



A celebration of the return of Atlantic salmon

Developing the Natural Aire is a partnership project between the Aire Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency. Our aim is to connect 60km of the River Aire to allow the return of Atlantic salmon to their traditional spawning grounds in the shallow river and becks around Gargrave.

Absent since the latter half of the 18th century, Atlantic salmon found their way barred to the waters in Craven by the weirs that powered the textile mills of the Aire valley and historic pollution from Bradford and Leeds. Now a much cleaner river can sustain them and welcomes them back. Atlantic salmon have been caught during Environment Agency monitoring in Leeds and thanks to four new fish passes built the project in Leeds and Saltaire, the river is open to them.

We want to celebrate their return and the revival of the River Aire by erecting a work of art in Gargrave village. *This forms part of a funding commitment to Craven District Council that recognises their financial support for the Developing the Natural Aire project.*

The Aire Rivers Trust would like to work with a local artist and a local community group (to be chosen between the client and artist) to design a suitable piece of art to do this. This commission is both for the artwork and community engagement.

The artwork

Taking advice we don't want to be too prescriptive about what we would like to achieve. We would like it:

1. to be focused on the wildlife and natural heritage of the river, with Atlantic salmon being a prominent part of the this
2. to have a physical presence. This, or at least a significant part of this, should remain in place until October 2027. It should require limited maintenance and be capable of being maintained by staff and volunteers from the Aire Rivers Trust
3. to be shaped by the community of Gargrave to help build local ownership of the artwork and the river in general. One of the central messages of our project is that our river is has a heritage that is shared by communities along the river.
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Budget

A budget of £10,000 budget (including any VAT) has been allocated for this project. Artists would be expected to demonstrate value for money, and this covers both community engagement and the artworks themselves.





Location

It has been suggested by the Parish Council that the top green may be a suitable site. This is near the new interpretation board the Trust has installed.



This location forms part of flood plain and permissions may have to be sought from the Environment Agency alongside any other planning requirements. The artist would be responsible for obtaining all relevant permissions and permits. The Aire Rivers Trust will provide support and guidance through this process.

Community Engagement

We would like to engage the local community to connect them to their river, its heritage and wildlife. Artists are encouraged to be creative in their approach to community engagement and we would expect the artist to engage with a clearly defined audience. Possible audiences include Gargrave Primary School or local adult groups like Gargrave Wildlife Group but do not have to be limited to immediate village. We would like to be involved in the selection of this audience but to be guided by the artist's expertise and experience.

We would expect approximately six workshops and 20% of the budget to be spent on this.





The client

The Aire Rivers Trust is one of many local Rivers Trusts. Each charity works to improve and care for their local river. We bring volunteers, local organisations and experts together to create projects that improve our streams and rivers.

Our mission statement sets out the, rather long winded, vision that the River Aire “will be a thriving river valued for its environmental, social and economic benefits, and which is actively appreciated by the community for its diverse ecology and contribution to flood risk management.” In short, when we talk to local communities, we talk about connecting people, places and nature.

We have existed since 2011 and have delivered projects from fish passes in Leeds to volunteer tree planting across Craven to reduce flood risk along the valley. Our work in Craven is a relatively new affair thanks to the Developing the Natural Aire project. This is a great opportunity to raise our profile and connect with volunteers and landowners. This piece of art will play a key role in celebrating the potential for Atlantic salmon to return to the Craven district.

The Developing the Natural Aire project is a partnership between the Aire Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency. It is funded by Craven Council, the Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The Aire Rivers Trust will be acting as the sole client on this project.

The river at Gargrave

The river at Gargrave is a shallow upland river that flows through the middle of the village. Bordered by housing and A65 on one side and village greens on the other it forms a focal point for the village including a historic bridge that links the two sides of the village. Whilst it may seem an unchanging part of the village landscape, locals will tell you many different stories of how it has changed. Tales range from shifting shoals of pebbles that changed the flow through the bridge to changes in fish numbers (that may actually be linked to the river becoming cleaner and less nutrient rich). Many people have crossed the river by its steppingstones, walked along it or paddled in it. It is clearly a special place for the local community.

The ecology of the river has changed less markedly than further downstream over the last 200 years. The pollution from homes and industry that left the River Aire almost dead below Bradford was never anywhere near as bad in Gargrave. Game fish species like grayling and brown trout can be found alongside minnows, bullheads, kingfishers, and otters. Once the birthplace of Atlantic salmon who leave the river for a gigantic migration that takes them to Greenland and back, we are optimistic of their return to the area.

We have installed a new interpretation board at Gargrave to help people discover the river and its wildlife (overleaf).





A river full of life

The River Aire brings wildlife into the heart of Gargrave. Atlantic salmon travel from Greenland to join fish, like grayling and brown trout, looking for places to lay their eggs in the gravel beds of the river and streams near here. Take care not to step on their nests, called redds, if paddling in the water.

Improvements downstream have made this possible. Better sewage treatment and care of the river downstream have benefited the river here in Gargrave. From the 1990s onwards, wildlife could be found all along the river. The Developing the Natural Aire project has reconnected 60km of the River Aire. Allowing fish to cross large weirs in Bradford and Leeds means that native species like Atlantic salmon and European eels can now return from the sea to parts of the river from which they have been missing for over 150 years.



In Craven, landowners are caring for our river by improving riverside habitat. Planting more river side trees creates shade and now habitat. Together with reducing the erosion of banks by farm animals, this is creating space for fish to feed, breed, and shelter. A healthy fish population supports the return of other wildlife like otters and kingfishers. The River Aire here supports recreational trout and grayling fishing.

Brown trout spawning in the gravelly bed of the river



From Malham to Gargrave, the most common fish caught is the brown trout. These fish thrive in the low nutrient, high quality, waters. Grayling, another species that need clean water, are also widely caught.

By the 1850s pollution from homes and factories meant they could not be found in the river below Skipton. Now, as our rivers become cleaner, their numbers are growing, and they can be found as far downstream as Leeds.

Other fish species that can be found in the rivers and streams around Gargrave are stone loach, minnow, bullhead, sticklebacks and brook lamprey.

Wildlife on the River Aire



Gray heron (*Ardea cinerea*)
With a wing span of nearly 2m, Herons are the largest birds most of us are likely to see. They nest in colonies called 'heronries', often in the top of trees. Here, they make large, untidy nests out of twigs and lay 3-4 eggs.



Common kingfisher (*Alcedo semita*)
In the UK, there is just one species of kingfisher, the common kingfisher. They're notoriously hard to spot. Often a vivid blue flash is all you notice as they fly by.



Female and male Atlantic salmon in spawning colours (*Salmo salar*)
Salmon travel from the Atlantic Ocean near Greenland to the streams and rivers in Yorkshire to breed. Fish complete this massive migration to spawn in the shallow, oxygen rich waters.



European bullhead (*Ictalurus nebulosus*)
This small, strangely shaped fish lives on the bottom of fast, stony rivers and streams feeding on invertebrates and the eggs of other fish.



Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*)
Few people are lucky to spot an otter but they can be found along the rivers in Craven feeding on fish, waterbirds, amphibians and crustaceans.

You may find otter spraint, or droppings, on rocks sticking up from the river. This is how they mark their territory.

Visit our website to discover riverside walks from here and along the River Aire: www.dnaireriver.org.uk

Design, illustration and production: greenwater.co.uk



Your submission

If you would like to be considered for this work, please get in touch with us, and provide us with the following (or links to):

- Current CV or portfolio.
- Examples of previous work.
- An outline of how you would approach the different elements of the brief.
- An indication of how much time the work might take and how funds would be spent.
- The names of two people/organisations you have previously worked with who would be willing to give you references.
- Anything further you envisage needing from the Developing the Natural Aire team.

Please submit your proposal to Simon Watts, Community Engagement Officer at simon.watts@aireriverstrust.org.uk by 9am on Thursday 2nd December 2021. Please get in touch if you have any questions or would like any further information.

We will invite successful applicants for interview by representatives of the Aire Rivers Trust and local organisation Chrysalis Arts Development, who will be guiding us through the commissioning process.





Bids will be scored on:

- 40% artistic merit.
- 30% previous experience of public art and community engagement.
- 20% value for money.
- 10% local connection.

Support

To support the artist, we will provide:

- Access to all relevant background project documentation.
- Access to Aire Rivers Trust volunteers (and hopefully their support).
- Access to project partners and any local events.
- Support with river specific permissions like flood risk activity permits.

Timeline

Deadline for applications – 9am on Thursday 2nd December 2021

Interviews with shortlisted applicants – During week commencing 6th December 2021.

Community engagement – January to June 2022.

Installation of artwork – by July 2022.