

Arun & Western Streams
Catchment Volunteer Strategy and Training Plan
Draft finalised – December 2016

The Arun and Western Streams Catchment Partnership

The Arun and Western Streams Catchment Partnership was established in 2012 for the purposes of integrated catchment management and delivery of the Water Framework Directive. The Partnership is made up of around 18 organisations from a broad range of interests including farming, fisheries, water companies, conservation organisations and statutory agencies. The partnership is hosted by the Arun and Rother Rivers Trust (ARRT).

Overview

The Arun and Western Streams catchment covers 1,490 square kilometres (575 square miles, 149,000 hectares or over 368,000 acres). It is dominated by the chalk ridge of the South Downs and the sand and clay of the Weald, and lies predominantly within the new South Downs National Park. The Arun and Western Streams catchment is in West Sussex. It includes the Rivers of the Arun and Rother and several small coastal streams which feed into Pagham and Chichester Harbours.

The Arun and Western Streams water environment supports internationally important wildlife sites, agriculture, industry and tourism.

The condition of water courses in the catchment is not good enough and this means the abundance and diversity of plant and animal species is lower than it should be. We are working together to understand the pressures on the water environment, how to address them and actions required to improve the environment. Investigations have shown that there are a number of issues having a significant impact in the Arun and Western Streams Catchment.

The primary aim of the partnership at the outset was to develop a Catchment Plan detailing the projects that will improve the river catchment for people and for wildlife. Now that the Plan has been published (www.arunwesternstreams.org.uk/plan) the focus now turns to how these projects can be delivered. (In order to facilitate delivery the Partnership is now going through a period of reviewing its aims, objectives and governance).

Vision for volunteering

To make the Arun and Western Streams Catchment and its activities available to a wide range of people of ages, backgrounds and cultures. In the coming years people volunteering in the Arun and Western Streams Catchment will learn new skills, benefit from improved social networks and gain confidence. Volunteering has a positive impact on communities, contributing towards lifelong learning, creating cohesion and respect and providing a way in which people can enhance and take part in improving their local environment.

A significant part of the above vision for the catchment is engaging volunteers as a means of engendering stewardship and ownership of the catchment area.

In the future volunteering in the AWS catchment will be seen as an opportunity to:

- Get out and explore the Arun and Rother rivers and surrounding landscapes
- Contribute to improving water quality in the catchment
- Connect with the local rivers, find out more about their natural and cultural heritage and play a role in protecting and conserving them.

- Make a valuable contribution to the local area through volunteering.

Aim

This strategy will show and quantify where there is a demand for volunteering and how this engagement can be planned and managed. Importantly, this plan will show how these volunteers will be able to access training either provided by partners or external trainers. The strategy needs to address the immediate and long term needs regarding existing volunteering and future volunteers and training.

Volunteering objectives

- Develop a joined-up approach to volunteering.
- Promote volunteering by improving the diversity, quality and range of volunteering opportunities.
- Provide flexible volunteering opportunities that consider individuals' diverse needs and overcome barriers to getting involved.
- Ensure volunteering leads to outcomes valued by communities.

Lessons learned from ARC

The ARC Project is a partnership project between the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Environment Agency (EA), Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT), South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), Natural England (NE), West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and the Arun and Rother Rivers Trust (ARRT). It works alongside local communities to promote a thriving river system where wildlife flourishes and where people value the unique natural and cultural heritage. Through training and developing volunteers and working closely with landowners and local communities, ARC is empowering local people to tackle complex issues like flooding, poor water quality and invasive non native species – creating a resilient landscape for the future.

In 3 years the ARC Project:

- Delivered 1985 days of volunteering activities
- Recruited 1119 volunteers
- Recorded 13,898 volunteer hours (or 1985 volunteer days or 5.4 years of volunteering (on a 365 days in the year basis!). This translated to over £141K of match funding to the project.
- Volunteer activities have ranged widely from administration and finance, social media and event promotion, volunteer co-ordination, community engagement and practical activities.

Barriers to involving people

It is important to understand what barriers or perceived barriers there are to volunteering.

Barriers to organisations:

- Lack of communication or promotion to attract volunteers. Specifically this could include the need for understanding of cultural differences/ differences in ethnicities when asking for volunteers.
- Lack of organisational capacity or skills to recruit and manage volunteers.
- Lack of staff time and resources to manage volunteers.

Barriers to potential volunteers:

- Transport problems – particularly around rural areas. Not enough/frequent public transport.

- Financial worries – particularly from unemployed volunteers/jobseekers not being able to travel to volunteering destinations due to cost implications. This needs to be addressed through reimbursing their costs (and making it clear this is possible)
- Lack of confidence and/or interpersonal skills to get involved with others. Some BAME groups/unemployed are unfamiliar with volunteering and do not want to travel far from home. They are also reluctant to get involved unless others have been to/know the activity/project well.
- Time – lack of flexibility around volunteering (particularly from the full time employed).

Areas/groups of the catchment, both geographically and socially where many people are not participating in volunteering have been primarily identified as:

- Youth Groups
- Jobseekers/unemployed
- BAME groups
- Disabled/impaired volunteers

Lessons learned

What are the headlines we have learned through ARC and at the catchment level?

- Volunteers need dedicated and consistent support. A Volunteer Co-ordinator role is an essential/key part of this to increase short and long term community engagement and facilitate the delivery of community/conservation projects.
- Volunteer reps or volunteer champions are key in helping to promote and deliver projects more widely over the catchment area.
- Personal/face to face contact is needed. Volunteers need to be respected and valued and this enables a more wholesome relationship to be developed and shows the organisation takes an interest in the volunteer as a person. This also enables future project changes and demands upon volunteers to be implemented more easily due to ongoing volunteer communication.
- Regular contact (email/telephone/meetings) is needed for trust and recognition of volunteers. Feedback and ongoing support and dialogue are vital to ensure volunteers can become established and develop further in their role(s). Periodic 'thank yous' for example a social opportunity / gesture
- A point of contact or group and a system is needed for volunteering. Currently the ARC Volunteer Co-ordinator role sits within the RSPB and uses the established RSPB Volunteer Management System (VMS) to support volunteers. Partner organisations also have different systems so the key could be to create a network of volunteer co-ordinators across organisations or an online hub to co-ordinate activities catchment-wide.
- Establish a community action (steering) group amongst partners at the earliest convenience to regularly discuss and co-ordinate volunteer development and support.
- For any partnership activities, establish a system of volunteer data sharing without breach of data protection through a volunteer agreement.

Volunteer roles for the catchment include:

- Habitat restoration
- Habitat surveying
- Species surveying
- Removal of non native invasive species

- River stewards (Rother Riverfly / Riversearch)
- Volunteer team leaders
- Volunteer Co-ordinator - Riverfly
- Community engagement/ volunteer rep. role
- Outdoor learning assistants/field teachers

Priority projects that depend on volunteers. Future projects can also be added in.

Projects in the AWS catchment	Description of works	Volunteers engaged through ARC	Staff support	Equipment
Projects concurrent with ARRT strategic plan and ARC legacy workshops				
Removing non-native invasive species (INNS strategy)	Recording invasive species in the catchment and participating in invasive species removal	(~238 volunteers engaged in work parties and training workshops)	ARRT, SDNP, SWT, RSPB	PPE - Gloves, protective clothing, eyewear hand tools. Equipment - stem injector, pistol (mink)
Riverfly on the Rother (& to expand to the River Arun)	Training volunteers in freshwater invertebrates identification and river surveying through kick-sampling techniques	(currently 16 volunteers involved in Riverfly on the Rother)	ARRT, ARC (RSPB), SDNP	Survey kit – Net, bucket, ID trays, magnifying lens, pipette, waders
River cleanups	Remove litter and debris from rivers Arun and Rother	2 x cleanups in 2015. 28 volunteers 4 x cleanups in 2016. 60 volunteers	RSPB, HDC, corporate volunteers	Gloves, wellies/waders
(Riparian) tree planting	Riparian tree planting in the catchment	16 volunteers	ARRT, Woodland Trust	Gloves, hand tools
Other projects				
Community pond wardens – surveying and water quality testing.	Identifying aquatic species and uploading findings to i-record/SxBRC	~58 volunteers	RSPB, SWT, Freshwater Habitats Trust	Recording kit – clean water kits, ID chart, clipboard, writing materials.
Water vole surveyors	Finding and identifying signs of	~196 volunteers	SWT, Brighton University	Recording kit – ID chart,

	water voles and uploading findings to i-record/SxBRC			clipboard, writing materials
Toads on the roads project	Finding and identifying toad migration routes and reporting findings to SxARG	~48 volunteers	SxARG, Froglife, RSPB	Recording kit – bucket, clipboard, writing materials
River/wetland habitat restoration	Completing river habitat restoration works – revetment works and channel narrowing/widening.	~100 volunteers	ARRT, RSPB, SWT, SDNP	Waders/wellies, gloves, hand tools
Enhancements to wildlife habitats and public access	Various	~85 volunteers	ARRT, SDNP, SWT, RSPB	Various

Volunteer support

Training is an integral part of volunteer support and should include skills in conserving and restoring, increasing community participation and access and learning.

We want to ensure that a diverse range of volunteers have the opportunity to get involved with volunteering activities. Volunteers enhance our work by bringing valuable skills, experiences and energy as well as their gift of time.

Useful documents to have in place are:

- Communicating about volunteering – what is a volunteer and essential do's and don'ts.
- Volunteering Development and Implementation guide.
- A volunteering charter/policy (to include recognised standards of commitment to impaired volunteers eg. Disability Charter). <http://disabilityactionalliance.org.uk/projects-3/volunteering/volunteer-charter/>

Useful websites include:

- NCVO – National Council for Voluntary Organisations www.ncvo.org.uk
- Volunteer Now - Quality Standard for Volunteer Management. <http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/training-and-standards/investing-in-volunteers-quality-standard-for-volunteer-management>
- Investing in Volunteers - <http://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/about>

Recruitment and Marketing

Utilise existing groups and networks with connections to AWS catchment along with partner connections.

- Newsletters: EA - Weekly Buzz magazine, SDNP – Downland Thymes, South Downs View
- Forums: SDNP, SCREF (local resilience forum)
- Neighbourly website. www.neighbourly.com is the social platform that connects local projects with people and organisations who want to help.

They do this by breaking down traditional barriers to finding and giving help - neighbourly is a friendly network of companies, individuals, charities, councils, institutions and community groups.

Volunteering agencies

In addition to working with partners and stakeholders and local conservation groups there is also a selection of volunteering agencies and online resources that can assist with recruitment and also training of volunteers.

They have databases to recruit and involve volunteers and they offer training for both individuals and organisations. These include:

- VAAC – Voluntary Action Arun & Chichester (Skills Share West Sussex)
<http://www.vaac.org.uk/>
- HAMSVA – Horsham and Mid Sussex Voluntary Action
<http://www.hamsva.org.uk/>
- Voluntary Action Worthing
<http://www.vaworthing.org.uk/>
- Adur Voluntary Action
<http://new.adurva.org/>
- Do-It.org
<https://do-it.org/>
- The Conservation Volunteers
<http://www.tcv.org.uk/>
- Environment Job (EJ)
<http://www.environmentjob.co.uk/jobs>
- Countryside Jobs Service (CJS)
<https://www.countryside-jobs.com/>
- Conservation Jobs
<https://www.conservationjobs.co.uk/>

Accessing volunteers

- Recruitment and selection – adopt a “task led” approach to get the right volunteer for the right role. Ensure the role description is detailed, meaningful and worthwhile. The volunteer and training roles will be set out so that each project will be aware of its target and budget allocation for volunteers and their training.
- Application procedure – registration and exchange of information to discover whether the placement is right for the volunteer and AWS.
- Interviews – either formal or informal depending on the role.
- Induction, training and development – Volunteers made to feel welcome, know their role, specify their goals, are able to develop in new skills areas and where appropriate. The progress and contribution of volunteers will be discussed regularly.

Co-ordination

It could be useful to carry out an audit of catchment partnership organisations to see what volunteer support is already available and how collaborative volunteering can be taken forward in practical terms .

Volunteer Co-ordinator(s) or ‘regional/area reps’ could:

- Manage the aspects of ongoing volunteer recruitment, induction, training, support and development and retention of volunteers in delivering the catchment aims and objectives.

- Facilitate training of volunteer coordinator in order to implement long term plans for catchment aims and objectives.

Training

The delivery of training to volunteers could be carried out through:

- Use of internal resources to plan and deliver training courses for both staff and volunteers
- Development of specific courses
- Use of external trainers to deliver courses where required in-house skills are not available
- Placement on external training courses for any enhancement of skills not deliverable through other means.

Management of volunteer activities

Different organisations have different systems in place to manage volunteers. Below are various data systems that can be used.

Volunteer Management System

- Registrations/data management/data protection eg. Better Impact's Volunteer Management Software, My Volunteer, Find My Shift, My Volunteer Page.
- Volunteering hubs or a centralised volunteer system could be agreed upon. The ARC activity plan suggests for hubs to be created within SDNP (perhaps associated with the Volunteering Map) or at SWT at Woods Mill, Henfield.

Feedback system

- Volunteer Engagement Survey, Volunteer feedback form - SurveyMonkey (tailored/standard volunteer questionnaires), Appreciation events (group/individual catch-ups dependant on role).

Volunteer Action Plan (2016-2021):

Training	Trainees / targets	Type	Delivery (support)	Annual cost (resources)	Cost of project lifespan	Outcome
Invasive species – identification and control techniques	50 /yr	Session	staff	Staff time	Staff time	Volunteers become skilled in identification & able to train others
Training in eradicating non-native-species	50 /yr	session	staff	Staff time	Staff time	Volunteers trained & species eradicated /controlled
Eg. Riverfly	12/workshop/yr	Riverfly course	National Riverfly trainers	£540 (course, packs, venue hire, lunch)	£5382 /yr (Rother Riverfly budget)	Volunteers are experienced and skilled in river surveying
Vol Co-ordinator (for Riverfly)	1 (ARRT)	2-3 days/wk	staff	£11,000 21-23k pro rata	Every year?	Volunteers are supported to deliver Riverfly
River cleanups	50 /yr	event	Project	Staff time	Staff time	Volunteers upskilled

			officer			to supervise other volunteers in maintenance
Tree planting	landowners	event	Land-owners	Tree 'packages' dependent on type & number	Staff time/liason	Greater restoration and conservation of habitat through private landowners
Pond wardens – aquatic identification	15/ workshop	workshop	Consultant (SWT)	£350/workshop	Every year?	Volunteers trained in aquatic surveying and identification
Water vole surveyors	20/ workshop	workshop	Consultant (B'ton uni)	£100/workshop	Every year?	Volunteers trained in identifying water vole signs and surveying.
River/ wetland habitat restoration	10/yr	course	partners	In-house	Every year?	Volunteers trained in habitat creation and management
River restoration techniques	40 / yr 2 x workshops	workshop	Wild Trout Trust	£500/workshop	Every year?	Increased knowledge and understanding amongst local community about river restoration
Volunteer team leaders/ regional area reps	10 volunteers	session	Volunteer co-ordinator	Staff time/ First Aid training £400/ person	Staff time	Volunteers trained to deliver/oversee activities with transferrable skills
Volunteer recruitment & management	Project partners, Co-ordinator for training & volunteering	course	Volunteering England	£500 for 15 people.	£500	Organisations can enhance volunteer membership & attract new people.
River safety training	Staff & volunteers	course	ARW Training Solutions	£50/person		Staff & volunteers are trained in river health and safety

Monitoring and evaluating the action plan

Success can be measured largely by:

- The increase in the number of participants actively volunteering in the catchment
- The diversity of participants actively volunteering in the catchment
- The levels of support provided for volunteers
- The levels of volunteer satisfaction.

Measuring success

The success of the training and volunteer plan needs to be monitored to ensure targets have been met. Key achievement indicators are:

- Annual training plans implemented for catchment volunteers and staff.
- Number of people involved in volunteer events
- Demographic information of volunteers
- Feedback from volunteers and staff
- Number of volunteers/staff attending training courses
- Reports from other partners including information on volunteer hours.

Review

Throughout the strategy there must be continuous communication among project partners and volunteers. This will ensure the aims and objectives are consistently met and projects remain sustainable in the long term and embedded within the local community in terms of participation and ownership.

Review measures could include:

- An annual review by all partners with recommendations and changes implemented the following year.
- Priorities to be refined and changed based on performance.
- Future support for creative initiatives and new ideas for each of the projects
- Attracting Target audiences at all stages of the project.

Disseminating results

The AWS catchment will benefit and succeed through best practice training and skills and will aim to share this best practice by:

- Communicating with partners and stakeholders.
- Sharing feedback on activities with volunteers, staff, similar sites and local projects.
- Keeping the local community informed of opportunities through media, meetings and attendance at community events.

For any queries about this strategy please contact:

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