

Nineveh Trust Project Completion Report

The Winstar and Gilpin Habitat Improvement works kindly funded by The Nineveh Trust have now been completed by South Cumbria Rivers Trust.

On the 2nd July 2019 South Cumbria Rivers Trust, in conjunction with Butterfly Conservation, hosted a survey demonstration day in the River Winstar catchment, Cumbria. The aims of the day were to educate the local public on ecological monitoring techniques, set up a local volunteer network and to connect people with nature. The day acted as a training session for interested members of the public and local landowners to learn about the monitoring techniques used to assess ecological health in local rivers. On the day a number of monitoring techniques were covered. These included:

- Buffer Strip Surveys – Working with Butterfly Conservation we have been developing buffer strip surveys to assess how areas along rivers re-generate after fencing by recording vegetation, butterflies and freshwater invertebrates.
- Riverfly Surveys – Riverflies such as mayfly, stonefly and caddisfly are good indicators of water quality, and a great way for volunteers to monitor local becks.
- Electrofishing demonstration – This is the method for surveys undertaken by South Cumbria Rivers Trust.

Part of the donated funds has paid for staff time to organise and undertake this survey day, including the logistics and training of volunteers in survey techniques and associated follow ups to establish the volunteer network in the area. We now have multiple riverfly volunteers at new local sites preparing to send us data throughout the Spring and Summer of 2020. On the demonstration day buffer strip surveys data for the Low Foxfield site was collected. This data will act as a baseline of the site before the habitat improvement project is delivered. The landowners are now also set up to undertake buffer strip surveys next year following project completion so as to fully understand and monitor the success of buffer strip creation and exclusion of livestock. The training day has contributed greatly to the citizen science and local community engagement being undertaken in this catchment by local volunteers.



Figure 1: Low Foxfield Monitoring Training Day.

The habitat improvement project at Low Foxfield, on Spannel Beck in South Cumbria is also now complete. Approximately 475m of Spannel Beck, a tributary of the River Winster is now protected from livestock poaching, sedimentation and nutrient enrichment. The project includes 950m of fencing alongside the watercourse and native species tree planting to create natural river bank areas. The Nineveh Trust kindly provided us with match funding towards this project, which has paid for half of the fencing works. We are currently looking to plant trees in the newly created riparian zone, which will help to slow the flow of water during times of high flow and capture some of the sediment and nutrient run-off from the fields, thus further improving river habitats and water quality. Trees also provide an important riparian habitat for wildlife including birds, bats and insects, and stabilise the banks. This project completion will now allow the beck to function more naturally, maintaining natural processes and improving spawning gravels for fish.



Figure 2: Newly installed fence line to reduce livestock poaching, sedimentation and nutrient inputs to Spannel Beck.



Figure 3: Newly installed crossing point for livestock and vehicles.



Figure 4: Newly installed fence line on Spannel Beck.



Figure 5: The fence line has created a riparian buffer zone that will naturally regenerate and provide multiple benefits.

Volunteers and landowners will next year begin to monitor the site to assess the riparian buffer strips created using the skills learnt on the monitoring training day.

Remaining funds have been used to cover staff time and costs whilst scoping projects in the Winster and Gilpin catchments. This has allowed us to find projects to progress in 2020, as well as all the work that goes into making the project delivery happen, such as site visits, GIS mapping and applications and consents to local authorities.

All at South Cumbria Rivers Trust would like to thank the Nineveh Trust for this kind donation to our cause. The money has been used to really improve water quality in the Winster catchment of South Cumbria, and the ways in which we monitor project success with the local community.

Many Thanks,

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