

# Press Release

Tuesday, 7 January 2014



## **School helps breathe life back into their local river with tree planting**

Pupils from Graffham Infant and Duncton CE Junior Schools are helping to improve their local environment by planting trees, breathing life back into a failing river.

Alongside a local angling club, the school has helped plant sixteen Black Poplar trees to assist a £100,000 project to enhance the Western Rother at Shopham Bridge, near Petworth.

The work, which is being led by the Arun & Rother Rivers Trust, working closely with the Wild Trout Trust and the Petworth and Bognor Angling Club, is creating a better environment for fish living in the river. The project will enhance the habitat available for a wide range of wildlife, from birds and butterflies to newts and wetland plants.

Thirteen pupils from year 6 took part in the tree planting, assisted by representatives from Petworth and Bognor Angling Club, ARRT Project Officer, Ses Wright, and ARRT volunteers. The children worked hard planting the trees around a newly constructed fish refuge. The trees will help to support and protect the soft sandy riverbanks from erosion and provide cover for the fish from predators.

Graffham Infant and Duncton CE Junior School Head teacher, Helen Martin, said: "These children have spent time learning along the Western Rother on field work; so this was an excellent opportunity for them to gather and share knowledge about a river that they already know well. They brought enthusiasm and energy to their important task of planting the Black Poplars."

Sir Sebastian Anstruther, Chairman of the Arun & Rother Rivers Trust, added: "We are delighted with the work we've so far been able to achieve to improve the Western Rother river. We have much to do to protect and improve our rivers in West Sussex, but by working together I am convinced that even the most complex issues can be addressed.

"It is wonderful to see local children playing their part in this project to breathe life back into the river and we hope this helps to give the children an appreciation and understanding of their local environment. We look forward to seeing the river benefit from the children's hard work."

The Arun & Rother Rivers Trust (ARRT) received government funding in 2012 to enhance the Western Rother around Shopham Bridge. Work has so far included the construction of a 60 metre long stone and gravel riffle and the creation of a shallow water refuge where fish can escape forceful river flows after heavy rainfall.

**Notes to editors:**

The Arun & Rother Rivers Trust is one of the newest members of the Rivers Trust network in England and Wales, supported by the national umbrella body The Rivers Trust.

For more information about the Arun & Rother Rivers Trust, or to view the annual report, please visit: <http://www.arrt.org.uk/>

To view a map of the 'Arun and Western Streams' catchment visit:  
[http://www.arrt.org.uk/media/ARRT\\_Catchment\\_Map.pdf](http://www.arrt.org.uk/media/ARRT_Catchment_Map.pdf)