



Trustees' Annual Report for the period



From	Period start date			To	Period end date		
	01	12	2021		30	11	2022

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		01/12/2021 to 11/3/2022	
5	David Palmer			Lark Valley Association
6	James Meadows		01/12/2021 to 11/3/2022	Lark Angling and Preservation Society
7	Graham Showell		From 06/05/2022	
8	Caroline Chamberlain		From 06/05/2022	
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
20				

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 fourth year as a registered charity, we have 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 of 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 2022.

This was the year where we emerged from the Covid pandemic and reacquainted ourselves with our more normal face to face meetings, gatherings and celebratory events; whilst still being mindful and precautious because, as was repeatedly emphasised in the media 'Covid hasn't gone away'.

Building community-based organisation to deliver river conservation:

The conservation activities we aspire to be 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 2022 we were able to progress our river restoration activities through the Brecks Fen Edge & Rivers Landscape Partnership Scheme (BFER) and matching grants made to us by the Environment Agency. In all we carried out some ten work parties across the year with more than 20 volunteers participating. We also delivered 'smart rivers' training to nine of our volunteers. In 2022 we have launched our programme of citizen science activities aimed at establishing a greatly enhanced evidence base of ecological, stream water quality and stream flow data across the catchment. We are signed up as a pilot catchment through CamEO for the national citizen science water quality project - Catchment Systems Thinking Cooperative (CaSTCo) and we will work in partnership for that with the River Wensum team in Norfolk.

The River Lark chalk-stream Flagship Project:

In 2022 RLCP has entered into a partnering relationship with Anglian Water (AW) for the preparatory stage of the Lark chalk-stream Flagship Project. From 2025 to 2030 AW will be implementing the project aimed at significantly improving the health of our precious chalk stream. Our memorandum of understanding with AW looks to build on our Action Plan for the river and also to develop our capabilities as their community partner in the project's implementation.

The RLCP Water for Tomorrow project:

In September 2021 RLCP was grant funded a project to deliver services for enhancing:-

- Shared river abstraction and water management by farm businesses in the Lark
- Communication and Engagement to develop RLCP Catchment Water Management attributes.

This project funds an array of water management and citizen science activities from September 2021 to April 2023. In November 2022 we added a further communication and engagement grant from Water for Tomorrow to fund our outreach and engagement efforts with farmers and other landowners across the catchment and to boost our citizen science activities.

The River Lark is a sub-catchment of the Cam and Ely-Ouse catchment (CamEO). Throughout the year we have participated in the regular CamEO 'collaboration and engagement' meetings and other events including the annual conference held in October where we show cased our activities.

Celebrating the year's achievements:

On 5th December 2021 we held our first in person gathering for our members, partners and volunteers since the perdure of the pandemic. This Showcase event at Fullers Mill Gardens was to celebrate the achievements of our fantastic volunteers, and to provide an opportunity for our members to meet some of our partners and stakeholders. There were a variety of talks and presentations given, a delicious lunch provided by Casa, generously funded by CamEO, a Q&A session and the unveiling of our information board by the river. A huge thanks to everyone who attended, especially to those volunteers who helped on the day and everyone that contributed.



Glenn Smithson giving his 'in-river' restoration talk at our showcase event

In August we hosted an MPs visit to the River Lark. The original intention of the visit instigated by Jo Churchill Hon MP for Bury St Edmunds, was to invite Rebecca Pow, the Environment Minister at DEFRA responsible for rivers, to discuss the Lark River and its issues as a chalk stream. Rebecca Pow is well acquainted with the CaBA movement. The Minister's visit was originally proposed for March/April as an important initiative in the context of our unfolding Lark action plan together with Government's development of policy for Chalk Stream restoration. In the event, after considerable effort to prepare the visit it had to be delayed to late July; then of course the Johnson Government collapsed. However, at Jo Churchill's request the visit went ahead in August with an impressive entourage of Lark stakeholders including Anglian Water, Environment Agency, Lark Farming Abstractors and environmental managers. Rebecca Pow has since been reinstated at DEFRA as Minister for Environmental Quality and Resilience.



Jo Churchill MP and Rebecca Pow MP at Fullers Mill Garden

At the event an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) was signed between Anglian Water and RLCP covering the two years of planning for implementing the Flagship project at the end of 2024. The Lark Flagship is one of 12 chalk streams identified as a national priority. At the Chalk Stream Flagship national launch in 2021, Rebecca Pow Environment Minister stated: “Chalk streams are both incredibly rare and a hugely important part of our environmental heritage”.



Anglian Water's Chris Gerrard and RLCP's Jim Stephens signing the flagship MOU

Also in August we held our Evening Summer Garden Party at Fullers Mill where some 50 of our members and volunteers attended. We are so grateful to Annie, Maddie and the team at [Fullers Mill](#) for allowing us to use their beautiful setting, and to Maria from Casa for feeding us with such a delicious dinner again. For those that couldn't make it, we hope you can join us next year!



RLCP's 2022 Summer Garden Party at the beautiful Fuller Mill Gardens

River restoration projects in 2022:

The year's river restoration works within the Brecks Fen Edge & Rivers Landscape Partnership Scheme (BFER) were delivered our volunteer led restoration works in the reaches of Flempton Bridge, Fullers Mills Gardens and of West Stow in collaboration with the Bury St Edmunds Trout Club. This year's work completed the BFER restoration activities at Fullers Mill and Flempton Bridge amounting to an accumulated kilometre of restored river.

We also provided the funds through BFER to Bury St Edmunds Trout Club so that they could execute a contract in September and October to deliver their major project in the upper reach of West Stow called 'Alder Carr' to complete the wonderful restoration of the Lark through the West Stow nature park. The contract has established five alternating tree/brush ledges created to push the flow for side to side in an overwide reach of the river. The ledges were topped up where necessary with gravel along with gravel augmentation of the bed.

Much to our satisfaction, flow diversity is already creating much more interesting pathways and local scour of the fine sediment that hitherto dominated the reach.



Big machinery placing tree ledges for flow deflection at the Alder Carr reach at West Stow, October 2022

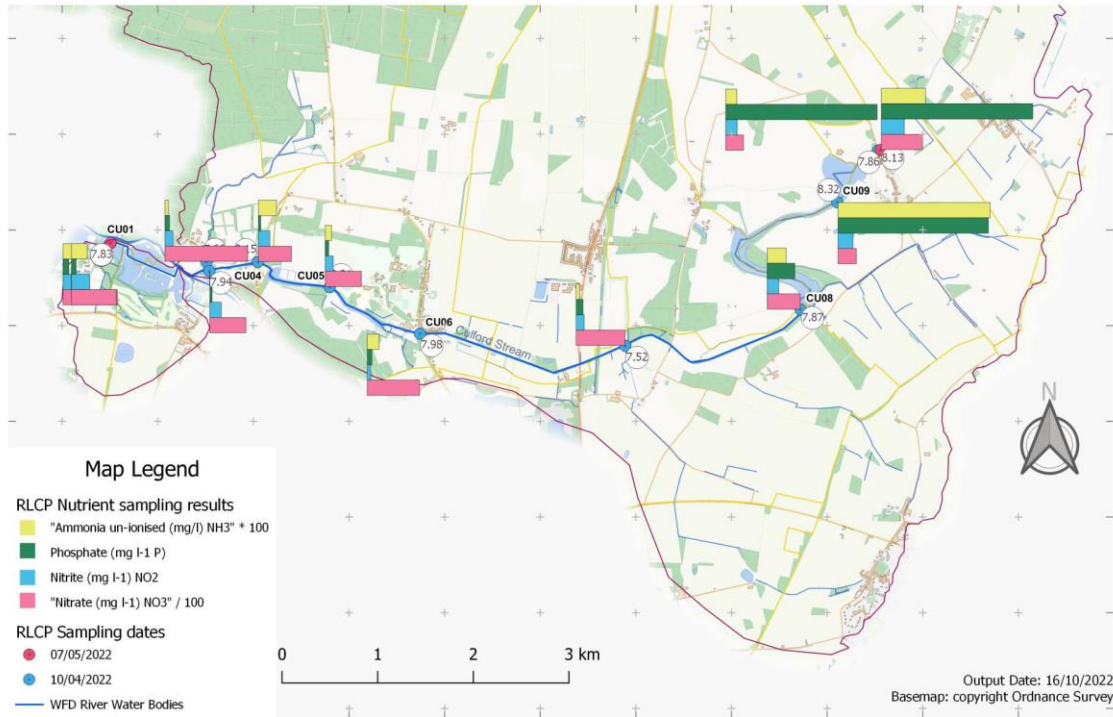
The next phase of BFER will be addressing about a 1km stretch of the river from the outskirts of Bury St Edmunds into the South end of the Lark Valley golf course. Towards the end of 2022 we worked on all the preparations for that, particularly the permitting and the engagement with the riparian landowners for their consent. We then went on to carry out the first three work parties on the reach. The work

programme for next year will be largely taken up by continuing work parties on the reach to complete the restoration.

Citizen Science in the Lark Catchment:

Over the course of the year we trained volunteers in water quality monitoring and progressively developed our skills to deliver an effective programme. We started up by establishing our water quality sampling in tributaries earlier in the year and then moved on to the main River Lark. In September, we chose eleven sampling points upstream to downstream of the Tollgate Coop to Golf Course restoration project, from Tollgate Bridge to Mill Rd, Hengrave. We will be monitoring here before and after the BFER restoration work is completed over the next few years.

Culford Stream Sampling Points - Nutrient Results



Results presented up of our water quality sampling for the Culford Stream Tributary

In October we entered into an agreement with the National Trust to collaborate on Citizen Science efforts for the Linnet tributary which largely occupies their Ickworth Estate parkland.

Activities and Outcomes of the Project

The RLCP Tributaries Water Quality Monitoring Project will carry out testing on the Linnet and its ditches for the standard Environment Agency measures for river quality, aligned with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD).

Regular testing will be carried out to monitor flow, pH, temperature, suspended solids, ammonia, nitrates and phosphates. Monitoring for invertebrates as a measure of river health will also be beneficial. All results collated will be shared with the National Trust and relevant riparian land owners. RLCP volunteers will adhere to the RLCP Tributaries Water Quality Monitoring Project Guidance Notes and will always inform the National Trust Ranger department prior to visiting the site.



Martin Gilbert from National Trust, Ickworth and Andrew Hinchley from RLCP signing the MOU on 3rd October 2022 at Ickworth Park

River Lark – Anglian Water’s chalk-stream Flagship Project:

The Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy was launched in October 2021 as a ‘Catchment Based Approach’ (CaBA) initiative sponsored by DEFRA, EA and Ofwat by CaBA’s chalk stream restoration group which is made up of representatives from the Environment Agency, Natural England, Ofwat, Water UK, WWF, Angling Trust, Salmon and Trout Conservation, The Rivers Trust, Wild Trout Trust and Wildlife Trusts. In 2022 Anglian Water selected the Lark to be the chalk stream ‘Flagship’ in its area.

Water companies were asked to consider 5 main criteria in selecting a suitable chalk streams for the flagship submission. AW’s key decisions were as follows:-

- Local Passion**–The creation and development of the River Lark Catchment Partnership charity. Lots of public interest/involvement (Mildenhall & Bury St Ed).
- Landowners**–Anglian Water are currently building a landowner network for AMP7 WINEP delivery and there are known connections through local partnerships.
- Scale**–The Lark catchment is large, but the chalk stream sections are of the right scale for this proposal.
- Designation**–The River Lark currently has no legal designation.
- Condition**–Across the Lark catchment, waterbodies have moderate or worse ecological status. There is a clear opportunity for improvement (as seen in targeted stretches of the Lark already), but there are also challenges around technical feasibility and timescales of improvements.

We recognised the close alignment of our action plan for the Lark with the chalk stream recovery strategy and since mid-June have invested in our preparatory efforts to engage with AW as the key community-based partner for the initiative.

The August 2022 major engagement event at Fullers Mill Garden for Flagship was coordinated between RLCP and Anglian Water and the parties signed up to a memorandum of understanding for this preparatory phase which we aspire will lead to a full partnership agreement to deliver the Flagship implementation from 2025 onwards.

Here’s what Rebecca Pow, DEFRA’s Minister responsible for this area had to say in her introduction to CaBA’s chalk-stream restoration Implementation Plan in October 2022:

This summer, I had the pleasure of visiting ONE stretch of the River Lark in Bury St Edmunds which is a remarkable example of what a chalk stream can look like when it has been restored. Its clean water and the banks alongside it are now teeming with wildlife. Yet not all chalk streams are in such good condition. Indeed much of the River Lark itself is in a poor condition. Chalk Streams are an internationally rare and irreplaceable habitat, as well as an important element of our nation’s natural heritage. England is home to the majority of chalk streams across the globe, with 85% of the streams found in England alone. They are a vital water resource and provide a habitat for a diverse group of wildlife from the damselfly to salmon. However, they are under increasing pressure from climate change, development, pollution, and abstraction.

Lark Water Management Conference:

On 4th November 2022 we held a water management conference for the Lark basin as part of our delivery into the Water for Tomorrow programme. The conference attracted some forty stakeholders across the sectors including water abstractors, Anglian Water, Farm businesses, British Sugar and Greene King; basin environment stewards, the Environment Agency, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Natural England and West Suffolk Council and Fishing Groups, Lark Angling and Preservation Society and Bury St Edmunds Trout Club.



Jo Churchill MP leading the Q&A with the conference presenters

Presentations were given by WfT project manager Dr. Ukwuori Fadayiro, RLCP's water resources lead Jim Stephens, Anglian Water's water resources environmental manager Martin Bowes and the Lark Farm Businesses Abstractor's Group chairman Lindsay Hargreaves followed by a Q&A session chaired by our MP Jo Churchill. At the conference the catchment's licenced water abstractors and key environmental stakeholders committed to participating in a permanent Lark basin Water Management Forum and RLCP will convene the first meeting in February/March 2023 with the intention of setting up routine meetings on a semi-annual or annual basis.

Catchment collaboration and engagement events in 2022:

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 2022 we attended all the CamEO collaboration and engagement meetings and the annual conference event in October.

Section E Financial review

For 2022 the charity does not have a reserves policy and does not hold funds in reserve. This will be actively reviewed in 2023 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 2022.

Further financial review details (Optional information)

In 2022 the charity received grant funds from the following donors:

- Environment Agency Partnership Agreement
- Water for Tomorrow Fund administered by The Rivers Trust
- Heritage Lottery Funds through the Brecks Fen Edge and Rivers Landscape Partnership (BFER)
- Locality grants from Suffolk County council and West Suffolk Council



Grant funded expenditure has supported our capacity building for catchment-based approach awareness raising, Lark River restoration works, pollution action plan and citizen science monitoring 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)	James Stephens	Graham Showell
Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc)	Treasurer, Trustee	Trustee
Date	10 th April 2023	