



## PRESS RELEASE

14 February 2013: For immediate release

### **River restoration partners announce formation of new South East Rivers Trust**

The Wandle Trust, The Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency are delighted to announce the formation of the new South East Rivers Trust to help engage communities with conservation and restoration of their local rivers across Kent and south east England.

The rivers trust movement has grown rapidly in recent years, with a vibrant network of individually motivated community-led initiatives operating throughout over 80% of UK river catchments. One of the few areas without widespread rivers trust coverage is south east England. The Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency have been exploring options to enable the formation of a trust that can complement and work alongside other existing local organisations delivering river conservation work including the Kent Countryside Management Partnerships, which is co-ordinated by Kent County Council.

After much consideration, it was agreed that a nearby Trust extending its current area of operation would be the most efficient means of capitalising on existing expertise and avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort.

Rivers trusts apply the ecosystem approach at a catchment scale, and have a strong ethos of community engagement and partnership working with other bodies including farmers, landowners, water companies, other environmental NGO's and angling groups. In collaboration with the Environment Agency and many local partners, the Wandle Trust has a proven track record of delivering complex river restoration projects across south west London, with a unique blend of scientific expertise and volunteer engagement.

Accordingly, the Wandle Trust has now agreed to extend its area of benefit to cover the Kent and the south eastern area where rivers trusts do not currently operate. Over time, the charity is likely to evolve fully into the South East Rivers Trust, whilst continuing to operate as the Wandle Trust within the Wandle river catchment, and to develop river restoration projects as the South East Rivers Trust with all interested partners on the wider stage.

#### **Wandle Trust and South East Rivers Trust Chairman Theo Pike said:**

*"This is a hugely exciting development both for the Wandle Trust and the whole rivers trust movement, and we're very much looking forward to engaging with local people across south east England who are already doing so much for their rivers. But it's also business as usual on the Wandle, where our recent Catchment Plan consultation has told us how south London's communities want to see the Wandle improved, and we're now starting to deliver these improvements with partnership funding from Defra and the Environment Agency. Watch this space for much more news!"*

#### **Wandle Trust and South East Rivers Trust Director Dr Bella Davies said:**

*"Rivers are such an integral part of a landscape and hugely important to many communities - so it is a pleasure to be asked to work across a larger area, helping to restore more rivers in partnership with others*

PO Box 56545  
London SW18 9DY  
0845 092 0110  
[www.wandletrust.org](http://www.wandletrust.org)  
Charity Registration No: 1091000

*and supporting the good work that is already underway. We are also delighted to be able to help close the gap in rivers trust coverage in the south east and support the Rivers Trust in bringing greater benefits for rivers and their communities across the country."*

**Environment Agency Regional Director Howard Davidson said:**

*"We are pleased to help facilitate this agreement which will see Rivers Trust coverage extend to cover Kent. By bringing together the proven experience and expertise of the Wandle Trust and the Countryside Management Partnerships, this agreement will assist the Environment Agency in delivering more for the environment especially our Water Framework Directive targets."*

**Rivers Trust Director Barry Bendall said:**

*"Aquatic ecosystems are vital in supporting the needs of our society and yet they are fragile environments, under enormous threat from human activities. Re-connecting society with these environments and enabling communities to take ownership for delivering conservation work in partnership with other public and private organisations is a major challenge, but one that rivers trusts are extremely suited to and one that can ultimately deliver the maximum benefits. I am therefore delighted that such a well established trust as Wandle has decided to extend its hand out to other partners in the South East in a bid to maximise the conservation opportunities of such important resources."*

**KCC Kent Countryside Management Partnership Manager Kate Phillips said:**

*"We are delighted to support the new SE Rivers Trust; it is an opportunity to strengthen the excellent work that is already happening across Kent. The Countryside Management Partnerships will use their extensive network to help develop and deliver river projects with organisations, businesses and volunteers. By working together we can continue to help improve the quality of our rivers as well as people's enjoyment of them and their surroundings."*

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**Notes to editors:**

- 1. The Wandle Trust is an environmental charity dedicated to restoring and maintaining the health of the River Wandle and its catchment ([www.wandletrust.org](http://www.wandletrust.org)) in the London Boroughs of Croydon, Sutton, Merton and Wandsworth. Recent changes to the Wandle Trust's Articles also enable the Trust to work in partnership with the Environment Agency and other organisations outside the Wandle catchment.*
- 2. As part of the development of the South East Rivers Trust, the Wandle Trust will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Kent Countryside Management Partnerships.*
- 3. The Rivers Trust is the umbrella body of the rivers trust movement in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and has an MoU with a sister organisation in Scotland (RAFTS). The Rivers Trust is an independent charity representing the rivers trust movement nationally and internationally, and promoting a catchment based approach to river restoration within a framework of sound science, partnership, facilitation and avoiding duplication of effort.*
- 4: The Kent Countryside Management Partnerships are a collective of organisations run to help manage habitat and landscapes in partnership with local communities. CMPs provide a wide range of services across the county of Kent and the London Borough of Bexley. They bring together many organisations to help maintain Kent's landscape and wildlife, as well as support Kent's communities, and play a vital part in the*

*conservation and enhancement of the Kent countryside. For more information please go to [www.kentcountryside.org.uk](http://www.kentcountryside.org.uk)*

**For more information on the Environment Agency, please direct all media enquiries to 0118 953 5555; out of hours 0800 141 2743. Please ask for the duty press officer.**

**For more information on the Wandle Trust and the South East Rivers Trust, please contact Theo Pike on mobile 07941 955 511, or via email [theo.pike@wandletrust.org](mailto:theo.pike@wandletrust.org)**