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Elcot Creative	Natural England	Thames Water
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Grove Farm	Ramsbury Building Services	Waitrose
Hobhouse Charitable Trust	Ramsbury Estates	WWF
Ian Smith	Reekie Charitable Trust	
James and Annabel Dallas	Revere Charitable Trust	<b>Our members, volunteers and supporters</b>
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Action for the River Kennet

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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) or contact Linda Nemeth: [linda@riverkennet.org](mailto:linda@riverkennet.org)

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Action for the River Kennet

# Action for the River Kennet Annual Report 2017

The Rivers Trust for the Kennet Catchment

# ARK's year in numbers



**Young hedge trees** were planted at our Stonebridge reserve in Marlborough to improve the environment and create new habitats



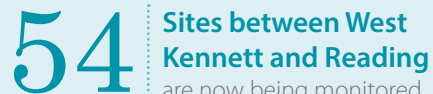
**Children took part** in ARK river and water activities through their schools and other special events



**Different people** contributed their time and expertise to our indoor and outdoor projects during the year



**Species of animals and plants** have now been recorded at our Stonebridge Wild River Reserve



**Sites between West Kennett and Reading** are now being monitored by our riverfly recorders to check for pollution



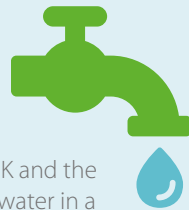
**Hours were worked by our volunteers** on practical conservation and scientific recording projects



**Farmers engaged with ARK** to improve the health of the river as well as increasing the productivity of their own land



**Adults attended outreach talks** about the work of ARK and the importance of using water in a sustainable way



**Litres of water** were slowed and infiltrated as a result of the construction of ARK-sponsored rain gardens



**The amount of income leveraged** for our conservation projects from every £1 subscribed by our members



In June ARK celebrated a major milestone: the opening of the new pipeline to provide Swindon with an alternative water supply.

This £30 million investment means that the south of Swindon is no longer solely reliant on the Kennet for its water. As a result, Thames Water can reduce the quantity of water abstracted from Axford and Ogbourne during low flow periods. Abstraction has been the most long-standing issue for ARK and the river, which makes this breakthrough truly a cause for celebration.

We were joined by representatives from the Environment Agency, Natural England, WWF and the local community at a ceremonial event by the Kennet, hosted by Thames Water and attended by their new CEO Steve Robertson. The event not only marked

Creating a better future for the Kennet through:

- 1 **Creative Conservation**  
Read more on page 6-7
- 2 **Citizen Science**  
Read more on page 8-9
- 3 **Agricultural Advice**  
Read more on page 10-11
- 4 **ARK in the Classroom**  
Read more on page 12-13
- 5 **Everyone's River**  
Read more on page 14-15
- 6 **Winning Support**  
Read more on page 16-17

the first step in reducing abstraction, but was a celebration of the benefits of working together towards shared objectives.

The story of abstraction of water from the Kennet at Axford to quench the thirst of Swindon has a long history and starts well before my association with ARK began, but I am delighted to have witnessed the first step in redressing the balance. I am also committed to ensuring that this is just that – a first step in reducing abstraction, and I look forward to further discussions with Thames Water about how we can ensure that the river is protected for future generations to enjoy. I am heartened by Thames Water's Chief Executive's ambition for abstraction to be reduced further than the minimum requirement of the new licence.

Jack Ainslie, a former Chairman and founder member, was fond of recounting that at ARK's inaugural



ARK Chairman Richard Clarke, The Angling Trust National Campaigns Co-ordinator Martin Salter and Richard Benyon MP celebrate the opening of Thames Water's new Swindon pipeline.

meeting the Town Hall was so full that people were 'hanging from the rafters'. That grass-roots support from our members and supporters has continued for over 20 years and has been instrumental in achieving this positive outcome.

Abstraction from the Kennet is still happening, and most of it is to supply the local area. Swindon isn't growing in splendid isolation; all settlements are expanding and with an increase in population and households there is an ever-larger demand on the finite water resources.

Local people all along the Valley are a critical part of the abstraction story. It is their use of water that will determine whether it will have a happy ending. That is why ARK has put so much effort into working with schools and young people, to show them the wonderful wildlife in our rivers and teach them and their families that using water wisely really has an impact on the health of the water ecosystem.

As I write this, the aquifer level measured at Rockley is well below normal for the time of year. The summer may have felt 'wet' but a very dry winter followed by prolonged periods of dry weather through the spring and autumn has left the river struggling again. This year we really do need a wet winter to recharge the aquifer if it is to be in good shape to keep the rivers flowing through next summer. And while none of us can control the weather, we do all have a part to play in using only the water we need.

Of course, healthy rivers need the water flowing in them to be clean as well as plentiful. I have been very

pleased to see ARK's partnership with Natural England's catchment-sensitive farming initiative going from strength to strength. We are lucky to have a growing group of farmers in the Kennet Valley who are keen to use agricultural techniques that reduce runoff, soil erosion, pollution and flooding while at the same time increasing infiltration and biodiversity.

As Brexit approaches it is critical that water-friendly farming is rewarded in whatever replaces the existing system of funding for farmers. It was therefore exciting to see the River Kennet and ARK's research into phosphate levels and algal growth feature in WWF's *Nature Needs You* campaign and their new *Flushed Away* publication. Being able to contribute to wider conversations and policies is a key part of our role.

In a similar vein, ARK has been working with local authorities, schools and other partners to explore ways of managing the built environment that can allow us to reap the benefits of green infrastructure in terms of reducing water pollution, reducing flooding and improving the spaces we live and work in.

I would like to end by saying thank you to members past and present, and to those of you who volunteer for ARK, whether promoting messages around wise use of water, or doing the back-breaking work in and around the river. Your support has got us to this point and the river and its wildlife is all the better for it.

*Richard Clarke*  
CHAIRMAN



# Creative Conservation

CARING FOR OUR CHALKSTREAMS AND THEIR WILDLIFE



## Restoring habitats is one of ARK's most important activities – and great fun too!

Our Bearwater Community River Days project on the River Dun in Hungerford showed how you can get local people involved and investing in their river to great effect. The project restored 150 metres of riverbank to a more natural state.

Together we have put in place a sinuous marginal zone of native plants that has created a habitat corridor for insects, fish, birds and mammals. Visually the riverbank is more attractive for people and the work is preventing further erosion.

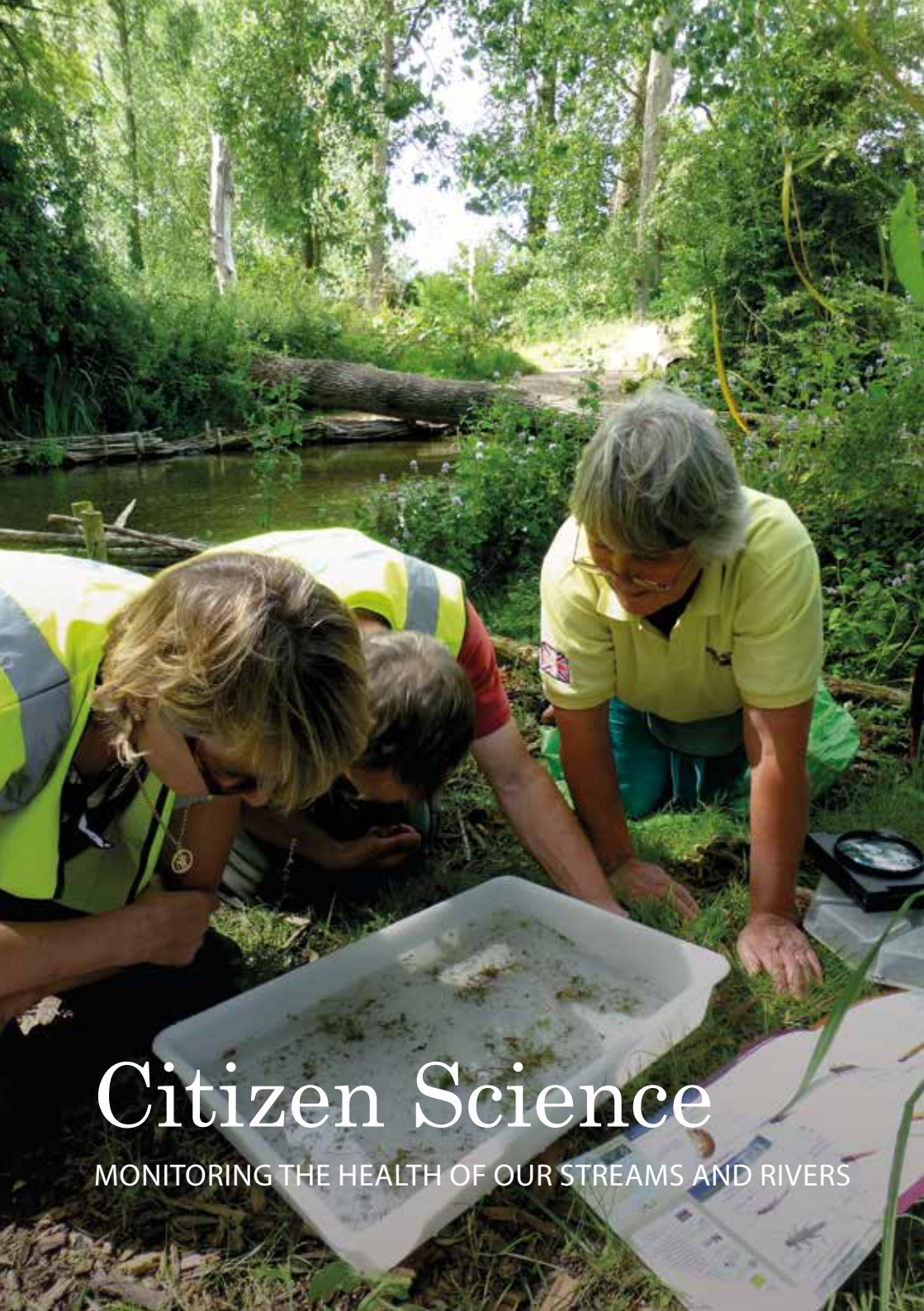
Volunteers ranged in age from 17 to 84. Over a period of seven days 47 volunteers contributed no fewer than 582 hours to the work. Those who could not don waders helped from the riverbank or baked lots of cakes. For many participants new skills were learnt, friendships were made and a love for the river was ignited.

Over the summer we ran conservation afternoons exclusively for teenagers

as a way of introducing young people to practical river habitat improvement work. The fun of sporting waders, using tools and (under guidance) carrying out techniques to restore a stretch of their local river proved very enjoyable and successful.

The huge habitat restoration project we carried out around Minal has been settling well. Already the river is looking much improved, new fish spawning has been observed and there are already good stands of starwort and the start of ranunculus growth. The final phase is planned for 2018, funded by the Environment Agency. This last part of work will improve fish passage up and downstream of Minal and add to the river bank restoration, leading to robust and healthy wild fish populations.

[Charlotte Hitchmough/Anna Forbes](#)  
Director/Project Officer & Volunteer  
Co-ordinator



# Citizen Science

MONITORING THE HEALTH OF OUR STREAMS AND RIVERS



## ARK's trained volunteers collect the scientific data which informs our practical conservation.

ARK is celebrating the tenth year of its membership of the national Riverfly Partnership scheme. We now have 40 trained volunteers monitoring the abundance of these important indicators at 54 separate locations. This year we established six new sites on the Kennet, increased our coverage on the Lambourn and also now have sites on the Enbourne, Priors Moor and Emm.

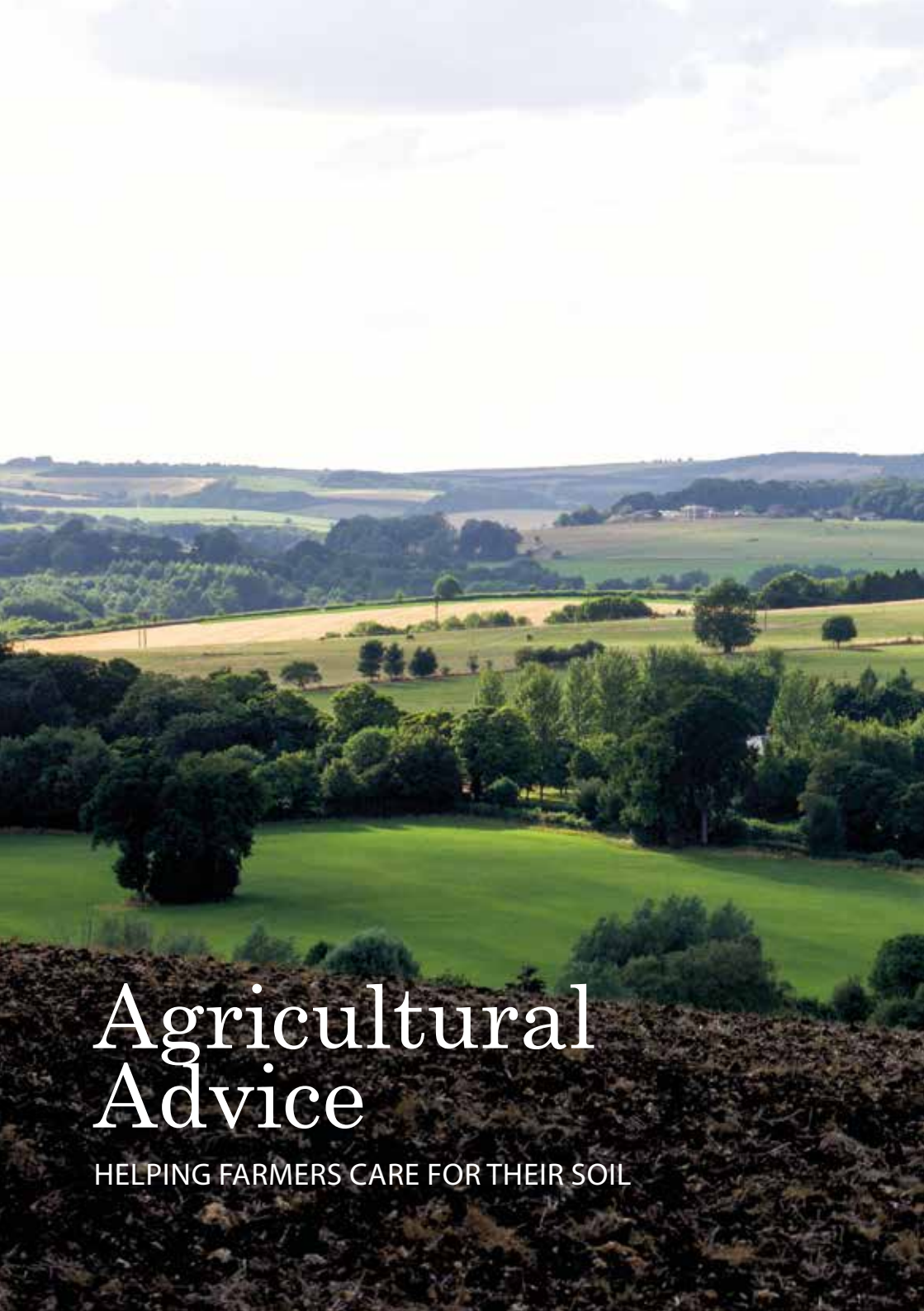
We ran three Riverfly Partnership accredited training workshops during the year to educate and inspire new volunteers in Wiltshire and Berkshire. In October we held an introduction to riverflies for riverkeepers. Next year we are running a workshop at Avington Estate and Denford Fishery so that keepers can monitor their own stretches for pollution and invertebrate trends.

Our water vole surveyors have this year focused on pre-habitat restoration surveys. This is a vital step in ensuring the presence of this protected species is incorporated into river habitat

improvement projects. Surveying before our river restoration project on the Dun at Bearwater, Hungerford, found no trace of these endangered mammals but since the work was completed there has been at least one positive sighting of this endearing rodent.

Our trained water-quality testers are continuing to monitor levels of nitrate and phosphate between Clatford and Reading. First Marlborough Brownies are diligently testing the river and wetland at the Stonebridge Wild River Reserve in Marlborough. This is helping us measure the health of these freshwater habitats and is teaching the Brownies about the importance of water quality. Recently their data demonstrated how effective our wetland is at filtering the road pollution from the A4 that previously ran straight into the Kennet.

**Anna Forbes**  
ARK Project Officer & Volunteer  
Co-ordinator



# Agricultural Advice

HELPING FARMERS CARE FOR THEIR SOIL



## Diffuse pollution is the enemy of a healthy river – but ARK is determined to fight it.

Water quality is worse in catchments where there is a lot of intensive farming. Tackling diffuse pollution from agriculture has been the aim of Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) for the past ten years. CSF focuses on areas where such work will have the greatest effect, which is why CSF and ARK have formed a partnership to tackle the problem of diffuse pollution in the Kennet catchment.

Nutrients, sediment, pesticides, slurry and manures all cause problems when they get into water. Add to these the gaseous emissions of methane, nitrous oxide and ammonia and we see that it's both water and air that need protecting. The effects of water and air pollution are exacerbated by extreme weather events that seem to be the legacy of a changing climate.

Farmers can and want to solve these diffuse pollution problems. In many cases, small changes in the way they manage their land are sufficient to stop the diffuse pollution at source.

In others, capital grants can help to finance new infrastructure to contain the problem, or prevent it occurring in the first place.

If a group of farmers put their collective efforts into solving the diffuse pollution problems, then improvement is not just at the farm scale, but at catchment and landscape scale. It also happens much more quickly when people work together.

One such group is alive and kicking in the Kennet catchment, and there are more springing up behind it. Funded by Natural England, the group defines its own aims (helped by a facilitator) and decides what the priorities should be in terms of environmental stewardship and training. Look out for groups of farmers in the future; they will be the ones championing sympathetic and sustainable management of the countryside.

Timothy Clarke  
Farm Advisor



# ARK in the Classroom

ENCOURAGING YOUNG PEOPLE TO CARE FOR WATER



## The future guardians of our precious rivers are the young people of today.

Showing the younger generation the wonders of our chalk streams and their wildlife, and how we can protect them is one of the most enjoyable parts of ARK's work. In 2016 ARK worked with more than 1,000 children as part of the Water Matters campaign funded by Thames Water.

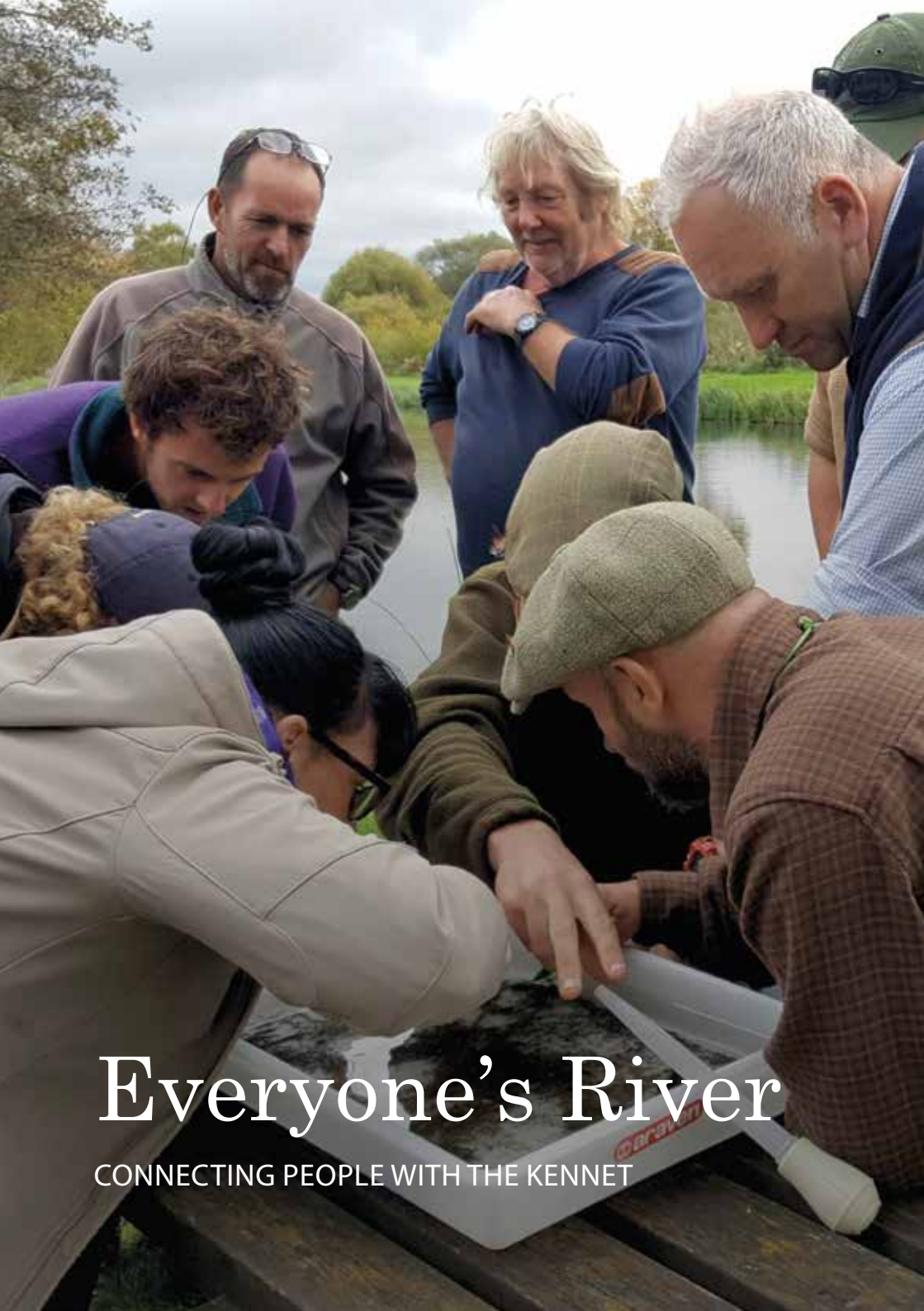
Our flagship projects Trout in School and Eel in School have introduced children to the life-cycles of these amazing creatures and provided the chance to show them the local river environment that they live in.

We now have a waiting list of schools keen to take part in the Water Matters programme and we look forward to working with lots more children in the coming years. Our EmRiver tabletop stream model has also proven to be a useful addition to the activities we can offer to schools and groups, suitable for all ages from pre-school right up to A-level.

During the past year ARK has helped two schools to reduce their impact in the catchment by building rain gardens in their playgrounds. The rain gardens reduce the amount of impermeable surface in the playground, slowing down and filtering storm water. This helps increase the amount of water that soaks into the ground and down to the aquifer.

Because the gardens limit the quantity of water flowing into drains and sewers, the risks of sewer overflows and surface-water flooding are significantly reduced. As well as being fun and interesting spaces for children to enjoy, the gardens increase the proportion of green space in the school. What's more, all the extra plants attract butterflies, bees and other vital pollinators.

**Charlotte Hitchmough**  
Director



# Everyone's River

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH THE KENNET



## Understand why our chalkstreams matter – but also how we can enjoy them.

In contrast to 2016 this year's ARK members' River Walk took place in glorious autumn sunshine. Existing members and new strolled the stunning but usually private chalk stream riverbanks of The Old Mill and Howe Mill in Ramsbury.

ARK River School launched this year, providing hands-on, fun, outdoor learning. We've been getting local children's groups and the elderly into and alongside their local river. And if they cannot get to the river we take the natural world to them! These sessions are all about memorable experiences that improve understanding and increase interaction that will lead to participants having a greater appreciation of the chalk streams and rivers, and the surrounding habitats.

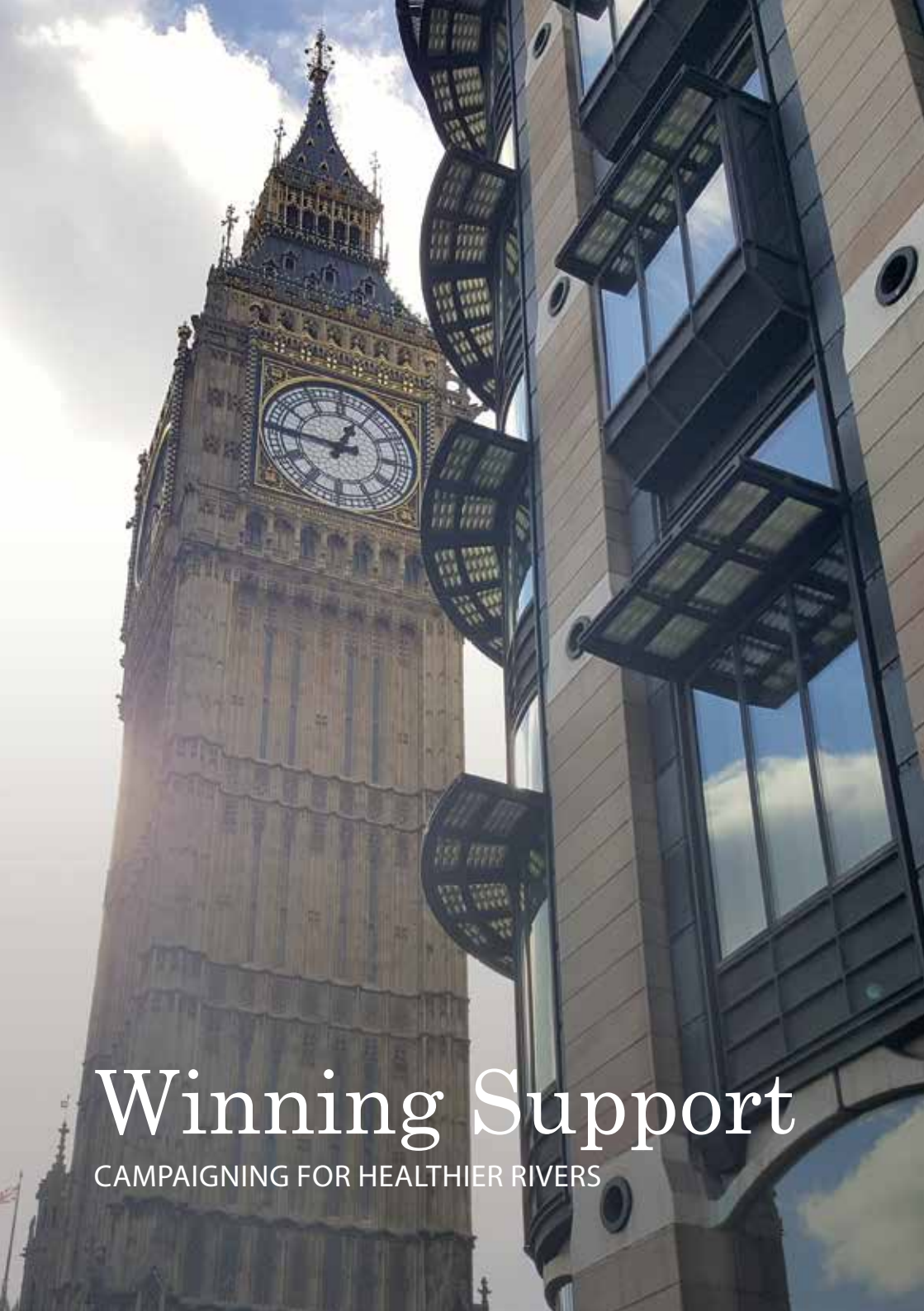
We gave talks across the catchment to a variety of WIs, U3As and other organisations, not only to raise awareness of ARK's work but also to explain the importance of water and

ivers to our lives. These presentations are a key way of communicating how everyone can help protect the Kennet and its tributaries, whether it's buying phosphate-free dishwasher tablets or not putting wet wipes down the loo.

Stonebridge Wild River Reserve is a great site to introduce people of all ages and backgrounds to a chalk stream and water meadow, and to the abundance of native wildlife that depends on these ecosystems. It is an exemplar of how wildlife and the community can co-exist. The birth of a Belted Galloway calf in the conservation grazing area in October was exciting for everyone and we look forward to welcoming our little herd back next year. We are looking forward to running more free public events at the reserve and downstream that provide new ways for the community to interact with nature.

**Anna Forbes**  
Project Officer & Volunteer Co-ordinator





# Winning Support

CAMPAIGNING FOR HEALTHIER RIVERS



## ARK can't do everything on its own – which is why we welcome like-minded partners.

This year ARK have continued to host the Kennet Catchment Partnership. The partnership is growing, and together we are working throughout the catchment to help all water bodies to reach Good Ecological Status. The partnership's actions are guided by the Kennet Catchment Management Plan, which is a live document available at [www.kennetcatchment.org](http://www.kennetcatchment.org).

As Britain prepares to leave the EU there are new opportunities to strengthen laws and commit to a long-term plan that ensures that our rivers and water environments are restored to a healthy state. ARK have been pleased to be invited to speak directly to ministers in Westminster to share our experience in the Kennet and emphasise the importance of keeping and strengthening the environmental legislation created with the EU.

ARK is one of the most established Rivers Trusts in the country, and as such we have been sharing our knowledge

with other trusts and organisations by speaking at conferences across the country. Sharing best practice and learning from others has an important part to play in getting the best results for all our rivers.

Great progress has been made to reduce water abstraction, but there is scope for more improvement. At the same time, data shows a mixed picture of water quality in the Kennet. High phosphate concentrations trigger algal growth, which smothers the healthy water plant 'stream water crowfoot'. To support WWF's *Nature Needs You* campaign ARK has been monitoring phosphate levels and algal growth in the Kennet. The research formed part of WWF's evidence base for their 2017 report *Flushed Away* – an influential document to drive improvements in wastewater treatment.

**Charlotte Hitchmough**  
Director

# Accounts

## Year Ended 31 March 2016-17

### Income and Expenditure Account Assets and Liabilities as at 31 March 2017

	2017	2016
	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>		
Donations	20,334	24,627
Grants	130,931	276,787
Other trading activities	750	2,714
Investments	1,719	1,621
<b>Total income</b>	<b>153,734</b>	<b>305,749</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Raising funds	2,565	4,258
Charitable activities	116,038	228,778
Governance	3,333	3,123
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>121,936</b>	<b>236,159</b>
Net gains/(losses) on investments	520	217
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>	<b>32,318</b>	<b>69,373</b>
Transfers between funds	3,666	-
Other recognised gains/(losses)	3,001	(7)
<b>Net Movement in Funds</b>	<b>35,319</b>	<b>69,366</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>		
Total funds brought forward	240,151	170,785
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>275,470</b>	<b>240,151</b>

### Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2017

ASSETS	2017	2016
	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>		
Tangible assets	83,210	85,097
Investments	43,160	36,398
<b>Total fixed assets</b>	<b>126,370</b>	<b>121,495</b>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Debtors	23,237	9,438
Cash at bank and in hand	139,431	128,963
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>162,668</b>	<b>138,401</b>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(13,568)	(19,745)
<b>Net current assets/(liabilities)</b>	<b>149,100</b>	<b>118,656</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>275,470</b>	<b>240,151</b>
<b>FUNDS OF THE CHARITY</b>		
General fund brought forward	170,658	170,785
Increase/(Decrease in fund in the year)	10,370	(127)
Restricted income funds	94,442	69,493
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>275,470</b>	<b>240,151</b>

#### NOTE

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, and on an accruals basis.