



The River Restoration Centre (RRC) awards the UK River Prize to celebrate the achievements of those individuals and organisations working to restore our rivers and catchments, recognising the benefits to society of having a healthy natural environment.

2023 UK River Prize winners

River Trent wins
Catchment-scale
Award

Rottal Burn wins
Project-scale
Award

This year's two winners are:

The '[Staffordshire Trent Valley](#)' winning the *catchment-scale award* and receiving the Nigel Holmes Trophy.

Applicant: Staffordshire Wildlife Trust & Environment Agency; and

'[Restoring the Rottal Burn](#)' winning the *project-scale award* and receiving the RRC Trophy.

Applicant: the River South Esk Catchment Partnership.

The announcement was made at the annual UK River Prize Awards Ceremony which was held at Eastside Rooms, Birmingham, on 19th April 2023. The UK River Prize is hosted and awarded by the River Restoration Centre (RRC) at the annual River Restoration Network Conference. The Award Partners are RRC, Arup, Atkins and Natural Resources Wales.

This year's impressive entries were judged by a panel of industry experts, including Martin Janes (The River Restoration Centre), Pam Nolan (Environment Agency), Ann Skinner (Independent) and Roger Owen (Independent).

The catchment-scale award and the project-scale award reflect the different scales at which river restoration is undertaken. 'Shropshire Trent Valley' picked up the catchment-scale award for 20 years worth of work to protect, enhance and restore the River Trent across the county (further summary below).

'Restoring the Rottal Burn' won the project-scale award for its 10 year long programme of monitoring and observation, documenting the return of the burn's natural processes of change, creating habitat for threatened species (further summary below).

The runners-up were Unlocking the Severn, led by the Canal and Rivers Trust, and Bowston Weir Removal Project, Cumbria, led by South Cumbria Rivers Trust.

Project Films

Short films featuring the winning projects are available to view on the River Restoration Centre's website <https://www.therrc.co.uk/2023-uk-river-prize>

Martin Janes (River Restoration Centre Managing Director) presented both winning projects with their trophies, at the evening celebration. The 'Shropshire Trent Valley' team was awarded the Nigel Holmes Trophy – named after a hugely influential and passionate river restoration and conservation advocate. 'Restoring the Rottal Burn' won the partnership from the River South Esk the RRC Trophy - created by Anne Lewis, a river geomorphologist and glass artist, based in Pembrokeshire.



About the UK River Prize Winners



**River Trent, England – Staffordshire Trent Valley
Catchment-scale Award & Nigel Holmes Trophy**

Lead applicant: Staffordshire Wildlife Trust & Environment Agency

The Staffordshire Trent Valley covers the mainstem of the River Trent from its source at Biddulph Moor, through Stoke-on-Trent all the way to the confluence with the River Dove just downstream of Burton-upon-Trent. It includes all the tributaries and catchments including the Sow, Penk, Blithe, Tean, Manifold and the parts of the Tame, Mease SAC, Anker and Dove systems within Staffordshire.

The genesis of this project was the UK Biodiversity Action Plan process; a local partnership was established to produce (species and) habitat action plans in 1998. For Staffordshire, this included rivers and streams. Biodiversity audits undertaken at the time, together with subsequent catchment assessments and the Environment Agency's data (including River Habitat Data), concluded that over 85% of rivers and streams had been heavily modified and were disconnected from their traditional floodplains. Ambitious restoration targets were agreed.

A dark blue banner with white text and logos. On the left is the UK River Prize logo. In the center, it says "2023 WINNER RIVER TRENT, STAFFORDSHIRE". On the right is a Twitter icon with the text "Tweet us #UKRiverPrize". Below the banner are two photographs: an aerial view of a river winding through a landscape with reeds and trees, and a ground-level view of a stream flowing through a wooded area with fallen branches.



2023 UK River Prize Partners:



In 2003 the LBAP targets for rivers were largely superseded by the Water Framework Directive's 'Good Ecological Status' for all 'waterbodies'. We now fully endorse the UN 30 by 30 Convention on Biological Diversity.

Between 2006 and 2018 a series of opportunity mapping & biodiversity audits were carried out for the Staffordshire Trent Valley involving a mixture of walkover surveys, aerial photography and a compilation of existing information including EA data and an

analysis of historic maps highlighting where evidence of habitat complexity was evident in the past.

Reaches with recovering river habitat diversity were used as 'reference conditions' to help inform and inspire our restoration plans and interventions. In order to adhere to aspirations to undertake 'process-led' restoration work, we work with science teams comprising of fluvial geomorphologists from consultancies and universities. Their input is crucial to the final designs and interventions that are undertaken to 'trigger' dynamic natural processes.

Once the baseline geomorphological audits are secured it is then possible to undertake repeat surveys to assess the effectiveness of our interventions. The same approach is used for our ecological monitoring: baseline surveys for 'indicator species' are carried out in partnership with The Wild Trout Trust, Natural England and consultant biologists and repeated post project delivery.

About the UK River Prize Winners



Rottal Burn, River South Esk, Angus, Scotland – Restoring the Rottal Burn

Project-scale Award & the RRC Trophy

Lead applicant: River South Esk Catchment Partnership



The Rottal Burn is a tributary of the River South Esk in Glen Clova, Eastern Scotland, with headwaters in Cairngorms National Park. The project described here is an unconfined re-meandering of the lower part of the burn from where it flows under the B955 road bridge around 1km southwest of Rottal Lodge to the confluence with the River South Esk.

The lower burn was straightened around the 1830s for agricultural reasons and was subjected to regular dredging. While salmon and trout continued to spawn in the straightened section of river, survival of juvenile fish was poor, and salmonid nests, called 'redds' were frequently washed-out during winter floods.

To restore the Rottal Burn, a new channel was created in 2012, replacing 650m of straightened, embankment-lined channel with an open, meandering channel extended to 1200m in length and now connected to its floodplain. The restoration design was process-based rather than focusing on creating individual habitat features.



2023 WINNER ROTTAL BURN, SCOTLAND

Tweet us
#UKRiverPrize



Cyfoeth
Naturiol
Cymru
Natural
Resources
Wales

2023 UK River Prize Partners:

ARUP

ATKINS
Member of the SNC-Lavalin Group

The construction works were designed to create the restored channel without any import or export of material, which required careful planning through the design and the construction phase. The existing gravel embankments were used to provide material for the bed of the new channel and excavated material was used in landscaping and infill of the diverted channel. Sections of the restoration included large woody debris in the form of trees with rootballs sourced from wind-blown Scots Pine from the local estate.

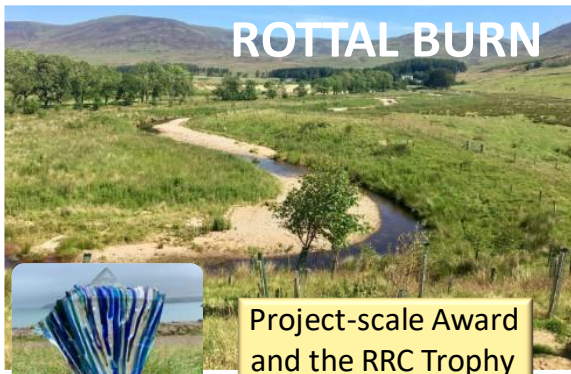
Trees were planted in 2012 along much of the new channel in 2012, using native broadleaf and pine trees. The riparian zone of the new channel has not been used by grazing by the estate, and there has been significant natural regeneration, mainly alder, in the area.

The restoration aimed to restore natural river processes and in-stream and riparian habitat, particularly for the Atlantic salmon, trout, and freshwater pearl mussel. The unconfined restoration did not 'lock' the channel in place, it was expected that it would remain active and change naturally over time, developing gravel bars, pools and local bank erosion. The freedom to evolve has resulted in improvements in terrestrial habitats such as wetlands, riverbank habitat e.g. sand martin nesting opportunities and shingle islands. The botanical interest of the site has increased greatly, and invertebrate/pollinators are anecdotal greater in number. The project continues to evolve, and ecological monitoring of these wider terrestrial species is planned.



the River Restoration Centre
Working to restore and enhance our rivers

Hosted and awarded by RRC



ROTTAL BURN

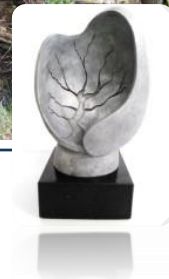


Project-scale Award
and the RRC Trophy



RIVER TRENT

Catchment-scale Award
the Nigel Holmes Trophy



2023 UK River Prize Partners:



Quotes from the UK River Prize Partners

"This year's river prize entries cover a fascinating range of projects, and the judging panel are always excited to read about the wonderful applications that this award receives. As always, it was difficult choosing between them, but all four finalists are great examples of excellent projects aiming to work with natural processes to achieve freshwater ecosystem restoration. This year's finalists have taken on the catchments of the Severn and Trent and the energetic reaches of the rivers of Glen Clova and Cumbria. Each of the four finalists have achieved amazing results through the dedication and hard work of all the partners and communities involved. Well done and keep them coming!"

Martin Janes, UK River Prize judge



"Rivers are at the very heart of a sustainable and thriving natural environment, and the importance of maintaining and improving the health of our rivers is now the subject of passionate debate for organisations and communities alike."

We believe that sustainability should be at the core of everything we do and with a catchment-based approach to our work, we appreciate the valuable impact of healthy rivers on communities, biodiversity, and the economy. They can bring health, wellbeing, economic and natural stimulus.

Arup has sponsored the UK River Prize since its inception in 2014, welcoming the opportunity to celebrate the hard work and achievements of all the applicants and we are thrilled to be supporting the UK River Prize again this year."

Catherine Wenger, UK Water Business Leader, Arup

ARUP

"Atkins is proud to partner the 2023 UK River Prize. Our commitment to improving the water environment goes back many years and we are delighted to be able to support this prestigious event that recognises the delivery of outstanding contributions to river restoration. Congratulations to all the finalists your nominations are well deserved."

Dr Kevin Skinner, Associate Director, Environment, Atkins

ATKINS

Member of the SNC-Lavalin Group

Note to editors

The River Restoration Centre

The RRC is an independent, UK-wide, not-for-profit company that champions the natural and societal benefits of restoring river systems. We support river restoration by collating project information and evidence, developing best practice and sharing this knowledge throughout the river and catchment management community.

Physical modification of rivers is a key pressure in the UK and the main reason why rivers are failing to achieve good ecological status. We actively promote the re-establishment of natural processes, features and biodiversity in river systems, and support the need for 'space for water' to allow reconnection of river channels with their floodplains and wetlands.

All media enquiries

Joshua Robins, The River Restoration Centre

josh@therrc.co.uk, 01234 752979

Further information is available at <http://www.therrc.co.uk/2023-uk-river-prize>



the River Restoration Centre
Working to restore and enhance our rivers