Water, Wetlands & Wildlife

Inspiring & Leading Action for Healthy Rivers

Action Plan for the River Ouse & River Adur 2024 - 2030

Introduction

Delivering Positive Action

Our local rivers, and those across the country, continue to be under serious threat from a range of pressures. However, never has their health been more in the public eye and it is fantastic to be a part of the community making a difference, pressing for and committed to taking positive action. It is, after all, the foundations on which OART has been built.

The Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust has established itself as one of the primary organisations delivering river and wetland restoration projects across the catchment. From putting the wiggles back and daylighting channels to removing or mitigating barriers to fish passage, creating in-channel habitat, constructing wetlands and delivering natural flood management solutions in urban and rural settings, our work has seen not only substantial improvements to the river network but also to the knowledge and expertise across local communities and within our own team.

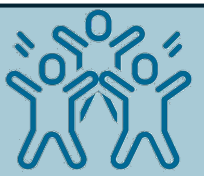
Looking forward, the needs of the catchment require a greater level of strategic thinking, developing longer-term delivery periods and attracting a wider range of funding and income streams. This will enable "bigger, better and more joined up" thinking in terms of catchment restoration and delivery of long-term projects which address the bigger issues facing the local water environment.

What is clear is that we need to work faster, be bolder, and expand our collaborations, in short, we need more action, and this plan sets out our aims, priorities, and mechanisms to enable a leap forward in improving our water environment.

Our Values

Dedicated
To delivering high quality, evidence-based solutions

Open-minded
To innovative solutions and methods



Enthusiastic
About working with others and learning ourselves

Honest
Being upfront with information, insight & processes

Inclusive
Collaborating and engaging effectively with people from every background

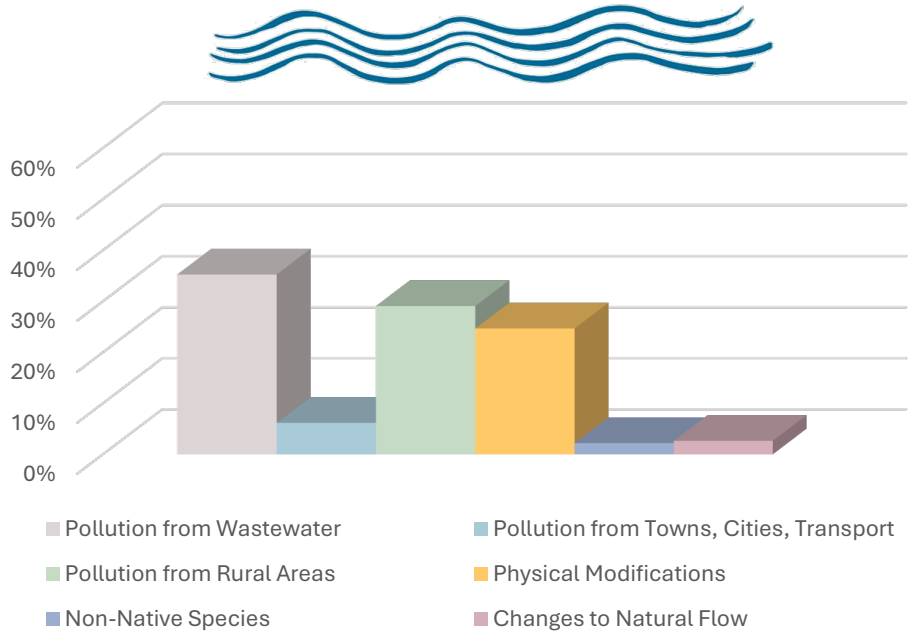
Curious
Hungry to learn, and share, never being complacent in our work

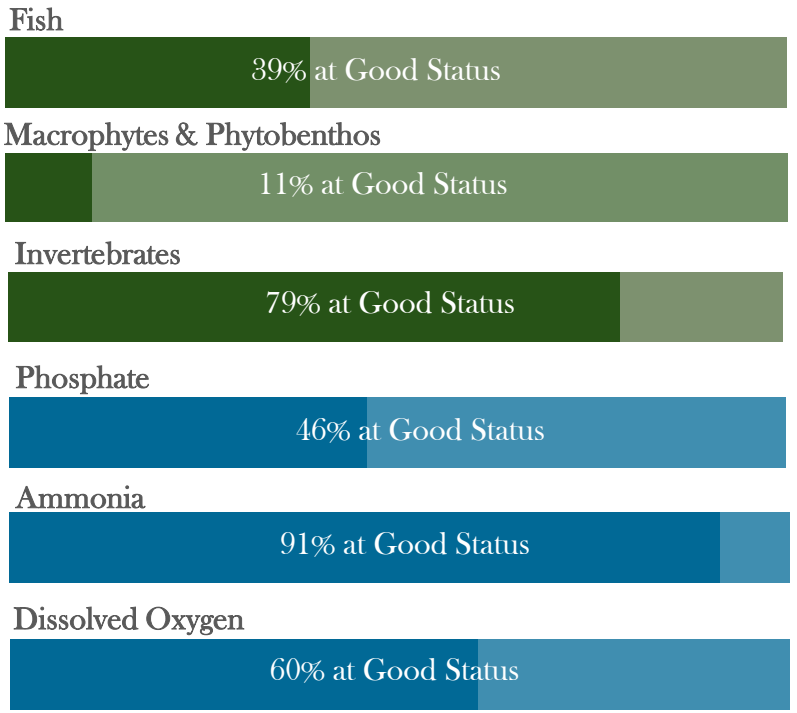
State of Our Rivers

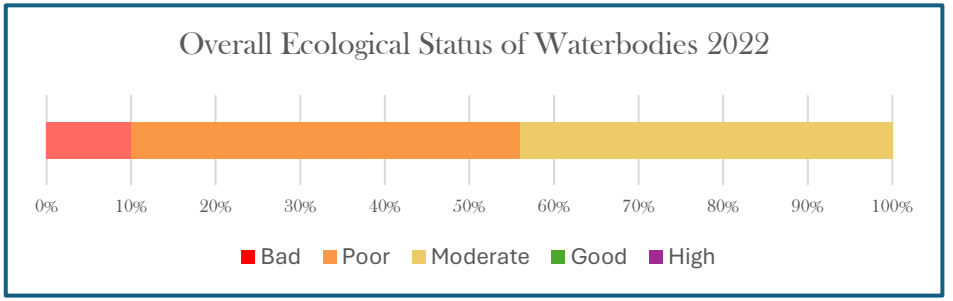
In the last round of Water Framework Directive (WFD) classifications (2022), none of the 46 waterbodies within the Adur & Ouse catchment achieved an overall Good (or High) Ecological Status.

These classifications highlight the need to ensure sustainable fish populations and increase in-channel vegetation (macrophytes and phytobenthos) as priorities to improve biological health, whilst significantly reducing phosphate with the catchment is a priority for physio-chemical water quality.

Of course, there are interactions between these elements and interventions which address one will often have a positive impact on another. However, the reasons for not achieving the desired ecological status are complex and require strategic planning and long-term investment for both small- and large-scale intervention.







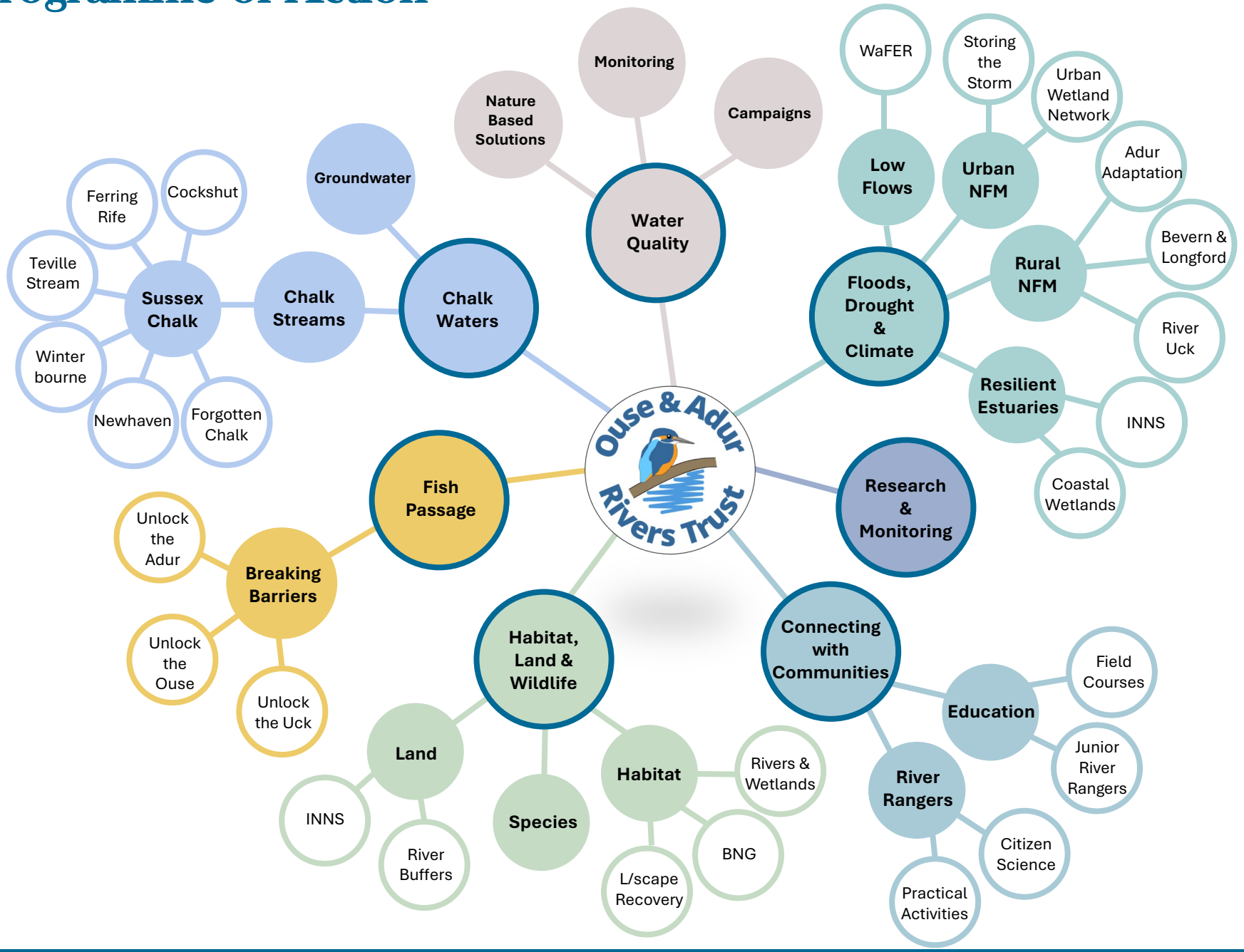
Programme of Action

Inspiring & Leading Action for Healthy Rivers

Here we set out our core workstreams until 2030, detailing our aims and priorities for action. We have taken an evidence-based approach in identifying priority areas and provide an overview of live projects within each workstream. Further information is available on request for each of these along with our case studies report. We are keen to hear from organisations, and individuals, who wish to support these projects, whether through forming strategic partnerships, financial support, or volunteering time to assist with delivery, we are stronger together in increasing action on the ground and having the impact we need for healthy rivers.

- **Chalk Waters:** Enhancing Sussex Chalk Streams
- **Breaking Barriers:** Creating Channel Connectivity
- **Floods, Drought, & Climate:** Climate Resilience for Future Generations
- **Habitat, Land, & Wildlife:** Supporting Farming & Restoring Natural Catchments
- **Water Quality:** Collaborating to End Pollution
- **Community Connections:** Practical Action, Engagement & Data Collection
- **Research & Monitoring:** Taking an Evidence Based Approach

Programme of Action



Chalk Waters

Enhancing Sussex Chalk Streams

From the Ferring Rife in the west to Newhaven in the east, the coastal plains of Sussex are rich with waters flowing from the South Downs, forming rare chalk water habitats. Some are perennial, such as the Cockshut Stream on the edge of Lewes Brooks, and some are ephemeral, like the Lewes Winterbourne, Broadwater Brook and the "Sewers" of Newhaven.

The Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust is taking a leading role in understanding and restoring these often-degraded, overlooked, waterbodies. We aim to work collaboratively in developing a long-term, strategic focus for these gems within our landscape, ensuring the chalk waters of Sussex are resilient into the future.

Our Aims

Building on past projects we are creating a network of functional chalk water environments along the coastal plain of Sussex. From site specific enhancements, such as habitat restoration and the removal of invasive species to whole waterbody improvements in water quality, hydrology and connectivity within the landscape, we are actively seeking to improve and protect not just the watercourses themselves but their associated habitats and sources.

Forgotten Chalk Streams

In 2010, freshwater ecologist and river restoration expert, Dr Nigel Holmes surveyed the headstreams of many of our sub-catchments. The results of these surveys verified over 25 sections of true chalk stream to the north of the South Downs overlooked in national strategies and databases but are just as important as iconic chalk streams such as the Test and Itchen. Unfortunately, Nigel passed away in 2014 and OART is committed to picking up the recommendations within the Sussex Chalk Stream report to ensure these valuable areas are protected, enhanced and highlighted for their importance in our landscape.

Groundwater

Groundwater is a fundamental ecosystem service provided by the catchment, which is comprised of two major aquifers. Of these The Brighton Chalk Block provides public water supplies for Brighton and Hove and beyond to some 365,000 people, as well as base flow to streams, rivers and the marine environment. Its status is at risk from rising nitrate levels, as well as risks associated with turbidity and contaminants such as pesticides, chlorides, oils and solvents and diffuse pollution in both urban and rural areas.

We are working to protect groundwater resources through the Urban Wetland Network, alongside engaging and working with landowners and land managers to improve catchment resilience related to raw water quality deterioration.

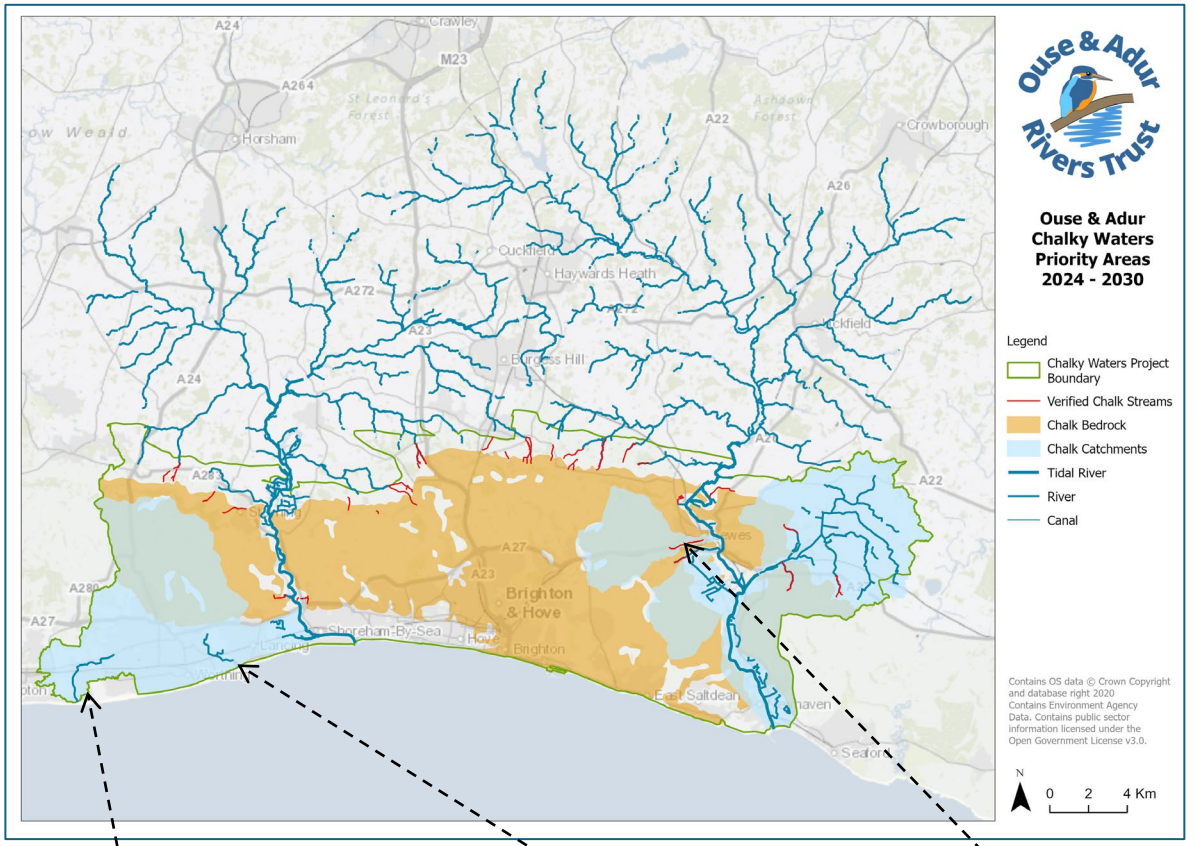
Partnering with Lewes District Council to restore the Cockshut Stream in Lewes Brooks SSSI.

Sussex Chalk

Enhancing Sussex Chalk Streams

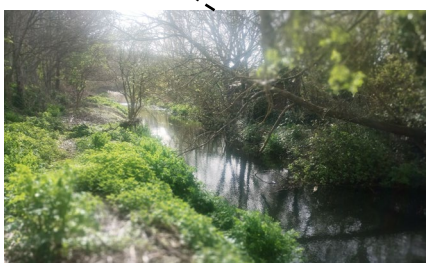
Our Priorities

- Delivering a long-term vision for improvements to the Lewes Winterbourne as outlined in the 2023 Restoration Action Plan
- Enhancing the Teville Stream, expanding the benefits of the EPIC project at Sompting Brooks.
- Delivering enhancements to the Papermill Cut and surrounding floodplain through our collaboration with Lewes District Council at Landport Brooks.
- Continue the restoration of the Cockshut Stream, focusing on the areas up- and downstream of the 2023 project site.
- Work with partners on the restoration of the Ferring Rife to include the creation of 2ha of wetland to the western banks.
- Work with partners to survey and understand the verified chalk streams and associated habitats across our catchment.



Chalk streams are rare and incredibly important habitats. There are only about 250 chalk streams in the world and 160 of them are in the southern half of England. They are a haven for iconic species like otter, kingfisher, brown trout and mayfly as well as many fish and specialist invertebrates on which they feed.

Ferring Rife



Teville Stream

Lewes Winterbourne

Breaking Barriers

Creating Channel Connectivity

The Adur & Ouse Catchment contains over 400 man-made structures which cause multiple problems for our river ecology, preventing the movement of fish species, blocking access for eels, and disrupting the natural movement of sediment, reducing dynamic flow regimes, and exacerbating the impacts of drought. Whilst some of these structures serve a function in flood risk management and hydrological monitoring, many are a now redundant legacy of historic navigations, agricultural practices, or land drainage.

The Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust has removed over 15 structures and fitted fish passes or simple easements to over 20 more. There is long way to go to create riverine corridors which enable healthy, native, wildlife populations to flourish.

Our Aim

Through Breaking Barriers, we will be focusing on unlocking the river system through encouraging the removal of barriers where they do not serve a function or the fixing of engineered fish pass solutions where structures serve a function. Over the next five years we aim to open a further 100km of river network to all species in all flow conditions.

Our Priorities

We have assessed where the density of barriers is greatest, enabling us to focus efforts where they will be most effective and highlighting priority areas;

- The River Uck.
- The northeast of the River Ouse (Cockhaise Brook, Shortbridge Stream, Middle Ouse, and Sheffield Park Stream).
- Eastern Adur (Chess Stream, Herring Stream, Adur East)
- Removal or mitigation of barriers will always be complimented by upstream habitat creation and alterations to the morphology of the channel.
- We will accurately map all structures observed to add to existing data sets, which are known to be incomplete, enabling longer term strategic approaches to be developed beyond 2030.

Technical fish pass fitted to Ardingly Gauging Station in 2022 (left) and removal of Buxted Park Weir in 2012 (right)

Unlocking our Rivers

Breaking Barriers

Project Delivery

Unlocking the Uck

Aim: Connect fish passage to a further 27km of River Uck by 2030

Our new project, focusing on 24 weir structures, Unlocking the Uck will engage landowners across the catchment to seek opportunities for removal or mitigation, and to gain understanding of constraints to connectivity. Target to open 20km of river to multiple fish species whilst ensuring suitable upstream habitat is available.

Unlocking the Ouse

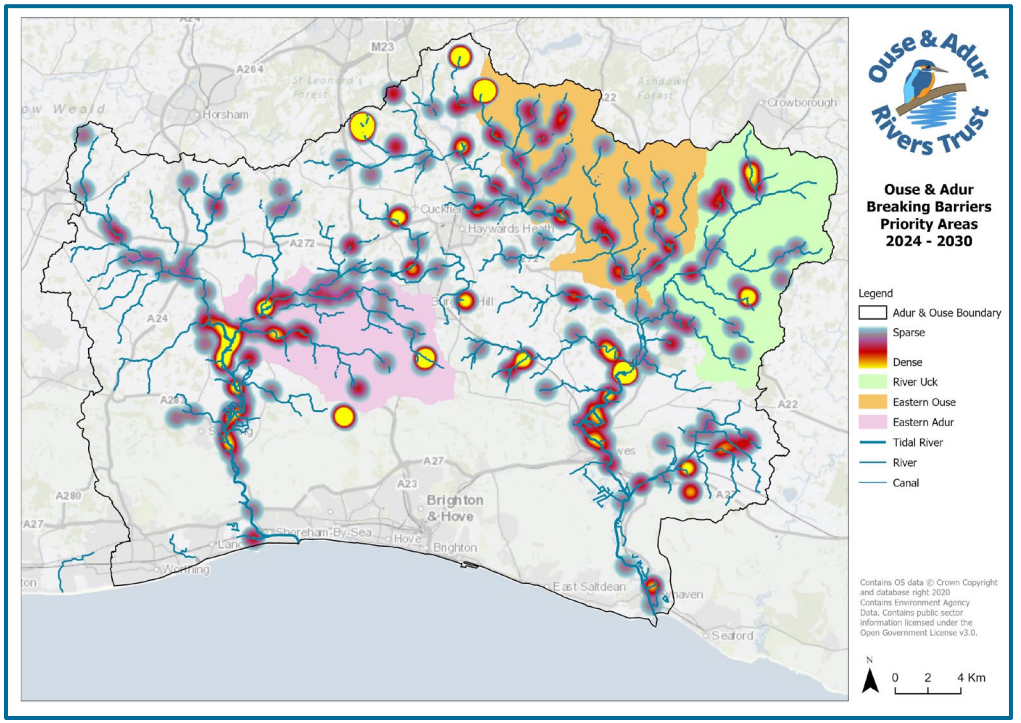
Aim: Connect fish passage to a further 34km of upper Ouse by 2030.

Forty-eight structures sit within the four sub-catchments of the northeast Ouse. Unlocking the Ouse has already removed or fitted fish passes to two of those on the Cockhaise Brook and our target is to further increase fish passage by 15km, through engaging landowners and seeking opportunities to connect fish populations on the River Ouse.

Unlocking the Adur

Aim: Connect fish passage to a further 39km of eastern Adur by 2030.

Thirty-seven structures sit within the three sub-catchments of the eastern Adur. Unlocking the Adur has already removed four of these and our target is to further increase fish passage by 15km, through engaging landowners and seeking opportunities to connect fish populations across the eastern Adur.



Density of barriers across the catchment with priority impact areas highlighted

Barrier removal to create fish passage and functional river habitat on the Cockhaise Brook, 2023

Floods, Droughts & Climate

Catchment Resilience for Future Generations

Climate change is a major threat to the health of our waterways, increasing the risk of droughts alongside high intensity storms which will impact both rural and urban populations. Only through increasing our knowledge of catchment hydrology can we begin to implement solutions which consider not just the present but future resilience for the next generation. Through our work on floods, drought and climate we are looking ahead to ensure the right interventions, in the right place, enable an adaptive pathway approach to our catchments long term health.

Our Aims

Our work will build resilience into rivers and streams against periods of low flow with a focus on increased permeability, reduced abstraction, water sustainable agriculture and, nature-based, on-farm storage. Alongside this we are working strategically to provide natural flood management (NFM) solutions at scale, based on data and evidence as to the most appropriate locations for installation. Within urban environments we will create a network of water focused nature-based solutions enabling urban nature recovery and working with households, schools and public bodies to implement community wide approaches to reducing runoff from hard standing areas.

Farmland on the River Ouse

Our Priorities

- Increase our, and others, knowledge of catchment hydrology, seeking to understand the relationships between base flow recharge, hydrology, and abstraction from within the catchment, leading to the co-development of a 'Low Flow Action Plan' for the catchment.
- Deliver Phase 1 of the Adur Adaptation Project, seeking to reduce peak flows at Bramber by 10% through working with natural processes to prepare the catchment for the future climate.
- Seek long term funding to incorporate and expand the "Storing the Storm" and "Urban Wetland Network" projects.
- Based on the outputs of NFM opportunity mapping, target areas on the River Uck where NFM has been highlighted as beneficial to both Uckfield and Lewes.
- Working with landowners to provide on farm water resilience through the WaFER project. Seeking alternatives to river or borehole abstraction through rainwater harvesting from farm buildings and nature-based solutions for water storage across landholdings.
- Expand our impact in reducing the impacts of both flooding and drought conditions across the Bevern & Longford Streams.

Rural Natural Flood Management

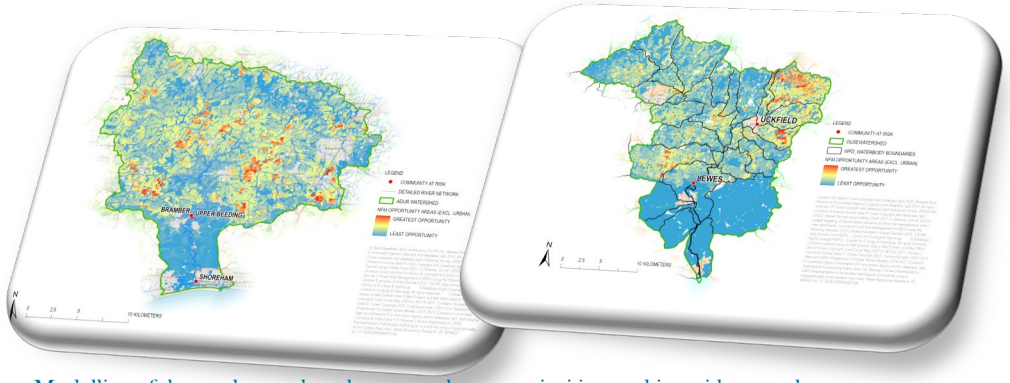
Catchment Resilience for Future Generations

A Suite of Solutions

Our focus within rural areas is on a range of natural flood management interventions, from slowing the flow with ditch blocking and leaky dams to temporarily retaining water through floodplain connectivity and habitat such as scrapes. River restoration has a key role in reducing flood risk. Re-naturalising and re-wiggling our straightened and over deep watercourses are two ways in which we can help downstream communities. Tree planting and hedgerow creation form part of our programme of flood management whilst increasing connectivity, providing river shade and improving our rates of carbon sequestration.

Our coastal areas offer opportunities to alter existing flood defences to more natural approaches, removing embankments to connect our floodplains whilst maximizing the benefits of intertidal habitat creation such as salt marsh which can store up to 50x more carbon than a tropical forest.

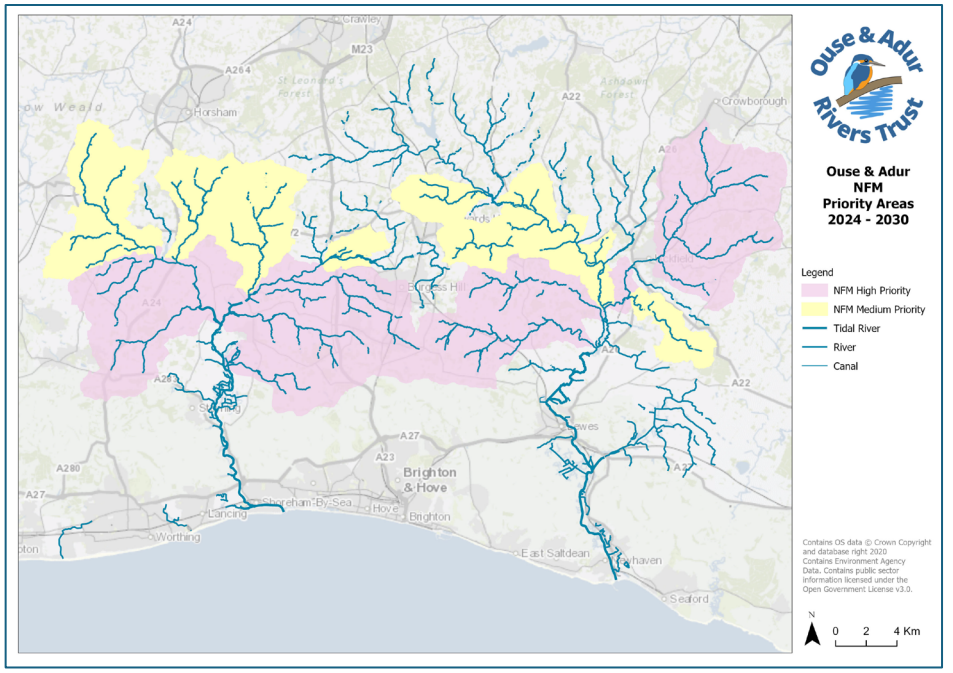
We are also providing support and advice to landowners on alternative land management or use to reduce compaction and increase filtration into the ground, great not just for slowing flow during heavy rainfall but also instrumental in drought resilience and improving the quality of the catchment's soils.



Modelling of the catchment has shown us where to prioritise working with natural processes to reduce flood peaks across the River Adur (left) and River Ouse (right).

Priority Areas

Identifying priority areas for the implementation of NFM measures which seek to provide the highest impact and enable a strategic approach to be delivered is an important component of catchment management. Mapping of these opportunities has been undertaken by the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust, using the SciMap Flood tool developed at Durham University. This uses a wide range of datasets to highlight where mitigation might be best placed to reduce flood risk at a given point of impact.



Urban Wetland Network

Floods, Droughts & Climate

The Vision

A network of nature-based solutions to flooding and water quality across the urban environment of the catchment. This network will be influential in aiding natures recovery, providing opportunity for co-design and delivery with local communities whilst building connectivity between the urban and rural environments.

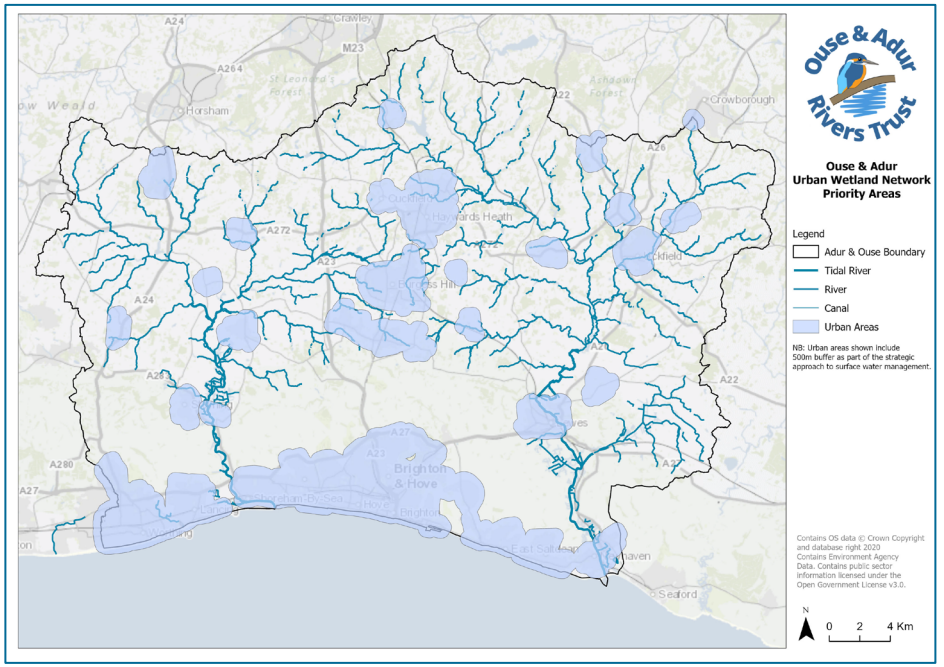
Our Approach

- Delivery of functional wetland habitats within urban areas and throughout a 500m buffer area around their edges.
- Creating features such as retention wetlands and scrapes alongside river restoration, and re-naturalising ditch networks.
- Through our Storing the Storm! SuDS initiative we are working with schools and local communities, highlighting the benefits of urban ponds, raingardens, and rainbox planters, inspiring involvement in their design and delivery.
- Formation of a grant scheme for retention features, aimed at homeowners and small holdings where other grants or stewardship payments are difficult to

Part of the Urban Wetland Network; retention ponds in Ringmer and rainbox planters in Lewes

Our Priorities

- Creation of an additional 10ha of urban wetlands across the catchment.
- Installation of 250 SuDS rainbox planters to slow surface water runoff and provide pollinator habitats.
- Collaboration with 15 schools to install measures to “Store the Storm”, presenting curriculum relevant learning on the water environment.
- Reduce inundation within the sub-surface drainage system, decreasing pressure on the combined sewer network and helping to reduce CSO discharge into our rivers.



Habitat, Land & Wildlife

Supporting Farming & Restoring Natural River Catchments

To restore our rivers to good health we need to look beyond the river itself and work across the surrounding landscape. Our approach to this is to collaborate with farmers and landowners to create large scale wetlands, control of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), re-wiggle river channels, and establish buffer strips. We do not believe that it is a choice between health environments or food production, but that sensitive and appropriate landscape enhancements can deliver both.

Our Aims

Raising the profile of a wider landscape approach to healthy water environments will be delivered through engagement with all stakeholders across the catchment. We will undertake surveys and use existing data to provide relevant and appropriate support and advice to landowners and farmers seeking to balance food production and ecological health.

Farming Support Service

We are committed to finding solutions to the climate and ecological crises affecting our water environments in a way which works for those who manage the land for agriculture. Our experience has shown that these two critical components of our landscape (farming and functional habitats) should not be considered as separate entities but as one ambition to have a thriving agricultural sector alongside high quality, and clean, rivers and wetlands. Using our knowledge of the catchment along with funding mechanisms such as Biodiversity Net Gain and Environmental Stewardships we will offer options which consider a catchment-based approach to enhancing the landscape along with the economic requirements of those whose passion and livelihoods are entwined with agricultural productivity.

Our Priorities

- Offering advice to landowners and managers relating to river health, water use, and habitat creation.
- Provide a consultancy services for river condition and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessments for rivers and wetlands, and river management plans
- Adding value in the delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, supporting those aiming to deliver “30 by 30”.
- Expand the impact of the Ouse INNS project, ensuring catchment biosecurity measures are adopted by all user groups.
- Create 50ha of wetland habitats across the catchment area.
- Species specific work will focus on enabling the establishment of viable water vole populations through catchment connectivity, alongside projects which benefit our target species of Bullhead, Sea Trout, eels and all Odonata.

INNS Project

Habitat, Land & Wildlife

Project Funding Target: £50,000 p/annum

Fresh and transitional waterbodies are particularly vulnerable to Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) as they serve as natural wildlife and dispersion corridors. This coupled with the fact that many of our waterbodies are becoming unfavourable for our native species means that there is more chance that INNS will colonise and thrive along our rivers and streams. This threatens the natural heritage of our river catchments through modification of the physical environment (e.g. riverbank erosion caused by Himalayan balsam) and out-competing native species (e.g. American Signal Crayfish).

In 2023, we led a partnership approach with South East Water, Environment Agency, University of Brighton and South Downs National Park, to create a strategic approach for monitoring and controlling INNS across the River Ouse, underpinned by implementing high quality, biosecurity measures.

Our Aims

- Apply sustainable approaches and increase the strategic co-ordination of INNS management across the catchment.
- Identify and engage with stakeholder groups to reduce the risk of spread or colonisation by INNS through increased training, awareness, and biosecurity.
- Establish a catchment-based framework for the detection and monitoring of INNS, including horizon scanning of neighbouring catchments, linked to agreed protocols, ensuring rapid responses to management and control.
- Encourage long term financial investment from multiple stakeholders to eradicate and/or control the occurrence/spread of INNS within the catchment.

Our Priorities

- Increase biosecurity awareness across key user groups of the River Ouse, using existing Check, Clean, Dry principles.
- Form community 'River Hubs' for monitoring the catchment, increasing the number of records for INNS to enable more informed control.
- Create 2km buffers around protected sites, monitored for the presence of INNS with control measures prioritized in these locations.
- Provide advice to landowners, raising awareness of INNS grants through Countryside Stewardship schemes and assisting with control.
- Assist fisheries and recreational water sports locations in achieving AquaAwards for biosecurity actions.

Controlling the invasive Parrots Feather on the River Ouse

Adaptation Projects

Habitat, Land & Wildlife

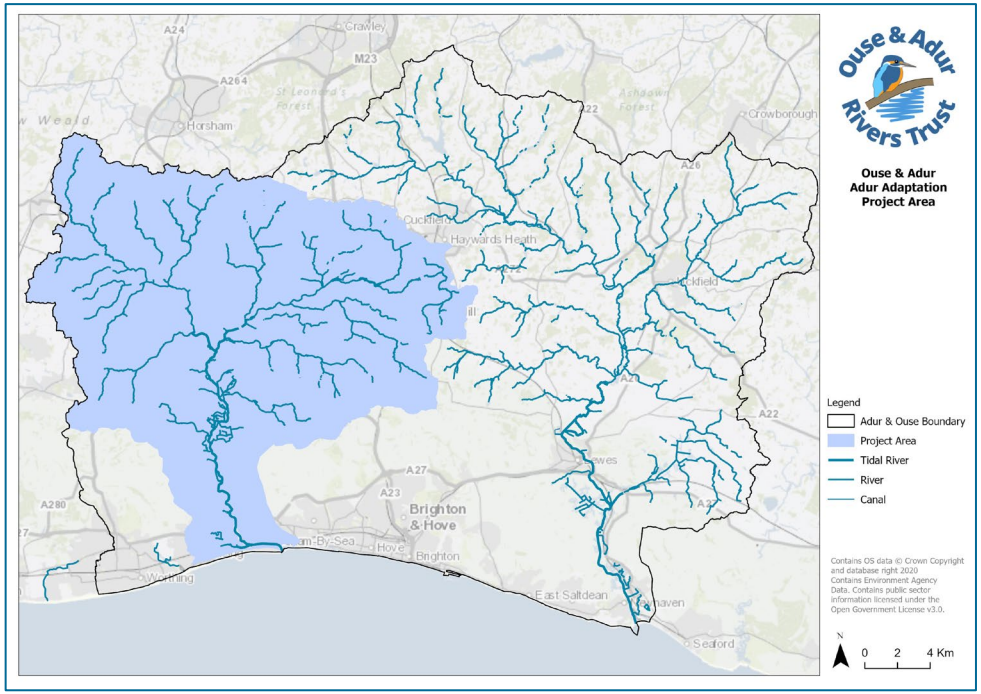
To be effective we need to think about how we join individual projects together. We are committed to delivering projects considering a whole catchment approach, seeking to adapt the landscape to ensure it can function for both people and wildlife into the future. The landscapes vulnerability to climate change and population growth must be considered beyond standard political or business planning cycles and projects must be delivered with long-term thinking to enable rivers and wetlands to thrive whilst maintaining or enhancing opportunities for agricultural productivity and critical infrastructure provision. Only by thinking ahead can we build resilient and adaptable catchments for the future.

Adur Adaptation Project

Our longest running project, operating until 2034, the Adur Adaptation Project is taking a whole catchment approach to restoring natural processes to the river corridor both in the rivers and streams and across the surrounding landscape. From wetland creation, weir removal and river restoration to tree and hedgerow planting, the project is providing advice to, and working with, landowners to deliver meaningful change at a catchment scale. A focus on natural flood management aims to reduce peak flows by 10%, reducing pressure at pinch points in the river, protecting communities from a wider range of rainfall events.

Alongside this we aim to reduce pollution to the rivers through the creation of buffer strips and constructed wetlands whilst seeking collaboration to reduce sources and pathways of pollution.

During the first five years of the project, we aim to monitor the hydrology of the catchment during different rainfall periods and deliver projects to create 15ha of wetland habitat, plant 10,000 trees and 12km of hedgerow, supporting local nature recovery strategies and adding resilience to land use.



Landscape Recovery

Complimenting the Adur Adaptation project, we are instrumental in the successful application and subsequent development of the Adur River Recovery project, a Defra funded Landscape Recovery Project as part of the Environmental Land Management Schemes. We are working with a number of partners across 27 landholdings with OART developing the landscape design required to see tangible improvements to water quality, reducing flood risk, creating intertidal habitat, and boosting biodiversity.

Water Quality

Collaborating to End Pollution and Restore Rivers to Good Health

Improving water quality is at the heart of everything we do. We believe it is vital that water quality is considered holistically, and our approach is supported by effective monitoring, engagement, and awareness raising, alongside advocating and delivering nature-based solutions which provide multiple benefits.

The detriment of sewage within our rivers is widely understood, and we are committed to working with water companies, owners of septic tanks, and private sewage treatment works to establish sustainable long terms solutions which consider not just the end problem but advocate better systems of development and reducing input to the system through our Urban Wetland Network.

Along with pollutants associated with sewage and agriculture we are committed to understanding the impact of rising levels of pharmaceuticals in our water and , emerging toxic uPBT substances, which persist and bioaccumulate in the environment, as these are likely having a significant impact on our wildlife but are less understood and less easy to mitigate.

Our Aims

We will work constructively with businesses and individuals to develop activities and capital projects which reduce the sources of pollution across the catchment undertaking investigations and sharing knowledge and data. We will encourage, and support, higher levels of research into emerging pollutants, supporting mechanisms for reducing their impact.

We will expand our monitoring across the whole catchment, incorporating Citizen Science to highlight areas for more in-depth analysis at our testing laboratory. We will advocate the use of nature-based solutions as the preferred solution to water quality issues, whilst seeking to integrate these alongside hard-engineering where necessary. We aim to improve water quality parameters of phosphate, dissolved oxygen and nitrate across 10% of our monitoring area by 2030.

Our Priorities

- Provision of advice and support to individuals and communities on water quality issues.
- Using an evidence-based approach we will target areas with the highest opportunity to reduce diffuse pollution, providing advice and support to, businesses, landowners and managers to increase river protection.
- Facilitate the establishment of 25km of functional buffer strips along river edges.
- We will work with Catchment Sensitive Farming advisors and other partners to ensure that available financing mechanisms support the creation of clean rivers.
- We will establish a high-quality hybrid programme for Citizen Scientists and professional monitoring, ensuring our data is accepted by regulators and business to target improvements.
- We will advocate for clean water; running events, campaigns and working professionally with all sectors to raise awareness and reduce impact.
- We will ensure joined up thinking between rural and urban environments, encouraging a holistic approach to improving water quality.


Buffering Streams

Water Quality

Diffuse Pollution

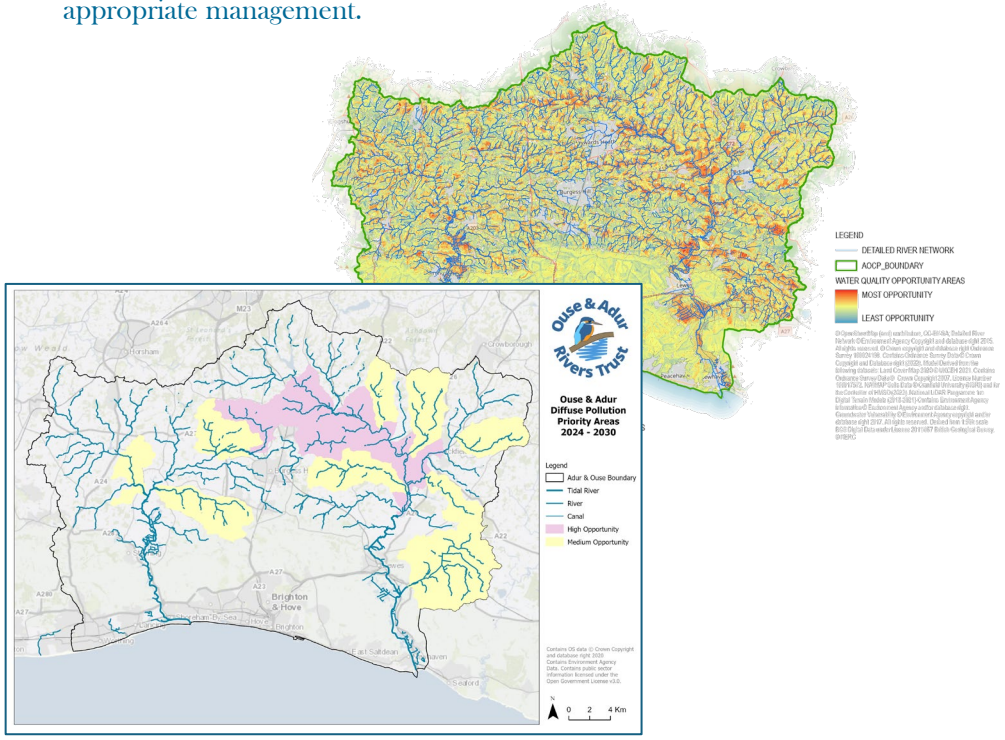
We've assessed where opportunities exist across the catchment to tackle issues from diffuse pollution using a combination of environmental variables, soil data, topography and hydrological connectivity. The maps show not where the problems are occurring but where impact points are located and therefore where focus should be placed into preventing pollutants entering the watercourses. We have weighted land use according to its effect on water quality whilst accounting for land parcels which are already in stewardship agreements with a water quality improvement option. This gives us an overview of the catchment at a 5m scale and can be used to target options for landowners for grant schemes and stewardship payments.

One of the simplest ways to reduce diffuse pollution from entering our waterways is through the creation of effective buffer strips of up to 12m in width. These can be next to the river (riparian buffer strips) or across the middle or around the edge of fields. Creating buffer strips of rough vegetation provides a physical barrier that slows the flow of overland runoff, increases infiltration and prevents soil, sediment and nutrient loss from fields.

Buffer strips provide additional benefits within the agricultural landscape, providing shelter and shade for livestock and habitat for beneficial insects, such as pollinators and predators of pests. Buffer strips can also help farmers comply with the Farming Rules for Water (2018) by reducing the area alongside a river where there is potential soil poaching by livestock.

Our Aims

- Facilitate the creation of 25km of buffer strips across our priority areas.
- Work with landowners and managers to identify and obtain appropriate funding for implementation.
- Monitor the effectiveness of buffer strip creation in reducing channel turbidity
- Provide advice to stakeholders on reducing runoff at source through appropriate management.



Priority areas for targeting diffuse pollution based on the outputs of OART catchment modelling.

Community Connections

Connecting with Communities to Collect Data and Take Practical Action

The Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust has grown from the local community and remains committed to providing opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to get involved with our work, connect with nature, become more aware, and ultimately have the ability and confidence to be part of the solution. We recognise that our ongoing success is achieved through our supporters and their assistance through time, knowledge and donations are critical to our ongoing success.

Therefore, we commit to providing high quality opportunities, advice, and action to the catchment communities and those beyond, ensuring that we build long term relationships for the benefit of all across our catchment.

Our Aim

We aim to create stronger, meaningful and productive connections across the following target groups.

- Landowners and Managers
- Cluster Farms
- Nature Recovery & River Interest Groups
- Local Authorities and Parish Councils
- Academic Institutions
- Schools
- Communities
- Local Businesses

We will achieve this through activities and events, providing advice, consulting on emerging plans and expanding our existing community activities.

Our Priorities

- Expand our network of Citizen Science programmes across the catchment focusing on
    - Riverfly Monitoring
    - Smart Rivers Programmes
    - Sea Trout Population Monitoring
    - Monitoring Invasive Non-Native Species
- Develop our Education & Training Activities (student field courses, school assemblies, training courses, John Muir Awards).
- Organise and host a Sussex River Summit, seeking to bring experts and communities together in delivering solutions.
- Expand our River Rangers programme across the catchment, providing a wider range of activities and launching our Junior River Rangers programme.

Citizen Science & Practical Actions

Community Connections

Citizen Science

We aim to expand our Citizen Science programme to 15 River Hubs across the catchment, providing essential long-term data on the health of the river and the progress we're making.

Chemical Water Quality

We provide our monitoring hubs with all the equipment they need to undertake water sampling in the field, from phosphate, ammonia and nitrate to conductivity (indicator of heavy metals) and turbidity (indicator of soil run off). This data enables us to target projects where they are most needed, working with a range of stakeholders to reduce pollutants entering our waterways.

Biological Water Quality

Freshwater invertebrates not only tell us the biological health of the rivers and streams but can also be early indicators of deterioration or even recent pollution events. Our professional team undertake in-depth sampling across the catchment whilst our Citizen Scientists are trained in Riverfly Monitoring and allocated sites to regularly check the presence of 6 target species.

Sea Trout Watch

OART has been monitoring sea trout populations across the catchment since 2001. Our dedicated monitoring teams survey the river for signs of Redds, the nests which sea trout make in gravels to lay their eggs. This long-term data set allows us to monitor breeding sites and assess how populations increase or decrease as a result of positive or negative influences on the river.

River Rangers

River Rangers are our eyes and ears on the ground and invaluable to our success. From assisting with delivery of projects, to onsite management and long-term monitoring, our highly valued volunteer force not only helps us deliver but is instrumental in focusing our attention where most needed for future projects.

Practical Conservation

Providing on the ground support in delivering projects. From in-channel habitat works to planting wetland plants, trees and hedgerows, our volunteers are always involved in creating the habitat essential for all stages of river and wetland life.

Ecological Monitoring

After our projects are complete, we want to know if they meet our aims and where appropriate our River Rangers undertake ecological monitoring of a range of species. We provide training and support across a wide range of species which has included freshwater invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles, harvest mice, small mammals, birds, and dragonflies.

Preventing Plastic Pollution

Our River Rangers provide vital support in keeping our rivers clear of plastic, undertaking regular litter picks and brand audits to inform us of the rates of plastic accumulation and keep our rivers clean.

Research & Monitoring

Evidence Based Approach to Improvements

We are committed to using the best available evidence to direct our work, undertaking our own monitoring and analysis alongside supporting the research of academic institutions from across the UK.

Academic Research

We contributed to the study on **"Pharmaceutical Pollution of the English National Parks"** undertaken by the University of York and The Rivers Trust in 2022. This is investigating the environmental quality of rivers and streams across the National Park network and the threats from pollution by commonly used pharmaceuticals. We collected data from four rivers across the South Downs National Park which contributed to this research.

We are also collecting data for the University of York for their study into the **"Risk of Companion Animal Parasiticides to Urban Biodiversity"** throughout 2023 and 2024. This is analysing up and downstream of waste water treatment works to monitor pet pesticides, seeking to establish if there is indirect pollution from drainage sources alongside the direct pollution of water from parasiticides from popular dog swimming locations.

Alongside assisting with data collection, we support students in their MSc or PhD studies through provision of research questions relevant to our work, access to our data, co-ordination with landowners and insight into practical application of their outputs.

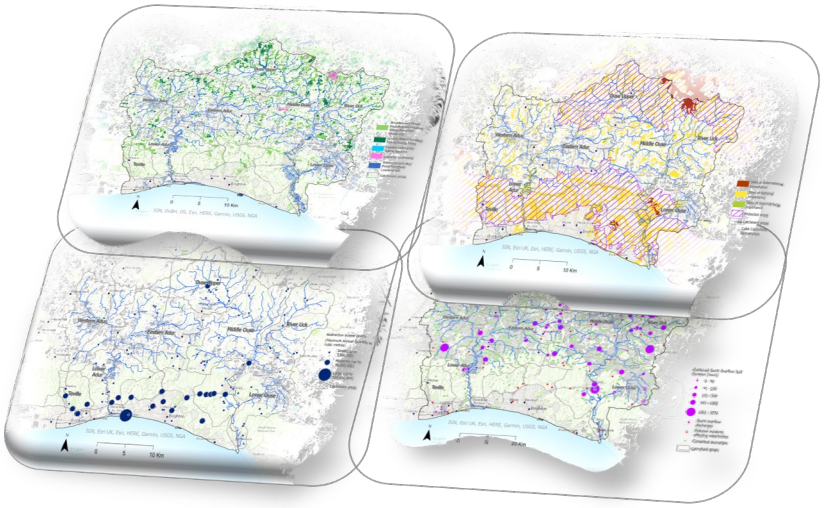
Over the next five years we aim to provide support to further academic research, specifically looking at the impacts of implementing nature-based solutions on water quality, climate resilience, and carbon sequestration.

Data Analysis

All our data is used in conjunction with external sources to provide detailed analysis of the catchment, allowing us to understand where problems originate and opportunities for improvement exist. We provide services for data analysis and reporting to external partners through our experience of modelling and mapping data.

We aim to further align our data useage with statutory agencies and partners, enabling us to incorporate wider data sets and share meaningful outputs to a wider audience.

This will underpin our future work and priorities as we seek to implement high-quality projects, allowing us to further develop the actions within this document whilst planning for the future of our rivers and wetlands.



Support Our Work

Inspire Positive Change

Our love for rivers unites us, and by supporting the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust, you become part of an organisation playing a vital role in enhancing and protecting the water environment in our area. Together, we can enhance the beauty of Sussex for generations to come.

Project Funding

Our projects get stronger the more we invest in them. We regularly apply for grant funding to assist with our aims or work through a diverse range of partners. We are pleased to have joined 1% for the Planet® as an environmental partner. This partnership is intended to advance our impact as well as involve more businesses in the environmental movement and we are delighted to be able to work alongside corporate partners who have been certified for reputable giving.

Donations

Donations lie at the heart of maintaining the Trust and drive a wide range of projects and activities that ultimately enhance and protect river habitats for both wildlife and people. Each donation, whether it's a one-off gift or regular support, directly contributes to the improvement of our rivers and streams and their associated ecosystems.

Corporate Days

Want to get out and get involved in one of our activities? We offer corporate days across the catchment from practical conservation to river cleans and balsam bashing. It's a great way to connect with your local river and have great fun at the same time.

Volunteering

Join our River Rangers team to help monitor the rivers or get involved in our practical activities. We are an inclusive Trust and there are activities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. All and any help is welcome. We provide all the equipment and training you need along with seriously delicious cakes and biscuits and, of course, tea.

Membership

Inspired by the splendour of Sussex rivers? Want to see our water environment get better? Join us as a valued member of OART and you will be proactively helping to improve these precious waters.

Want to find out more? Visit our website www.oart.org.uk or get in touch via info@oart.org.uk

Inspiring & Leading Action for Healthy Rivers

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