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## **Action for the River Kennet receives grants of £278,000 from the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund**

- 68 projects have been awarded grants between £62k and £3.8 million to kick-start a pipeline of nature-based projects while creating and retaining jobs
- First funding round sees £40 million pot allocated, second round of funding to open in early 2021

**Sparkling Streams and the Thames Catchment Community Eel projects** are two of the first environmental projects awarded a grant from the government's £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund. ARK are partners in both projects. Sparkling Streams is a partnership between ARK, North Wessex Downs AONB, the Southern Streams Farmer Group, and Hungerford Town and Manor. The Thames Catchment Community Eels project is a partnership, between Thames Rivers Trust, Action for the River Kennet, South East Rivers Trust and Thames21.

The **Sparkling Streams** project will work across the Shalbourne, Dun and middle Kennet to improve river habitat, water quality and fish passage. The active participation of the Southern Streams Farmers is particularly exciting and provides a truly 'catchment based approach' to river habitat restoration. We will be working with communities, volunteers and schools to encourage them protect and learn about these very valuable water courses.

The **Thames Catchment Community Eel project** will run workshops and activities for schools and groups to share the magical lifecycles of eels, teach people about eel habitats, history and modern threats to their survival, as well as looking at what we can do to help. The project will build a collaborative partnership to aid the long-term survival of the European eel. Through training and citizen science monitoring and development of a new surveying methodology we will be collecting and analysing robust data, to be used for strategic decisions for future eel projects. Together with education and engagement with communities we are raising the profile of this critically endangered fish.

Charlotte Hitchmough, ARK's director said 'these projects are really exciting, they enable us to make real improvements to some of the most damaged rivers in our catchment, as well as providing plenty of opportunities for people to learn about rivers and their wildlife. Both projects give us the opportunity to work with other fantastic organisations, and involve hundreds more people, as well as creating new jobs'

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund is a key part of Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan to kick-start

nature recovery and tackle climate change. The fund is being delivered by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.

**Environment Minister, Rebecca Pow, said:**

“These projects will drive forward work across England to restore and transform our landscapes, boost nature and create green jobs, and will be a vital part of helping us to build back greener from coronavirus.

“I look forward to working with environmental organisations as these projects help address the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change, while creating and retaining jobs as part of the green recovery.”

**Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive, National Lottery Heritage Fund, said:**

“Supporting our natural environment is one of the most valuable things we can do right now. All these projects are of huge benefit to our beautiful countryside and wildlife, but will also support jobs, health and wellbeing, which are vitally important as we begin to emerge from the coronavirus crisis.”

The government’s forthcoming [Environment Bill](#) puts the environment at the centre of policy making to ensure that we have a cleaner, greener and more resilient country for the next generation. The fund is supporting a range of nature conservation and recovery and nature-based solutions projects, which will contribute towards government’s wider [25 Year Environment Plan](#) commitments, including commitments to increase tree-planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

- 21 projects will receive the larger grants (over £250k - £5m) and 47 projects awarded funding for the smaller grants (£50 - £250k).

For more information contact

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