

Ernest Cook Trust – Press Release

Partnerships key to restoring our rivers

A stretch of the River Coln in Fairford, Gloucestershire, has been restored to its former glory and will soon be teeming with trout.

The restoration was showcased at a recent open day hosted by educational charity the Ernest Cook Trust (ECT), in partnership with the Cotswolds Rivers Trust, the Environment Agency, the Wild Trout Trust and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

The recent event in Fairford, Gloucestershire attracted some 70 guests, including local landowners, farmers and anglers.

Its aim was to show how landowners can take relatively easy steps to improve river habitats, and to demonstrate the value of working in partnership with river organisations and agencies.

The open day included a walk along the River Coln on the Ernest Cook Trust's Fairford Estate to see the improvements. Last autumn the Cotswolds Rivers Trust worked with ECT to carry out a range of measures to improve the habitat along a half-mile stretch of the river.

The work has transformed a previously straight, uniform section of water into a meandering river with ideal habitat for fish. Work included adding gravel to the river bed where trout can spawn, creating a series of pools and turning an old mill race into a fish pass, allowing trout to swim upstream past a weir.

Launching the event at Fairford Community Hall, ECT's Chief Executive Nicholas Ford said: "Looking after the River Coln is very important to us, and we're delighted with the work that's been carried out by the Cotswolds Rivers Trust. It has resulted in a tremendous improvement to the river habitat."

A presentation by the Environment Agency outlined the human impact on our rivers and the Agency's role in their restoration. Under the EU Water Framework Directive, the UK's rivers are expected to gain 'good ecological status' by 2015.

Andy Thomas, conservation officer of the Wild Trout Trust, gave a rough guide to enhancing river habitats. And John Field of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust talked about the Cotswold Rivers Living Landscape project, which aims to reconnect and restore rivers throughout the Cotswolds to good health.

Vaughan Lewis, the Cotswolds Rivers Trust's ecological advisor, said: "The event was very successful in highlighting the fact that Government agencies and voluntary sector organisations are here to provide advice to those interested in river restoration - and strong partnerships can help deliver positive outcomes."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Ernest Cook Trust, one of the UK's leading educational charities, is rooted in the conservation and management of the countryside. It owns and manages 22,000 acres of landed estates across five counties in England.

The Trust places education at its heart by actively encouraging children and young people to learn from the land through hands-on educational opportunities on its estates, and by giving grants.

The Trust was founded in 1952 by the philanthropist Ernest Cook, grandson of Thomas Cook, founder of the famous travel agency. As a result of Ernest Cook's foresight and passion for the countryside and the arts, each year the Trustees currently distribute £1.8m in educational grants to benefit children and young people.

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