

Leader Dumfries & Galloway – End of Project Report

Project Title: Restoring Annan’s Water Community Engagement Project



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1. How was the idea for the project developed?

The project was developed by the River Annan Trust with support from several local stakeholders, including the local council, SEPA and the University of Glasgow. These partners provided advice and feedback throughout the scoping phase of the project and were regularly consulted during the delivery of the project.

An online survey was carried out to assess interest in the RAW project within the local community. Responses to the survey were largely positive, with most respondents indicating an interest in participating or finding out more.

Opportunities for small-scale habitat restoration were identified through a pilot survey of a small number of local landowners. The Landowner survey was designed in partnership with the University of Glasgow School of Interdisciplinary Studies and was extended across the catchment as part of the Community Engagement Project.

Feedback was received from the Duke of Edinburgh coordinator in Annan about delivery of the Youth Rangers scheme. Discussions were constructive and there was consensus that young people in the area would be interested in participating. Six local primary schools were contacted to assess interest in participating in the Eels in the Classroom project.

River Annan District Salmon Fishery Board (RADSFB) staff contributed environmental management and fisheries expertise to the design of the project, and additional advice on river restoration was sought from an expert based with the Wild Trout Trust. A comprehensive list of local environmental groups including the Moffat Wildlife Club, the Dumfries and Galloway Bat Group, The North Solway Ringing Group, The Solway Firth Partnership, Dumfries and Galloway Environmental Resources Centre, Moffat Community Woodlands and local County Wildlife Recorders were contacted to get feedback on the project and explore the possibility of partnering on restoration and community engagement activities. Positive feedback was received and opportunities for collaboration identified.

Letters of support were provided by the Dumfries and Galloway Biodiversity Officer, a Senior Environmental Protection Officer from SEPA and the Moffat Community Woodlands group.

2. Who was involved in the project? Individuals and Organisations.

River Annan Trust, River Annan District Salmon Fishery Board, Restoring Annan's Water advisory group (SEPA, RAT, Dumfries and Galloway Biodiversity Partnership and Glasgow University School of Interdisciplinary Studies), 12 primary schools, members of the public, volunteers, Scottish Natural Heritage, Castle Loch Community Trust, Southern Uplands Partnership, Borders Forest Trust, and The Woodland Trust.

3. What were the aims and objectives of the project?

- Raise awareness of the river Annan environment with landowners, local community, children and visitors
- Reconnect Annandale communities throughout the catchment with the river
- Undertake practical habitat improvements and restoration

4. How was the funding package assembled?

Total eligible cost £91,550

5. How much money did LEADER provide?

LEADER - £45775
Match funding from HLF - £45,775

The project experience

6. When did the project take place?

26/06/2017 – 31/03/2020

7. What actually happened?

The Restoring Annan Water project had five streams of deliverables as follows:

Eels in the Classroom - This school-based education initiative was delivered to 4 primary schools per year. Tanks containing juvenile eels were installed in each school. These were used as a learning resource on which lessons about river ecology, the environment and the impacts human activities have on the river or riparian habitats were based. Interactive classroom sessions were delivered by the Community Engagement Officer, followed by a field visit to the river to release the eels. This scheme helped to raise awareness of the issues facing the endangered European eel and also worked to mitigate the negative impact of barriers such as Milnby Weir or Caul on the Annan European eel population. Over the two year's of the project 544 school pupils from eight catchment primary schools were made aware of the issues with European eels in the River Annan catchment and almost 100 had direct involvement in looking after and releasing the elvers.



Youth rangers / Tree champions – The initial plan was to establish in Annan and Lockerbie opportunities for young people (aged 15-25) to contribute to conservation work and develop new transferable and practical skills. Activities were to be based around river and riparian environments within the catchment and included habitat management/surveys, tree planting, wildlife monitoring, and invasive species control. Unfortunately, despite concerted efforts with local schools and promotional outlets the uptake proved too poor to make it a viable deliverable. This element then morphed into the Tree Champions project where 4 additional primary schools grew trees/saplings and received river-based lessons from the Trust engagement officer, culminating in river field trips to learn about the riparian environment and plant their trees. These Tree champion sessions were provided at four primary schools within the catchment reaching 95 pupils in the catchment. During their riverside visit approximately 250 saplings were planted.



Landowner engagement –The RAW community engagement officer, with support from RAW partners, engaged with landowners and promoted landowner participation in the project through attending local agricultural shows, collecting responses to a landowner survey, coordinating site advisory visits, and developing guidance publications on catchment management best practice. The Community Engagement Officer worked to build relationships with landowners on the Annan identifying opportunities for delivering practical habitat improvements. Through the RAW community engagement project, landowners had access to experts who provided technical advice on alternative management options and guided on the implementation of sustainable land use practices. Through this interaction four sites were identified for small-scale habitat restoration.

Small-scale habitat restoration - Riparian and instream improvement schemes were implemented with the assistance of volunteers and local fencing and tree planting contractors. Restoration methods employed included fencing to exclude livestock, riparian tree-planting, and green bank protection. Almost 2 kilometres of stock grade fencing was installed with associated water gates. At these sites a mix of approximately 3000 native trees donated by The Woodland Trust were planted out with relevant stakes, and shields.



Restoration workshops and seminars - A program of restoration and riparian educational themed workshops was delivered across the catchment providing learning opportunities to local interest groups and members of the public. These included talks and practical workshops which were delivered by relevant experts and Trust staff. Topics such as redd

counting, green bank protection, riverfly monitoring, and natural flood management were included in the program. Appendix 1 is a table of events and participants.



Over the life of the project these workshops, seminars and events attracted and informed over 630 participants including 211 adults and 431 children ranging in age from 4 years old to 16.

As a final “legacy” and to further reinforce the public awareness of the European eel we commissioned three eel waymarker posts which have been placed on the Annandale Way. These waymarkers have engraved on them the co-ordinates of a

Geocache box which contains information on the plight of the eels in the Annan catchment.



8. Detail how the project fits with the Local Development Strategy.

The RAW Community Engagement Project fits mainly with the Land, Coastal and Marine Environments element of the LDS, but also contributes to the Economy and Sustainable Settlements elements.

Land, Coastal and Marine Environments

The project focused on reconnecting people from across Annandale with the river environment through delivering a programme of volunteering events, educational activities, and skills training based around river and riparian habitats. It is widely understood that the more engaged people are with their natural environment, the more likely they are to value it. By providing opportunities for local people to play an active role in the management of the River Annan, the RAW Community Engagement project will help to promote greater understanding and appreciation of the river environment.

Work delivered as part of habitat restoration workshops brought about physical improvements to the environmental condition of the river and surrounding environments. At sites where habitat restoration was delivered, environmental impacts such as diffuse agricultural pollution and bank erosion will be reduced. Increased shading created by planting riparian zones will mitigate the effects of climate change. Delivering these improvements through volunteering events will allow members of the public to contribute to maintaining and improving the condition of their river and will help raise awareness of the benefits of river restoration.

By improving landowner/user knowledge and understanding of the natural heritage of the river, land stakeholders were encouraged to adopt catchment management best practice. This had a positive effect on the way the river is managed at a local scale.

Through delivering this project, we developed community support and skills-base necessary to ensure a healthy, thriving river environment that will function sustainably, and be more resilient to pressures associated with current land use practices, infrastructure development and climate change.

Economy

The Community Engagement Project created high value skills training opportunities within the local community. A programme of educational workshops and a citizen science scheme aimed at all members of the public will provide learning opportunities to a wide demographic range. These initiatives provided useful knowledge and skills for those interested in entering environmental work or further education. We also created a paid training placement each funding year, which ran concurrently alongside the RAW Community Engagement Project, providing an invaluable opportunity for recent graduates to gain experience in the environmental sector. These training opportunities allowed participants to develop transferable skills, increasing their employability and contribution to the local economy.

Practical restoration work carried out as part of the project had indirect benefits on the local economy. According to the River Restoration Centre, river restoration can contribute to improvements in ecosystem services such as flood control, pollution removal and recreational opportunities. These services are of significant economic value and their restoration or improvement can therefore bring economic benefits. The promotion of RAW objectives may also contribute to the local economy through improving the value of the Annan as a recreational fishery. The value of angling related tourism in the area could be increased if productivity of the fisheries and angler experience were to be improved as a result of restoration activities.

Sustainable settlements

The RAW Community Engagement Officer worked to deliver environmental and social benefits to communities in Annandale. Participants in our community engagement activities benefited from increased interaction with the natural environment and an improved sense of individual and community wellbeing, through working together towards a shared goal. Skills training aimed at young people also contributed to the Sustainable Settlements aims to “prepare our young people for adulthood and employment” and “build community capacity”.

9. How was the project delivered?

The River Annan Trust appointed a Community Engagement Officer who, with support from River Annan Trust/and River Annan District Salmon Fishery Board staff implemented a work programme overseen by the Restoring Annan’s Water advisory group (SEPA, RAT, Dumfries and Galloway Biodiversity Partnership and Glasgow University School of Interdisciplinary Studies). This included managing the budget, coordinating volunteers, liaising with landowners and project partners and organising suitable community engagement events. Project administration was facilitated as an in-kind contribution by the River Annan Trust in accordance with our Articles of Association. Quarterly progress reports were produced for RAT Trustees. The Restoring Annan’s Water advisory group also met with the River Annan Trust on a regular basis to review and provide guidance/advice on project delivery. The project was line managed by River Annan District Salmon Fisheries Board Director of Fisheries. Weekly briefing meetings were held to ensure budgets were adhere to and that deadlines were progressed. Unfortunately, more than two thirds of the way through the project both the Director and the Project Officer left their respective posts. The final elements of the project were then delivered by a Freelance Project Officer and Project Co-ordinator. This led to some delays in delivery and changes to milestone costs which were approved by funders.

Most of the targets for the project were more than met. Unfortunately due to the Youth Ranger element not proving viable the numbers of youth upskilling was lower than initially planned. Similarly, we found it difficult to attract volunteers despite using various media – most volunteers were harnessed by word of mouth. We think this may have been due to a two-fold problem, firstly the Trust’s meeting point/office whilst near a public transport route has very poor public transport options – so rule out again the youth element who can’t drive or indeed have no access to a car. Secondly, in the near vicinity there are three wildlife groups – 2 in Moffat and 1 in Lockerbie with strong links to secondary schools and programs to assist with award schemes such as John Muir, Saltire and Duke of Edinburgh. In addition Castle Loch Community Trust have established a strong volunteer core linking with local groups to deliver outdoor benefits – these organisations are effectively all vying for those same volunteers. All in all though we were very appreciative of the small band of regular volunteers without whose support the project would have been much more difficult to deliver successfully.

10. What marketing was undertaken?

- Regular promotion on RAT and partner social media outlets such as Facebook
- Regular press releases on key aspects of the project, including tree champions, eels in classroom and end of project achievements
- Attendance at public events eg D&G Environment Fair
- Production of a paper leaflet and pop up banners
- Event posters
- TV coverage on ITV’s BorderLife

River Annan Trust

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Chris Stones Good luck guys
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River Annan Trust
Published by Darren Flint (?) · 4 December 2019 ·

Our final Tree Champion school, St Mungo Primary at Kettleholm, were out in all the wind and rain planting their alder, hawthorn and hazel saplings. Not a grumble and smiles all round.

Over the last couple of weeks the various schools have planted over 400 saplings - a fantastic job.

Thank you to Dumfries and Galloway LEADER Programme and National Lottery Heritage Fund Scotland for funding the various project elements.



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Winter Tree ID

A beginners guide with Duncan Ford

Sunday 4th November 2018 at 2pm.

Email or message to book a place. Spaces are limited.

Meet in carpark at Hoddom Bridge.

Wear sturdy boots or wellies and dress for the weather.

Suitable for ages 10 and over.

Under 18s to be accompanied by an adult.

River Annan Trust

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Part of Restoring Annan's Water Community Engagement Programme



**River
Stories and Crafts
Lockerbie Library**

10am — 12noon

**Wednesday 17th & Thursday
18th April**



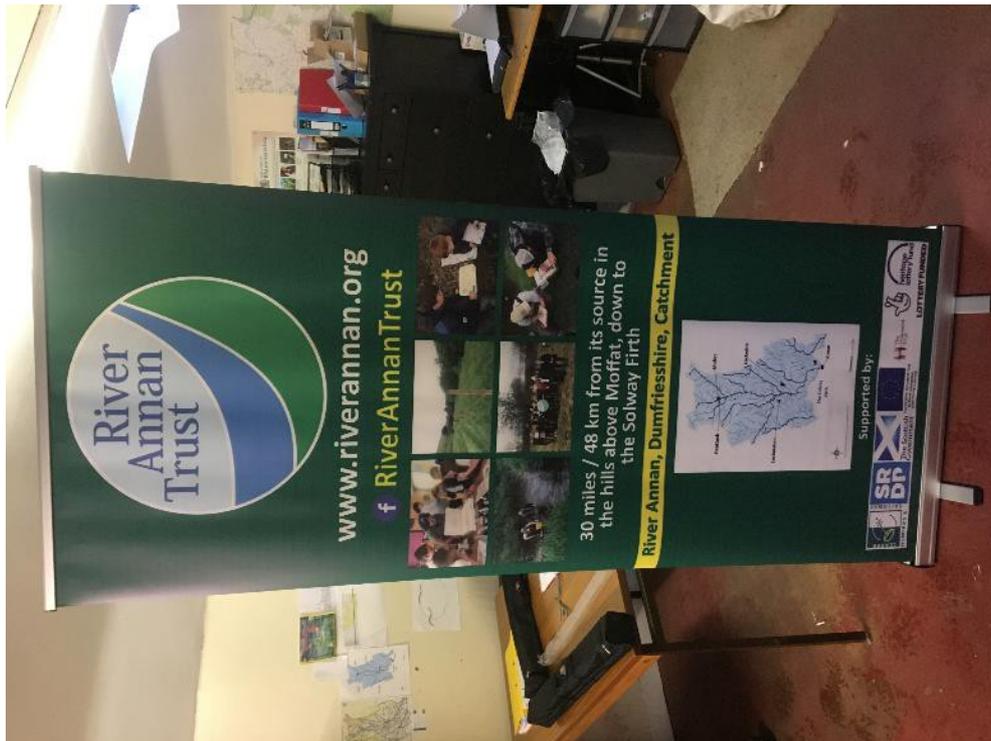
Free Event! Come along and hear stories about eels and salmon and make a river picture. Drop in's welcome.

All welcome, adults please accompany your children.



LOTTERY FUNDED

Part of Restoring Annan's Water Community Engagement Programme





TREE PLANTERS ... St Mungo Primary School

Young planters put down roots

SCHOOLS in Annandale have been putting down roots and leaving an environmental legacy.

The River Annan Trust has been working with four schools: Beattock, St Mungo, Kirkpatrick Fleming and Brydekirk, to plant hundreds of trees at two river side sites. Oakriggsdale, on the River Annan between Beattock and Moffat, and Linnhall on the Water of Milk between Lockerbie and Langholm were chosen and the pupils headed outdoors in all weathers, ranging from blue skies and sunshine to torrential rain, but there were no grumbles, just excitement to be outside and planting the trees they have been tending for the last few months.

Earlier this year the trust worked with the schools to set up a tree nursery, featuring alder, hazel and hawthorn and hazel.

Raised beds were created and the children planted tiny saplings, plus had a number of classroom sessions led by the trust talking about riverbank restoration, protecting farmland and enhancing biodiversity.

The children enjoyed the practical work, which involved digging holes, planting the trees and attaching the tree supports and protectors.

One of the landowners who farms the land and tree planter contractor TreeSurv also came to talk to the children about the value of their hard work and what difference it is going to make.

River Annan Trust project officer Darren Flint said: "It was wonderful to see the enjoyment the children had by finally bringing their trees from school out to the countryside for planting.

"Their inquisitiveness about the project has been infectious throughout.

And he added: "This planting will create a lasting legacy far into the future - one day these fully grown trees will provide homes and habitats for plants and animals, slow soil erosion that affects salmon and trout spawning beds, plus take up carbon dioxide and emit oxygen."

A further few thousand trees, donated by the Woodland Trust, are also being planted at the sites by TreeSurv.

In preparation for the works, the trust also employed local fencers GLS Fencing and James Patterson to fence off the riverbank and put in water gates, to prevent livestock nibbling the saplings and assist with the water management.

Two other sites, Bodesbeck and Cerehead, have also been supported by the Trust with new fencing and tree planting.



GETTING STUCK IN ... pupils from Kirkpatrick Fleming



PLANTING PERFECT ... Beattock Primary School



HELPING THE ENVIRONMENT ... Brydekirk Primary School

Police by Sgt

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11. Who benefitted from the project?

Eels in classroom and the Tree champions benefited the primary school children through engagement and knowledge improvement. The river environment and species were improved through the number of a particular species, enrichment of a particular habitat and range of habitats.



Small-scale habitat restoration benefited both landowners and the river environment by improving habitat for wildlife and reducing environmental impacts such as diffuse agricultural pollution and bank erosion. Sites where habitat restoration is delivered will be used to demonstrate the tangible benefits of river restoration. In addition, volunteers will have the opportunity to gain an understanding of different restoration techniques and experience a sense of purpose through contributing to catchment wide restoration objectives



12. How did the final budget turn out?

The budgets were managed across the life of the project, with regular financial claims being submitted to both funding partners. All the key aspects of the project were delivered to budget. One project element, 'Youth Rangers', evolved mid-way through the project lifespan in to 'Tree Champions' project. This was because despite initial enthusiasm from schools and youth groups to develop a youth ranger program it struggled to recruit enough participants to make it both viable and able to deliver tangible community and environmental benefits. As the staffing of the project changed 18 months in, a number of project financial change requests had to be submitted to reallocate funds. The project was delivered slightly under budget. A closing event was in the planning but was abandoned due to the covid pandemic restricting activities.

13. What lessons have been learnt?

The initial focus and excitement of the project was to deliver quick 'on the ground' actions and outcomes. This was arguably to the detriment of the less engaging elements such as project financials and managing cash flow. This meant banked funding was spent during the

first 12-18month leaving difficulties in releasing the final Leader funds. The hardest part of the project was engaging with the 16-24 year old “youth” element required of the youth ranger part of the project. Despite repeated attempts trying through schools and various youth groups only one co-hort were engaged with leading to a change to the original plan and replacement with Tree Champions element which was delivered within schools.

14. Will the project be mainstreamed or transferred?

It is hoped that some aspects of the project, particularly the Community Engagement with schools and riparian habitat restoration will be continued. However, this will depend very much on future funding options.

15. Detail the sustainability of the project and/or the exit strategy.

All tools & equipment procured during the project will be maintained and remain in service with the River Annan Trust with the option to loan items to other organisations to undertake work contributing to our aims.

Fencing and habitat improvement works will be maintained/managed by the relevant landowner after installation.

Beyond the term of this project we anticipate that there will be a South of Scotland Enterprise initiative which could heavily influence how we fund and deliver community engagement and education projects. There will always be demand and need for the outcomes delivered through education and engagement and we would ensure that any new partnership projects or landscape scale habitat projects retain an element of education and awareness raising.

Policy and regulation will continually evolve and this will dictate the areas in which we can make a meaningful contribution as a registered charity with an educational and environmental remit. We do have aspirations to establish and deliver specific large-scale projects concurrently to this funding. If these projects can be delivered successfully, they will present new opportunities for education projects and awareness raising which should make us eligible to a wider range of funders in future. This will continue to be explored for the next chapter of the project.

On the whole the project received excellent support locally and we would like to thank all our volunteers, supporters and funders for their hard work and collective efforts. We hope through our work with local schools that we have inspired the next generation of scientists.

