



Great Ouse Valley Trust
Our landscape for life

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IS THE RIVER GREAT OUSE GOOD FOR PEOPLE AND FISH?

- *Great Ouse Valley Trust speakers present the facts!*
- *New Rivers Trust for the whole river announced!*



The John Brewington (Rivers Trust) selfie captures the enthusiastic audience at the GOVT talk with his fellow speaker Kye Jerrom (Environment Agency) in the front row with his hand up.

The fascinating story of fish migration and the history and health of our river Great Ouse was presented to a meeting of the Great Ouse Valley Trust with great enthusiasm, knowledge and expertise by the two speakers at the St Ives Corn Exchange last week.

The inspiring speakers were **Kye Jerrom**, the Environment Agency expert on all things fishy, and **John Brewington**, the national Rivers Trust coordinator.

Kye told the enraptured audience that sometimes the scruffier, unkempt and more overgrown the watercourse, the better for the animals that live in and around the river. We cannot reverse the changes that have been made to the river over the last 1,000 years in humankind's attempt to control the river for its own purposes. However, we can take action to help and improve the habitats for our river wildlife.

Kye illustrated how the construction of fish and eel passes, most recently at Godmanchester Mill Steps, has allowed fish to navigate over man-made obstacles for the first time in centuries, and how planting trees along river banks can have a real effect on climate change.



The Godmanchester Fish Pass at Mill Steps Photograph by GOVT

John Brewington then explained the significance of developing a local Rivers Trust to work alongside the Environment Agency. Our Great Ouse is the only major river in the United Kingdom without its own local rivers trust.

Great Ouse Valley Trust chairman, Graham Campbell, explained how the Trust is now working with its colleagues in Bedfordshire and in northern Cambridgeshire to develop the brand new Great Ouse Rivers Trust (GORT). This will cover the whole 150-mile length of the river from Northamptonshire to Kings Lynn, as well as its many tributaries and backwaters. The aim is that

GORT will carry out a multitude of projects over a wide area to sample the water and monitor the health of the river, plus check on the problems of invasive species - Floating Pennywort and the Chinese Mitten Crab, for example.

The big question posed by many was:

'Is the river safe to swim in?'

Unfortunately there was no definitive answer to this question. We are sure this won't put off the new army of wild swimmers that will still jump in the water whatever the weather or time of year. However, John Brewington did advise that the Rivers Trust website <https://theriverstrust.org/sewage-map> reveals the location of outfalls for storm water and sewage, and that water companies should provide information as to when discharges of sewage have been made.

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What is the Great Ouse Valley Trust?

The Great Ouse Valley Trust (GOVT) is a charity formed in October 2018 with the charitable objective 'To promote for public benefit the conservation, restoration, and enjoyment of the landscape, wildlife and heritage of the Great Ouse Valley and environs in the county of Cambridgeshire.'

Members include local councils, the local Wildlife Trust, individuals and environmental groups.

The Trust's Vision recognises the Great Ouse Valley is a fantastic place to live and visit, with off the beaten track areas to explore by foot, cycle or horse. The area is nationally recognised and valued for its wildlife, leisure, natural and heritage attractions which contribute to the county's natural green spaces. This is achieved by GOVT being the catalyst which brings national organisations, local communities and individual people together for the common good.

GOVT's mission covers:

- **Enhancement of landscape** – increased biodiversity
- **Promotion** - sense of place, tourism and local economy, health benefits
 - **Protection** – active conservation and campaigning
 - **Access** for all – residents and visitors, disabled
- **Partnerships** and alliances: groups working together
- **Increased engagement** – education, volunteering