



# the River Restoration Centre

Working to restore and enhance our rivers

## RRC Annual Report April 2015 to March 2016

RRC is a “not-for-profit” information and advice centre working across the UK to support understanding and delivery of best practice river restoration & management.

### Overview

This year has been one of extremes, some good, some not so good, and some (like the winter flooding) disastrous. At the beginning of the year, whilst in the midst of funding cuts and a single year spending review, Defra still made a £6m commitment to support and promote the work of the 100+ Catchment partnerships across England, with independent advice from RRC. The River Prize was expanded to cover the UK, and the cross border River Tweed received the accolade and the Nigel Holmes Trophy, in front of an audience of 250.

Scotland continued to invest even more heavily in the morphological quality of its rivers, as well as their capacity to naturally reduce the impact of flooding, drafting an excellent Natural Flood Management (NFM) Handbook (with RRC input). Conversely, Northern Ireland began major changes to its core agencies & departments, slowing its WFD and NFM progress somewhat.

Following the flooding at Christmas in Cumbria and Yorkshire, flood risk management and the role of working with river processes is firmly on the political agenda. This matching of extreme floods and environmental protection was echoed when RRC presented at an EU Parliament Environment and Climate Change workshop.



Finally, it was a great privilege to attend the EU Green Week LIFE awards, alongside Toni Scarr from the Environment Agency, to jointly accept a ‘Best of the Best’ award for RESTORE, on behalf of the partners.

### RRC Staff

Managing Director	Martin Janes
Business & Finance Co-ordinator	Emma Turner
Science & Technical Mgr	Jenny Mant/Marc Naura
Restoration Adviser	Ulrika Åberg/Jasmine Errey
Centre Administrator	Tracy Burton/Nicola Mackley
Information Officer	Josh Robbins
Local Engagement & Communications Officer	Will Barber

2015 has been a big year of team changes for RRC. During the year we said goodbye to Centre Administrator - Tracy Burton, Restoration Adviser - Ulrika Åberg, and Science & Technical Manager - Jenny Mant and welcomed in their place Nicola Mackley, Jasmine Errey and Marc Naura. We also welcomed Will Barber, on a two year Esmée Fairbairn funded role to support and engage with the growing number of emerging catchment partners, in the same way that we have worked with the statutory bodies.

### RRC Board of Directors

RRC is governed by a Board of Directors:

Fiona Bowles (Chairman)	Andrew Gill
Kevin Skinner (Secretary)	Will Bond
Orlanda Harvey (Vice Chair)	Nicholas Clifford
Dan Alsop	Lawrie Gray

We are always keen to discuss new director appointments. Interest should be expressed to a director or the Managing Director in the first instance.

### RRC at Cranfield

The River Restoration Centre is based at Cranfield University in Bedfordshire. We would like to thank Cranfield Water Science Institute and the School of Water, Energy and Environment at Cranfield University

**Cranfield UNIVERSITY** for their support and hosting of RRC.

### RRC Membership

RRC continues to receive the support and financial commitment from the UK environment agencies and conservation bodies as Core Funders (logos below).

Corporate Members for the year were:

Cranfield University	Jacobs UK
Royal Haskoning DHV UK	Atkins
Salix River & Wetland Services	AECOM
Ove Arup & Partners	EWB Moore
WSP Developments	

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During the year we welcomed the following new Business Members:

- Affinity Water
- Cambridge Water
- Capita Property
- Water Management Alliance
- Wycombe District Council

The RRC gratefully acknowledges the support of all its Members: Core, Corporate, Business, Trust, Individual and Student.

## Delivering the RRC Business plan

The start of 2016 saw RRC's new Business Plan, following the six year cycle of the Water and Floods directives. As part of this process we began instigating our first ever strategic review, which will take place during the next year. We will be in touch with many of you over this period for your input.

RRC's core activities continue to be an essential component in maintaining our position as the UK's independent information and advice centre for up to date best practice and expertise in river restoration. Core activities are grouped into:

- Information and knowledge exchange;
- Expert technical advice & evaluation;
- Dissemination, training and guidance.

Notable areas for growth are auditing/evaluating projects, training and other events, and extracting more from the data and experience of RRC and the wide membership of the UK river restoration network.

## Information & Knowledge Exchange

### Best practice restoration and management

We have continued to improve and add to the National River Restoration Inventory (NRRI). There are now over 4,500 projects on the NRRI, this is up from 3,850 last year. As part of our continued improvements to the NRRI, we have begun to transfer the data to an Access database. This should allow us to manage and analyse the data more effectively. RRC continues to be responsible for moderating all RiverWiki case studies that are added in the UK, while also acting as an administrator for the website, on behalf of the European Centre for River Restoration (ECRR). The UK-specific RiverWiki data is downloaded each month and added to the NRRI database.

There are 594 projects from the UK and 963 in total on the RiverWiki which has over 7,200 registered users and has had 4 million views in the past 3 years.



These data are used to compile information on a wide range of river restoration, working with natural processes and best practice river management works for a range of organisations, including the SNH led IUCN River Restoration and Biodiversity report (UK and Ireland), Natural Flood Management (NFM) costs and examples for SEPA/Scottish Government and flood risk mitigation costs, and NFM examples, for EA FCRM.

### RRC Bulletin

The RRC Bulletin has continued to be published monthly, with two special editions each year. The Bulletin is sent out to a readership of over 2,800 and is an effective way of synthesising both internal and external information.

In the last year, bulletins signposted many new reports and documents including: SEPA's new Natural Flood Management Handbook, EA's report on the impacts of the winter 2013-2014 floods, the EU Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Report, REFORM's Policy Brief No.3 and the new Channel Management Handbook.

The RRC Bulletins also feature news and events. For example we have publicised a number of PhD opportunities from Universities such as Loughborough, Lancaster and Coventry. Events such as the WTT Awards, CaBA Conference and EU River Symposium have been featured. News and Job opportunities from Arup, RAFTS and cbec have also been included.

The Bulletin has also been a great way to publicise internal news and events, particularly the Annual Conference and Catchment Partnership Learning Workshops. RRC web pages such as the new Community Engagement page and updates to the Projects Map have also featured in the Bulletin.

### RRC web-based resources

Following the launch of the new RRC website in December 2014, the number of visitors to the site has increased significantly.

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The unique visitors in the 2015/2016 financial year were higher in every month compared to the 2014/2015 year. On average, there was a 37% increase in unique visitors and 35% increase in total visitors.

We are continuing to develop the site so that it is essential for anyone involved in river restoration. The UK Projects Map has been improved and it is now easier to find case studies with basic information attached – don't forget to call us for help with more detailed information! With funding from Esmée Fairbairn, 'Community Engagement' has been added with further pages to come on this.

#### Communication, events and media

Complementing the website and bulletin, we actively promote new developments, key activities and best practice. This may be at events, conferences and international meetings such as:

- Presenting to the European Commission environment and climate change committee in Brussels; the Launch of the French National River Restoration Centre in Paris; 3 London-based community engagement, citizen science & planners & rivers workshops; and monitoring river restoration in the Netherlands and Northumberland.

Or through social media routes:

- The RRC's Flickr account is being continually developed to showcase RRC's image archive of projects, techniques and events.
- An increase of 192 'likes' on Facebook to 742. There was an excellent reaction to our River Prize Finalists announcements posts which were shared to over 6,000 people.
- The RRC now has over 2,447 followers on Twitter, this is up by nearly 647. With a monthly average of 37 tweets (up from 18), 31,000 impressions (up from 9,000) and 1,100 page visits (up from 300). All helping to spread the message of managing our rivers better.
- There are over 150 new followers of the RRC LinkedIn profile. This has resulted in a greater amount of river restoration professionals seeing and interacting with our posts.

#### Teaching and Research

RRC lectures at various Universities (including Birmingham, Kings College, London, Nottingham and of course Cranfield. We are also hosting Chiara Magliozzi who is undertaking a three year Marie Curie International Training Network (ITN) programme of research into the hyporheic zone and river restoration, at Cranfield University. This involved teaching on the summer school for all 13 ITN students, in Berlin.

#### Technical Advice and Evaluation

##### Strategic steering and working groups

RRC is respected for its impartial and independent expert advice. We continue to provide significant input at the EU/UK/national strategic level:

- UK River Prize lead partner/administrator - UK
- Catchment Partnership Action Fund panel – England
- CaBA Catchment Data User Group - England
- Natural Flood Management steering group – Scotland
- IUCN river restoration review steering group – UK/RoI
- SSSI river restoration programme board - England
- European Centre for River Restoration board - Europe
- Water Environment Fund adviser - Scotland

These roles allow us to inform, influence and support national initiatives.

##### Evaluation of the Cumbrian River Restoration Strategy

Natural England. The Cumbrian River Restoration Strategy (CRRS) was developed by the three Cumbrian River Trusts (Eden, West and South Cumbria) in partnership with the EA and NE. The approach of working with the rivers trusts to deliver large projects was a relatively new way of working in the Cumbrian area, and as a result the restoration strategy was subject to a range of procedural, process and delivery issues that needed to be resolved as the project evolved. By request from the Project Board, the RRC reviewed these lessons and produced a detailed report based on interviews and visits to key restoration sites, to allow the partnership and team to improve the way it delivers this work across Cumbria.

##### Checkley Brook

The Environment Agency contacted the RRC about some unconsented works which were carried out on Checkley Brook, Staffordshire. The channel had been straightened and two meander bends were removed. The landowner was willing to help reinstate the old

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channel, so RRC visited the site and produced a report to suggest how the contractors should approach it.



### Hydropower & geomorphology in Wales

After observing an increase in the number of small scale high head hydropower plants across Wales, Natural Resources Wales was concerned about the potential individual and cumulative impacts on high energy Welsh streams and their geomorphology. The RRC organised a one-day expert workshop attended by specialists in geomorphology, hydropower and ecology, from government agencies, consultancies, universities and other organisations. The resulting report summarised the current available knowledge on the geomorphological impacts of high head micro-hydro, an identification of key knowledge gaps and a monitoring framework to support NRW in collecting better evidence.

### Flood Risk and Biodiversity Improvements

We have been working with Environment Agency flood risk managers in Par in Cornwall to suggest how a number of possible Flood Alleviation Scheme options might also result in a significant benefit for river habitat and amenity. This will be used to feed in to the much larger structural flood scheme's technical feasibility study once the contract has been awarded.



### Local Engagement & Communications work

RRC are in receipt of a 2 year grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to fund a local engagement &

communications project aimed specifically at local community-led groups.

By offering both desk based and on-site technical advice and support, free workshops and developing guidance materials through the production of 'how to' factsheets and online videos the RRC aim to empower people to become river champions, develop and strengthen good practice and influence the UK policy decision making process to enable them to improve the quality of their rivers

The project commenced in August 2015 and will run till July 2017.



### Catchment Partnership Action Fund (CPAF)

RRC was involved throughout the CPAF process. This ranged from undertaking the technical reviews of the CPAF applications, to supporting the EA and the individual partnerships, where needed, running three workshops and undertaking an audit of seven projects at the end of the 12-month delivery period.

106 partnerships were awarded funding to undertake a project to deliver aspects of WFD implementation. These were small scale and low value (£15 to £31K in most cases, but with others picking up considerable match funds too. Time was also tight, with delivery within the financial year, and the horrendous wet weather over the 15/16 winter period.

The three regional CPAF workshops, run by RRC and EA, with input from CaBA NSG attracted 142 delegates from 80% of the partnerships. The idea was to work through some of the issues common to many of the proposals, namely:

- setting clear project objectives to support project delivery, and defining success targets and,
- monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate that project objectives and benefits are achieved.

### Dissemination, Training and Guidance

#### RRC 2015 Annual Network Conference

"People and Process-Based River Management: Restoring River Processes; Natural Flood Management; Healthy Catchments". This two day conference was held at Whittlebury Hall, Northamptonshire and attracted over 250 delegates with 55 presentations. The conference was well supported with 14 sponsoring organisations providing highly sought after discounted places to smaller trusts, students and voluntary groups.

The feedback was excellent with 97.5% of attendees saying it met their expectations (2.5% not answering). On average the sessions were rated 4.2 out of 5. The

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site visit, NFM session and Citizen Science workshop rated the highest (4.4).

#### Thanks to our conference sponsors

AECOM, Alaska, ARUP, APEM, cbec eco-engineering, CH2M Hill, E-fish, frog environmental, Greenfix, OHES Environmental, Penny Anderson Associates, RShydro, Salix and Wiley

#### 2015 UK River Prize

In 2015, RRC facilitated the inaugural UK River Prize following on from the England River Prize in 2014. A new trophy was commissioned and named after Nigel Holmes who sadly passed away the year before.

There were four finalists who were selected from 18 applicants. These were:

- Ballinderry River
- River Adur
- Kennet and Lambourn
- River Tweed

**The overall winner was the River Tweed for the great work that has been done by Tweed Forum.** They were awarded the Nigel Holmes Trophy and £10,000 at the UK River Prize Awards Dinner, which was held during the 2015 RRC Conference.



#### Thanks to the supporters of the UK River Prize

Environment Agency, Rivers Agency, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, University of Dundee, Natural Resources Wales, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and WWF.

#### Site visits

A programme of four site visits offered the opportunity for RRC members to view and discuss ongoing projects:

- Rivers Wandle & Hogsmill, London – April 30<sup>th</sup>
- 2015 UK River Prize Winner River Tweed trib. (Eddleston Water) – 24<sup>th</sup> June
- River Taw, Dartmoor – 14<sup>th</sup> July
- River Irfon, Mid Wales – 10<sup>th</sup> September



#### Training courses

Three RRC training courses were run in the year.

#### Natural Flood Management: concepts, design, project management and delivery - Northumberland, 21<sup>st</sup> April

In this course the multiple benefits of working with natural processes were discussed. Participants looked at a number of case studies from across Europe and visited the Belford NFM project. Supported by ARUP.

#### Best practice river restoration design: Concept to Delivery - Manchester, 9<sup>th</sup> June

This course aimed to improve the technical understanding of participants who are involved with the design and development of restoration projects. The course included a site visit to the River Medlock.

#### Ecosystem services: How to apply the theory to river restoration and natural flood management projects - Northumberland, 9<sup>th</sup> July

This course looked to link ecosystem service theory to practice and to think about what valuing our ecosystems means in terms of restoration. Participants were able to test these concepts on a site visit in the Tyne catchment.



#### Workshops

#### Northern Ireland training course

Following our involvement in the Blue-Green Cities project there was a need in Northern Ireland for a targeted workshop/training day. This NFM workshop in Belfast, with Rivers Agency and Blue-Green consortium, was to help ensure that all functions of NI departments and local government are committed to joined-up thinking and approaches to catchment-wide flood management. The day included guest speakers from London Borough of Lewisham and Leeds University.

#### Upper & Bedford Ouse Catchment Partnership

In March 2016 RRC worked with the Catchment Partnership host for the upper Great Ouse to run two introductory volunteer evening events, followed by on-site weekend visits to local tributaries. The same process, with more detail, was also arranged for the

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Catchment Partners. The aim was to support this enthusiastic and new partnership, with most of the time input from our Esmée Fairbairn Local Engagement Officer, Will.

### River Dove – Weir removal & restoration

RRC also supported and presented at this workshop, at the Isaac Walton Hotel in Dovedale. The long history of modification of the Dove was also captured by artists and comparison has highlighted the changes over centuries. This open discussion and walk across the famous stepping stones aimed to look at the issues and aesthetics of the valley, the river and the role of natural processes and fish passage.



### Guidance / publications

#### Monitoring Planner – into practice

We are continuing to work with organisation to embed a culture of sound planning into river restoration and management across the catchment. This encompasses both setting targeted and clear objectives and planning a cost effective means of evaluating the work before, during and after implementation. We have been working with SEPA, Natural England, Environment Agency and the 108 Catchment Partnerships in England to do this.

<http://www.therrc.co.uk/monitoring-planner>

#### Weirs – design modification and removal

RRC has been involved in the Ciria update to its 2003 River Weirs - Good Practice Guide. The work, led by JBA, will incorporate more on modification, decommissioning and removal (and so restoration of the river afterwards).

#### SEPA NFM Handbook

This practical introduction to the concepts and case examples of Natural Flood Management in Scotland combines a wealth of material and understanding with links to other documents like the RRC River Restoration Manual. With 20 years of experience in these type of guidance documents and the recipient audience, RRC

was well placed to support SEPA with editing the chapters and providing ideas for content.

<https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/163560/sepa-natural-flood-management-handbook1.pdf>

### UNESCO River Restoration Book

WWF and GIWP in China are working on a UNESCO publication titled “River Restoration; A Strategic Approach to Planning and Management”. RRC was asked to review the book and provide additional input and direction for overall content and case studies.

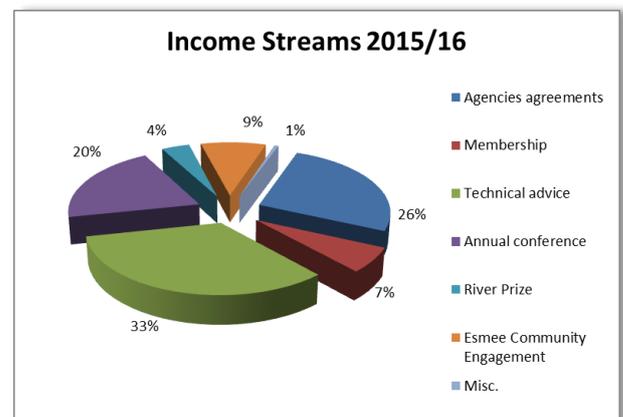
## Financial Summary

RRC has had a steady year, achieving its financial targets that enable the objectives outlined in both the Business and Operational plans to be delivered. Setting longer term agreements with the government agencies continues to prove difficult, however existing agreements with core funders were maintained. This year also saw more charitable trusts take up the ‘Trust Member’ offering and new organisations taking up corporate and business membership while the training courses, site visits and annual conference all continue to be very well supported.

### Income

At its core, RRC provides support and advice to its members. Income generated through statutory agency agreements, membership and events all fund this activity. This helps to maintain the RRC as a permanent accessible resource for river managers and practitioners.

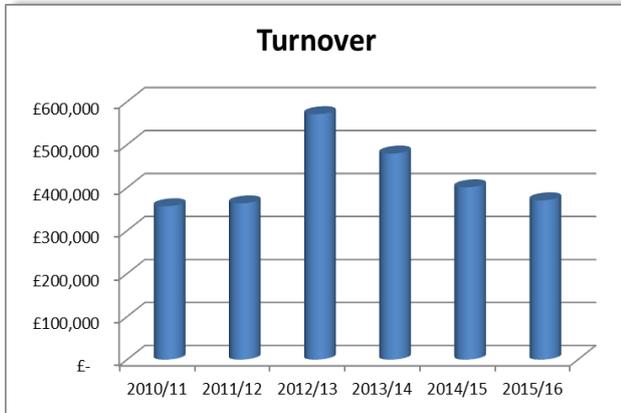
The more variable activity, year on year, is the degree to which UK river practitioners require local ‘project’ and national ‘programme’ specific technical advice and assessment. In this period RRC supported 30 programmes and projects with direct independent technical and expert input. This generated £123,896 of income, up 55% on the previous year.



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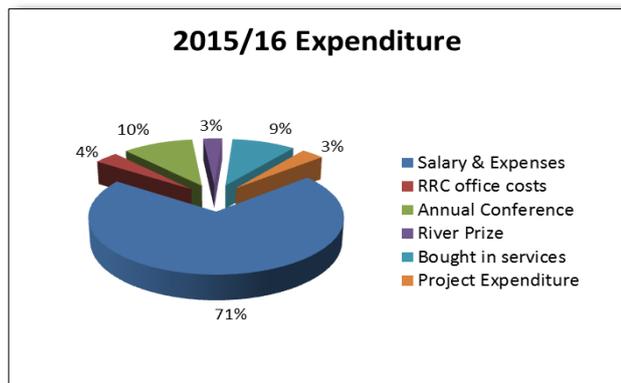


Following on from the political uncertainty and budgetary cuts experienced by this sector during 2014/15 and 2015/16, RRC turnover continues to remain strong relative to our organisation's size. RRC has come back to staffing levels similar to that of 2012, prior to the three year WFD GiA funds and RESTORE.



#### Costs

As an organisation RRC is very cost effective with 71% invested directly in the staff resource.

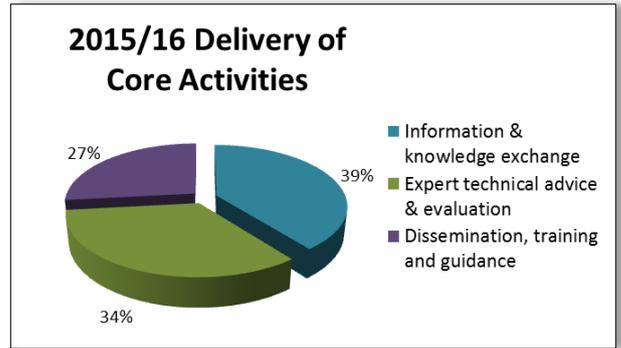


The small bought-in-services element includes costs associated with updates to the NRRI, RRC website and annual accounts while the project expenditure includes RRC expert advisors that provide support to various project activities carried out throughout the year. The Office cost figure relates to rent and insurance for the RRC office space.

#### RRC core activities

The core activities continue to be evenly split across the three RRC business areas:

- Information & knowledge exchange;
- Expert technical advice & evaluation;
- Dissemination, training and guidance.



Information & knowledge exchange combines the core role of RRC as an information and advice centre using its resources such as the NRRI and River Wiki to ensure the UK has a central point of contact for evidence and best practice river restoration.

The expert technical advice & evaluation element emphasises the ongoing need for independent trusted advice offered by RRC staff and expert advisors.

While dissemination, training and guidance represents input into publications, the RRC conference, site visits, other RRC events and training courses together with the regular updates to the website, monthly bulletins and enhanced use of social media to inform our network.

These three core areas combine to enable the RRC to continue to provide a broad range of outputs to support the needs of river managers, RRC subscribers, members and agencies. Across this range RRC is able to be proactive as well as respond to current needs and priorities.

#### Retained Income

As a not-for-profit organisation RRC aims where possible to maintain a provision representing approximately eight months' operating costs, to ensure financial stability for growth and to maintain cash flow.

After provisions, the business generated an operating surplus of £61,930 for reinvestment in the organisation.

Martin Janes  
Managing Director  
July 2016

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