

## **Action for the River Kennet's AGM sparks lively debate on Beavers**

Action for the River Kennet's AGM, held in Hungerford last week stimulated some robust discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of releasing Beavers back to rivers in the Kennet catchment.

After the main business of the meeting, during which new committee member Judy Pitts was elected, the packed room welcomed speakers from the Beaver Trust, the Conservative Environment Network, Kennet Valley Fishery Association and local river keepers.

Beavers were native to the Kennet and other lowland rivers until the sixteenth century, when they were hunted to extinction. These dam building rodents have been reintroduced to other rivers in England and Scotland where their natural engineering skills have improved water quality and reduced flood risk. There was some robust, good natured debate about whether beavers should return to the Kennet, and whether the same benefits seen in headwaters of other rivers would be evident on chalk streams, where the start of the river moves depending on the season.

The volunteer of the year award was presented to Sean Dempster in recognition of the hundreds of hours of work he has given to teach children about the value of rivers as part of ARK's Water Matters schools programme, as well as the time he has spent in the river on habitat restoration projects.

The meeting was followed by drinks and informal discussions. The Annual Report for 2019 is available online.

**More information:** [www.riverkennet.org](http://www.riverkennet.org) or 01672 512700

**Annual Report:**

[http://www.riverkennet.org/uploads/files/files/ARKAnnualReport2019%20\(web\).pdf](http://www.riverkennet.org/uploads/files/files/ARKAnnualReport2019%20(web).pdf)