



Westcountry
Rivers
Trust



WRT Event Review Launch of the AARC Project

On Thursday, 2 September 2010 the Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT) launched the 3.8 million euro 'Atlantic Aquatic Resource Conservation' (AARC) project at Reed Hall, Exeter.

Partners travelled from France, Spain, Portugal and Ireland, to celebrate the start of the three-year project, conceived and led by WRT, bringing together a diverse range of organisations from across the rugged Atlantic coast of Europe to improve our rivers.

The launch was an evening of great entertainment, talks from four excellent guest speakers and a great deal of discussion.

Not content with the current state of rivers and coastal waters, the AARC Project Partners are throwing a battery of different methods into tackling the problem:

DNA analysis will be used to find out what migrating fish are up to when they leave our rivers

River restoration will improve the habitats for endangered water animals, including working with farmers to promote environmentally sensitive farming

Public access to rivers will be improved with internet linked information points where the public can learn about the rivers near them

Sustainable methods for funding river restoration will be developed, like linking green hydro-power schemes to fish passes.

An international Masters qualification will give university students a chance to learn how to manage rivers and water catchments.

Dr Dylan Bright, Westcountry Rivers Trust Director (shown bottom right talking to EA South West Regional Director Richard Creswell) said:

"The Trust's vision is to have living, working landscapes that deliver employment, food and amenity without impacting on rivers and biodiversity and without the need for heavy regulation and supervision. This European funded project will really push that vision forward"

Arlin Rickard, Director of the Association of Rivers trusts said:

"The time has come for rivers - everyone has realised how much we rely on them, when just a few years back, it seems they were taken for granted. Farmers would like to see an income from looking after healthy streams. Anglers need healthy rivers to produce the healthy fish they want to catch. The water companies want clean water coming downstream to put into our taps. The general public love walking by and enjoying rivers, and of course holiday makers know that clean rivers help make for clean beaches when they are on holiday. This new project is using the latest science to help us all benefit from healthy, functioning water courses."

Professor Ken Whelan Research Director of the Atlantic Salmon Trust, who spoke at the event, said:

"What I like most about this project is the use of DNA fingerprinting on migrating fish like Sea Trout. This kind of approach has the potential to make a real difference to the long-term conservation of these iconic fish."

