



Life R4EVER KENT

Patrons Day Event Summary

Date: 23/09/2024

Location: Species Recovery Centre (SRC), Windermere and Elf Howe Farm, Staveley.

Led by: Louise Lavictoire (FBA), Ben King (FBA), Emma Wright (SCRT) and Mike West (SCRT)

Number in attendance: 27

Purpose: SCRT host a patron's day each year to show case all the varied and partnership work that they carryout in South Cumbria. The SCRT Patrons day is an opportunity for this varied group of experts in their respective fields, with a wide range of experience and perspectives and vested interest in river habitats and species, to come together and share invaluable insights and knowledge.

The event this year was to showcase the R4ever Kent project and the work that has and is being carried out by the FBA and SCRT through the partnership work on the project. The event was split into two visits one to the Species Recovery Centre and to Elf Howe Farm, to showcase the two elements of the project, but to get conservations around mussels and river restoration work.

Species Recovery Centre

The tour was conducted by Ben and Louise, who each led a group of 10 Patrons to ease movement around the site and allow for better communication of information.

For each group, Louise/ Ben first introduced the species and discussed its unique parasitic life cycle, specific habitat requirements and the dominant threats it faces in the UK. This was then followed by an explanation for the need of the Species Recovery Program, how it was adapted from the fish experimentation facility and how the facility operates.

Visitors were led to the top of the site, where they were shown the broodstock mussels and the fish, to understand the reproductive behaviours of this mollusc and how the program obtains wild fertilised mussels to release glochidia onto the salmonids. Ben showed how plankton nets are set over the fish tank outflows and illustrated the process of collecting glochidia for propagation. The functioning of the upweller and flume systems were explained, highlighting the pros and cons of each.

Visitors then observed the juvenile rearing systems in the 'Gashouse'; aquaria and tray systems were described, and juvenile mussels of various ages were shown to exemplify the early development of the species. Staff detailed the cleaning and feeding regimes required for the systems.

Finally, visitors were informed on the release process, using the examples of the rivers Irt and Ehen in Cumbria, before finishing on a discussion about long term species conservation and the importance of river restoration works that SCRT and other organisations provide.



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Figure 1: Photos from the tour at the species recovery centre

Farm visit: Elf Howe

After the visit to the FBA the group went over to Elf Howe Farm, Staveley, where Emma and farmer David gave a talk around the farm on the restoration processes that have been implemented. This involved looking at the tree planting, the floodplain connection works, leaky dams, fish refuges and the fencing work, that has been carried out over the past two years.

The discussion focused on improving river habitats for fish, ensuring suitable conditions for all life stages, especially spawning. The value of woody material in the channel was highlighted, as it supports invertebrates and other wildlife. David emphasized the benefits of a collaborative approach combining river restoration with productive farming—creating fenced-off areas for wildlife while enhancing pasture for livestock. The new riparian fencing has enabled rotational grazing, giving some fields longer rest periods to grow more nutritious grass. David noted this has improved livestock weight gains, leading to better auction sales.



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Figure 2: Photos from Elf Howe Farm, of the fish refuges

Outcomes: This event created an enjoyable, educational and unique event for the SCRT Patrons Day. It was an activity related to the work conducted by SCRT staff and served to increase the awareness of this critically endangered freshwater species and promoted the important work of the FBA and its Species Recovery Program.

SCRT received positive feedback about the site visit, in regard to increasing fish numbers through habitat enhancement works but also was particularly interested to know about the increased in livestock weight because of the fencing and rotational grazing. SCRT also



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received positive feedback about the tour at the species recovery centre and the enthusiasm for the staff involved in the project.

Written by: Samantha Bonny, FBA and Emma Wright, SCRT

Evidence:



South Cumbria Rivers Trust

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Monday, 30 June 2025

Dear

After the success of the last 2 years of Patrons' site visit events we have decided to do something similar again this year. We would like to show you something a little different that, I feel sure, you will find fascinating plus examples of the excellent work being done by the Trust in the River Kent catchment.

Details are as [follow:-](#) Date: **Monday 23rd September**.

- 10.00 Meet at SCRT offices and leave some cars there, proceeding in as few cars as possible. Address above.
- 10.30 Arrive at The Fresh Water Biological Association (FBA), Ferry Landing, Windermere where we will learn all about the rearing of freshwater mussels and see how they develop in the FBA hatchery prior to release in various rivers.
- 12:00 Leave [The FBA](#) and take the ferry to Ferry Nab and onto Bowness where we will board a boat, courtesy of Windermere Lake Cruises. We will have a sandwich lunch whilst enjoying a short cruise and if time allows see some of the reed beds planted by SCRT staff.
- 14.00 Depart for Elf Howe Farm, ~~Kentmere~~.
- 14.45 Arrive Elf Howe Farm where Emma Wright, SCRT and David Kelley, farmer & SCRT Trustee, will show us various works being carried out on Hall Beck, a tributary of the river Kent.
- 16.30 Travel back to SCRT offices. We expect to complete the day by approx. 17.00.

There will be long grass and occasional wet patches. Wellington boots or similar are strongly recommended for the afternoon visit. Also of course wet weather clothing.

I would be grateful if you could reply by email to admin@scrt.co.uk, by Tel: 015395 30047 or by post to the above address indicating whether you will be accompanied by your spouse/partner. It would also be useful to know if you are happy to share your vehicle with others and how many passengers you may be able to accommodate in your vehicle. I very much hope that you will be able to attend.

Yours sincerely

Julius A Barratt,
Trustee SCRT



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