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# ANNUAL REPORT 2017







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South Cumbria Rivers Trust

### Chairman's Report 2017

This report concerns the year January to December 2017 with some additions that have occurred in early 2018 : it also includes events and developments that relate to Storm Desmond in December 2015.

Major changes in infrastructure of Government and apportionment of funding in 2017 combined with absorption and restructuring of the EA and NE into DEFRA have made communication more onerous.

The implications of Brexit continue to question the future of important environmental directives. Of particular relevance to SCRT are the possible changes in emphasis for landowner support and in translation of results from the programmes under the Water Framework Directive and the Habitats Directive.

In the Coniston and Crake catchment the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund was successful and following some practical work Charlotte Hall took this forward initially in 2017 together with help from other staff (Charlotte left SCRT in October 2017). Mike West and Kath Smith are currently carrying out the second phase of this project.

The Lyth Valley proposal for a Drainage Board Water Level Management Board has met further obstacles (de-maining, boundary amendments, modelling the Ulpha channel, perceived flooding risks) but for reasons associated with legislative time in Parliament is unlikely to complete its development within the next 2 years. 2021 seems to be a likely completion year! Jayne Wilkinson continues to represent the interests of SCRT in this work.

Publicity, web-site management and administrative support continued to be the focus of Meredith Revill's work in 2017. (Meredith has since left SCRT)

The Pearl mussel project continued through 2017 with Mike West providing advice to the riparian owners in the Brathay and Kent catchments. A recently appointed member of staff, Matt Carroll, is assisting Mike West with projects including the pearl mussel project. Decisions made by Natural England have resulted in the emphasis on restoration moving from the Brathay to the top of the Eden catchment. This project is due for completion in September 2018.

The combination of flooding, the lack of improvement provided in the WFD results for Cumbria and the decline in salmonids reported in SCRT's 2017 electrofishing surveys indicate that the salmon as a resident species in the SCRT catchments continues to be severely threatened.

All of the changes associated with accommodation within the Clock Tower are now complete i.e. we have two floors of accommodation for the office (and an old shipping container for extra storage).

Continued..



#### Chairman's Report 2017

All of the above, from the response to the floods and SCRT's management of the aftermath to funding issues across the public and private sectors, have been coordinated by Pete Evoy who has continued to drive the Trust forward throughout a most challenging year.

During 2017 the pressures and more diverse nature of the work carried out by SCRT increased quite considerably and the Executive Committee re-examined how the organisation worked with its existing structure and reviewed the roles and responsibilities of staff members. An increase in numbers to 9 employees (with 3 staff leaving and needing to be replaced during the year) meant that the relatively flat structure of the organisation was not best suited for the range and nature of the work being carried out. A more tiered structure was proposed with the managerrole being expanded to that of a Chief Executive with two senior staff reporting in the scientific and practical management areas. Pete Evoy has taken on the position of Director, with Mike Sturt and Bekka Corrie–Close reporting directly to him. At the same time a re-examination of the work practices, job descriptions and legal responsibilities of SCRT as an employer were made to ensure equality of opportunity in every employee's contract.

I would, once again, like to thank my colleagues on the Executive Committee of SCRT: Dickon Knight, Ian McMurdo and Diana Devenish who together with Pete Evoy, have enabled us to get this far.

Thank you also to all the Trustees for their work on the board and in the catchments. The recent Patrons' evening was, as always, a great success and I would like to thank Julius and all his colleagues for the organisation that went into this: Mike Sturt's description of this last year's work in SCRT illustrated very well the quality, quantity and hard work of everyone involved.

The staff worked really well and made impressive progress in 2017 despite some really challenging tasks and I look forward to this continuing in 2018.

**Roger Sweeting** 

**SCRT Chairman** 



### **Treasurer's Report 2017**

### **Financial Review**

Total turnover increased to £536,104 and showed an increase of £90,172 from the previous year. This came through an increase of the grants received for the year, with the Freshwater Pearl Mussel, River Kent Restoration projects playing a key part to this. Conversely the trading income reduced, as the Elterwater project was completed. As a result, the surplus after expenditure was £80,671 over the period. The majority of the funds held by the Trust are restricted to projects yet to be completed and it is vital that the Trust tries to increase the element of unrestricted funds to help pay the overhead costs and do works of its own to fulfil the aims and objectives.

This year the Trust saw a depletion on the unrestricted funds of £22,217, compared to gains over the last few years. This is mainly due to changes that have been occurring in the funding opportunities available to the Trust. Since Storm Desmond, the Environment Agency and DEFRA have been under pressure to focus on flood alleviation works. As the Trust is the Catchment Host for the whole catchment of South Cumbria, we have been closely involved with the considerable discussions that have taken place to consider the works required to help reduce the flooding in communities at risk across South Cumbria. The Trust Director has therefore had to invest a considerable amount of his time looking and debating the various options. This should help in future years as there are likely to be several projects that we will be well placed to manage and therefore recoup some of this investment in time.

#### **Achievement and Performance**

During 2016 the Trust moved to a larger office within the Clock Tower Business Centre. This was due to increasing staff numbers and allowed the Trust and its staff to work from a less crowded environment and the advantages have been seen over this year. With 8 staff and some visiting external workers the flexibility the office has provided has been marked. Some reorganisation of the responsibilities has taken place and in particular, Pete Evoy has moved from Trust Manager to Trust Director. He has taken on more responsibility and this role gives him a greater executive position. He has been supported by other internal promotions of Bekka Corrie Close and Mike Sturt and so there is a good working structure to allow the Trust to move forward with its aims and objectives.

It has been another full year with the project work. The HLF delivery phase of the Coniston and Crake project was granted, following a successful development phase. This now gives the project 3 years and is the largest project granted to the Trust. Charlotte Hall, who very ably run the initial phase stepped down from the delivery phase and Mike West has moved from the BIFFA project to run this. He has been joined by Kath Smith who was recruited to the Trust to oversee the education and community aspects of the project.

The River Restoration project has continued this year. The work has concentrated on preparing feasibilities for various weir removals on the Kent catchment, as well as drawing up the plans, approvals and costing for the restoration at Bannisdale Beck and the reinstatement of an historic lake as a large flood water storage area.



#### **Treasurer's Report 2017**

In addition, the BIFFA project progressed very well towards conclusion in February 2018 and has now been extended to allow work to continue with residual funds. Work on Dubbs Beck has continued under the above two projects and the restoration of this important aquatic environment continues to improve.

The South Cumbria Catchment Management Group was finally established this year with excellent contributions from several the staff. This will provide a very good platform for much of the Trust's work in the years ahead. We have also been asked to undertake a 3-year project on the Winster and Gilpin and several individual works are being discussed with local farmers and landowners with the possibility of joint funding through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Close working with farmers and landowners is a very important aspect of the Trust's work and therefore education of the benefits for them and the environment continues to be a theme of the work undertaken.

There has continued to be a contribution to the work of the Trust from contractual work and we have again done some work with United Utilities in the important Elterwater area and in a biosecurity advisory role. The aim is to try to extend this type of work to ensure we can provide good advice to a range of contractors working within our catchment.

There were a few events run by the Trust over the period including the All England Open Skimming Championships on Windermere. These are well attended and help promote the Trust and bring in addition unrestricted funds.

#### **Future Proposals**

The Trust is currently in a fortunate position in that it has in place several projects which are funded for one to two years ahead. However, these are reducing and the Trustees are aware of the increasing need to continue to pursue funding opportunities that coincide with it's aims and objectives and will continue to invest time and effort to promote the Trust for this purpose. The promotion of a Trust Director and the promotion of others to assist him has been done with this in mind. The awarding of World Heritage Status on the Lake District National Park may help the Trust in the future.

#### **Reserves policy**

The Trustees have a policy to monitor the unrestricted funds, as well as funds available to the Trust to run the projects. The policy held by the charity ensures we have sufficient funds to run the charity for three to six months should the resources be expended. At this level the Trustees feel they would be able to continue the activities of the Trust in the event of a significant fall in the current activities. At 31st December 2017, there were £118,769 of unrestricted funds and so this well exceeds the parameters of the policy.

**Dickon Knight** 

**SCRT Treasurer** 



### **Director's Report 2017**

Again, as last year, trying to follow the comprehensive reports of SCRT's Chair and Treasurer and attempt to expand upon the detail and quality provided in this Annual Report is a near impossible task. In fact, I won't and would rather attempt to pick out one or two areas worthy of further thought.

2017 saw the continued development of the flood focussed Catchment Management Groups with SCRT taking the Chair of the South Cumbria CMG. Additionally, new funding opportunities for Natural Flood Management made available through DEFRA were followed closely with an eventual submission of 21 separate projects put forward late in the summer for south Cumbrian river catchments and their Communities at Risk. 10 of these projects have now been awarded provisional funding and we are currently looking forward to finalising the agreements necessary to allow these projects to move forward in 2018. SCRT will lead on 8 of these projects.

All this, of course, is set against the backdrop of the UK's 2016 decision to leave Europe. Regardless of political views it is fair to say that the mounting uncertainties surrounding our withdrawal in 2019 and what it will mean for the environment and agriculture have been keenly felt. This will undoubtedly mean that it will become increasingly difficult to secure agreements with farmers and landowners for the type of work we do until at least the fog clears. This is a threat that we are paying very close attention to as the entire "Brexit" scenario plays out and is, itself, set against a backdrop of continuing falls in public spending and environment funding opportunities. We will no doubt have to work harder and develop keener eyes for all other opportunities.

However, on a much more positive note- reading this Annual Report and the monthly Trustees' reports that are produced by SCRT's staff throughout the year it always heartens me to see the breadth and quality of "real" work that is being delivered by these few talented people. This work not only benefits south Cumbria's water environment but all who live and visit here. I know only too well how much hard work is needed to take a project idea to a stage where you can point a camera and take a picture of what you have achieved. And, there are lots of pictures in this report! So, a very well done to all SCRT's staff, Trustees and all our volunteers, partners and others who understand like us that in an increasingly complicated world we are determined to keep it simple and keep it real.

I sincerely hope that you will enjoy the insight in to our work that the following pages provide. As always, please let us know if you have any questions or comments to make- we are keen to hear them.

#### Pete Evoy

#### **SCRT Director**



## 300

Christmas trees collected from the 'Upcycle your Xmas tree' campaign 27 project proposals put forward for communities at risk flood management under catchment management groups and 9 accepted. 2000m2 of Himalayan Balsam removed from Elterwater Quarry and Elterwater Park alone!

new websites went live: The Becks to Bay website &

Conserving Coniston and Crake website.



**75** trees were planted at Little Langdale Beck and **300** 

live Willow Whips planted for a River Kent bank

stabilisation



Approx. Or flood investigations of domestic properties in South Cumbria completed for Cumbria County Council after the floods in 2015.





South Cumbria Rivers Trust

The HLF Conserving Coniston and Crake project officially started in June 2017, with the delivery phase given the go ahead. Mike West, who was our Freshwater Pearl Mussel officer took over the role of project lead and delivery officer and will make a huge success of it we are sure!



Unfortunately, SCRT had to say goodbye to one member of staff. Charlotte, our Conserving Coniston and Crake development officer decided it was time to move on and pursue a career in teaching. We wish her every success in her future career. In 2017, SCRT started using a project management system called ASANA. ASANA is designed to allow team members to collaborate on a project easier and track if a project Is on track or not using Instagantt. It will hopefully make the way we store information as well as communicate

more efficient and structured.

SCRT **NEWS** 

### CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT GROUPS

Kath Smith joined the SCRT family in August . Kath has brought with her a wealth of experience, from the Forestry Commission and Max Wildlife Trust! Her role is to focus on the HLF Conserving Coniston and Crake project as a community and

The CMGs focus on delivering projects with a flood benefit but also identifying options to deliver wider environmental outcomes where possible. However, Becks to Bay has a much wider remit, working around the seven themes agreed by the core group.

engagement

Bravo

CHEERS

Becks to Bay is the local catchment partnership, led by SCRT, that is part of the national catchment based approach initiative. The Becks to Bay website was launched this year, 2017. <u>https://btob.scrt.co.uk</u>



South Cumbria Rivers Trust

WELCOME KATH!

\*Congrats

### **RESTORING FRESHWATER MUSSEL RIVERS IN ENGLAND** (YEAR 2)

### **Colwith Revetment Removal Project**

The revetment removal started at Colwith, and the initial revetment removal was began in September 2017. Once this section was completed, work began to remove the more formal revetment downstream. The work was filmed with time lapse cameras in order to produce a short film showcasing the work. In addition, our project officer has been filming the river bed to show the homogenous and armoured nature of the existing bed. This filming and photography will be re-



peated over subsequent years to assess the readjustments caused by modified flow rates.



It is expected that smaller gravels will begin to accumulate behind any large boulders to improve salmonid and freshwater pearl mussel habitat. A total of 275m of revetment has been removed and the bank regraded. This more natural bank profile will allow for the slowing of flows, connection of the river to its natural flood plain and improvement of conditions within the riverbed. These improvements are crucial to the success of the Biffa Award Project which aims to release juvenile mussels back into Little Langdale and or the Brathay catchment.



South Cumbria **Rivers** Trust

### Dubbs beck

What else have the Freshwater Pearl mussel team been doing in 2017?

<u>Skelwith Woody Debris</u>: The team undertook a project at Skelwith, that as well as fencing and drinking points included creating bank protection using coppiced brash bundles, to reduce the energy of the river in these areas to reduce ongoing erosional processes.

These bundles will help to re-stabilise the banks and reduce the loss of eroded material downstream. They will also provide valuable fish refuge sites and improve spawning habitat by reducing sedimentation.

Heavy metals: Little Langdale beck had to be

analysed for heavy metals, due to the Green burn beck copper mines that are situated there. This occurred as the site was being proposed as a potential receptor site for the juvenile pearl mussels bred at the Freshwater Biological Association. Both water samples and sediment samples were taken from 20 locations and found no distinct pattern within exceedances for any metal. <u>PECs (Probable Effect Concentrations) are not exceeded by any metals (apart from copper at two locations near the mine) suggesting that the risk of toxicity to freshwater pearl <u>mussels would be limited.</u></u> On the 5th of October the final stages of the Dubbs beck project were completed. This final stage involved the installation of an agricultural bridge across the beck to replace the bridge present before the habitat improvement work was completed. The reason for replacement was associated with the increase in width and bank profile of the restored beck. The re-naturalisation work resulted in a beck which was approximately 2m wide at the river bed level and at least 3.5m wide at bank top (although considerably more in places). In order for the beck to function naturally and allow suitable flows to pass it was essential to remove the existing structure which acted as a pinch point constraining the river.

NB: Since the photograph additional fencing and guide rails have been installed. Stone ramps have also been installed to ensure smooth passage of vehicles on and off of the bridge deck.







New volunteers were trained at two training courses run by the Freshwater Biological Association. In total, there are now 43 Riverfly volunteers surveying 45 different sites across South Cumbria.

Click here to view to 2017 Riverfly Report 2017

This year, there were **25** 

Electrofishing

survey sites

across South Cumbria.

Click here for the Electrofishing report 17

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We installed a further 15 piezometers at Dubbs Beck this year. They measure interstitial dissolved oxygen to determine site suitability for Freshwater Mussels. <u>Click here</u> <u>to find out more about this</u> <u>methodology: https:// bit.ly/2JU2CeO</u>

> Monitoring Water Quality

eDNA Sampling This technique is relatively new as it filters water to capture DNA from species that are being

targeted. See pg. 13 for further information.

Water quality monitoring within our catchments helps assess the environmental parameters that are affecting individual sites and in turn directs further project work. We do this by measuring temperature, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, pH, sediment transfer data, phosphorus, heavy metals concentrations and assessing flow characteristics.

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SCRT

### edna sampling

eDNA analysis involves taking water samples containing 'Environmental DNA'. This is the DNA given off by all living things as they move through the water. eDNA can include things such as cells, fish scales, eggs, invertebrate material or other tissues sloughed off from living things. The DNA detected can tell us about the present or absence, variety and sometimes density of species within the water body. Once the water sample has been collected and passed through a filter, the collected DNA is amplified in the lab using DNA primers associated with the

This developing technology was trialled through the Biffa Award Restoring Freshwater Mussel Rivers in England project. eDNA sampling was trialled to assess the technologies ability to detect FWPMs in different rivers. Mussel surveying usually involves lengthy survey work where surveyors view the entire river bed using a Bathyscope, an underwater viewing device in the hope of finding, counting and monitoring mussels living between the gravels. eDNA may hold the solution to extensive survey work by allowing conservationists to



take water samples at specific points within the river system to ascertain if mussels are present upstream. Once a positive result has been found, conservationists can carry out targeted visual monitoring guided by the eDNA results.

The trial was part of a national project where eDNA samples were taken from rivers with known populations of FWPMs. This was information could be gathered on the effectiveness of species detection. The South Cumbrian rivers are known to have extremely small and constrained populations of mussels. One of the rivers is known to have only 3 individuals present. As such various sample sites were taken within the river. The first was taken 2m downstream of

species being analysed. These primers can be designed to be specific to a single species such as the Freshwater Pearl Mussel, or a suite of primers can be used to assess the diversity of a species within a given water body, for example a series of likely fish species can be used to assess the diversity of a species within a given water body, for example a series of likely fish species.

the mussel group, the next 50m, 500m downstream and finally 4.5 KM downstream. Additional trials were held across the country at rivers where known populations of approx. 500, 2000 and 500,000 mussels such that a detection limit of the technology could be found. The samples were also linked to approximate river flows in order to attempt to standardise the sampling. Results may be presented at the Biffa Award Conference in October 2018.



### Backbarrow fish Counter validation

The aim of this project is to visually validate the fish counter readings at the Environment Agency fish counter weir at Backbarrow. In collaboration with Lancaster School of Computing, we want to develop motion detecting computer software to analyse footage automatically. Unfortunately, this project is slightly behind its schedule, due to



technical issues. We are determined to have a video recording schedule with the EA in 2018.

### Elterwater



The data from the water loggers was downloaded and presented.

The monitoring from this year shows promising results suggesting the intervention is working, changing the lake profile during the summer months. A further data workshop will be held in March 2018 to review the full years monitoring and next steps. SCRT carried out a white clawed crayfish rescue from the River Kent in

August from a UU site.

Metal piling had already been installed and the contractors had deposited over 200 tonnes of stone into the river so that the excavator could install the piling.

A painstaking search for white clawed crayfish was carried out but there was no sign of them; more than likely due to the initial disturbance.



After successful reedbed installation at Windermere in 2016, some of the team returned to the scene for some additional work. A floating boom was installed around Harrow Slack in order to reduce the impact that the waves have been having on the shore and in turn on the reedbeds.. This is a trial countermeasure to see what effect it will have on the waves...watch this space.





### CaBA—Catchment Based Approach

To support the SCRT riverfly programme, supported through CaBA, in June a bid was submitted to Tesco Bags of Help and was granted a gratefully received £2000 from the grant scheme. Mel Flether from FBA, ran a 'riverfly plus' workshop for existing riverfly volunteers. This new technique is still in development but will look at a greater number of invertebrate groups to generate a more in depth assessment of river health, which may have the potential to be used to support the monitoring of habitat improvement works.

A project map is now up and running and is hosted on the SCRT website. This means you can search all of our ongoing projects and the status of all the projects. However, the supporting data and evi-

dence are yet to be updated on the website...so watch this space.

### Becks to Bay (South Cumbria Catchment partnership)

The Becks to Bay group are working towards expanding the catchment plans; including case-studies, evidence and monitoring. The new Becks to Bay website was





launched in May 2017 and there has been some positive feedback and interaction with the site since then. What is needed now is everyone working towards expanding the catchment plans. As well as engaging with wider audiences, as was the intention of hosting the plan online in an accessible format.

Catchment Management Groups (CMGs) were established in 2016 and have been running in individual partnership locations since 2017. The CMGs focus on delivering projects mainly with a flood benefit but also identifying options to deliver wider environmental outcomes where possible. However, Becks to Bay has a much wider remit, working around the seven themes agreed by the core group.







### 2017– The first SIX MONTHS delivery

To improve water quality, habitat and biodiversity in the Coniston and Crake catchment area, through conservation activities and community engagement.

### Delivery

After a successful development phase, the project moved into its first delivery year.

### What's occurred?

The team have installed of a number of pieces of LWD (Large Woody Debris) at **Bouthrey Bridge.** By using green engineering techniques, the energy of water is broken up and reduces in power, lessening the possibility of erosion and flooding downstream.



As well as this, they conducted a slate shard investigation. The slate is ruminant from the slate industry and it acts by artificially armouring the river bed, preventing natural gravel processes. There is no salmon spawning in this area, which they may if the slate was removed.

Water Park Outdoor Education Centre De-culverting Project– This project came about, due to persistent flooding. The project however, required planning permission because the project proposed to change the course of water and redirect it into the lowest land parcel.

Doll Moss Beck De-culverting project- There have been some delays with this project. However, a topography survey has been carried out, used to plan the water flow. We have also carried out a number of electrofishing surveys and Riverfly monitoring.

Greenholme Beck:- The team carried out a number of; walkover surveys, riverfly monitoring and electrofishing.





### 2017– The first SIX MONTHS delivery

### **Community HIGHLIGHTS**

Kath, our new community officer is looking at ways to involve and engage the community in the catchment area which is a fundamental aspect of the project. In the last few months alone, there has been..

Community events...

- Tree planting at Thurston Education centre-12 volunteers attended (including 4 from Thurston OEC) and planted 120 trees, with stakes and guards by midday.
- A public bat walk was organised by SCRT and led by John Martin, a bat expert at Water Park on the 1st
  September. This was a great event, attended by just over 20 people from around the catchment.
- Kath attended Lowick Show on the 2nd September, with assistance from four Riverfly volunteers.



- First family activity day with National Trust at Hoathwaite Campsite. Various simple activities have been planned, including pond dipping, wild art, stone skimming and water footprint games.
- November– 1st volunteer task, coppicing along Torver beck.

There will be lots more to come in 2018...



The aim of river restoration is to consult with landowners, bodies and organisations to delivery restoration projects.

In 2017 we have had a number of river restoration projects agreed and completed.

Brow Foot Farm project started on 29th August- completed by September. This consisted of an embankment removal—see example of LIDAR imagery to the right, defining the removal.

We provided an overview of the Dubbs Beck river restoration project in the SCRT Annual Report 2016. However, the majority of the work was completed in 2017. The project was match funded between RRS and BIFFA. Commencing in June 2017, FWPM has to be relocated. As of September, a total of 465 metres of the beck has now been restored. Two tasks remain; replacement of bridge slabs to be completed on the 2nd of October and tree planting to be completed in



### February 2018.

Mike Sturt gave a presentation in January at Staveley Village Hall as part of the EA/FC NFM workshop: This presentation will be turned into an education package in collaboration with the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission communications teams.

SCRT begin preparing specifications for drone surveys to obtain aerial footage. We are hoping these will be used as part of ongoing geomorphological monitoring.

The Bannisdale tender process is complete. A company called CBEC will head up the design work and this consist at looking at 3 separate locations and weir removals.



## Natural Flood Management (NFM) and ongoing project work

Ever since Storm Desmond in 2015, DEFRA set up the Cumbria Flood Partnership to focus on flood management projects in Cumbria. One of the focused areas is Natural Flood Management and the techniques this encompasses, to reduce flooding by working with natural features and processes and to store or



slow down flood waters. The measures compliment other prevention methods such as defences and channel maintenance and provide additional benefits to the environment and wildlife.

There are lots of different types of NFM techniques, including:

Creating Woodland Slowing run off Creating wetlands Managing upland drainage Bank Restoration

### Restoring rivers Managing land and soil

This is currently in the development phase, and designs have been produced, setting out strategic catchment scale maps to highlight the opportunities and benefits of NFM based on distributed modelling for the three Cumbrian catchments, within the Life-IP project area. SCRT are currently looking at about eleven locations in the South Lakes where NFM could have considerable alleviation effects on flooding.

Legend Runoff Attenuation Features





SCRT are currently working up the project, talking to landowners and scoping the potential sites.







South Cumbria Rivers Trust