



South Cumbria Rivers Trust

(s crt.co.uk)

Business Plan

1 Mission

Our mission is to protect, conserve and restore all aspects of our natural heritage of lakes, tarns, rivers and becks and estuaries in South Cumbria.

We will do this by:

- Developing a full and comprehensive science based understanding of the problems associated with the waters of South Cumbria
- Developing proposals to restore healthy and sustainable aquatic environments.
- Influencing individuals and organisations that impact our catchments
- Delivering projects and monitoring results
- Raising awareness in the local population, businesses, tourism interests, riparian owners and farmers to promote a protective attitude towards their local waters.

2 Five year Vision

Our five year vision is for an effective, professional and self sustaining charitable Trust that:

- Has surveyed and mapped all of the important rivers and becks in our area.
- Is carrying out water quality and ecological surveys on a regular basis and is developing a comprehensive database of information to monitor trends and identify problems.
- Has developed and shared a good understanding of the main issues associated with the waters of South Cumbria, and is promoting ideas for further improvement
- Has completed many habitat improvement projects on all of the main catchments and some of the minor ones, and these are delivering benefits in terms of improved biodiversity.
- Is continually improving our waters for conservation and fishery purposes; particularly salmonid stocks.

3 Partner Organisations

Crucial to our success will be effective collaboration with all other governmental and environmental organisations with interests in common. These partner organisations recognise the gap we are trying to fill and are keen to work with us, and support us.

Our partners are:

- Environment Agency
- Lake District National Park Authority
- English Nature/Natural England
- Cumbria Wildlife Trust
- National Trust
- Freshwater Biological Association
- Friends of the Lake District
- Furness and South Cumbria Fisheries Consultative

4 Background

South Cumbria Rivers Trust (SCRT) is a new organisation dedicated to the protection and conservation of the aquatic environment of South Cumbria. Our area covers the Bela, Kent, Leven, Crake and Duddon catchments. In addition there are many other minor rivers that provide habitat for a variety of important species.

The main lakes are Windermere and Coniston, and there are numerous other lakes and tarns.



Before SCRT was formed various other organisations were active in their own areas; the Kent Rivers Improvement Group, the Leven and Crake Conservation Trust, and the Crake Catchment Improvement Association.

This SCRT area has a particularly high environmental and landscape value, reflected in the number of designations. Two thirds of the area is within the Lake District National Park, and it contains one Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Arnside and Silverdale, on the southern shore of the Kent Estuary.

Morecambe Bay is of international nature conservation importance for waterfowl, and is designated a Special Protection Area, marine Special Area of Conservation and Ramsar site, as well as being a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The catchment also contains eight other Special Areas of Conservation, 79 SSSIs, seven National Nature Reserves and many Sites of importance for Nature Conservation

The area comprises 2300 km of watercourses and 28 km² of still water. Much of this habitat has been increasingly impacted by human activities, particularly over the last 50 years.

5 Context

- The Environment Agency has the remit, to protect and conserve the aquatic environment. The task is huge and they have finite resources, so to be most effective they must work in partnership with others.
- The Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan defines a number of habitats and species that need protection. One of the target habitats is "Rivers and Streams", and SCRT has a key role to play working with the Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership as a delivery agent for the required actions.
- The Water Framework Directive (WFD) will also drive activity in this area. It is a substantial piece of EC water legislation and demanding environmental objectives will be set, including ecological targets for surface waters. Most of our waters are likely to fall short of good ecological quality.
- The Still Waters Partnership, which has been working on Bassenthwaite Lake will soon be addressing the major issues of Windermere.
- Catchment Sensitive Farming is a new DEFRA initiative to limit the impact of diffuse pollution from agriculture on water quality. South Cumbria has not been selected as a priority area, but work will be carried out under the Associate CSF scheme.
- South Cumbria is an area of high recreational value, and tourism is the mainstay of the local economy with several million visitors each year. Clean and healthy lakes and rivers are an essential component of maintaining the long-term amenity of our unique environment. Several of our waters are used for public water supply, which requires high quality standards. Inevitably high population, intensive farming adjacent to watercourses and high recreational pressure will degrade the natural aquatic environment. Unfortunately this point is evident in many areas across our catchments, with Windermere providing a particularly vivid example.
- The South Cumbria Fisheries Action Plan was published in June 2006. SCRT is defined as having the lead responsibility for many of the crucial actions defined, and partner responsibility in many others. Four of the Trustees are on the Fisheries Action Plan committee.

6 Development of the Trust

South Cumbria Rivers Trust was registered as a Company limited by Guarantee in February 2006, and was registered as a charity in June 2006. There are 12 Trustees, details can be found on the website s crt.co.uk.

While some River Trusts elsewhere are operated on a purely voluntary basis we have decided that we will employ a full time employee to accelerate progress. The workload is significant and the Trust must be able to interact with its partner organisations, all of whom have full time staff, in a professional way.

We will also need various ecology and fisheries skills, ideally also as employees, but in the early days we will cover these on a voluntary or contract basis.

While we can expect to get some high quality effort on a voluntary basis, we cannot rely on it exclusively. Volunteer effort should be included in project costs on an 'in kind' basis.

7 Activities of the Trust

7.1 Surveys

In order to protect and conserve the waters of South Cumbria we need an inventory of our waters and the problems that are present. To do this we will need to carry out a systematic survey. This can be done at various levels, from a basic 'walk over' survey that volunteers can perform, through to sophisticated biological and chemical analysis of the water quality.

7.1.1 Walk over surveys

The aim here is basic documentation and mapping of the river and features, plus photographs, and including local knowledge and history of the river if available.

Things to be assessed and recorded are erosion, riparian habitat, amount of in-stream cover, substrate, pool and riffle sequences and obstacles to migration.

This will provide an inventory of our waters, with an assessment of their habitat and health, plus candidate ideas for habitat improvement. Advice from River Trusts elsewhere is that the biggest benefit in the short term comes from fencing and the creation of buffer strips and the removal of man made obstacles to migration, weirs, culverts etc.

We will work with our partner organisations to progress these surveys.

While we will aim to use voluntary effort as far as possible, to do the job effectively considerable management effort will be required to co-ordinate the surveys and collate the results.

The output from the walk over surveys will be an inventory of our waters, with maps, photographs and descriptions.

7.1.2 Water Quality and Quantity Surveys

Both water quality and quantity is of profound importance. While the EA do carry out a programme of water quality and quantity monitoring, the locations and intervals are limited. The Trust will develop a capability to carry out some aspects of water quality analysis, e.g. at specific points to address questions raised by the walk over surveys, and on a regular basis to monitor trends.

Various techniques may be employed e.g. measuring temperature, flow meters, oxygen, pH, algae (chlorophyll), conductivity etc. Also the number and species of invertebrates present is an excellent indicator of water quality.

We need to understand the impact of abstraction on river flows.

We will develop skills for taking the samples and readings on the river, and will have access to laboratory facilities, skills and time to analyse them.

7.1.3 Juvenile salmonid surveys

Monitoring the populations of juvenile salmonids provides excellent data to help manage the rivers. Without good data about fry and parr populations we will be 'shooting in the dark' when it comes to defining the priority projects.

The EA does occasional surveys and this data is available, however these are very sparse in terms of both locations and frequency. We aim to collect a lot more juvenile survey data in the future.

7.2 Project Generation

The various surveys conducted will highlight problems and generate ideas to address them. Generally the identified project ideas will be to

1. improve habitat or
2. improve water quality/reduce pollution or
3. remove obstructions to fish migration or
4. restore sustainable ecological flows

A great deal of work will be required to take an early idea through to a fully funded and consented project.

Some types of projects are reliably good for the riparian and aquatic habitat, classically fencing and buffer strip creation. These tend to be the 'bread and butter' work of River Trusts in the early days. The issues are identifying suitable locations and securing landowner consent.

Discussions with landowners and consultation with all parties, to modify if necessary, and gain support for the proposed improvement projects will take a great deal of time. This work is an essential component of achieving environmental improvement.

7.3 Project Delivery and Monitoring

Once projects are fully agreed and funded the Trust will complete the projects and deliver environmental improvements.

Once the projects have been completed the Trust will monitor the results, and use the experience gained for further improvements.

7.4 Lobbying

SCRT will build strong relationships locally with individuals and organisations to assure that reasonable consideration is given to the protection of the aquatic environment of South Cumbria in local strategic planning, specific planning applications and recreational management.

7.5 Awareness Raising and Education

The best protection that our rivers and lakes can get in the long term is if we have a local population, and local business and agricultural interests, that understand them and value them. The Trust is running a program aimed at giving the local population and visitors an environmental awareness and appreciation of our waters.

The program will consist of:

- Visits to schools
- 'Experience the River' days, when children from local schools have a chance to visit their local rivers and lakes.
- Guided river walks
- Publications and presentations

The other area where the Trust will play a major role is in addressing the issue of diffuse pollution. Multiple low-level sources of pollution can have a significant cumulative effect on our rivers and lakes. While legislation and enforcement can be used against major and persistent polluters, education should be the first approach to addressing this problem.

SCRT will work in support of DEFRA's Catchment Sensitive Farming initiative, and the organisations running it in South Cumbria.

8 Finance

Financial sustainability will be achieved by:

1. Having management and staff time built into fully funded projects. This work will be performed by salaried Trust staff.
2. Having volunteer effort as an 'in kind' contribution to the project funding, so it will be possible to bank some of the project costs. These can be used later to cover core costs.
3. Seeking contributions from supporters, either individuals or organisations. Where the contributor is a taxpayer an extra 28p in the £ Gift Aid can be claimed.

Thus ongoing financial viability is totally dependent on being, and being seen to be, an effective organisation. However we cannot be an effective organisation until we are financially viable.

To address this classic start-up conundrum we are seeking commercial sponsorship and/or seed corn funding so that we can work towards our objective of being an effective operating organisation in the near future.

n.b. comprehensive version of this Business Plan including all financial details has been produced.

9 Conclusions

There is an urgent need to protect, conserve and rehabilitate the aquatic eco-systems in South Cumbria. The Trust is in unique position to assure that this is done.

Our aim is to work with nature to re-establish what we once had, but which has been lost due to human pressure on the environment.

The Trust can be partially self-sustaining by completing fully funded environmental projects, but to achieve financial sustainability we will need continued injection of some capital on an annual basis.