



Trustees' Annual Report for the period



From	Period start date			To	Period end date		
	01	12	2019		30	11	2020

Section A Reference and administration details

Charity name River Lark Catchment Partnership

Other names charity is known by

Registered charity number (if any) 1177318

Charity's principal address

24, Northgate Avenue
 Bury St Edmunds
 Suffolk
Postcode IP32 6BB

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

	Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
1	James Stephens	Treasurer		
2	Andrew Hinchley	Chairman		
3	William Cranstoun			Suffolk Wildlife Trust
4	Chris Gregory			
5	Anthony Weston		1 st December 2019 to 29 th September 2020	Lark Angling and Preservation Society
6	David Palmer			Lark Valley Association
7	James Meadows		From 29 th September 2020	Lark Angling and Preservation Society
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Names of the trustees for the charity, if any, (for example, any custodian trustees)

Name	Dates acted if not for whole year

Names and addresses of advisers (Optional information)

Type of adviser	Name	Address

Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members (Optional information)

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Section B Structure, governance and management

Description of the charity's trusts

CIO Association Constitution
Association
Elected by members

Additional governance issues (Optional information)

Our trustees are nominated and elected directly by our membership and we ensure that trustees are practitioners who bring a full set of competencies for our board to be effective. In this our third year as a registered charity, we continuously had six trustees serving on our board. Our constitution allows for a maximum of twelve trustees and our policy is to continue to attract nominees to add to the board to enhance the good governance and functioning of the charity. We also enjoy the strong support of the Cam and Ely Ouse Catchment Partnership within which the Lark Partnership is a sub-catchment.

We have formally adopted an array of policies covering:-

- risk management
- volunteer management
- safeguarding
- complaints handling
- managing conflict of interest
- ensuring equality

Section C Objectives and activities

To conserve, preserve and improve the River Lark and its catchment area for the benefit the public, in particular but not exclusively by:

- (i) Improving access and encouraging the appropriate use of the River and its environs by members of the public.
- (ii) Educating the public about the River and its environs
- (iii) Facilitating community involvement in the conservation of the River
- (iv) Monitoring the River & its catchment and reporting any issues or concerns to the appropriate bodies having statutory responsibility.

The Trustees of RLCP actively engage in the formulation of the charity's annual action plan and in so doing ensure that they have due regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance. The Trustees constantly reviewed the annual work plan as it was underway for 2020.

The onset of the global COVID pandemic has inevitably impacted heavily on our charity's pursuits in 2020. The trustees have ensured as a first interest that all its activities have been undertaken within the Government's instructions and guidelines.

Building community-based organisation to deliver River conservation:

The conservation activities we aspire to in line with the charity's objectives require us to develop an effective linked community organisation along the full extent of the river. We intend to do this progressively over the next few years. In 2020 prior to the onset of the pandemic we made good progress consolidating on our efforts to build our volunteer force. The launch of the Brecks Fen Edge & Rivers Landscape Partnership Scheme (BFER) added impetus with a large volunteer force contributing to our first river restoration project under the scheme at Fullers Mill. However, once the pandemic restrictions were introduced, we suspended our programmed activities. Towards the end of the year we were able to continue engaging with our volunteers with some limited training and river surveying activity carried out within the restrictions in force.

Taking the initiative to improve the catchment water resource balance:

The East of England is a water deficit region and the rivers and aquifers are extremely stressed. A National Abstraction Plan launched by DEFRA in 2017 and led by the Environment Agency to reform abstraction practices is underway. In February 2020 an RLCP led group funded by a Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) Water Resources Communication and Engagement Fund grant started work to implement a pilot for improved river abstraction practices by the agricultural water takers in the Lark valley.

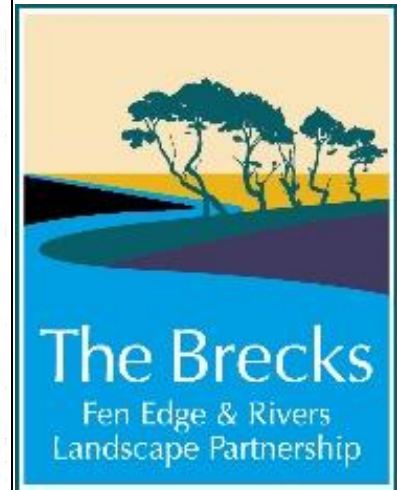
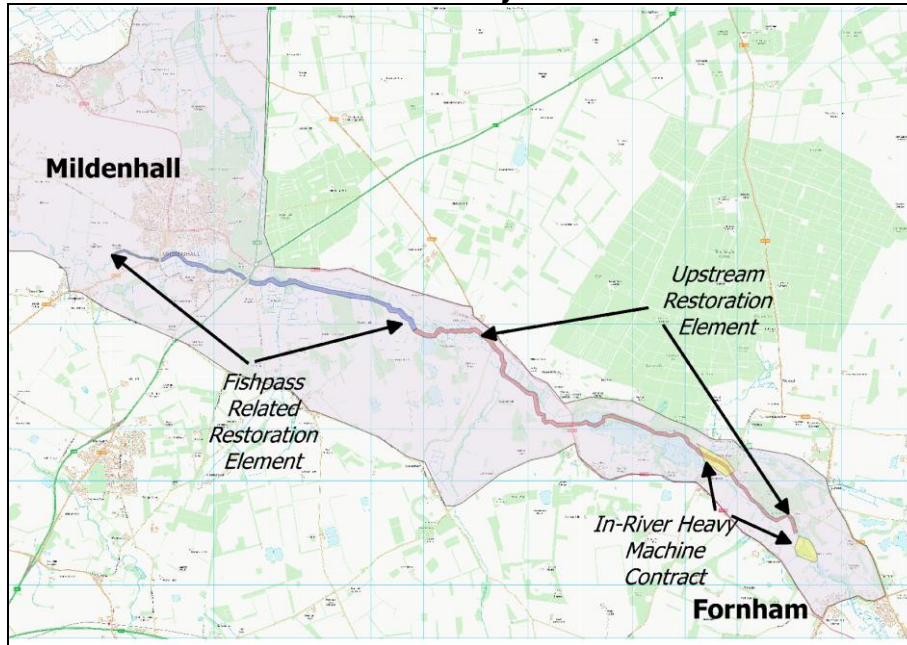
Coordinating community and stakeholder engagement for the Lark River catchment:

We aspire to engaging with River Lark stakeholders such as riparian landowners, agricultural landowners, managers and businesses, other relevant businesses, relevant statutory authorities and relevant community operations to provide a platform for integrated initiatives to improve the river. In 2020 we have continued to make good progress through our regular RLCP meetings which we have been able to continue via zoom during the COVID restrictions.

The River Lark is a sub-catchment of the Cam and Ely-Ouse catchment (Cam EO). Throughout the year we have participated in the regular CamEO 'collaboration and engagement' meetings which have been continued by remote technology during COVID restrictions.

River restoration projects in 2020:

The year started well with the commencement of river restoration works within the Brecks Fen Edge & Rivers Landscape Partnership Scheme (BFER) within which we will be tackling restoration works throughout 2020 to 2025 along 25km of the Lark river.

River Lark Channel Restoration Project – 2020 to 2025

However, after mid-March with the onset of COVID restrictions all our programmed works were suspended for the rest of the year. In the last quarter of the year we were able to carry out some limited training activities.

The Fullers Mill restoration works –

On Saturday 1st February, we kicked off our rather ambitious works at Fullers Mill Garden, West Stow. The Lark here has been historically impounded not only by a weir but also the addition of weir boards to elevate the backwater upstream. On a super low gradient river like the Lark this really puts the brakes on any natural processes as the river cannot even erode anything around the man made steel and concrete impoundment to try and work around the problem. The river can get virtually trapped.

Another huge downside of the sluggish flows is a massive growth of burr reed along the reach, as seen here



Section D

Achievements and performance

We have managed to get the boards removed, (many thanks to Fullers and the EA) lowering the river immediately upstream by nearly a metre and releasing an impounded river length of nearly 1 km upstream.

The project now is centred around creating higher velocity channels within the lowered but still over wide river channel.

Massive thanks to all at Fullers, the Environment Agency and especially our volunteers who turned up and put in a big shift to get the ball rolling.



Kicking off the works on 1st February

After deciding to take a chance with Storm Dennis, the weather was kind to us and we managed a full session at Fullers Mill on 15th February. All our volunteers on duty, experienced and new, put in a good shift, helping each other out and keeping each other safe. Can't ask for more than that.

Consolidating the previous work on the island with some bare and pre-planted rolls, pre-planted pallets and brush bundles, the central island project was now taking shape.



We went on to extending the brush revetment work upstream, the river showing us where we needed to be with that. Also, finding a silt bar gave us the opportunity of creating another island, this one a really small feature but no doubt it will become home to something.



Volunteers at work in mid-February

Back to Fullers Mill on Saturday 1st March to continue the works. Our super workforce managed to complete the planting of the main island interior with pre-established coir pallets and also used pallets on some exposed mud bank. Advanced the work on the marginal revetments and started to create the brash shelving. All of these features will add much needed in-stream habitat diversity to this reach of the Lark.



And back again on 1st March

Our last organised work party took place on Saturday 14th March. Unfortunately, we just couldn't complete everything we wanted to before the garden was due to re-open and we intended return later in the year to put final touches to the works. However, we have been able to follow the progress of the river since the campaign and the restored reach has settled down very well providing a much more energised river with excellent diverse and maturing habitat. Narrowing the river and speeding up the flow in this section will also discourage the burr reed from again completely choking the channel.



The completed works in mid-March

Scoping and permitting works at Flempton Bridge and Lackford Lakes reaches – Our next programmed restoration works under BFER which we hope to carry out as soon as COVID restrictions allow in 2021 will be at the Flempton bridge and within Forestry Commission territory at Lackford Lakes. We have prepared the way for these substantial works by obtaining the requisite EA permits with WEIF funds which will be matched with the BFER grant.

Catchment Water Resources Management in 2020:

Piloting River Abstraction Reform –

In 2019 under the DEFRA National Abstraction Plan the RLCP, coordinated by EA CameEO Priority Catchment Lead, engaged with water abstracting Farm businesses through their Lark Abstractors Group to discuss a river abstraction pilot project where it was agreed that preparatory work was required. Accordingly, in 2020 Cranfield University was commissioned by RLCP with support from the National Farmers Union (NFU), to complete a technical investigations and hydrological modelling study in collaboration with EA, RLCP and the local abstractors to develop a project data base for the pilot.



Improving water resources and abstraction management for agricultural and environmental needs in the River Lark catchment

Di Liu, Pauline Long'or Lokidor, Katherine Rushen, Jessica Sanchez and Raphael Zylberman

Supervisors: Prof. Ian Holman, Prof. Jerry Knox and Dr. Dolores Rey

www.cranfield.ac.uk



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A series of workshops (mainly e-webinars) were conducted with the priority catchment group including EA and wider relevant catchment stakeholders, around the study, to design the pilot. Arrangements are now being made to launch the pilot in April 2021. Implementation will initially involve enabling more flexible abstractions based on the automatically captured station flows with more flexibility based on grouped or

aggregated consents and hands-off flows. Efforts will then extend to looking at more flexibility with seasonally defined consents and formalising measures for water sharing between the farm businesses. Later in the pilot it may be possible to enhance water sharing with infrastructure investing and to consider groundwater abstraction. In parallel RLCP wants to investigate the potential to progressively introduce a catchment-based approach for abstraction management involving the local and regional catchment institutions (RLCP, CamEO and WRE).

Catchment collaboration and engagement events in 2020:

RLCP is a sub-catchment partner of the Cam and Ely Ouse (CamEO) catchment partnership which is hosted by the Rivers Trust and Anglian Water. In 2020 we attended all the CamEO collaboration and engagement meetings, most of which were organised as remote (zoom) meetings due to COVID restrictions.

Section E Financial review

For 2020 the charity does not have a reserves policy and does not hold funds in reserve. This will be actively reviewed in 2021 together with considerations about any necessary decisions to have funds in reserve.

The charity registers Receipts & Payments accounts. No funds were materially in deficit in 2020.

Further financial review details (Optional information)

In 2020 The charity received grant funds from the following donors:

- Environment Agency, Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF)
- CaBA Water Resources Communication and Engagement Fund administered by The Rivers Trust
- WaterCog via The Rivers Trust.


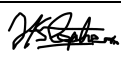
Grant funded expenditure has supported our Lark River restoration and Abstraction Pilot efforts, and our outreach campaigns.

Section F Other optional information

Section G Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)		
Full name(s)	Christopher Gregory	James Stephens
Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc)	Trustee	Trustee, Treasurer
Date	7 th April 2021	