



Life R4EVER KENT

Event Summary



Date: 21st–22nd October 2025

Location: Kent catchment and Species Recovery Centre

Led by: LIFE R4ever Kent project team

Number in attendance: 25

Purpose: To share learning on mussel reintroduction, habitat restoration and community engagement and compare catchment constraints between the Kent and Clun.

Outcomes: Knowledge exchange, strengthened collaboration, and inspiration from restoration efforts and mussel recovery facilities. On 21st and 22nd October 2025, the LIFE R4ever Kent project hosted a 2-day networking visit for representatives from the Clun catchment. The purpose of the event was to share learning on mussel reintroduction efforts, comparing the considerations and constraints between the Kent and Clun catchments.

The visit began with a presentation over lunch provided by the project at Wilf's Café in Staveley, introducing the LIFE R4ever Kent project and the restoration work underway. Attendees then visited two key restoration sites—Browfoot and Elfhowe—where they observed habitat improvements and reinforcement efforts for Freshwater Pearl Mussels and host fish species and the stunning scenery of the upper Kent rivers left a lasting impression on the visitors.



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The site visits were led by Emma Wright from South Cumbria Rivers Trust describing the restoration works undertaken at each site, and David Kelly, the land manager who was able to eloquently describe how he has been able to give space to the river and nature in combination with productive farming. This provided an interesting platform for discussing organisations roles and stand points around how we achieve the balance between farming and nature in practice.

In the evening, representatives from both catchments met for 'pizza and pearls' in Kendal. Mike Kelly who worked for the Shropshire Hills AONB for 20 years, many of them as Rivers Officer, managing projects related to the Freshwater Pearl Mussels gave a talk entitled '*Freshwater Pearl Mussels: A Cultural and Historical Journey*'. The talk was very informative and kickstarted the evenings discussions regarding the similarities and differences between the two catchments, how the Kent and specific sites had been selected as enforcement sites and the monitoring that had been undertaken in both catchments.



On the second day, the group toured the Freshwater Biological Associations Species Recovery Centre, gaining insight into the facilities and techniques used to support mussel recovery. The Clun representatives were particularly excited by the opportunity to see the Clun mussels and discuss how similar approaches might be adapted for their own catchment.

The event was attended by a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives from: River Clun Monitoring Group, Environment Agency, River Clun Festival, Natural England, National Farmers Union, Angling Trust, Severn Trent Water, Severn Rivers Trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Shropshire Hills National Landscape. This broad representation enabled rich discussions and knowledge exchange across sectors.

The visit concluded with a wrap-up discussion over refreshments at Joey's café kindly provided by the guests, reflecting on shared challenges and opportunities for collaboration in species recovery and catchment management, the invigorated energy to deliver more and how best to approach that and utilise the visit to prompt further action.

Written by: Morgan Barrie



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