



20th October 2020

ARK Water Matters project connecting with schools during COVID

Action for the River Kennet (ARK) is working in new and innovative ways to connect local school children to their rivers, through their Water Matters project.

The local charity, which is the Rivers Trust for the Kennet Catchment, has adapted to COVID restrictions and is running live classes and workshops via Zoom, and still taking students out to the river where that's possible.

The project has an important message: water is a valuable resource and the water we all use comes from the underground chalk aquifers that feed our chalk streams. There's a vital link to make, the more water we use the less that is left to support these globally rare chalk rivers and streams, like the Kennet. Being Water Smart (water efficient) is a small thing that everyone can do to keep their local river flowing and healthy.

'Through lockdown it has been great to see so many young people outdoors enjoying their local rivers. We are helping students understand that their local chalk streams are globally rare. There are only about 200 of them in the world we are very lucky to have 85% of them here in England. This project helps all children to learn about the rivery wildlife they can see close to home, and to find out what they can do to protect it', said ARK Director Charlotte Hitchmough.

Schools have access to three hands on activities which show them what lives in the river and then what these amazing creatures need to thrive. They learn the importance of plentiful unpolluted, flowing water, with a mosaic of healthy habitats.

Project Officer Anna Forbes explains 'Although COVID restrictions mean we cannot be in the classroom in person, we are still providing live freshwater wildlife and identification

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| Chairman | Richard Clarke |
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| Technical Adviser | John Lawson |
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equipment, so that students can still have a really exciting experience and gain valuable identification skills. I am there with them live on Zoom to run the workshop on the classroom big screen.'

Marlborough St Mary's year 6 teacher Mrs Jenny Swankie said, 'We are so lucky to have been able to continue to take part in the Water Matters sessions this term. Luckily ARK found a way to make our sessions work despite the COVID restrictions in place in school. The children thoroughly enjoyed their Zoom sessions and are really looking forward to their final session after half term with the water invertebrates.'

The Water Matter Project is in partnership with Thames Water. 'We're delighted to be supporting ARK with their 'Water Matters' project and helping them to continue their great work with schools in the River Kennet Catchment. We have a shared ambition to protect our rivers, and we hope this project will highlight to some of our youngest customers how they can play a part in looking after their watercourses. We believe that by working with environmental organisations like ARK, the link between our business and the local environment comes to life for our customers and inspires them to look after water, which is such a precious resource.', said Thames Water Education Manager Paul Hampton.

If your school would like to be part of ARK Water Waters contact Anna Forbes by email anna@riverkennet.org

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For more details contact Anna Forbes. Email anna@riverkennet.org Tele 07780381709



Notes to editors

Image: Image attached to email Marlborough St Mary's year 6 classes having their first of three Water Matters activity with ARK.