



Don Network Newsletter

Spring 2016

The **Don Network Newsletter** brings you the news of what's happening across the Don Catchment. **Got something to share?** If you have any news or features you would like to share please contact the Don Network.

Helping eels to leave Old Moor



Some of the 2010 cohort, 3 years on

RSPB have carried out work that will allow eels to leave the site. Eels were once common on the Dearne but disappeared from the river more than a hundred years ago due to pollution. Nationally they have declined by as much as 95% in the last 25 years. Between 2010 and 2014, around 100,000 glass eels from the River Severn were introduced into the RSPB's Dearne Valley Nature Reserves, the sites being an ideal place for these tiny eels to grow and develop until ready to migrate back out to sea.

Several years on from the first introductions and the eels have grown somewhat - to the point that it won't be long before they start to think about leaving reserves and heading off downstream.



Old Moor sits alongside the river but there was no natural means for eels to exit the site. The solution was to fit a special flap-valve to the outlet on Knoll Beck to allow migrating eels to move in and out of the site when conditions were right. RSPB needed funding to get the levels right on the banking and the work was needed before the eels were big enough to want to leave. The clock was ticking!



The banking before and after the works

In 2015, the RSPB was offered some money from the Disney foundation to carry out the work. Yes, you read it right! It won't be long before the eels look to say goodbye to Old Moor and undertake their amazing journey back to the Sargasso Sea. Who knows, in a few years the eel pass may see the first of a new generation of wild eels come back to the Dearne.

Don Network grants

Work funded by the Don Network community grants is underway. Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust used the funding to plant a hedgerow adjacent to the river at Centenary Riverside Wetland Nature Reserve. The reserve is in a loop in the River Don, close to Rotherham centre. It was created after the 2007 floods and as well as providing a haven for wildlife, it is an integral part of Rotherham's flood protection.



Excavation of a planting ditch



The Rivelin Valley Conservation Group used their funding to install way marker and interpretation posts on the Rivelin Valley Nature Trail. The posts give a brief description of the old mill pond sites and a QR code for more information on their website. Described as the lungs of Sheffield, improvements to the trail should see more people enjoying the Rivelin Valley.

Finding out about the Heritage Lottery fund

Don Networkers keen to progress their funding bids attended a learning workshop in February.

They heard from Katharine Boardman from HLF as well as the experiences of Jane Thompson from Canal and River Trust and John Housham from Don Catchment Rivers Trust with their HLF bids. Their main advice for applicants:

- Think about the benefit to lottery players
- It's HLF's money, so it's their rules – listen!
- Demonstrate the need for your project

The delegates also had the opportunity to discuss their proposals in detail and pick up tips on the application process. The overarching message from HLF? If you've got a good idea come and talk to us!

www.hlf.org.uk



Contact the Don Network if you would like a copy of the presentations

Breakthrough at Beeley Wood



The Environment Agency has removed part of Beeley Wood weir on the River Don near Middlewood. The work is part of the wider strategy to reconnect fragmented habitats and restore migratory fish populations to the Don system.

Keeping it under control

The Check Clean Dry campaign celebrates five years this year but did you know?

- There are around 2000 established non-native species in the UK, of which 10 -15% are invasive;
- It can take just one individual to start an invasion;
- Invasive non-native species cost the British economy an estimated £1.7 billion a year.



Japanese knot weed is infamous for the problems it causes in the urban environment where it can cause damage to hard structures and surfaces. Eradicating Japanese knotweed from construction sites can cost over £1000 per square metre.

Restoration of Ravenfield Ponds



Phoenix and Parkgate Angling Club are in the process of restoring the historic ponds that form part of Ravenfield Park near Rotherham. The origin of the ponds is unknown but the ancient estate and deer park dates back hundreds of years.

In the 70s the site was sold to the British Steel sports organisations as a facility for members and in the 80s a group of enthusiastic anglers set about restoring the site to its former glory. The work has included deepening the ponds, clearing vegetation and improving access. The Park is situated in a peaceful and secluded valley and the fishery is made up of six fishing lakes that contain tench, crucian carp, bream, roach, rudd, perch, gudgeon, eels, mirror carp and common carp.





Come spring the angling club will use a Don Network grant to create floating vegetation islands in the pond margins. Once planted up these will provide habitat for insects, shelter for fry and remove nutrients from the water.

Opportunities for volunteers and an environmental conservation apprentice



Could you help protect and improve access to the heritage of the River Don? Can you inspire young people to care about their environment? Do you want to work as part of a team, get active and learn a new skill? Don Catchment Rivers Trust is looking for volunteers to help deliver their exciting project, The Living Heritage of the River Don;

Conservation Volunteers - to take part in river clean up working parties.

Lead Conservation Volunteers - to assist the Community Engagement Officer to lead a group of conservation volunteers.

Education & Events Volunteers - to deliver 'River Guardians' school sessions and assist with activities such as guided walks and community events.

To apply for any of the volunteer roles click [here](#) or for more information contact Rachel Walker, Community Development Officer (Rachel.Walker@dcr.org.uk).

The project is also looking to employ an apprentice to train and earn a salary in the field of environmental conservation in South Yorkshire. The successful applicant will be working towards completing a Level 2 Apprenticeship in Environmental Conservation, including day release to Askham Bryan College.

This is an opportunity to gain real work experience and skills for a career in the environmental sector. The Trust is looking for people who have an interest in nature, wildlife and the environment and who enjoy being outdoors doing practical tasks.

Click [here](#) for more info.

Closing date 6 May 2016.

If you have any news or features that you would like to include in future editions of this Newsletter please send them to donnetwork@dcr.org.uk or call Karen Housham on 07990 027703

 I'm part of the Catchment-Based Approach www.catchmentbasedapproach.org

The Don Network partnership is hosted by the Don Catchment Rivers Trust
and the Environment Agency



www.dcrtr.org.uk/the-don-network