



UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01 THURSDAY 10TH DECEMBER 2020

Thames Rivers Trust receives grant of £250,000.00 from the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund

- 68 projects have been awarded grants between £62k and £3.8 million to kick-start a pipeline of nature-based projects while creating and retaining jobs
- First funding round sees £40 million pot allocated, second round of funding to open in early 2021

Thames Rivers Trust Thames Catchment Community Eels Project is one of the first environmental projects awarded a grant from the government's £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

Defra announced grants between £62,000 and £3.8 million today, to help create and retain thousands of green jobs. The projects, spread across England, will see trees planted - 800,000 in total - and protected landscapes and damaged habitats such as moorlands, wetlands and forests restored, alongside wider conservation work. The projects will also support environmental education and connecting people with green spaces.

Thames Catchment Community Eels project is a partnership, led by Thames Rivers Trust in partnership with fellow Rivers Trusts Action for the River Kennet, South East Rivers Trust and Thames21, the project is driven to aid the long-term survival of the European eel.

The rivers in the Thames catchment have an immense natural and cultural heritage. The eel was once common, yet is now critically endangered. Together the partnership is working closely with the Zoological Society of London and Thames Estuary Partnership and will be developing and trialling a nationally recognised and standardised methodology for citizen science eel barrier walkover survey training, that will enable trained volunteers to help assess and map robust data of where there are barriers to the eel migration; and this will allow strategic prioritisation for future eel projects.

For eels to fulfil their complex life cycle they need to be able to freely move up and down river systems before returning to the Sargasso Sea to spawn.

The project will create a variety of ways for the public to get involved, including training to monitor young eels, known as elvers as they migrate up the River Mole.

The Thames Catchment Community Eels Project will be reaching out to local communities and schools on the Rivers Mole, Ravensbourne, Brent, Middle and lower Kennet and Pang with an innovative eel education and engagement programme of events and workshops. Wherever possible the project will be getting



people outdoors and connecting with nature, in or by their local rivers (where eels spend the majority of their lives).

The Thames Catchment Community Eels Project grant success has also meant the creation of new jobs with the Trusts and during the project the opportunity for Trust staff to increase their skill sets.

Chairman of Thames Rivers Trust Dave Wardle said, 'We are absolutely delighted to have been awarded this grant; and to have the opportunity to raise the profile of this iconic and yet Critically Endangered fish. Bringing our partners together will enable us all to achieve more towards conserving the European eel than any of us could hope to deliver alone.'

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund is a key part of Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan to kick-start nature recovery and tackle climate change. The fund is being delivered by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Environment Minister, Rebecca Pow, said:

"These projects will drive forward work across England to restore and transform our landscapes, boost nature and create green jobs, and will be a vital part of helping us to build back greener from coronavirus.

"I look forward to working with environmental organisations as these projects help address the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change, while creating and retaining jobs as part of the green recovery."

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive, National Lottery Heritage Fund, said:

"Supporting our natural environment is one of the most valuable things we can do right now. All these projects are of huge benefit to our beautiful countryside and wildlife, but will also support jobs, health and wellbeing, which are vitally important as we begin to emerge from the coronavirus crisis."

The government's forthcoming [Environment Bill](#) puts the environment at the centre of policy making to ensure that we have a cleaner, greener and more resilient country for the next generation. The fund is supporting a range of nature conservation and recovery and nature-based solutions projects, which will contribute towards government's wider [25 Year Environment Plan](#) commitments, including commitments to increase tree-planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025.

ENDS

Notes to editors



- 21 projects will receive the larger grants (over £250k - £5m) and 47 projects awarded funding for the smaller grants (£50 - £250k).
- For more information about Thames Rivers Trust and the Thames Catchment Community Eels Project contact Anna Forbes info@thamesriverstrust.org.uk
- Image attached to email of a European eel

