

RVFG NEWSLETTER

Rother Valley Farmers Group (RVFG)

ISSUE 1 2019



Photo Ref.: ARRT

Rother Valley Farmer Group

One Year into the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund.

The Rother Valley Farmers Group RVFG is one year in to its Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund (CSFF) Agreement. We now have a RVFG Steering Group, principally made up of Rother Valley Farmers, the Facilitation team, ARRT and Southern Water. We also have a Rother Valley Farmers Liaison Group made up of organisations such as the NFU, SDNPA, Environment Agency, RSPB, and Universities to share information and knowledge with.

There are plans for RVFG events over the forthcoming months, please see 'Upcoming Events' on page 4. The RVFG is above all a farmer led group, so please tell us what your aspirations are, How can the group help? What do you want to see more of or even less of! Tell us about your ideas and thoughts so that we can all work together to deliver wider benefits across the Rother Valley landscape and for you who manage it. info@arrt.org.uk

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**RVFG Tour of
Hardham Water
Treatment Works.**

**RVFG Farmers Up
date meeting followed
by lunch, Farm
Walk TBC.**

RVFG Target Species

Target Species

Most farmer led Groups have adopted target species to help focus activity and provide some demonstrable results to help show the success of the project.

During 2018 the steering Group spent considerable time exploring which species would be most appropriate for the RVFG with us wanting ones which could be monitored, would engage our farmer members and which would also be indicative of land management beneficial to water quality and other wildlife.

We have selected the following target species which will be the subject of future training and workshops.

Yellowhammer – an easily distinguishable farmland bird.



Lapwing – Now a very localised breeder but needs open arable or wet grassland with suitable nesting and feeding areas.

Barn owl – Can easily be encouraged through nest boxes and the provision of new areas of tussocky grassland.



Uncommon arable plants particularly corn flower, corn marigold and common fumitory. The lighter soils along the valley seem to hold a very good seedbank of uncommon plants and suitable management may also benefit other key species such as turtle dove.

Riverfly – are already being monitored through ARRT and will indicate improvements to water quality across the catchment. Please see page 3 for Riverfly training opportunities.

Although these groups will be the focus of our action for wildlife on an ongoing basis, it doesn't mean to say that we won't be able to cover other species so please send in any suggestions to:

info@arrrt.org.uk

Southern Water Farm Capital Grant Scheme

Southern Water is working with farmers and land managers to help reduce losses of pesticides, nutrients, soils and animal wastes to our surface and ground waters.

They are now offering capital grants of up to £10,000 per holding per year, for infrastructure improvements to help reduce the risk of water pollution in the Western Rother catchment.

For further information, please email zoe.fothergill@southernwater.co.uk



Photo Ref: SDNPA

Riverfly



Photo Ref: SDNPA

Interested in becoming a Riverfly volunteer?

If so, please contact info@arrrt.org.uk



Photo Ref: SDNPA

RIVERFLY

Training Opportunity

The Arun and Rother Rivers Trust together with the SDNPA are currently looking for new Riverfly volunteers to undertake monitoring along the River Rother – so I thought I'd get in touch to see if anyone's interested in getting involved!

Essentially, it would involve collecting samples from the riverbed each month using a technique called 'kick sampling' and recording the presence and abundance of three key groups of invertebrates - mayflies, caddisflies and stoneflies - which are known to act as biological indicators for the health of a river. The data gathered through Riverfly monitoring provides valuable information that can be used to monitor water quality, provide early pollution indications and inform river managers in the planning of improvements.

Those who are interested in getting involved would be required to dedicate one day a month to monitoring, and would receive training on the sampling methodology and on water safety. Any data recorded would feed into a national recording scheme (for more information you can visit: <http://www.riverflies.org/rp-riverfly-monitoring-initiative>).

Charles Winchester

(South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA))

Metaldehyde Free Rother Valley

The proposal from one of our farmers to make the valley metaldehyde free by 2021 was gaining real momentum but has now been overtaken by the Minister's surprise announcement to ban the use of the pesticide from spring 2020 except in glasshouses.

"Southern Water are continuing to offer payments to use ferric phosphate in place of metaldehyde within the Western Rother catchment until the metaldehyde ban comes into force in spring 2020. In the longer term, we will continue working with the RVFG to achieve our shared aims for improved water quality in the catchment" Fiona Pearce Southern Water. For further details please contact us at info@arrt.org.uk or Tom and Sammie at CSF.

There is a wealth of experience of using Ferric Phosphate and cultural control methods amongst the Group and an event to allow this to be shared may be the logical next step.



RVFG Winter Walk

A Winter Farm Walk organised by the RVFG to help engagement between the local communities and farm sector was held on Tuesday 8th January 2019 at Kilsham Farm, Petworth.

Parish & Town Councils within the RVFG Area attended the event.

Upcoming Events:

- 20 February 2019, 11.30am : An opportunity for Rother Valley Farmers to take a tour of Hardham Water Treatment Works, and hear about Southern Water's catchment management programme. Contact info@arrt.org.uk to book a space.
- 25 February 2019, 10.00am: RVFG members update followed by lunch, short farm walk TBC.



ARRT Registered office:
c/o The Barlavington Estate Office
Duncton Mill, Dye House Lane
Duncton, Petworth, West Sussex GU28 0LF

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