

**LIFE20 NAT/UK/001013**

**LIFE R4ever Kent**

# **PROJECT INFORMATION NOTE**

**Published 26 January, 2022**

**[r4everkent.co.uk](http://r4everkent.co.uk)**



## Overview

LIFE R4ever Kent will make the River Kent Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in South Cumbria and its species more resilient to environmental pressures.

This 5-year project, which started in October 2021, has a special focus on freshwater pearl mussels (*Margaritifera margaritifera*).

The project is led by Natural England, working with the Environment Agency, South Cumbria Rivers Trust and the Freshwater Biological Association.

## Project aims and objectives

The LIFE R4ever Kent project aims to:

- improve the ecological condition of 90% of the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion habitat. This is a freshwater habitat with abundant water crowfoots.
- remove invasive species from over 20km of the rivers
- facilitate the set-up of 30 agri-environment scheme agreements
- increase awareness across an audience of approximately 30,000 individuals

The project will achieve this by working with stakeholders, including farmers and land managers.

## The project will:

- Restore the mid to upper reaches of the river system by restoring more natural geomorphological conditions and improving conditions for fish and other species.
- Plant trees and install fencing along river corridors to improve the riparian zone and reduce diffuse source of pollution.
- Promote sustainable catchment management through agri-environment schemes, along with targeted advice and demonstration of potential techniques.
- Revitalise freshwater pearl mussel populations within the catchment by reinforcement with donor stock, improving captive breeding installations at the Freshwater Biological Association's Species Recovery Centre and achieving optimum conditions at reintroduction sites.
- Trial new techniques like Invasive Alien Species (IAS) biocontrol and eDNA surveying to monitor species and detect crayfish plague, and investigate fish and mussel interactions.
- Demonstrate best practice to business, policy makers and land managers locally and across Europe.
- Increase awareness of the importance and sensitivity of Annex II species (freshwater pearl mussels and white clawed crayfish) and the SAC within the local community.
- Improve the ecological condition of the SAC and Annex II species populations and increase their resilience to climate change impacts.

## Important issues affecting the area

### Issues that are affecting the area include:

- Elevated levels of nitrates and phosphates that negatively impact water quality, habitat and species.
- Barriers to fish passage and unnatural geomorphological profile that reduce suitable habitat available for species and block fish passage which affects the freshwater pearl mussel's reproduction cycle.
- The arrival of new invasive alien species and the persistence of established species threaten native species and sensitive habitats within the SAC catchment.
- Low levels of awareness in the local community and amongst land managers about how adjacent land management can impact the river, its habitats and species.

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LIFE R4ever Kent (LIFE20 NAT/UK/001013) has received funding from the LIFE Programme which is the European Union's funding instrument for the environment. Funding is awarded for best practice, innovation and demonstration projects that contribute to the objectives of Natura 2000.

Natura 2000: The project covers the River Kent Special Conservation Area which is part of the Natura 2000- a network of the very best areas for wildlife across Europe. All Nature 2000 sites have special protection under European and UK laws.



A partnership project. Co-funded by the European Union.