



# ANNUAL REPORT

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2020



# Contents

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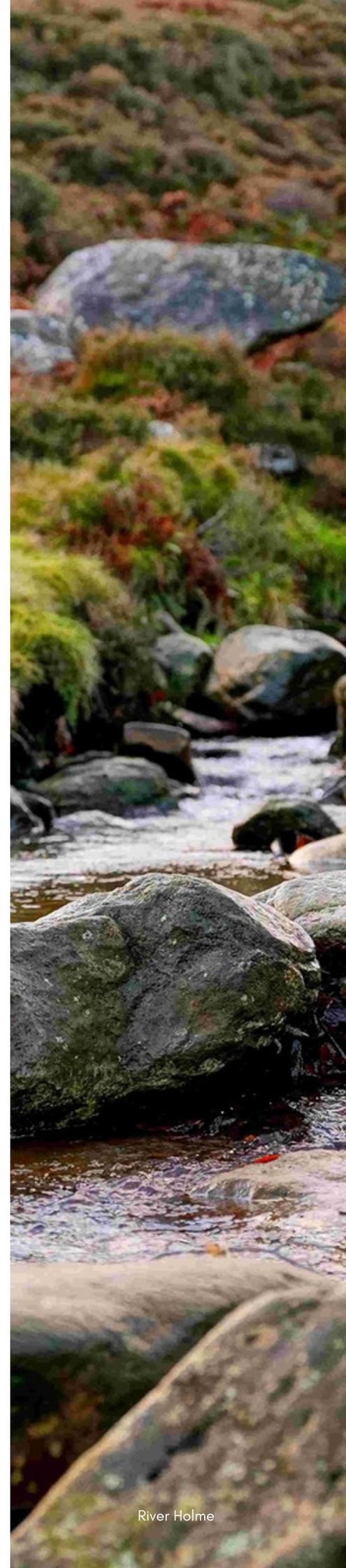
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River Holme Connections is a registered charity No. 1163873

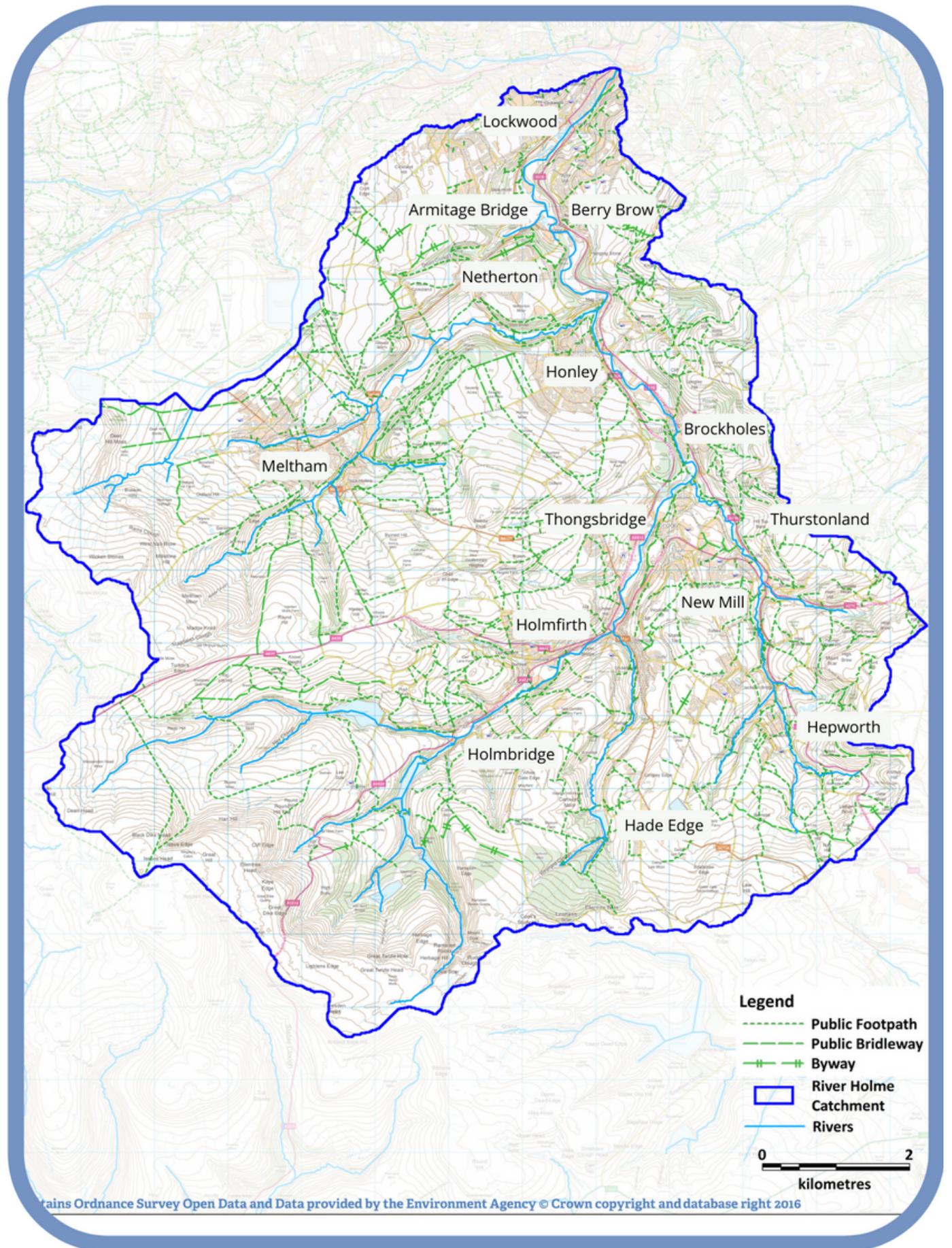
The amazing photos in this document were taken by our talented volunteers, trustees, team and supporters.

Front cover picture: Ramsden Reservoir by Michael Forster Jones.

Back cover picture: volunteers at Spa Wood.



# River Holme Catchment



# Chair of Trustee's report

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Welcome to our 5th annual report. It is amazing to see how far we have come, by improving habitats for wildlife along with better access for people to learn about and enjoy our River Holme. This was brought home to me when celebrating our fifth birthday in November, with our supporters, staff and dedicated volunteers, which highlighted the positive impact we are making. The cumulative numbers are eye-catching: £500k investment; 12,000 volunteer hours; 24km treated for Japanese knotweed; and 1,500 school learning and discovery days, to name a few. A truly magnificent community effort.

Around the country, organisations continue to declare climate emergencies including Kirklees and Holme Valley Parish Council. The Government published its Ten Point Plan plan for a green industrial revolution, and the UK will be hosting COP26 this year in November. There's a growing realisation that nature is a natural healer, vital for physical and mental health and wellbeing. During this year's pandemic, River Holme Connections stepped up to the plate and we're proud to be contributing already to these agendas with our partners and dedicated volunteers.

In spite of the challenging year, we continued to spread our efforts and partnerships across the Holme catchment with projects in Meltham and New Mill. We've also carried out work at the bottom of the Holme, at Snow Island and Lockwood spa (at one time a rival to Harrogate spa!), where the local community and volunteers have done a tremendous job to improve signage, repair the riverside footpath. This work, combined with river and litter clean-ups, have created an inspiring riverside walk into and out of the town centre. I recommend that you go and check it out with family and friends.

Our River Stewardship business, led by Simon and hugely assisted by Jane and our family of volunteers, is going from strength to strength. We're pooling resources from donations, local business and grants, (thankyou), to improve water quality so fish can thrive; remove invasive plants like Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed to allow native species to flourish; plant new hedgerows and trees and educate the next generation of river stewards on how to care for, protect and respect all the river has to offer.

There's always a lot going on! I do encourage you to leaf through the following pages that showcase the projects and positive changes taking place along the River Holme and its tributaries. There are many highlights from the year – a personal favourite was the short story competition during the first lockdown, with the river inspiring stories from young and old alike.

So here's to another five years. The future looks bright with opportunities to work with Kirklees on opening up the river in the middle of Holmfirth; engaging more landowners to help slow precipitation runoff and flow by tree and hedge planting, as well as looking forward to having our volunteer and education programmes returning to full strength. If this inspires you to get involved please do get in touch via social media, email or just come along to an event, see our website for details.

I look forward to bumping into you on the riverside walk or at one of the many events our team, experts and volunteers host. If you had no idea that there is a riverside walk along the River Holme, then I encourage you to check it out immediately! You'll find more information on our website, [riverholmeconnections.org](https://riverholmeconnections.org).



**ADRIAN BARRACLOUGH**

Chair

# Executive summary

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The global Covid-19 pandemic, with its subsequent lockdowns and restrictions on gatherings and events, put a stop to business as usual in 2020. Yet, it also provided new opportunities for us to reach new audiences, through flexible and new ways of working.

Our team undertook several major projects, working within the lockdown guidelines. Signposts were installed, completing the Routes capital project, Sands Bog Garden was completed and a significant start was made on the Thongsbridge Wild Space. Tree planting continued, with more than 2,700 trees and shrubs planted, and we formed a new partnership with the White Rose Forest, which continues into 2021. Where possible, events and work parties went ahead as planned, or were changed to virtual or self-led activities. As always, our amazing volunteers stepped up to the mark, donating almost 2,000 hours by fundraising, litter-picking and performing supporting work and activities.

Our Stewardship and invasive species control work continued, with almost 20km of river treated for Japanese knotweed. Education remains a key focus. Unfortunately, our plans to launch a major education project were postponed until 2022, however we provided river education packs to the 20 primary schools within our catchment and donated 30 River Guardian packs to local communities.

Funding for the education project saw income via donations and, as a consequence, gift aid rise to £145,839. Expenditure dropped significantly to £108,563 following skewed figures in 2019 due to the completion of a legacy project.

This year saw a number of personnel changes among our trustees and staff and, in June, we officially changed our name to River Holme Connections.

While press coverage declined in 2020, reach via social media channels continued to grow.



# Introduction

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Healthy rivers are a vital element of a healthy ecosystem and a valuable resource for all. Yet, our rivers are facing many challenges. Man-made obstacles obstruct 99% of all rivers in England and Wales, large aquatic mammals have declined by 88% and our rivers are awash with plastic pollution.

The River Holme and its tributaries, which flow through the Holme Valley before eventually joining the River Colne near Huddersfield town centre, are no different. River Holme was designated 'Moderate Ecological Status' according to the Water Framework Directive.

For the past five years, however, River Holme Connections – the charity formerly known as River 2015 – has worked hard to restore the River Holme to health and improve access for all. The overall aim is to help the Environment Agency to achieve 'Good Ecological Status' throughout the River Holme catchment.



Duck Feeding Area,  
Crown Bottom,  
Holmfirth



Butterfly walk and talk,  
Bottoms Mill

## Our work

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Since 2015, our team, supported by trustees and helped by dedicated volunteers, has cleared paths, structurally reinforced banks and provided seating and all-weather paths at locations throughout the catchment.

We've also removed tonnes of litter from the river and surrounding area, planted thousands of trees, and treated miles of invasive non-native species, including Japanese knotweed, replanting areas with native species to encourage biodiversity.

Equally important, we've embarked on an ongoing project to educate and inform young people – and future river custodians – about why we need to look after our rivers.

# Strategic partnerships

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At River Holme Connections we do not operate in isolation. The river system and the landscape are part of a bigger whole and this informs what we do. Over the years we've taken a catchment-based approach (CaBa), which involves nurturing strategic partnerships with organisations and communities with whom we have shared targets and goals. These include, among others, reacting to and mitigating against climate change events such as the impact of increasingly frequent extreme weather.

We now work collaboratively with organisations including Future Landscapes, the Upper Holme and Colne Catchment group and the 3Valleys Nature Park partnership. This collective approach gives us the opportunity to work strategically with several local partners which include Kirklees Council, White Rose Forest, Environment Kirklees, Environment Agency, Calder Catchment Partnership, the Peak District National Park Authority, Moors for the Future, National Trust, Yorkshire Water, Woodlands Trust, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and Greenstreams.

At this level we can engage on topics including:

- Water management including both quality and natural flood management
- Restoring the landscape
- Improving biodiversity of plants and animals
- Improving accessibility for all

Working together, and taking a joined-up approach to the challenges we face and opportunities presented, we can, and do, make a real difference.

Holmfirth moorland



# 2020: challenges & opportunities

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January 2020, and we had a calendar full of events at River Holme Connections, plus a variety of major projects planned for the forthcoming year.

However, like many organisations, we found our operations limited by the global Covid-19 pandemic. With a full lockdown in March, followed by limitations on group numbers and further lockdowns, many of our projects were rendered impossible in their proposed format.

Yet, lockdown revealed new opportunities. More people were walking, cycling and running, parents were using nature walks to home-school children and, with no organised activities, the countryside became a desirable outdoor space.

At River Holme Connections, we took full advantage of this renewed interest in the countryside. While it was necessary to postpone some events until 2021, where possible we moved planned events online, providing resources to enable 'virtual' or self-directed activities to take place, and creating new opportunities that encouraged children and adults to engage with and learn more about nature. When lockdown eased, we introduced Covid-safe working procedures to enable talks, walks and work parties to go ahead with limited numbers.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our team and volunteers, we turned the limitations of lockdown into an opportunity: giving more people a greater appreciation of our river environment.



# Numbers at a glance

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## Despite Covid-19 restrictions, in **2020** we safely...



Received **1,970** hours of volunteer input



Held **7** educational talks and virtual events involving more than **150** people



Held more than **100** days' worth of volunteer work parties and events



Treated more than **20km** of river for invasive Japanese knotweed



Planted **2,723** trees and shrubs throughout the catchment



Removed **609** bags of rubbish from the river catchment



Invested almost **£75,000** worth of funding from grants and donations to helping to improve our local rivers

# Teamwork

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Despite the challenges of Covid-19 facing our team and volunteers during 2020, we achieved a great deal.

River Steward, Simon Hirst, together with Operations Support, Jane Skilling, and supported by the Trustees and volunteers, held work parties, virtual events and self-led activities. They ensured that planned projects took place where possible, including our Japanese knotweed control programme, tree planting and bog garden projects. Other events were postponed until 2021.



# Student placement

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In July 2020, Ella Scharff, joined the team on a Year in Industry Placement. Ella worked closely with the team to develop a range of projects that were Covid-secure and maintained interest in the river environment. She said:

"I'm lucky enough to have this amazing learning experience at River Holme Connections during the pandemic. In the summer, I was involved in the final stages of bog-garden creation at Sands Recreation Ground in Holmfirth. This project was three years in the making, so it was really rewarding to see the success of installation on-site in July."



Ella has also been involved with our INNS project, bashing balsam and treating Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed.

Ella's internship continues until May 2021, but before then, she intends to make the most of her time by taking part in future projects, including building pathways and a wildflower meadow at Thongsbridge Wild Space. She's also planning on restarting the Riverfly monitoring work in April when the season opens, collecting vital data to inform our knowledge of the health of the River Holme.

"I would like to say thank you to all the staff and trustees at River Holme Connections for this amazing opportunity, and good luck to the next Year in Industry student who starts in the Summer!" Ella said.

# Volunteers

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Small charities such as ours rely on volunteers. It's their continued help and dedication that enables us to undertake and successfully accomplish projects ranging from major structural river improvements to educational programmes for schools and young people. In 2020, more than ever, we are indebted to the resilience, determination and hard work of our amazing volunteers. Despite the challenges of Covid-19, and the restrictions of lockdown and social distancing, our volunteers have pulled together to help us make things happen.

They've kept busy on their daily walks by spotting nature, litter picking and sharing photos and videos. Many have worked virtually to help create self-led materials for various projects and events, while others have made bags, jigsaws, calendars and more.

When lockdown eased during the summer, it was fantastic to meet with our volunteers once again at our Third Saturday Work Parties, albeit in smaller groups and at a safe distance. We're now looking forward to a time when restrictions ease and we can all meet safely once again.

Determined not to be stopped by Covid, our volunteers helped us to achieve a great deal during past year. Thank you to everyone who generously gave their time and support during this incredibly challenging year.

## 2021 fundraising calendar

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Volunteer and wildlife photographer, Mick Forster Jones, created our stunning River Holme Connections 2021 calendar featuring 12 of his incredible wildlife photos. In August, we took delivery of 400 calendars, which found homes as far afield as Canada. Thank you to Mick, and to all the people who donated in return for the calendar. Our sincere thanks also goes to all the organisations and businesses who sponsored, supported and sold our calendars, including: Thongsbridge Tennis Club, Your Nuts, Taylors Food Store, Read Bookshop and Scholes Post Office.



## Video and film

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Volunteer and amateur film makers, Sue Harrison and Owen Baker, spent time capturing footage of wildlife, people and activities (when possible) taking place within the River Holme catchment. Sue edited the film to create a wonderful story of River Holme Connections for our five-year celebration.

See: <https://youtu.be/B7WgCq1q6wc>



# Events

Lockdown and Covid-19 restrictions put a stop to many of the face-to-face events that we, and our partners, planned for 2020. Undeterred, our team, supported by volunteers, took a more flexible approach to events. While it was necessary to postpone some guided walks and talks, and festivals, where possible, planned events went ahead as either virtual events or self-led activities.

## **Bird Walk and Talk, Bottoms Mill, by Huddersfield Bird Watchers Club**

### **January**

Before lockdown, 16 individuals joined us to celebrate the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch. Huddersfield Bird Watchers Club guided the walk along the River Holme at Bottoms Mill. Among the birds species sighted were sparrowhawk, rook, mistle thrush and dunnock.



## **National Volunteers Week**

### **June**

Supported the event by trustees and volunteers posting messages.

## **Virtual Wildflower Walk and Talk, Magdale**

### **July**

Volunteers worked with the Botany Group professionals to identify flowers found along the Magdale walk. The self-led event was promoted on social media and achieved 15k views.



## **Spa Wood Nature Trail in partnership with Newsome Community Forum**

### **August**

To replace the postponed Newsome Fun Day, our team worked with Newsome Community Forum to create a self-led nature treasure trail for children along the River Holme at Spa Wood.

## **Short Story Competition - May to July**

### **55 entries in 3 x age groups (10 and under, 11-18, over 18)**

Judged by author Joanne Harris, the task was to write a 500-word short story about 'My River in the Valley'. The winning entries were turned into audio stories by Ian McMillan.



## Online Quiz

### August

A quiz night via Zoom, saw 17 groups join in the fun, raising £130.

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## What lurks beneath our waterways? Online talk

### 3 October

Originally planned as a face-to-face walk, the video and talk by Mark Barrow from Beneath British Waterways, took part online.

The overall response from attendees was extremely positive.

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## River Holme Connections 5th Birthday Celebration

### 25 November

It's 5 years since River Holme Connections was founded by a group of like-minded people. In that time, we've undertaken six-figure structural improvements along the river home, cleared tonnes of rubbish, controlled invasive species along miles of river banks, planted thousands of trees and educated more people - including younger generations - about why we need to care for our rivers.



Mark Barrow from Beneath British Waterways



**RIVER HOLME CONNECTIONS**

Join us for a fun evening and help celebrate our 5th birthday!

We can't meet though we would love to, but we are going to celebrate anyway. We are 5 years old and the time has flown. We are going to look back at how we started, what we have done together and the exciting plans we have in store. It will be an entertaining and informative hour so please join us on

**Wednesday 25th November**  
at 7pm for our virtual (Zoom) party.

Register if interested on [bit.ly/3eEQpSS](https://bit.ly/3eEQpSS) (or scan qr above). The event will be held via Zoom. You can download the free Zoom app for your laptop, desktop or tablet here <http://zoom.us/support/download>

[www.riverholmeconnections.org](http://www.riverholmeconnections.org) 01484 661756 [info@riverholmeconnections.org](mailto:info@riverholmeconnections.org)

In November, 50 people joined our 5-year celebration via Zoom, as we took a look back at the fun we've had along the way. It was an opportunity to celebrate our achievements and thank the many volunteers, businesses and partner charities and organisations who have helped us to make it happen.

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## Postponed events

Due to Covid-19 restrictions and lockdown rules, these events were postponed and are planned for 2021:

- Open Office Day
- Tree Walk and Talk
- Bat Walk and Talk
- Butterfly Walk and talk
- Newsome Fun Day
- Coffee and Cake Day
- Light up the Pleasure Grounds, Meltham

# Projects

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2020 has certainly been a strange year for all, with many projects put on hold due to the national lockdown and others adapted to accommodate social distancing measures. It was also a year of opportunity. With more people spending time walking in the countryside and visiting our rivers, there was a greater thirst for knowledge about the natural world, and a desire for walks and places to visit.

As a team, we took advantage of special Coronavirus funding streams, to help people enjoy and take care of the countryside on their doorstep.

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## Routes

Our ambition was to increase awareness of footpaths and walks around the catchment by improving way marking, clearing overgrown paths and litter and encouraging biodiversity. Three routes were identified:

### Meltham

Working in partnership with Friends of Meltham Pleasure Grounds and volunteers, pathways and signage were improved and a picnic area created next to the river. A walking map was also produced encouraging people to follow the river and explore the moorland beyond.

### Damside Road

Together with volunteers from Cummins Turbo Technologies CSR team, we revitalised the off-road access around the south east of Huddersfield, through the town centre and beyond.

### Thongsbridge to New Mill

Improved signage has increased usage of this relatively flat and accessible river valley walk. Linking Thongsbridge to New Mill, it takes in several historical sites along the way.



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## Holme Improvements

This year-long project began in autumn 2019 with the aim of transforming green spaces throughout the catchment. Practical volunteer days helped us to clear plastic waste from the river, control non-native species and plant native trees and hedges to improve biodiversity and help with natural flood management. When lockdown occurred, we concentrated on education, creating a series of online blogs and social media posts to educate people about how to help keep our rivers clean and healthy.

Holme Improvements was made possible by an award from Postcode Local Trust, a grant-giving charity funded entirely by players of the People's Postcode Lottery.

Supported by players of



Awarded funds from



## Sands Bog Garden

In the summer of 2020, the final touches were added to our Sands Recreation Ground project, in the form of a bog garden at the far side of the white bridge. A clay bund was created to act as a natural dam for water running off the banking. This results in a wetland area that provides a natural habitat for plant and animal life.

To encourage biodiversity, we planted a range of native plants that thrive in the different conditions provided by the bog. Wild grasses, mixed with oxeye daisy, betony and knapweed that thrive in clay soils were planted in the drier banking areas. In the area that will become the wetland, ragged robin, water avens and meadowsweet were sown, while the deeper pond area has a mixture of yellow iris, water mint and marsh marigold, all of which attract pollinators.

Funded by Cobbett Environmental Ltd on behalf of the Landfill Communities Fund, and Kirklees Council, the project illustrate how minimal intervention, using natural materials, can have a positive impact on biodiversity and encourage wildlife to thrive.



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## Tree Planting

At the beginning of the year, we completed our challenge to plant more than 5,000 native trees and hedges during the 2019/20 planting season. In total our volunteers helped plant an amazing 5,153 trees and hedge plants.

The scheme was kindly funded by The Bright Green Community Trust, Holmfirth Transition Town (HoTT), Cobbett Environmental Ltd through the Landfill Communities Fund and Post Code Local Trust.

In the autumn, we successfully applied for funding from the Government's Trees for Climate, through the White Rose Forest. Following a call for land, we've arranged one-to-one meetings with landowners to survey the proposed sites and identify suitable tree planting areas.



# River Stewardship

Working within social distancing guidelines, we continued our campaign to improve river environments by increasing biodiversity, access and controlling invasive non-native species (INNS) throughout the River Holme catchment.

## **INNS Out - invasive non-native species control**

### ***Himalayan balsam***

When lockdown eased during the summer months, we hosted socially distanced balsam bashing work parties for volunteers. We also provided a wealth of information online and via social media to encourage people to safely 'bash' Himalayan balsam while out walking.

### ***Japanese knotweed control***

In total, we treated Japanese knotweed along 18.5km of river, including tributaries. This included spraying 6,505 sq m of Japanese knotweed and injecting 5,126 stems.

Our trained volunteers also helped us spray a further 900 sq m of Japanese knotweed and inject 492 stems, over a four-day period on behalf of Natural Kirklees, at locations beyond our river catchment.

## **Business partnerships**

We continued our Stewardship agreements with our corporate partners, including:

- Bower Roebuck - woodland work, bird box installation, litter clearing, invasive species control and wildflower seeding.
- Burton Safes - invasive species control.



Japanese knotweed control  
River Holme, Magdale

## River Guardians

Reacting to the enforced lockdown and to give people a greater appreciation of the natural world, we successfully applied for funding from One Community NET Coronavirus Emergency Fund Grant. With the funds we purchased 30 River Guardian kits (top right), comprising litter picking equipment and a range of identification guides. The kits were donated to volunteers and local community groups to help them improve our green spaces. The funding also supported our ongoing citizen science riverfly monitoring, to help us assess the health of our rivers.

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## Wildflower growing kits

During the second lockdown, we applied for funding from TSL (Third Sector Leaders) Community Learning Works for wildflower growing kits. These were sent out to volunteers to grow native flowers and plugs, which will be planted along the riverbanks to replace the invasive species.

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## Education

Our plans to start a major education project in 2020 was postponed due to Covid. Instead, at the start of the first lockdown in March, we contacted all 20 primary schools within the catchment offering remote support for any river-related topics they were delivering. Each school also received an education pack containing river-related resources, including a pond dipping kit (middle right) and NHBS field guides. The kits were kindly funded by the Worshipful Company of Water Conservators.

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## Art & environmental education packs

With funding from One Community Foundation and National Emergencies Trust, we donated 60 art and environmental education packs to children and families in Huddersfield (bottom right).

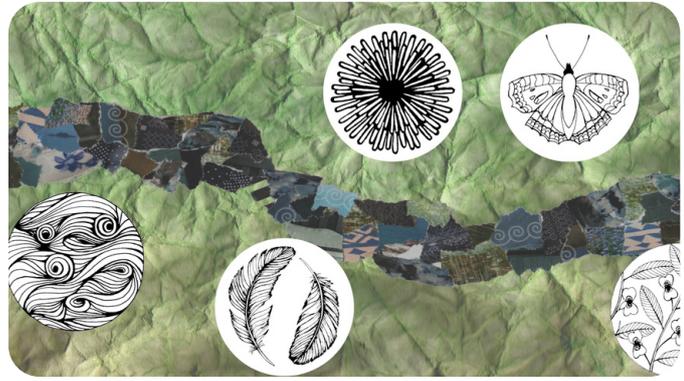


# River Runs Deep

Originally, we intended to host a series of creative workshops for Support 2 Recovery, Thornton Lodge Action Group and Adel Care Home. Lockdown prevented this from taking place, so the team developed an alternative approach to this Awards for All, National Lottery funded project.

Reaching many of the vulnerable and isolated members of communities along the River Holme, artists Rachel Massey and Alice Bradshaw created a bespoke nature activity and postcard that was distributed in food parcels.

The activity pack encouraged people to create words or images inspired by their favourite nature discovery, on the postcards and return them. The winning entry was from Desire, who wrote a poem inspired by nature. She received a supermarket voucher.



Desire (left) receiving her prize from Trustee, Lynva Russell (right)



Riverside Way markers



## Mapping the Riverside Way

The Riverside Way is a joined up walk, taking people from the moors above Holmfirth, along the river (where possible) into Huddersfield town centre. With no ongoing funding, the Riverside Way, which was mapped and signposted in 2000, had fallen into disrepair in places. We commissioned a public rights of way expert to survey the entire route, identifying where remedial work and signposting was required and the costs involved.

# Thongsbridge Wild Space

A crowdfunding campaign, on the Kirklees Council Growing Great Spaces platform, saw us raise more than £17,500 to create a new wild area for Thongsbridge Recreation Ground. The project includes creating 120m of accessible path, a picnic area, wildflower meadow and tree planting scheme.

When completed, the area will provide a destination for local people and visitors to engage with nature and take part in activities, such as carving, coppicing and bird watching among others. It's also anticipated that the area will become a valuable outdoor and environmental resource for local schools.

Work has already started on the tree planting, and will continue into 2021. The fundraising was so successful that the original target of £17,000 was reached by November.



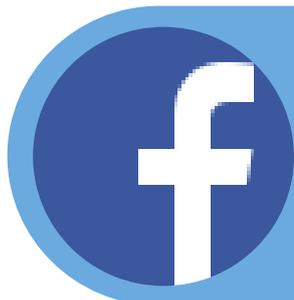
Above and below: Tree planting at Thongsbridge Wild Space



## Tributree

With lockdown once again in force in December 2020, we raised awareness of the River Holme and its tributaries, through our Tributree project. In the run-up to Christmas photos of almost every tributary in the Holme Valley were posted on social media feeds, with browsers invited to share and add their own images.

# Spreading the word



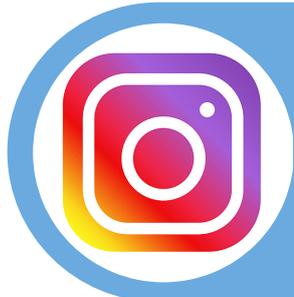
## Facebook

- Total number of followers increased from 667 to 933.
- Total number of page likes increased from 627 to 888.
- Most effective single post featured 'Our Future Landscape Group', reaching 8.1k views with 295 post clicks and 68 reactions/comments/shares on 17 February 2020.



## Twitter

- Followers increased from 451 to 643
- Average monthly impressions: 19,100
- Most effective Tweet (promoting British Nature Guide in December) received 8,216 impressions and 41 engagements



## Instagram

- Followers increased from 112 to 451
- Instagram reach (unique accounts that viewed at least one post): 759
- Most effective post ('Holme Tributree day 19'): 226 reach



## You Tube

- 20 videos posted
- Subscribers increased from 9 to 14
- Average viewers 28 per video
- 214 views for most popular video - 'Five Year Celebration'



## Newstream

- Subscribers increased from 397 to 428
- Open rate averaged 38.5%
- Clicks per unique open averaged 19.91 clicks



## Editorial coverage

- 1 x online article: 'Bog Garden', Examiner Live + 1 x photo caption on Japanese knotweed
- 6 x articles/ mentions in Holme Valley Review
- 1 x mention in West Yorkshire Women's institute
- Total of 85 column inches worth advertising equivalent value £3,981

# Future projects

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## Thongsbridge Wild Space

Work will continue on creating the picnic area, accessible paths and wild area in Thongsbridge.

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## Education programme

Postponed due to Covid, in 2022, we intend to work with every primary school within the catchment (c. 20 schools). The project involves providing a River Explorer day for each school, including resources and support. The aim is to help educate the next generation about our river environment and the importance of caring for our rivers now and in the future.

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## Year in Industry Placement 2021/22

In 2020, we welcomed Ella Scharff on a Year in Industry student placement. This scheme continues next year, with another student joining the team when Ella leaves in May 2021.

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## White Rose Forest Partnership

We'll continue our association with the White Rose Forest, as delivery partner for the Holme Valley, planting 1,400 trees within the catchment.

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## Future Landscapes

Together with Moors for the Future, The Environment Agency, Woodland Trust and Kirklees Council, we're part of the Future Landscapes partnership. Working together, this major, long-term project aims to consolidate the environmental work taking place within the wider region.

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## Youth participation project

In spring, we'll be inviting young people, aged 13-18-years, who live or study in the Holme Valley, to help us create a river project based on how the River Holme can benefit people following the impact of coronavirus. The plan is to find funding to turn the best ideas into reality.

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## Riverside Way

In 2020, we developed the Riverside Way improvement plan. In 2021, the plan is to revamp the entire walk, improving signage, repairing footpaths and making access better for all. As part of the project, we'll be promoting the Riverside Way walks and routes.



# Finance

A full set of accounts is available to view at the River Holme Connections office. Please call 01484 661756 to arrange an appointment.

## Income

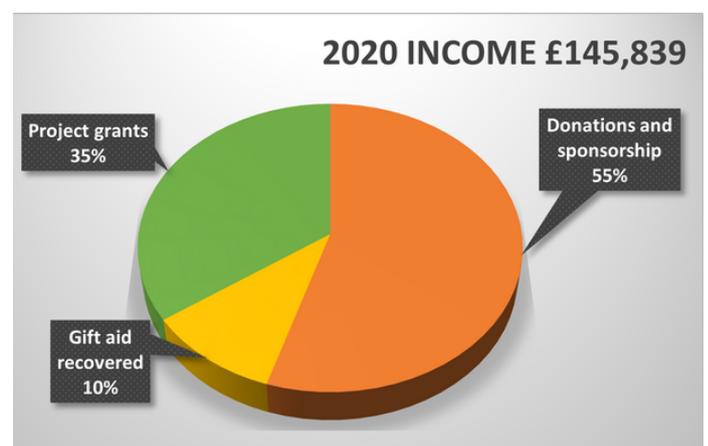
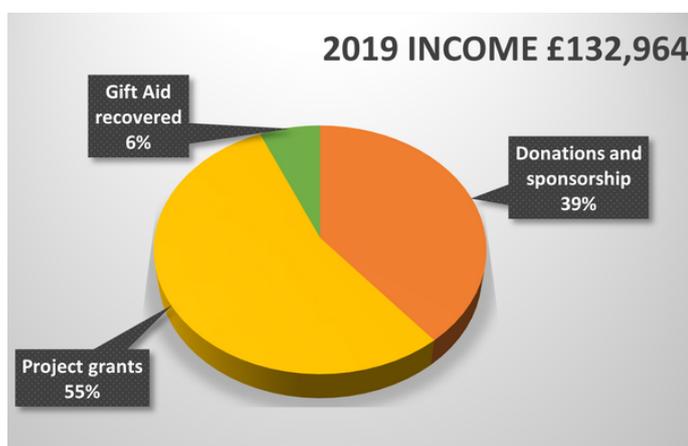
In 2020, we received a total income of £145,839, a 9.68% increase on the donations and sponsorship funds raised in 2019.

This comprised:

Income	2020	2019
Project grants	£50,480	£72,520
Gift Aid recovered	£15,328	£8,598
Donations and sponsorship	£80,031	£51,846
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£145,839</b>	<b>£132,964</b>

As a consequence of the increased value of donations from private individuals, the value of gift aid contributions increased by more than 80% from £8,598 in 2019 to £15,328 in 2020.

This was due to a significant increase in donations and sponsorship income, which rose from £52,000 in 2019 to £80,000 in 2020, following a large donation to fund a schools' education programme for at least two years. Covid restrictions prevented this programme from taking place in 2020 and 2021, but the project will launch in 2022.



# Expenditure

Expenditure for 2020 reduced by more than 40% from £188,493 in 2019 to £108,563 in 2020.

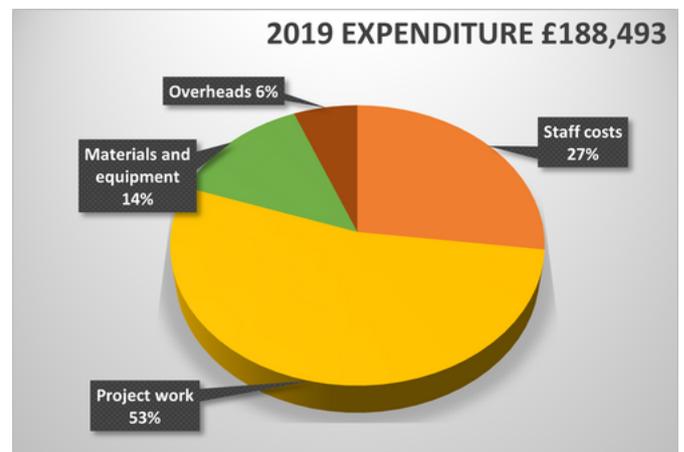
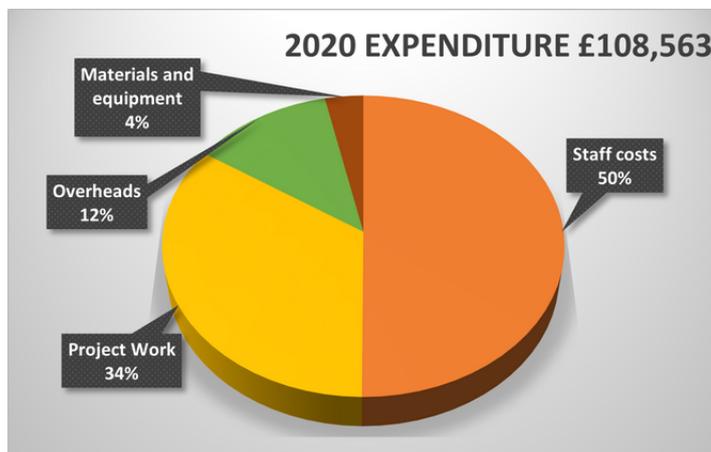
This comprised:

Expenditure	2020	2019
Project work	£37,132	£99,901
Staff costs	£54,390	£50,893
Materials and equipment	£3,660	£26,389
Overheads	£13,381	£11,309
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£108,563</b>	<b>£188,493</b>

Staff costs increased in line with inflation during 2020, with a small additional increase in staff costs as a result of the Year in Industry student placement. Overhead expenditure also saw an additional increase. This was a consequence of entering into a new IT and website support contract, which has finally solved long-standing IT issues.

In 2019, project work, materials and equipment expenditure was extraordinarily high. This was due to a large grant received in autumn 2018 for a project that continued until mid-2019. In 2020, materials and equipment costs were more in line previous years.

Project costs were also significantly reduced, as a significant number of planned projects were postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions.



# Meet the trustees and team

2020 was a year of change. In June we officially changed our registered charity name from River 2015 to River Holme Connections. As most of our volunteers and partners know us as River Holme Connections, it made sense to change our official name to avoid confusion.

Changes also took place among our team and trustees. Student, Ella Scharff, joined us in July on a Year in Industry student placement and Julie MacNaughton worked with the team on a fundraising consultancy basis. Mike Bowman, left the Board and Dan Eustance left the team to take up a new role. In turn, we welcomed three new trustees: Mike Dolton, Pam King and Sue Lee Richards.

Mike recently retired from Cummins Turbo Technologies, where he led the Environmental section of their community team. He has a lifelong interest in nature and has been a regular volunteer for many years. Sue is a teacher and Green Councillor for Newsome Ward. Sue already works closely with our team on the White Rose Forest and Youth Participation projects. After 40 years in education, care and health, Pam retired to the Holme Valley. She has a keen interest in environmental issues and has helped with many of our educational events and projects in the past.

## Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for leading and running the charity in a business-focused and socially responsible way. Between them, the trustees have a wide range of skills and experience, and are passionate about improving the River Holme catchment for people and wildlife.



Adrian  
Barraclough

Lynva  
Russell

Mike  
Williams

Clare  
Ash

Richard  
Ashley

Sue Lee  
Richards

Mike  
Dolton

Pam  
King

## Farewell to Mike Bowman

In August, we said a fond farewell to Mike Bowman, one of the founding members of River Holme Connections. Mike and his wife moved to Lincolnshire in September 2020, meaning it was no longer possible for him to commit to the role of trustee. Mike said:

"My wife and I will be sad to leave the valley and I will miss being part of the RHC team. We have achieved so much since we started and it has been a pleasure to play even a small part in helping to make such amazing things happen. There is still lots to do and I am sure that you will all help create a great story of future success. My very best wishes to you all and take care."

During his time as a trustee, Mike played an active role at the charity and will be sorely missed by everyone at River Holme Connections. The trustees and team would like to send their best wishes and heartfelt thanks to Mike for all his help and support over the years.



# RHC Staff

Jane Skilling, Operations, and Simon Hirst, River Steward, have done an amazing job in extremely difficult circumstances. They worked throughout lockdown, making sure that projects and events took place where possible. Turning the challenges of Covid-19 into opportunities, they secured funding for activities and events that supported the community and vulnerable families.

In July, Year in Industry student, Ella Scharff, joined the team. Ella worked closely with Simon and Jane to deliver projects, including Sands bog garden, Japanese knotweed control, funding applications including the successful Thongsbridge Wild Space bid, the fifth birthday celebrations and more. In July, fundraising consultant Julie MacNaughton began working alongside the team to assist with raising money for future projects. Jeanette Dyson, assisted with communication projects and, once again, wrote and designed this annual report.

Having worked closely as our planning consultant for many years, Dan Eustance accepted a new role working on a major government project. Dan's help was invaluable in our many capital projects and we wish him all the best for the future. Dan said: "The charity has achieved so much in the past five years and I thoroughly enjoyed working with the team. It's fantastic to see how local businesses, people and wildlife are now benefiting from the environmental projects, structural changes, investment and hard work."



Jane Skilling

Simon Hirst

Jeanette Dyson

Ella Scharff



Consultant,  
Julie MacNaughton



Dan Eustance

# Acknowledgements

This year, more than ever, we would like to say thank you to all the companies and organisations that have continued to support us through the various lockdowns. Thanks go to the landowners who have permitted us to plant trees and hedges, providing habitats for wildlife and aiding flood management.

Our biggest thank you is reserved for our amazing team of volunteers. It really is true that we would not be able to achieve the things we do without their help and commitment. It has been a difficult year for everyone, in some way, yet our volunteers have stayed with us throughout all the lockdowns, enthusiastically returning for our Third Saturday Work Parties, when it was possible. Even through lockdown, many worked remotely or by themselves, litter picking, bashing balsam, taking pictures and more. We hope to be able to thank them in person in 2021.

In 2020, we finally completed the last of our capital projects funded by Cobbett Environmental Ltd through the Landfill Communities Fund. Many other companies, individuals and community organisations have also contributed to our charity through the invasive species programme. We've also received financial and in-kind support from:

- Awards for All
- Bower Roebuck
- Brookes Mill
- Burton Safes
- Natural Kirklees
- One Community
- Yorkshire Water
- Kirklees Council
- Environment Agency
- Third Sector Leaders
- Newsome Community Forum
- Peoples Postcode Lottery
- Thornton Family Fund
- Water Conservators Trust
- Cummins Turbo Technologies
- Beneath British Waterways
- Central England Co-operative
- Community Learning Works
- Holme Valley Parish Council
- Huddersfield Bird Watchers Group
- South-West Yorkshire Botany Group
- READ Bookshop, Ian McMillan and Joanne Harris



RIVER HOLME  
CONNECTIONS



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Ins: riverholme2015

Registered charity number: 1163873

