The First 10 Years
2006 - 2016
Commitment

• To create and build a Conservation Trust that makes a difference
• Improving and protecting some of the special local habitats that are of global significance
• Undertake action research and education projects, disseminate results and findings
Objectives

1. To preserve and conserve wildlife and habitats associated with watercress and other salad crops for the public benefit.

2. To undertake research and analysis into wildlife associated with chalk streams and other habitats associated with watercress and other salad crops, and to disseminate the useful results for the public benefit with a view to increasing public knowledge and awareness thereof.
Environment Lecture

• 2007  –  **Helen Philips**, CEO Natural England

• 2008  –  **Professor John Beddington**  Chief Scientific Adviser and Head of the Government Office for Science

• 2009  –  **Chris Packham**  Wildlife Presenter, Author and Photographer

• 2010 – “Eating the Future” Debate  
  Professor **Ian Crute**, former Director of Rothamsted Research Centre; **Tim Nevard**, Executive Director of Conservation Grade Farming and **Lord Peter Melchett**, Organic Producer and Policy Director of the Soil Association

• 2012  –  **Chris Huhne MP**

• 2013  –  **Lord Deben**

• 2015  –  **Judith Batchelar**  
  Brand Director Sainsburys
Chalk Stream Headwaters Forum

- Initiated to provide a focal point for discussion and new ideas for the management of the wellsprings of some of Europe’s most ecologically important rivers

- The first Forum was hosted by the VCT in June 2007

- Brought together key stakeholders with an interest in pursuing opportunities for improved management of the upper tributaries of the Test & Itchen

- Formed two sub-groups – Bourne Rivulet Initiative and Upper Itchen Initiative
-presentations:
- Nature Conservation
  Chris Rostron, Wildlife Trusts
- Scientific Research
  Pete Shaw, University of Southampton
- Fishery Management
  Paul Knight, Salmon & Trout Association
- Watercress Industry
  Charles Barter, NFU Watercress Association
- A Retail Perspective
  Tina Jeary, Sainsbury's Supermarkets
- Water Supply
  Meyrick Gough, Southern Water

Response from Panelists:
- Peter Kelly, Environment Agency
- Kevin Exley, Environment Agency
- Michelle Leek, Natural England
- Alison Graham-Smith, Natural England

Breakout Sessions:
- Chalk Stream Headwaters Forums
- 55 presentations
  - Academics
  - Retailers
  - Water company
  - Fisheries Management
  - Restoration/bioengineering
  - Charities
  - Environment Agency
  - Wildlife Conservation
  - Statutory authorities
  - Rivers Trusts
  - ADAS
  - Centre For Ecology and Hydrology
Technical Advisory Panel

• Identifying, scoping, scrutinising and overseeing research projects

• Representation from:
  – Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
  – University of Southampton
  – Sparsholt College
  – Vitacress Conservation Trust
4 PhDs funded – scientists trained, peer-reviewed evidence base

• Environmental Impacts, Mitigation and Water Resource Management:
  – How and why water used in watercress production and processing affects ecosystems in receiving streams.
  – The potential for on-site mitigation of ecological impacts of PEITC.
  – How the artificially maintained discharges from the St Mary Bourne site can be used to benefit local habitats and biodiversity.

• Phosphorus in the perennial headwaters of chalk streams

• Measuring and Optimising Multiple Ecosystem Services Provided by Chalk Streams

• Can Watercress Farming Directly Impact Fish Communities
Other Sponsored Projects

- Conservation of White clawed crayfish
- DRI-STREAM (Drought Impacts on Stream Ecosystem Functioning)
- Support of The River Monitoring Scheme with volunteer training and monitoring equipment
- Tree sparrow project integrating the use of Vitacress’ Mullens farm and the adjacent river
- Wildlife Trust WATCH group
- Game Conservation Trust Trout project
- Electrofishing
Vitacress Conservation Trust supports essential crayfish work in Hampshire

The Trust is delighted to announce vital funding from the Vitacress Conservation Trust to support its work to conserve and protect white-clawed crayfish in Hampshire.

Our Southern Chalkstreams Project aims to conserve and protect chalk river invertebrates across Hampshire, including the last remaining population of white-clawed crayfish in the county. The Vitacress Conservation Trust joins the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Bristol Zoological Society (BZS) as key partners of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to support the vital work of the project.

A launch event was held this July to celebrate this new partnership, at a watercress farm in the Itchen Valley, near Winchester, where work has been carried out to help restore and maintain the important chalk stream habitat, essential to the survival of the white-clawed crayfish.

Vitacress Conservation Trust’s Dr Steve Rothwell and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust’s Ecologist, Dr Ben Rushbrooke, discussed conservation plans for the Itchen Valley, which include working closely with the Bristol Zoological Society on cutting-edge efforts to rear and release the endangered white-clawed crayfish into their native habitat.

Speaking about the new partnership, Ben said: “We are delighted that the Vitacress Conservation Trust is committed to ensuring the long-term survival of white-clawed crayfish in Hampshire, and this funding will allow us to continue to work closely with Vitacress, other key landowners, and all our partners in conserving the white-clawed crayfish in Hampshire.”

White-clawed crayfish are the only species of crayfish native to the UK, and became classified as Globally Endangered in 2010. Having suffered a 90% reduction in distribution in Hampshire since the 1970s, the species may become at risk of extinction from the whole of the UK in the next 20-30 years.

With the essential long-running support of its statutory partners, we have been the lead organisation in the conservation of white-clawed crayfish in Hampshire for over five years. Now, with the additional support from the Vitacress Conservation Trust and BZS, we can continue to be this lead in the years to come. More information on the key mechanisms implemented to deliver this very important aspect of the Trust’s work can be found on the Southern Chalkstreams Project pages on our website.
Education

- Created an outdoor classroom for school visits, hosted by H&IOWWT
- In collaboration with Winchester University, published an educational booklet entitled “The Wonderful World of Watercress”
Watercress Festival