconomics.org/about-doughnut-economics>).

I would urge you to write to your MPs emphasising the need for the new cabinet to understand the importance of the environment and that kicking the can down the road is not a common sense or reasonable solution to the threat of climate change.



CHAIRMAN





# Consolidating Partnerships

WORKING WITH OTHERS TO CREATE CLEANER HEALTHIER STREAMS





## No single person or organisation can fix a river.

As an independent non-statutory organisation, with no powers to regulate but with access to information and expertise, we have a powerful convening and partnership role to play. We can pull disparate groups together to meet common goals and we are pleased that in the last year we have engaged at a practical level with our local authorities as well as parishes, gardening groups, schools, individual farms, farm clusters, the AONB and fisheries. We continue to have regular contact and to run partnership projects with Natural England, the Environment Agency, Canal and the Rivers Trust and Thames Water.

Our volunteers come from the communities through which our rivers flow and they are thus ambassadors for those streams, spreading the word about pollution, water efficiency and the importance of river habitat. By testing water quality and the ecological health of our rivers their data helps ARK to build an evidence base to support good decisions in the catchment and to challenge others to improve.

Working in partnership does not prevent us from challenging other organisations when necessary. Tackling the appalling discharge of sewage by Thames Water remains firmly on our agenda and we have been working to influence national policy as well as raising local awareness of pollution.

Very little of the land and river we have worked on in the past year belongs to us, so our role as a trusted partner with an ability to implement excellent practical work is critical to building trust and confidence.

The capacity-building support and training we receive from our umbrella body the Rivers Trust is helping ARK to become a more effective and resilient organisation.

Our effectiveness is built on partnership, and long may that continue.

**Charlotte Hitchmough**  
Director





# Inspiring Young Minds

HELPING THE NEXT GENERATION TO ENGAGE WITH  
THEIR RIVERS





## It's wonderful to be back in the playground and river with our young students.

Our educational outreach, Water Matters, ARK River School and Thames Catchment Community Eels Project workshops continued to grow in demand during 2021-22.

Developing children's appreciation of their local river and putting that knowledge into context is paramount. If we want future generations to feel empathy with chalk streams and their wildlife, and to appreciate that they have an impact on them, we need to educate and inspire them.

Our workshops are lots of fun, but this doesn't mean we dumb things down. Our expertise support schools to cover curriculum topics in a way that literally brings them to life, spans a variety of subjects and at the same time creates wonderful memories.

The end of April 2021 saw the return of our face-to-face outdoor River School workshops in the Kennet catchment. Visits to the river itself were still hampered by Covid travel restrictions,

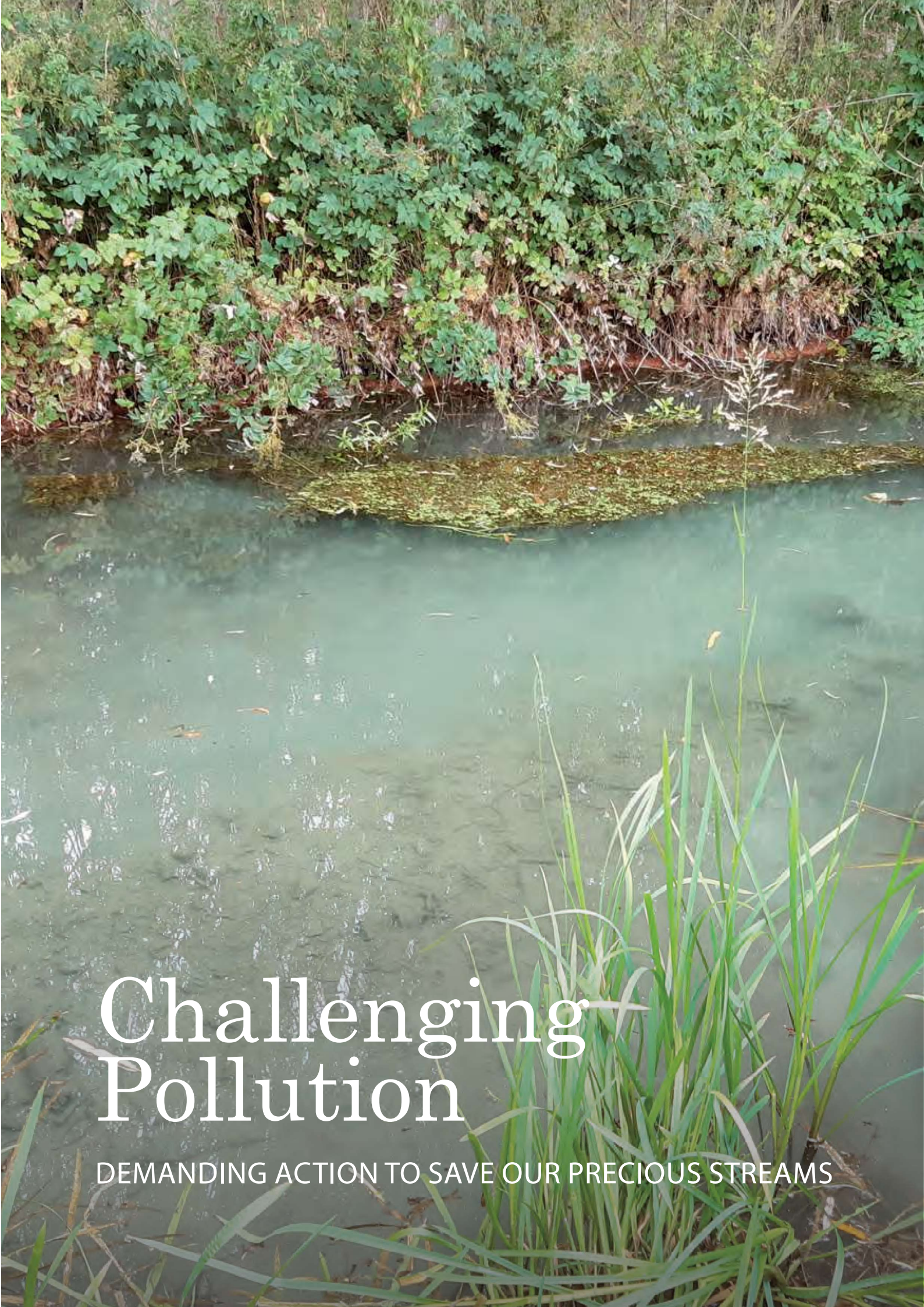
so instead we took the river to the playground for most of our workshops. For schools that could manage the travel logistics it was fantastic to once again provide safe, fun experiences in and by the river. For many this was their first and only field trip that year!

Our strong relationship with fisheries and riparian landowners helps us deliver our educational outreach as locally as possible. We want children to bond with their neighbourhood river, while learning plenty about it.

During September Chilton Foliat Primary School had a whole day in and by the Kennet with us and River Keeper Sam Marshall. It is important for students to know that the river supports businesses that offer career opportunities on the Kennet, but for this to continue we must all play our part in looking after it.

**Anna Forbes**  
Senior Project Officer





# Challenging Pollution

DEMANDING ACTION TO SAVE OUR PRECIOUS STREAMS





## The pollution of our rivers is a national disgrace that cannot be tolerated.

In the last year we have seen unprecedented media and political attention focused on sewage pollution in our rivers. ARK has repeatedly challenged Thames Water about the performance of their Marlborough Sewage Treatment works when the sewage discharge has been visible.

However, it was not until we had sight of the second year of 'event duration monitor' data from sewage treatment works mapped by Rivers Trust that we fully appreciated the scale of the problem across the Kennet catchment. Worse still was the level of deliberate under-reporting of sewage pollution by water companies.

Society as a whole has been horrified that we use rivers as sewers as a matter of course, and the perception that consented discharges were in extremis events has been shattered. Responding to public pressure, Thames Water has made some significant pledges to reduce the total annual duration of spills by between 50% and 80% by

2030, and enable real time notifications of sewage spills by the end of 2022. While this seems incredibly slow and not as ambitious as we'd like, it is certainly a promise of improvement.

Meanwhile, it's important to recognise that not all pollution is from sewage treatment works. Farms, roads and septic tanks are other significant sources and we at ARK are working flat out with our partners across the catchment to find ways to reduce it.

One of the critical keys to success will be the development of a robust evidence base derived from constant scientific monitoring of water quality. ARK is already a leader in this field and in coming years will be joining the larger Rivers Trust monitoring cooperative as it develops.

**Charlotte Hitchmough**  
Director





# Working with Farmers and Gardeners

THE PEOPLE WHO MANAGE OUR ENVIRONMENT





## At ARK we believe everyone has a part to play in caring for our rivers and streams.

Neolithic farmers began settling around the source of the River Kennet from about 4,000 BC. Ever since, agriculture and urbanisation have shaped the landscape of the Kennet valley and the surrounding catchments.

Post-war intensification of farming had a detrimental impact on river health, but most farming communities of today recognise the importance of healthy soils, clean water and abundant wildlife to their farm businesses. Throughout ARK's catchment areas farmers are working with environmentally focused organisations like ours to deliver better outcomes for nature.

Farm clusters now cover a significant proportion of the Kennet and Pang catchments. The farmers and land managers in these groups are working collectively to deliver a positive impact, alongside catchment-scale improvement ARK and the Rivers Trust's campaign of our river systems.

ARK has been supporting farmer groups through Catchment Partnerships, the Sparkling Streams Project and the Thames Water flagship Chalk Stream Project. This year we have also worked with farms to deliver projects through DEFRA's Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, administered by the North Wessex Downs AONB. Funding through FiPL has already helped ARK to achieve fish passage improvements, river restoration and wetland creation on farms across the catchment.

Gardens are other green spaces that can be cultivated to manage water and increase biodiversity. Our Rain Garden UK training has taught over 100 gardeners to harvest rain, slow water and create rain gardens, so that everyone can be part of the solution to healthy rivers.

**Rupert Kelton**  
Project Manager

**Charlotte Hitchmough**  
Director





# Acting on Evidence

PROVIDING THE SCIENTIFIC DATA THAT UNDERPINS PRACTICAL CONSERVATION





## Up-to-date evidence about the health of river is key to everything that ARK does.

For a small Rivers Trust, we deliver on lots of fronts, not least citizen science. Our ever-expanding team of volunteers help us in a multitude of ways.

Riverfly monitoring continued, with over 60 sites now being regularly checked. Working tirelessly to keep the long-term record up to date, our volunteers are the rivers' eyes and ears. We share all our data with the Environment Agency, Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre, and the national Riverfly Partnership dataset.

ObstacEELS is a new citizen science initiative to map barriers in rivers and assess them for passability to eels. Work on the Middle and Lower Kennet and the Pang has revealed that the number of such barriers had been underestimated by more than 50%.

Over the winter of 2021 we trained more volunteers to search for trout nests, as well as refreshing the skills of some of our existing Redd Spotters.

Harvest mice are on the Red List of British mammals facing extinction in the near future. Surveying at our Stonebridge Wild River Reserve in Marlborough (jointly owned by ourselves and Marlborough Town Council) was carried out by volunteers for the second year. Once again nests were recorded in the wetland and hedging, thus demonstrating the value of these new water-meadow habitats. Our ARK records contribute to the Mammal Society's national survey, which is also shared locally with Wiltshire Mammal Group.

Our volunteer watervole surveyors continued to collect evidence of the presence of this much-loved river rodent. We also ran days to share our surveying expertise with fellow conservation groups including Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Bristol Avon Rivers Trust and Pewsey Avon River Restoration.

**Anna Forbes**  
Senior Project Officer





# Removing Barriers

MAKING OUR RIVERS AND STREAMS BETTER PLACES  
FOR NATURE





## ARK and its partners are determined to undo the damage of past centuries.

Altering rivers to suit human activity is a familiar issue across the Kennet and Pang catchments.

Weirs, sluices and dams degrade habitats where the river has become impounded. They also restrict the free passage of fish resulting in fragmented populations that are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change or pollution incidents.

The optimum solution is removal of a structure. However, competing interests such as heritage, amenity, navigation and flood control can make this difficult. By-pass channels are the next-best alternatives but still can't tackle the underlying ecological damage caused by the impoundment.

In recent years ARK has worked hard to re-open blocked rivers or at the very least make it easier for fish, including eels, to move about. For example, alterations to a mill structure at the top of the Shalbourne Stream have

seen fish reaching upstream spawning grounds for the first time in centuries.

Further projects are in the pipeline on the Priors Moor Ditch, on the River Kennet at County Lock Weir in Reading and Bear Water in Hungerford, and on the River Pang at Tidmarsh Mill. What's more, our volunteers will soon be surveying the River Enborne for barriers using the ObstacleEELS method, trialled last year in the Thames Catchment Community Eels Project.

As ever, much of this work relies on ARK working alongside our partners in the Environment Agency, Natural England, Canal & Rivers Trust, Wild Trout Trust, Rivers Trusts and crucially private riparian owners and fisheries managers.

**Rupert Kelton**  
Project Manager

**Mia Ridler**  
Project Officer



# Accounts

## Year Ended 31 March 2022

Statement of Financial Activities for the year to 31 March 2022

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £	Prior period total funds £
<b>INCOME</b>				
Donations	56,588	20,000	76,388	56,588
Grants	16,875	572,877	589,752	253,444
Other trading activities	2,886	-	2,886	1,475
Investments	2,011	-	2,011	1,778
<b>Total</b>	<b>78,160</b>	<b>592,877</b>	<b>671,037</b>	<b>313,285</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON:</b>				
Raising funds	7,654	-	7,654	5,353
Charitable activities	37,188	406,444	443,632	170,489
Governance	2,313	-	2,313	2,587
<b>Total</b>	<b>47,155</b>	<b>406,444</b>	<b>453,600</b>	<b>178,429</b>
Net realised gains/(losses) on investments	984	-	984	847
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>	<b>31,989</b>	<b>186,443</b>	<b>218,421</b>	<b>135,703</b>
Transfer	(9,467)	9,467	-	-
<b>Other recognised gains/(losses)</b>				
Gains/(losses) on revaluation of investments	3,848	-	3,848	11,524
<b>Net Movement in Funds</b>	<b>26,370</b>	<b>195,900</b>	<b>222,269</b>	<b>147,227</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>				
Total funds brought forward	246,534	184,189	430,723	283,496
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>272,904</b>	<b>340,088</b>	<b>652,992</b>	<b>430,723</b>



## Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2022

ASSETS	2022	2021
	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>		
Tangible assets	102,612	105,147
Investments	72,865	68,254
<b>Total fixed assets</b>	<b>175,477</b>	<b>173,401</b>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Debtors	313,176	151,021
Cash at bank and in hand	198,017	135,868
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>511,193</b>	<b>286,889</b>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(33,678)	(29,567)
<b>Net current assets/(liabilities)</b>	<b>477,515</b>	<b>257,322</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>652,992</b>	<b>430,723</b>
<b>FUNDS OF THE CHARITY</b>		
Unrestricted funds	272,904	246,534
Restricted funds	380,088	184,189
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>652,992</b>	<b>430,723</b>

### NOTE

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, and in accordance with applicable accounting standards, the Charities Act 2011, the Charities SORP and the Financial Reporting Standard (FRS 102).



## Officers

Patron:	Lord Kennet
Chairman:	Richard Clarke (Chairman and Trustee)
Hon. Treasurer:	Martin Gibson (Treasurer and Trustee)
Technical Adviser:	John Lawson
Ecological Adviser:	Peter Marren
River Habitat Adviser:	John Hounslow
Committee:	Kevin Light, Judy Pitts (Trustee), Robert Starr, David Hill (Trustee)
Director:	Charlotte Hitchmough

The charity is constituted as a trust governed by a constitution. Trustees are elected annually by the members.

## Benefactors and donors 2021-22

Rosalind Allen  
Tim Delyle-Turner  
Environment Agency  
G C Gibson Charitable Settlement  
Green Recovery Challenge Fund  
Greenham Trust  
MADT  
Revere Charitable Trust  
Tesco Community Grants  
Thames 21  
Thames Water  
Wiltshire Community Foundation  
Rivers & Wetlands Community Days  
Rabley Gallery  
Waitrose

**Thank you to all the other individuals and businesses whose contributions make our work possible.**



## Action for the River Kennet

Avebury, Elcot Park, Marlborough, SN8 2BG  
t: 01672 512700 | e: [info@riverkennet.org](mailto:info@riverkennet.org) | w: [www.riverkennet.org](http://www.riverkennet.org)  
Registered charity number: 1120725

If you'd like to find out more about ARK, volunteering opportunities or membership please visit our website at [www.riverkennet.org](http://www.riverkennet.org)

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## The fishing estates and organisations who support us:

Barton Court  
Benham Estate  
Chilton Estate  
Cotswold Fishery Association  
Craven Fishery  
Denford & Avington Estate  
Eastridge Estate  
Englefield Estate  
Hungerford Town & Manor  
Kennet Valley Fishery Association  
Marlborough College  
Morewood  
Newbury Angling Association  
Ramsbury Estates  
Ramsbury Manor

