

CHILTERN CHALK STREAMS PROJECT ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23



ABOUT THE CHILTERN CHALK STREAMS PROJECTS

An initiative of the Chilterns Conservation Board, the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project is a partnership of statutory agencies, local authorities and voluntary bodies which aims to conserve and enhance all major chalk streams in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and to encourage enjoyment and understanding of them.

The Project provides advice to landowners on river and riparian management, carries out practical projects to enhance the streams for wildlife, improves access where appropriate, undertakes surveys and provides education resources for schools.



CHILTERN
CHALK STREAMS
PROJECT

MEET THE TEAM

In the last 18-months the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project Team has grown from a team of two to a team of nine. This has increased our capacity to deliver practical restoration and engagement work and allowed us to develop work in the fields of research and citizen science.



Ceri Groves
Education and
Engagement Officer



Adrian Porter
Rivers Officer



**Professor
Kate Heppell**
Research Lead



Laura Silverstone
Education &
Engagement
Officer



Josh Biddle
Farming
Engagement
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Fran Crowther
Project Support
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Steph Horn
Chess Smarter
Water Catchment
Co-ordinator

Allen Beechey
Project Manager



Hannah Parry-Wilson
Citizen Science
Co-ordinator



25 YEARS OF THE CHILTERN CHALK STREAMS PROJECT



In 2022 the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project (CCSP) published a major report reviewing the achievements and progress of the partnership over the last 25 years.

The report also reflects on the role the CCSP should play in shaping the future for the Chilterns chalk streams. The report was launched with a conference on 28th September featuring keynote speaker Charles Rangeley-Wilson, broadcaster, writer and chair of the CaBa Chalk Streams Restoration group. Thames Water and Affinity Water shared updates on their plans for our region; and the Project team looked to the future with presentations on current and upcoming work. The full report is available on our website.

Focus on Citizen Science

Over the last two years, the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project has developed an extensive citizen science programme. This has initially focused on the River Chess (as part of the Smarter Water Catchment initiative), but is now beginning to extend to other Chilterns streams.

Water quality

- **Emerging Contaminants of Concern survey**
Sampling for 200 chemicals not currently routinely monitored.
- **MudSpotter**
Records sources of sediment input to the River Chess in an urban environment.
- **Nutrient Ongoing Scrutiny Evaluation Survey (NOSES)**
Explores nutrient concentrations (nitrate and phosphate).

Ecology

- **Modular River Survey (MoRPh)**

Assesses physical habitat quality, helping us to record and measure the success of our river restoration work.

- **Tracking the impact surveys**

Monitoring breeding birds, butterflies and plant species in the Chess Valley and beyond.

In addition to this suite of new surveys, we continue to train and support Riverfly Monitoring volunteers across the Chilterns and work with our partners on the long-standing River Chess water vole recovery scheme.

We're so thankful to every individual that has helped us so far and all those who will continue to do so as the citizen science initiative progresses.



WHAT WE ACHIEVED



**CHESSE
VALLEY WALK
REGENERATED**



**OVER 300
VOLUNTEERS
ENGAGED IN
RIVER
RESTORATION
WORK**



**2.7KM
OF CHALK
STREAMS
RESTORED**



**10 GUIDED
WALKS WITH
OVER 100
PEOPLE**

CHALK STREAMS AND WETLAND MEADOWS PROJECT

The Chalk Streams and Wetland Meadows Project was awarded a grant of £294,000 from the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The project was delivered over an 18-month period from October 2021 – March 2023 and included practical river restoration, habitat enhancement, education and engagement projects on four Chilterns Streams – the River Chess, River Wye, Hamble Brook and Ewelme Brook. It was a partnership project delivered by two key members of the CCSP – The Chilterns Conservation Board and the Chiltern Society.

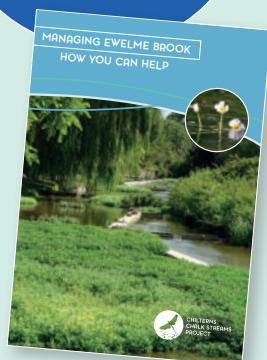
**2 NEW
MEMBERS
OF STAFF
EMPLOYED
PERMANENTLY**

**DELIVERY
OF WATER
EDUCATION
ACTIVITIES TO
OVER 2000
STUDENTS**

**20
INTERPRETATION
BOARDS
INSTALLED
ALONG THE
RIVER CHESSE
AND RIVER WYE**

**ADVICE
LEAFLET
PRODUCED**

**ECOLOGICAL
SURVEYS
FOR ALL
4 PROJECT
AREAS**



HAMBLE BROOK RESTORATION

The Hamble Brook has been extensively modified over many centuries, through activities such as agricultural cultivation, ornamental landscaping and flood alleviation. All of which have negatively impacted its natural function and ecology.

Outputs

- 1,100m River Restoration project completed, which equates to 16% of the entire length of the Brook. One of the largest winterbourne restoration projects ever attempted
- This involved 're-wiggling' the channel to create a more natural river shape and flow regime and re-profiling banks to better connect the brook to the surrounding landscape
- Research conducted by our citizen scientists, along with researchers from Queen Mary University of London and Nottingham Trent University to monitor the impact of the work



CHESS VALLEY WALK

The Chess Valley Walk (CVW) is a flagship linear walking route in the Chilterns, enjoyed by thousands of walkers annually. Ten miles in length, the walk route stretches between Chesham and Rickmansworth and takes in some of the most attractive countryside in the Chilterns AONB.

With no significant investment having been made into the development and maintenance of the walk over the past 20 years, and with a large and increasing number of visitors using the walk, it was clear that revitalisation was overdue. There was also a need to address access issues, develop opportunities to improve the visitor experience as well as provide education about the importance of the river and its valley landscape.

Outputs

- replacement of 11 interpretation boards
- new signage along the entire walk
- improvement of the footpath at 6 key sections
- 2 new benches
- CVW leaflet updated



EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT

Through the Chalk Streams and Wetland Meadows Project we further developed our education programme, offering our 'trout in the classroom' and 'River school' education programmes to more schools than ever before.

Outputs

- Over 2,000 pupils took part in educational activities – learning more about chalk streams and their ecology, and the importance of water efficiency
- The CCSP website was launched in October 2022. Educational resources can be found at www.chilternstreams.org/learning/
- A mobile Chalk Streams exhibition was produced to support our work engaging local communities



SMARTER WATER CATCHMENT



River Chess Smarter Water Catchment

In 2022 – 2023 CCSP continued work as a host and partner in the delivery of the River Chess Smarter Water Catchment Initiative. The Initiative, which is facilitated by Thames Water, is bringing £3million worth of investment to the River Chess. The project aims to tackle issues affecting the River Chess and its catchment and involves water companies, statutory bodies, conservation organisations and local groups working in partnership. Work is being delivered under 6 key themes:

The CCSP is hosting the project co-ordinator, farming engagement officer, research lead and citizen science co-ordinator. Project staff are acting as theme leads for three themes – **improving water quality, control of invasive non-native species and working together.**

CHESS SMARTER WATER CATCHMENT CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

In the year just passed the **Chess Smarter Water Catchment initiative (CSWC)** has gained new staff, a new logo and a new website chesssmarterwatercatchment.org



The **CSWC initiative** has provided funding to increase the number of sondes currently delivering live 15-minute interval data to project partners. The sondes are a vital piece of equipment used for monitoring a number of different river water quality parameters.

- 1 Improving water quality
- 2 Managing flow
- 3 Control of invasive non-native species



Funding is available through **SWC Landowner Grant Scheme**, Farming in Protected Landscapes, and Countryside Stewardship. In the 2022-23 financial year we awarded over £43,000 worth of grants to a variety of landowners within the catchment. This has enabled projects such as arable reversion, new boardwalks, fencing and woodland management.



- 4 Improving wildlife corridors
- 5 Involving people
- 6 Working together



The **Farming Engagement Officer** has been busy developing a Chess Farmer Cluster. We are now offering funded soil tests to farmers to better understand soil conditions on farms and the link between healthy soils and water quality. Work has continued on mapping erosion and runoff risk linked to farming activity using a modelling tool called SCIMAP. The Farming Engagement Officer is also providing advice and support to several farmers interested in delivering projects on their land.



RIVER CHESS STRATEGY 6 THEMES

The **Chilterns Chalk Streams** has not only played a key role in ensuring this ambitious project thrives, but is helping to provide a legacy for the Chess and beyond. Thames Water are now planning to roll out the Smarter Water Catchment initiative to other catchment partnerships, so lessons learned here have the potential to benefit river catchments throughout the Thames Water region.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2022/23

CHILTERN CHALK STREAMS PROJECT

Income	Amount (£)
Chilterns Conservation Board	15,000
Buckinghamshire Council	350
Affinity Water	86,000
Thames Water	50,037.25
Catchment co-hosting	9,208.33
Project funding	2,279.34
Courses/consultancy/donations	4,071.42
Misc	170
Total income	167,116.34

*£65,788.22 carried forward to support project work in 2023-24.

Expenditure	Amount (£)
Officer costs	71,413.55
Officer expenses	1,109.78
Office costs	6,726.15
Project support	5,740.10
Training	538
Events and publications	727.25
Education programme	228.43
Citizen Science initiative	445.35
Practical projects	4,816.41
CCSP 25th Anniversary	9,583.10
Total expenditure	101,328.12

CHALK STREAMS & WETLAND MEADOWS PROJECT

Income	Amount (£)
Green Recovery Challenge Fund	282,187.30
Match Funding	254,426.88
Total income	536,614.18

*£35,734.49 carried forward to support completion of outstanding practical restoration work in 2023-2024.

Expenditure	Amount (£)
Full staffing costs	76,633.58
Project management and office costs	32,687.00
Chess Valley Walk	126,171.93
Hamble Brook	165,173.59
River Chess Water Vole Habitat Restoration	6,068.59
Moor Recreation Ground, Chesham	31,371.58
River Wye Back Stream Restoration Project	29,141.65
River Wye Interpretation Project	30,000.00
Ewelme Brook Project	3,631.77
Total expenditure	500,879.69

CHESS SMARTER WATER CATCHMENT PROJECT

Income	Amount (£)
Thames Water	413,390.80
Total income	413,390.80

*£61,278 rolled forward to support project work in 2023-24."

Expenditure	Amount (£)
Staff costs	204,250.54
Che043 – Citizen Science	69,304.95
Che042 – Mudspotter	2,599.56
Che082 – Emerging contaminants	271.02
Che008 – Develop a farm cluster	1,545.78
INNS – strategy	1,584.00
Landowner grants	43,092.00
Balancing payment from 21 – 22	3,872.80
Misc. (tracking the impact, events, insurance etc.	25,591.90
Total expenditure	352,112.55