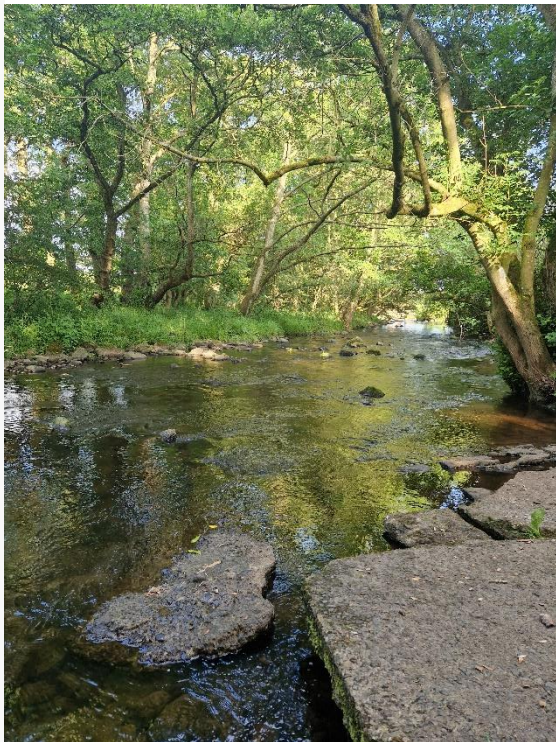




What's it all about?

The Plastic Free River Wear Group was formed in 2021 after a successful workshop at County Hall in Durham hosted by the SeaScapes Partnership. Anyone with an interest in the River Wear was invited to come along to help answer the question “*as a community how can we address the issue of plastics entering the river at source to sea?*” With all the excellent ideas and feedback from the workshop the key organizations formed the *Plastics Working*



Group and developed a *Plastics Action Plan* which has been narrowed down to cover the following 6 themes.

- Theme 1: Kerbside Collection and AI
- Theme 2: Establish Education Practitioners Group
- Theme 3: Business Engagement
- Theme 4: Logo and Newsletter
- Theme 5: Agri-plastics
- Theme 6: Funding Applications

The concept is that partners work together, in subgroups or as individual organisations, as opportunities present themselves, to address plastics pollution.

The Plastics Working Group and Plastics Action Plan are themselves registered under the Wear Catchment Action Plan as Project 14: Source to Sea Plastic

Programme which maintains visibility of partnership projects established through the Wear Catchment Partnership, established through Defra’s Catchment Based Approach (CaBA).

This first newsletter will provide an update on what the partners on the working group have been up to and how you can become involved.

Key Organisations

Wear Rivers Trust, SeaScapes Partnership, Sunderland City Council, Durham County Council, Climate Action North, ReCoup, Chestnut Bio, Groundwork, OASES, City of Durham Parish Council, Durham University, Durham Wildlife Trust, Oracle Environmental Experts/UK Spill Association.

KEY ORGANISATION: OASES

Empowering Environmental Action & CHILDREN 4 CLIMATE CHANGE (C4CC?)

This programme is funded through Northumbrian Water enforcement undertakings and match



funded by Durham University (Natural Environment Research Council). It educates schools and communities about climate change and empowers them to take positive action to mitigate and adapt to it – including clearing watercourses of plastic pollution, so that rivers are less likely to flood in a downpour.

During the EEA / C4CC? workshops, school pupils are given the facts on Climate Change and then supported to make a film (using

green screen technology) to illustrate these facts, various future scenarios and their feelings about climate change. These short films, the workshop resources and the pupil's learning journey and opinions are placed onto the special created c4cc.org.uk website.

The C4CC? website provides the general public with the accepted science behind Climate Change (using IPCC data and the latest scientific research) and young people's opinions on the issues. The website also contains: resources to enable schools to engage with Climate Change through the curriculum (lesson plans, relevant book links, websites...); advertise opportunities for schools and the general public to get involved with the issue (practical task opportunities like tree planting, top tips for lifestyle changes, useful website links); provide a mechanism for people to voice their opinions via a linked Twitter feed; a means of demonstrating to the world's leaders our concerns (a 'Click of you Care' counter).

A total of 25 schools are engaged with the project (10 funded through Durham University and 15 by Northumbrian Water). The extra funding from Northumbrian Water has meant that involved children have also been enabled and empowered to take Climate Action and gain the John Muir Award in the process.

Schools taking part this financial year (2022-23) are:

Edmondsley Primary School • Moorside Primary School • Ramshaw Primary School • Hamsterley Primary School • St Cuthbert's Primary, Crook • Langley Moor Primary School • St Michaels C of E, Bishop Middleham • Chester le Street CE Primary School • Thornhill Primary School • Hawthorn Primary School • Shotton Primary.

KEY ORGANISATION: DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

WEEE Project

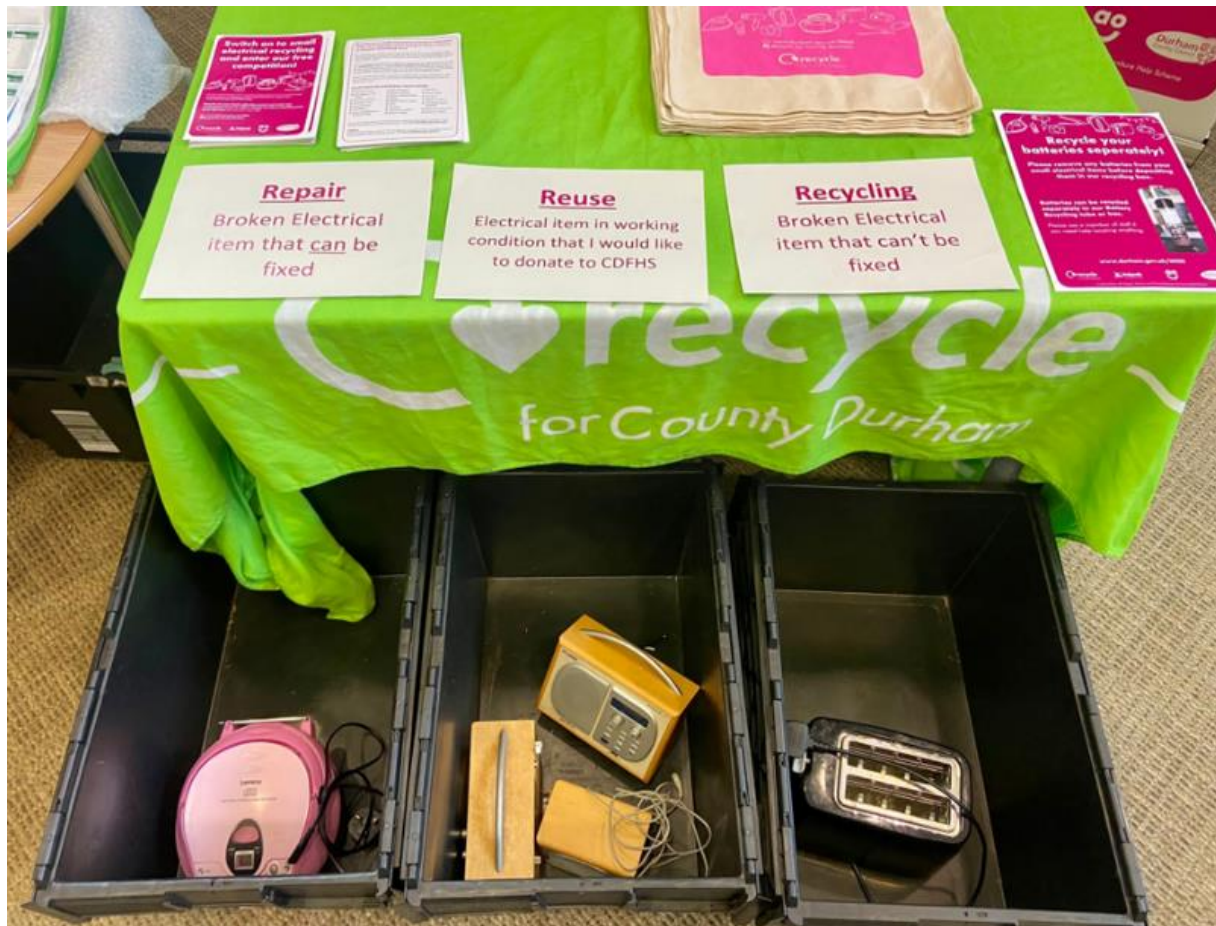
DID YOU KNOW Durham County Council have recycled 26 tonnes of small electricals and repaired 258 items since our small electrical recycling programme began in 2021?

If you have a small broken electrical item, don't throw it away! You can recycle it at one of 145 collection points across County Durham. If you have an item you would like fixed, bring it to one of our repair cafes, and we will try to fix it for you for free.

Friday 22 September, 10am- 1pm Spennymoor Youth and Community Centre, Spennymoor DL16 6PP

Thursday 12 October, 10am-1pm Chester-Le-Street Library DH3 3BP

www.durham.gov.uk/weee



KEY ORGANISATION: WEAR RIVERS TRUST

Riparian Heroes – Fighting Plastics and Invasives on Rookhope Burn

By WRT Project Officer, Jack Butlin

Rookhope Burn is a beautiful upland tributary of the main Wear. It flows gently through vibrant wet meadows before picking up speed and diving through steep wooded gorges and over impressive falls. Its confluence with the Wear is bolder strewn and awash with Dippers, Grey Wagtails and Common Sandpipers. Here, there's also a deep pool that WRT volunteer, and all-round riparian superhero, Nigel Wall, explains is perfect for salmon, regaling stories of joyous days catching fish with family - all Weardale natives.

Nigel is on a one-man mission - to clean up the rivers, burns, brooks, and streams of the land he grew up in. Weardale's industrial past has scarred the landscape, writing its rich history into the land, but also strewing its waste into our rivers. 'You never need to bring a bag up here' he says whilst dexterously prying an intact feedbag from beneath a rock. We fill up half a dozen of these bags with old agricultural plastics, bits of scrap metal, and more modern waste in the form of plastic bottles and crisp packets. But these are merely a secondary quarry - our real prize sports pink flowers and serrated leaves, Nigel's arch nemesis: Himalayan Balsam.



Wear Rivers Trust volunteer, Nigel Wall, filling a feed bag with rubbish retrieved from the river.

Himalayan Balsam is a schedule 9 invasive plant, meaning it is an offence to plant or cause it to spread in the wild. Unfortunately, Himalayan Balsam doesn't need much help. It has exploding seed pods that fling seeds over 7m away. They readily float downstream and can be deposited pretty much anywhere, especially in high floods. If left unchecked, large stands of the plant form along riverbanks, leading to destabilisation and risks of erosion when they die back in the winter - a particular problem in areas with a mining past. They outcompete native wildflowers and draw in pollinators with their huge nectar reserves. Thus, unravelling millennia of co-evolution. Over the past 4 years, Nigel has been relentlessly fighting Himalayan Balsam in Weardale. He slopes gracefully down the river, donned in just trainers, long socks and shorts, scanning the banks for his enemy. He has a 6th sense for the stuff, picking out seedlings where I'd have missed a large plant. All at a rate of knots I struggle, in my full chest waders, to keep up with. Once present continuously along the water ways of Upper Weardale, Nigel is now confident of stopping any Himalayan Balsam seeds from setting at the top of our catchment in 2023. From here, we can take his lead and move further downstream, securing the future of the River Wear for generations to come. **A true riparian hero!**

KEY ORGANISATION: WEAR RIVERS TRUST

Primary School Plastics with Stanley the Raindrop

Local primary school children in Stanley are enjoying learning more about a range of flooding related subjects as part of the SuDS+ project. They are taking part in interactive activities led by the Wear Rivers Trust linked to a wider initiative which aims to improve flood resilience by making local residents central to decision making.



The schools involved are Bloemfontein Primary, Burnside Primary, East Stanley Primary, Greenland Primary, South Stanley Juniors and St Mary's Catholic Primary. It is planned the activities will be repeated each year until 2027 in each school.

Each session helps the children understand the geography curriculum and focuses on a different topic. Topics include soils, climate change, habitat creation and rain harvesting. The Environment Agency also deliver an Introduction to Flooding session for each school using their new SuDS house.

As part of the engagement each session has had a cross cutting theme of plastics. From using a refillable bottle during the holidays to recycling plastic waste. Education workers from the Wear Rivers Trust found a plastic reduction message to link with the main topic every week. The main driver linking plastics was waste causing flooding helping to block waterways. For more information on the SuDS+ project visit stanleysuds.co.uk

KEY ORGANISATION: Re-Coup

Pledge2Recycle Plastics

Working across the community with Durham County Council (www.durhamrecycles.co.uk). This project engages with communities and individuals to encourage the recycling of plastics to keep it out of the natural environment and ensure it is recycled to give it a second life. Pledge2Recycle Plastics attends events, schools, community groups and retail environments to talk to citizens of all ages to

encourage them to do the right thing and reduce their confusion on plastics thus ensuring plastics packaging is disposed of responsibly. This is the consumer interfacing brand of plastics recycling charity, RECOUP, who have extensive knowledge of the collection, sorting and recycling processes and infrastructure in the UK.

www.pledge2recycle.co.uk www.recoup.org



KEY ORGANISATION: SEASCAPES PARTNERSHIP

SeaScapes Beach Care and Aware

The SeaScapes Beach Care and Aware Project forms part of the 3-year National Lottery Funded Tyne to Tees, Shores and Seas Partnership scheme. The project has a dedicated Officer who



works with volunteers, Schools, Colleges, Universities, and Businesses to organize a series of litter picks on the beaches from South Shields to Seaton Carew and to raise awareness of the impact of litter on the marine environment. Since the project began in April 2021, 3833 bags of rubbish have been removed from the beaches with help from 4311 volunteer days, 89 Businesses, and 20 schools!

This rubbish has a huge detrimental impact on wild animals, fragile habitats and the overall marine environment. It ends up on the beach through littering, discarded fishing nets and line, cargo, industry etc.

The project has 15 trained Volunteer Beach Care Officers who organise their own events and help out when needed. Data is collected as part of the Great British Beach Clean, where each piece of litter is logged over 100m of beach. This feeds into a national project run by the Marine Conservation Society and provides valuable data on the state of our beaches.



The project also works to enhance the coastal streams with funding from Northumbrian Water's Blue Spaces fund, this includes Lime Kiln Gill at Horden, Crimdon Dene, Green Drive, Seaham and Cut Throat Dene, Sunderland. More information can be found at www.exploreseascapes.co.uk

OTHER OPPORTUNITES:

Agri-Plastics. Modern farming runs on plastics. An Innovate UK-funded project to explore additional routes to collect and recycle agri-plastics, and to explore alternatives to oil-based plastics, is due to report at the end of November. The project will design a pilot and seek further Innovate UK funding to trial the alternative routes and methods identified.



River Plastics Barrier: Plastics and other litter accumulate on and around the weirs in Durham City, creating environmental damage and spoiling the visual appeal and enjoyment of this World Heritage Site. A concept to install barriers above and below the City to measure and capture litter arising upstream and from the city itself is being developed.





Wear Free Plastics at the Great North Run 2023

Our campaign to reduce plastic in the River Wear was taken to the Great North Run on 10th September. Ten runners with Wear Rivers Trust on the front of their t-shirts and River Wear Plastic Free on the back completed the run raising awareness of both the charity and plastic campaign. The crowds were magnificent with thousands of spectators seeing the logos in addition to a field of 60,000 runners.



Our squad of runners varied in experience from completing their first half marathon to over 25 years' experience running the distance. All were able to complete the run despite the hot weather which led to a high number not finishing the course.

If wish to get involved, have any ideas on how to manage plastics more effectively or if you wish to learn more about the work of the Wear Plastic Free group, please contact Admin@wear-rivers-trust.org.uk

