

WILD Project Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2017



What is the WILD Project?

The WILD project (Water with Integrated Local Delivery) is a partnership of primarily four organisations working together to bring about environmental improvements to the rivers and other watercourses of the Cotswold Water Park. The partnership is led by Gloucestershire Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and includes Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC), Cotswold Water Park Trust (CWPT) and the Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) at the University of Gloucestershire.

Project Officers engage with local communities and landowners to encourage them to get directly involved in understanding local water courses and their management. With ongoing local community input we will be continuing to develop and deliver plans of enhancements.

For more information and to get involved contact:

Jenny Phelps (FWAG) – working with landowners/farmers 01666 503668 or 07876 687272
jenny.phelps@fwagsw.org.uk

Helen Richards (GRCC) – working with communities
01452 528491 helenr@grcc.org.uk

Petrina Brown (CWPT) – Biodiversity Officer
01793 752730 petrina.brown@waterpark.org

NEW! WILD Churn, Cirencester

Funding has been secured from the Thames Water Community Investment Scheme to enable the WILD approach to be extended upstream along the Churn through Cirencester. Following the WILD approach we will be working with communities and landowners in Cirencester to identify water related issues, carry out



habitat restoration and promote volunteering opportunities. This project aims to not only improve water quality but to identify and install measures to help to control flow and increase water storage capacity along the River Churn upstream of and through Cirencester. We will be working with wider partners throughout the project including working closely with Cirencester Town Council, Cotswold District Council and numerous voluntary organisations in Cirencester working to improve their local watercourses.

There will be plenty of opportunities to **get involved**;

- Volunteer work parties
- Training events
- Visits and guided walks
- School visits
- Community mapping Tell us where the water related issues are in your local area

To join our team of WILD volunteers contact;

Jo Leigh, FWAG

joanne.leigh@fwagsw.org.uk or 01666 503668

WILD Project, Phase 2 Funding Secured



The WILD Project started in 2013 working with the 20 parishes and towns from Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Swindon that make up the Cotswold Water Park. The project was funded by the Environment Agency as a pilot for 3 years and a summary of some of our achievements, with the help of all of you, are listed later in this newsletter.

We are very happy to say that **funding for a further 3 years has been secured from the Environment Agency.**

This will enable WILD Project Officers from FWAG, CWPT and GRCC to continue working with communities, landowners and partners to develop and deliver projects within the Cotswold Water Park to improve water quality.



WILD Project Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2017

During the summer of 2016 all 20 parishes in the WILD Project area were provided with personalised River Management Guides, digitised water issue maps and



datasets as well as electronic copies of the Community Guide to the Water Environment produced by FWAG and ACRE (the national voice for the 38 rural community councils who make up the country's largest rural network). We will be continuing to work with communities to move forward and develop new projects to address not only local issues but to join up parishes along waterbodies to tackle larger scale concerns.

The WILD Project: Achievements in Phase 1

Just a few highlights from the first three years of the project;

- Over 21,000 volunteer hours committed
- 20 parishes engaged to identify issues & solutions
- 298 farm visits covering 118 farms/estates
- advice provided for over 22,000 hectares of land
- 24 Farmer Guardians covering over 12,500 ha across the Upper Thames
- 60 km potential river enhancements identified
- 8km shade reduction/ pollarding of trees
- 30km ditches sympathetically managed
- 5km new & improved fencing installed
- 5 additional communities engaged outside the project area



- 20 schools engaged through WILD Photographic Competition
- £242,000 grant funding secured from other partners/ funding bodies to help deliver overall WILD project objectives
- WILD Conference held in September 2015 with over 80 attendees from statutory bodies, landowners, NGOs and community groups from across the country learning about the 'WILD Approach' and other innovative water-related projects



Supporting Fairford Friends of the Coln

On Sunday 7th May volunteers from the local area of Fairford gave up their morning on what was a glorious day to help in an experiment to try to re-establish Water Crowfoot on a section of the River Coln.

There are many species of Water-crowfoot

Ranunculus (subgenus *Batrachium*) in the UK, they vary according to conditions and hybridize making species identification difficult but all are

massively important aquatic plants that provide both cover and food for a wide range of fauna from molluscs, to insects, to fish to birds. They also help to regulate water levels during dry summer months. Many have beautiful long capillary leaves that flow in the water creating a hypnotic flashing of differing shades of green.



Very healthy growth of Water-crowfoot at the Island in Fairford © P. Taylor

Where well established the plant goes through a natural cycle of growth, during spring it grows rapidly to the point that it becomes self-inhibiting and starts to die back over the summer, however where the plant has been lost it is often difficult to get the plant to re-establish.

WILD Project Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2017

Further downstream at Fairford there are only very small patches of the plant and concerns were raised about the lack of aquatic vegetation inhibiting the biodiversity potential of the river along this stretch. There are a number a theories about the causes of the loss of the plant which include increased shading, increased nutrient loading of the river, summer flooding and overgrazing by swans, but we don't really know why it does so well in some areas and has not established in others.

Our group of volunteers are working under the wider WILD Project a collaborative partnership project which aims to facilitate local involvement with the improvement of the local water environment. Thanks to funding from Nationwide Building Society they now have a significant pot of money to purchase tools and equipment to get regularly involved in enhancing the ecology of the River Coln.



If you would like to get involved in the **Fairford Friends of the Coln** group please contact Paul Taylor at paul.taylor43@sky.com

For more information on the WILD Project and to get involved contact:

Jenny Phelps (FWAG) – working with landowners/farmers 01666 503668 or 07876 687272
jenny.phelps@fwagsw.org.uk

Helen Richards (GRCC) – working with communities
01452 528491 helenr@grcc.org.uk

Petrina Brown (CWPT) – Biodiversity Officer
01793 752730 petrina.brown@waterpark.org



Local Farm wins award for sustainable farming

Gloucestershire's Silver Pintail Trophy showcases the long term commitment to wildlife conservation and sustainable farming shown by many farmers across the county. In addition to looking at the sustainability of the farm business and wildlife and conservation measures on the farm, the judges last year paid particular attention to the protection and management of water on the farm, in line with the 2016 theme 'water on the farm'. The farms were judged last autumn and in December FWAG were delighted to present the award to **The Rummings family of Waterhay Farm, Leigh**.



The farm specialises in the production of grass fed beef cattle, and has areas of species rich grassland which flood regularly. High quality housing for the cattle has been an essential part of the farm's plan to protect these sensitive grasslands and to protect the water quality of the river. The biodiversity present on the site shows the success of their strategies, with a naturally occurring colony of snakes head fritillaries thriving.

The judges found Waterhay Farm's work to restore and protect the River Thames particularly impressive. Work to reduce over-shading had been carried out sensitively, with enough trees, shrubs and hedgerows left to maintain the landscape character. Several other measures have been introduced to improve the value of the river for a range of wildlife; the judges noted the careful installation of small dam features designed to keep the gravel beds, used by spawning fish, clear of mud, this has in turn encouraged otters and water voles.

