

Volunteer pack



A guide to volunteering with Action for the River Kennet



Action for the River Kennet

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Welcome to Action for the River Kennet

Thank you for volunteering with ARK. Our volunteers are hugely important to us, not only with giving us their time but through spreading awareness.

Volunteers enable us to deliver projects effectively, whilst giving local people the opportunity to get involved with their river. You can be part of preserving and improving our precious chalk streams. Our volunteer tasks provide a variety of opportunities to learn new skills, work with like minded individuals, see new stretches of river and know you are contributing to protecting these internationally rare rivers.

No prior experience is required. Often volunteers bring a wide range of skills and interests, please do share these with us as sometimes these can be matched with a specific project or task.

There is no set amount of time we require volunteers to volunteer with us. You are welcome to volunteer as regularly as suits you. Some specific volunteer roles do require more commitment, but these can be discussed if you express an interest in these roles.

Our volunteer tasks are popular and often get fully subscribed very quickly.

We require volunteers to book their place in advance of a task. If a task appeals to you do get in touch swiftly to avoid disappointment. We operate on a first come first served basis for the majority of our tasks.

Our arrangements with volunteers are not legally binding but we work off trust and mutual understanding of the agreed volunteer activities and arrangements.

If you have any health/medical issues/conditions, whether physical or mental that we should be aware of please email our volunteer co-ordinator in advance of volunteering

How can I get in touch with ARK?

Our Volunteer Co-ordinator Anna Forbes is contactable via email anna@riverkennet.org and by telephone 07780381709.

You can find our Volunteer Programme on our website www.riverkennet.org

If you would like to be added to our volunteer database and receive our Volunteer Programmes directly as well as hear about any additional volunteering opportunities contact Anna.

In this pack, you will find everything you need to get started as one of our volunteers. This document aims to answer any of the questions you have about volunteering with us, however if you have additional questions after reading this do not hesitate to get in touch with us.



Who we are and what we do

ARK is an environmental charity and is the Rivers Trust for the Kennet catchment and the Pang catchment.

We are dedicated to the conservation and restoration of these globally rare chalk streams, working at a catchment scale towards healthy rivers for wildlife and for people. Our rivers include the Kennet, the Og, the Lambourn, the Enborne, the Holy Brook, the Foudry Brook, the North Brook Stream and the Pang.

We are a membership organisation. You are welcome to be both a volunteer and a member or one or the other.

What we do

River restoration

Every year we have a number of restoration projects at varying scales. These are designed to protect our rivers and make them more resilient. River restoration often aims to improve biodiversity.

Farming advice

We work closely with farmer cluster groups and individuals to provide information and advice to benefit our rivers.

Rain gardens

We've been building rain gardens in the grounds of primary schools since 2017. Rain gardens are a great way to educate schools and the wider community about the importance and value of water. They reduce the amount of rainwater going down the drain and provide permeable spaces for it to slowly filter into the chalk aquifer, that feeds our rivers.

Wetland creation

We build wetlands, well designed wetlands help to alleviate flooding, filter runoff pollution and increase groundwater infiltration. They can also be fantastic amenities for people and new habitats for a wide variety of native wildlife species.

Educational outreach

We engage and work with schools, brownie, cub, scout, beaver and rainbow groups, as well as all ages of the wider community to raise public awareness of our rivers and their importance. We want people to connect with and value their rivers. We run River Schools, events, give presentations and talks; and have stands at a range of events and shows. Visit our website and social media platforms to find out more.

Catchment Partnership Host

We work with our partners collaboratively to improve the health of our rivers, acting as the host for the Kennet Catchment Partnership and the Pang Catchment.

Citizen science

We train volunteers to use recognised surveying and monitoring techniques to collect robust data and make informed environmental decisions to monitor the health of our rivers and identify pollution incidents and target sites for improvements. Our citizen science includes Riverfly monitoring, water vole surveying, water quality testing, eel barrier surveying and brown trout nest logging.

Being an ARK volunteer

What can you do?

There are a range of ways to join in and volunteer. Some tasks require more volunteers than others, whilst some tasks need to be carried out at certain times of the year.

We work covering a large geographic area. You are welcome to stay local or travel to volunteer with us. Some volunteers prefer to stay on dry (ish) on land and others prefer in river work. Often tasks will provide both of these, but some are purely one or the other.

- Habitat improvement work/ river restoration
- Invasive non native species removal
- Surveying and monitoring
- River litter picks
- Education and raising awareness
- Fundraising
- Filming and photography work
- Maintenance and repair work



Benefits of being an ARK volunteer

As a volunteer you have the opportunity to develop or gain new skills, as well as having an enjoyable experience with us.

Benefits of volunteering with ARK can include:

- Learning about conservation and the environment
- Getting outdoors in the fresh air
- Keeping fit
- Igniting new interests
- Getting closer to nature
- Improved physical and mental wellbeing
- Building confidence and self-esteem
- Developing communication skills
- Meeting new people of all ages and from a range of backgrounds
- Exploring new places
- Potential training opportunities
- Giving back to your community
- Knowing you are helping improve rivers
- Having fun

If you volunteer with us and work with children, young people, or vulnerable adults you must undertake an 'enhanced disclosure check' through the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS). Volunteers will not be given any responsibility or left without supervision until conformation of their DBS status has been received. This will be arranged and paid for by ARK. If this disclosure is returned with details of a criminal record, then we may not be able to offer you any voluntary work, particularly that involves children, young people, and vulnerable adults.



What you can expect from us

Our commitment to you

We aim to support you as best we can when you volunteer with us, trying to ensure that you:

- Have the task clearly explained, what it is, why it is being carried out, what it aims to achieve. Your role will be explained and demonstrations given where needed
- Have safe working conditions, access to health and safety equipment, and the appropriate PPE for your role/task
- Will receive the opportunity to attend training where appropriate
- Will have your records kept in confidence
- Will have the opportunity to put your ideas forward
- Will be thanked and valued for your contributions

What we ask of you

As a volunteer you are an ambassador for ARK and are an invaluable way of promoting the work we do and recruiting more volunteers.

As such you are representing us, and we ask that you remember that your behaviour will reflect on our organisation. Therefore, we ask that you:

- Listen to risk assessments at the start of each task and ask if anything is unclear to you or you have any questions
- Share an up to date emergency contact number with the task leader at the start of each task
- Report any accidents and near misses to the organisation so they can be recorded
- Respect others
- Be reliable and trustworthy and inform the task leader or co-ordinator if you are unable to attend or fulfil your role/task



Important information

Health & safety

A staff member of ARK will provide a risk assessment, provision of PPE and tools.

At each task there will be an in date first aider, a first aid kit and an accident book. A throwline will be carried when working in or near water.

As a volunteer we expect you take all reasonable steps to make sure safe working practices are carried out. General hazards and procedures when volunteering and walking by rivers are outlined below .

Lone working should be avoided wherever possible. In some circumstances, where you need to carry out duties alone you will be fully briefed on our 'Buddy system' protocol.

Can I use my own private vehicle?

If you are using your own vehicle for ARK business, you must check with your insurance company if you have adequate cover. This is not normally a problem as most insurance companies recognise that voluntary work is not a 'business use' of a vehicle and should not incur any additional costs.

Equal opportunities

We expect all staff and volunteers not to behave in a discriminatory way towards fellow staff and volunteers. We will always respect the right of a volunteer to decline a task.

Insurance

Volunteers are covered under our employer's liability insurance and public liability insurance.

Volunteer records

Volunteer details are held on our volunteer database based upon the information supplied when you signed up. For example, we ask for information about any relevant medical information. We also retain your records to make sure you are kept up to date with the organisation and any volunteering opportunities. These records are kept confidentially. Please keep us up to date if there are any changes.

