



Staffordshire Trent Valley Catchment Partnership

Update: Summer 2018

It's great to get out to see and support the great work that's happening across the Staffordshire Trent Valley Catchment area, the dedication of the catchment partners and the many volunteers is a great inspiration. Also great to go back and visit some completed projects to see how the projects have changed and improved our rivers and streams.

Thank you to all who have sent in articles and updates, please do keep sending information to me I really enjoy hearing about what's happening and sharing with others. Thanks, Mel.

Sharing Best Practice

I was invited to attend the Tame and Anker Mease Catchment Partnership meeting hosted by Zara at Severn Trent Water which included a farm visit to see what John Plumb has been doing at Southfields Farm.

John has undertaken a river restoration project with advice from the Environment Agency and the Tame Valley Wetlands Partnership. A bund at the edge of the river has been removed to allow water to naturally flood the adjacent meadow by slowing the flow. This natural flood management eases the pressure of flooding downstream in Tamworth.

Additionally, local gravels from the adjacent field have been added to the watercourse to improve the habitat, whilst fallen trees have been left in the watercourse to provide further habitat and fish refuge.

John is also in the process of installing rainwater harvesting equipment to one of his large buildings in order to filter the rainwater and collect in a large tank.

Thanks to John and the Tame and Anker Mease partnership for their hospitality and a great opportunity to share.



Woody material left in watercourse



Southfields Rainwater Harvesting

If you would like to know more about any of the articles featured - or would like to get involved - contact Mel the STV coordinator at: m.westlake@staffs-wildlife.org.uk

Award Winning Flood Alleviation Scheme

Congratulations to the Crayfish Team!

The construction of a flood storage reservoir in Rugeley town centre required temporary de-watering of two sections of a watercourse with a population of the nationally and locally-threatened native white-clawed crayfish. Work was carried out to mitigate the impact but to also to strengthen the chances of their survival by establishing a new population in a safe location.

In doing so this scheme has been highly commended by CIEEM in their Best Practice Award 2018. Fantastic work and thanks to the partnership involving Staffordshire County Council, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Aecom, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and everyone else involved. This will help secure the future of our struggling native crayfish.



A 'berried' female translocated from Rugeley FAS to Brocton ark site, estimated 50 eggs

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has a new Rivers Manager

...here's what Paul Woodmin has to say

It's been nearly three months since I took up the post of Rivers Manager for SWT and the lead in delivering the ERDF funded SUNRISE Project. SUNRISE stands for Stoke and Urban Newcastle Rediscovering Its Secret Environments.

Coming from a background of conservation landscape contracting and with ten years of managing and coordinating Big Lottery projects with agricultural, horticultural and environmental focus I'm well used to the responsibilities now placed upon me. I am very pleased however, that I am now joined by Richard Guy our brand new SUNRISE Biodiversity Delivery Officer who has joined us from Moors of the Future Partnership. He has hit the ground running and will be helping to deliver all of our SUNRISE projects. Richard has been busy assisting our partners with preparation in getting the most ambitious and exciting SUNRISE project off the ground. This involves changing the River Trent from a concrete channel that crosses Stoke City Football Club's former home at the Victoria Ground, to a new, more naturalised, channel. In doing so this will create a more natural river with improved habitat and biodiversity.

Richard and I have now visited all of the sites that fall within the SUNRISE project and we are both struck with the amount of green space that Newcastle-Under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent have tucked away so close to the hustle and bustle that you'd expect from these two conurbations. We'll be updating you all as we progress.

If you want to find out more email Paul at p.woodmin@staffs-wildlife.org.uk



Paul and Richard visiting a weir due for removal at Cromer Road, Stoke.

What a difference!

A recent visit to Tag Marsh, adjacent to the Trentham Estate in Stoke-on-Trent, showed how the improvement work has made a huge difference in just two years.



Two years ago before work



During the work



River Trent channel at Trentham, Tag Marsh - note water crowfoot and gravels



Updates from our partners

South Staffs Water (SSW)

South Staffs Water and their Trial Farmer Rob Atkin of Atkin Farms hosted an Open Farm event on the 6th of June to showcase all the innovative work they have been trialling and some of Rob's SPRING Grant options too.

Over 100 turned up and took part in a tour round the farm which included a visit to the neighbouring farm of Mr Francis Mollatt to showcase some of his SPRING livestock options. Guests had the opportunity to look at the new SSW SPRING Mzuri Strip Tillage drill and some of the crops that have been drilled with a comparison to crops that had been drilled using a conventional min till drill, as well as seeing the biobed, nitrate trial plot, weather station and much more; the evening was a great success helped out by the lovely weather and a fantastic bbq.

This year also saw SSW become one of the major sponsors at the annual Staffordshire County Show where they had a large stand showcasing their catchment grant scheme, the trial farm, Mzuri drill and water efficiency and customer promise. The show had a fantastic turn out with a lot of new potential SPRING farmers interested in getting involved.



Rob on Trailer

© Nina Yiannoukos Benton (SSW)



Severn Trent Water award for the Friends of Lyme Brook

Zara Turtle of Severn Trent reports

The winners of Severn Trent's Cash for Catchments scheme have now been announced. Severn Trent received 35 applications for the scheme, which aimed to fund water environment improvements in the Severn Trent region.



The funding pot of £100k included donations from North Midland Construction and the Environment Agency, an additional £30k was then made available for a 'Dragons Den' style event where the shortlisted projects could present for further funding. Eight projects were shortlisted, and one was from our own Staffordshire Trent Valley catchment: 'Love Your River' Friends of Lyme Brook entered by Groundwork West Midlands!

The Friends of Lyme Brook is made up of local residents who are passionate about the Lyme Brook and want to see continued improvements in its water quality and biodiversity, and for it to be valued by the local community. The group undertake activities such as: river restoration tasks, habitat creation, invertebrate sampling, water quality testing, invasive non-native species control, and engagement activities.



Friends of Lyme Brook loving their river!

Updates from our Friends Groups

Friends of Lyme Brook undertake Urban Riverfly Monitoring

Alex Jones of Groundwork West Midlands reports

Following the Friends of Lyme Brook's recent success in accessing funding from the 'Cash for Catchments' scheme the group have received training on Urban RiverLife Monitoring provided by colleagues from the Environment Agency.



The training took place along the previously improved sections of the Lyme Brook as it flows through Lyme Valley Parkway in Urban Newcastle-under-Lyme and involved receiving indoor training in addition to a session of kick sampling and identifying invertebrates from the Brook.

The Friends were thrilled to uncover a good range of invertebrates from the samples recovered and are excited to put their newly developed skills and knowledge to use as part of an ongoing monitoring programme for the brook.

To find out more email alexander.jones@groundwork.org.uk



Urban RiverLife Monitoring

Friends of Bilbrook

The Friends of Bilbrook have continued the momentum of the work we carried out last year by removing Sycamore saplings along the river bank and generally trying to open up the canopy to allow smaller and medium size shrubs to take hold. This time of year is 'Balsam Bashing' time and we have been working with volunteers from the National Citizens Service, our local Beaver group and sixth form students from Codsall Community High School pulling up the invasive plant along a stretch of the Moat Brook. This year we have changed our strategy slightly in that we are working from the top of our 'patch' down stream. We have been pulling balsam for the last five years and are starting to notice a difference. There really isn't as much as there used to be so our hard work is having an effect.



Himalayan Balsam Bashing!

We hope to carry out some more river restoration work soon, opening up the thick tree canopy which crowds out the banks of the Moat Brook, adding more organic matter back into the water, creating more diverse aquatic habitats and putting some meanders back into the straightened sections. We have also continued with our education program working with local school children and youth groups, getting them closer to nature and developing an understanding of how we all fit into the ecosystem. This has been made a lot easier with our 'Forest Classroom' which was built with money donated from the Tesco carrier bag scheme. We can now host groups for extended periods of time, in a conducive learning environment. The classroom also doubles as a family picnic area which we hope will also be used by local residents to enjoy the beauty of nature which surrounds them in the Jubilee Wood and Moat Brook.



The opening of the Forest School area

Water monitoring continues in partnership with Waterside Care and our regular monthly check of the health of the water quality, river fly sampling and pond dipping ensures we keep an eye on the life in as well as out of the brook. We have more plans to improve the area with the addition of a community orchard being planted later this year. In a project partnership with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust through the Staffordshire Trent Valley Catchment Partnership and South Staffordshire Council, we will also be adding a wetland scrape later in the year to encourage more amphibians to the area and hopeful we will see frog and toad spawn in the wood next year.

As always there is much more we can do and it's always very exciting to spot new life in our wood and brook, rewarding all our hard work and reinforcing our mantra: If you build it, they will come.

If you want to find out more about the group check out the Facebook page Friends of Bilbrook or contact them at enquiries@friendsofbilbrook.org



Wild About Perton *Keith Elder, Chair, reports*

The River Penk begins at the unfashionable end of the catchment, emerging from a culvert in Wolverhampton, and then flowing as a gentle stream through Perton before snaking its way across southern Staffordshire to join the River Trent. The early reaches of the Penk don't attract much attention; not even map makers include it, and many locally couldn't tell you the name of the river. The Penk in Perton has been much altered over the generations, with much of the river buried and channelled, with its original course lost in the mist of time. But there remain some interesting patches.

Wild About Perton, a local friends group set up in 2006, speaks up for Penk in Perton. We began to investigate the quality of our local river and what lives in it, ten years ago. Now we have a dedicated group of volunteers who measure river quality at the same two locations each month, and also measure the invertebrate population using urban RiverLife monitoring. Our role is to monitor the health of the river and report any unusual events. Water quality is generally good with occasional pulses of ammonia and high nitrate readings which result from the built environment around us. The upper reaches of the Penk supports many freshwater invertebrate species including freshwater shrimp, some mayfly larvae and cased caddis. Three years ago we collaborated with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust who reintroduced white clawed crayfish to the Penk, so our monitoring is also an indicator of the success of the re-introduction.

Some local people now know the name of our river, and what lives in it because we take the river to people each year at our annual Spring Festival. The festival, which attracts some 1500 people, provides an opportunity to participate in river dipping and identifying. The festival also provides an opportunity to explain how the River Penk fits within the Staffordshire Trent Valley Partnership. Wild About Perton will continue to speak up for the river in Perton, and welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with specialist partners to improve our river for wildlife.

For more information call Keith on 07477 075899 or email keith.elder@hotmail.co.uk



Aquaviewing for bivalves



Live swan mussels



Red-eyed damselfly

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