

**Application form**

**Cherishing the rivers to which we belong**

**Each year the Prix Charles Ritz rewards a trophy and a cheque for works undertaken with devotion and commitment by individuals/communities who make a difference to the rivers they cherish.**

**This year, the Fario Club, London, has established the Prix Charles Ritz award for England and Wales, to honour projects here helping to preserve our rivers for future generations.**

All applications with projects undertaken in England and Wales are accepted. Please 4 pages maximum + attachments. You may apply by e-mail to prixcharlesritz@gmail.com by the 31rst August 2019

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| **Name of the Lead Applicant:**PHAE JONES |
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| **Individual/ Club / Organisation:**THE WYE AND USK FOUNDATION |
| **Project name:**RESTORING GRAVEL TO THE ELAN SYSTEM, WALES, UK |
| **Date of completion:** APRIL 2019 |
| **Project objectives – what did you do and why? Why was there a need for the project? [For restoration projects please include location and background)**Please also refer to the Foundation’s most recent project report (dated April 2019) – which is supplied with this application.**The need –** The Afon Elan (English: River Elan) is a tributary of the River Wye which runs through the wide expanse of upland moors, traditionally known as Elenydd, in central Wales; It has four dams.Grid Reference SN92466445 Map Reference SN96SWGoogle Maps [Click here](https://goo.gl/maps/JGMNl)In 1932, JA Hutton (Author, and Chairman of the Wye Conservators in 1921) noted that salmon no longer spawned right below the Caban Coch dam (the lowest of the dams in the sequence of four) as they had once and were now only spawning in downstream reaches. Since the construction of the Elan dams in 1904, the gravel in which they create their redds had been washing downstream while the supply of fresh gravel from upstream had ceased. Over 100 years later, this left the riverbed devoid of the fine sediments and gravels so important to the ecological health of this upper Wye tributary. When this project started in 2016 the Elan had no suitable spawning gravels in the 4km of river immediately below the dam. In the lowest 3km of the Elan the gravels were depleted and in many cases, compacted. This situation was impacting negatively on both the invertebrate and fish populations.**Project objectives –** The objectives of the project are the restoration of the ecological status of the Elan (in so far as this is practical without dam removal) as required by the Water Framework Directives (WFD) to reach “Good Ecological Potential.”A fresh supply of gravel would be returned to the lower reaches giving a more ‘natural’ state, restoring the river’s aquatic ecosystem and allowing salmon and trout to once again spawn and live there. New gravel would also re-establish aquatic insects and plants.Our objective was to put the gravel as far upstream in the section below the dams as we could, or as close to the Caban Coch dam as possible.**What did we do and why? –** It took The Foundation four years to allay concerns and to be granted the necessary consents to allow this project to finally get underway.At the start of the project in April 2016, extensive site investigations and consultation with stakeholders, including negotiations with land/riparian owners, hydrology/geomorphology reports, S28 consents and flood defence consents, took place and were obtained.To ensure effective ‘naturalisation’ of the lower Elan, the gravel was sourced from a river bed in the upper Wye. It was a little further away than was ideal but it met the many criteria needed for us to obtain consent to start work.Re-introduction – a site fitting the criteria for salmonid spawning, and from which the gravel could be washed downstream and form natural bars in subsequent years, was selected.Five months after the project started, 2,000 tonnes of river gravel were extracted, transported and introduced to the Elan by the Foundation’s operational team. It was inspiring for us to see the gravel going into this important river; another step forward in our efforts to restore the Wye catchment.Further gravel introductions were made in 2017 & 2018. , Initial monitoring results showed immediate improvements in the invertebrate populations in the previously depleted areas.  |
| **How have the objectives been achieved? (If appropriate please relevant documents for example before and after photos, monitoring results and/or press coverage)** Please also refer to The Foundation’s website news article -which is supplied with this application (press coverage).Prior to the first introduction of the new gravel in September 2016, the Foundation’s monitoring team conducted baseline electrofishing and surveys of the river bed so that we could see how and where the new gravel would eventually settle.Three months later, our monitoring team returned to conduct the second riverbed survey and, encouragingly, found that 34 of the 40 sites surveyed had gravel build-ups, and that gravel bars in likely salmon and trout spawning areas were starting to form.This was the first serious attempt at restoring gravel to an impounded river in Wales, and we hoped that the experience would allow similar projects to take place on other rivers across the country also affected by dams.Redd counts – In December 2016, 6 redds were found in lower reaches from Glan Elan to the junction with Wye. In December 2017, salmon redds were found at Glan Elan, Dolfallen and for the first time in 60+ years, 300m below the introduction site. In 2018, redds were found just downstream of Elan Village and at Glan Elan, and adult trout numbers were also found to have risen.In Spring 2019, electrofishing surveys confirmed that for the first time since monitoring started in 1972 (and possibly well before), salmon and trout have successfully spawned in the upper section of the river below the dams.This project has been several years in development, requiring lengthy and, at times, painstaking negotiations. We are very grateful to Dwr Cymru Welsh Water and Natural Resources Wales for their support and determination in making it possible. This result is proof that the gravel initiative was worthwhile.There will be a further introduction this year and some work to loosen compacted old gravels. We hope then to be able to secure the funding required to continue with yearly top-ups so that the newly restored areas do not fall back into their pre-project state. |

**Guidance**

* The award is aimed at restoration projects, large or small, and/or community projects those core objectives are to improve the riverine environment and the species which depend upon them through direct action or education.
* This is the initial application. The jury (judging panel) will compile a short list and visit these projects over the summer. The winner will be notified in early November, and an awards ceremony held beginning of 2020.

**Thank you and good luck.**

**Terms and conditions of entry**

Prix Charles Ritz will use the material from any entry or prize winner in its promotional literature, or on its website, or in other publicity as may be appropriate, unless you advise at the time of entry that you do not wish to take part. Copyright in any and all material submitted by the applicant(s) will remain with the applicant(s), although by submitting an entry, the applicant agrees to the organisation using material as described in these terms.

Prize winners agree to attend the Awards Ceremony and presentation.

By entering the Conservation Awards you are providing your information to Prix Charles Ritz and no other party. The information you provide will be used in conjunction with the organisations privacy policy available upon request.