Inspiring & Leading Action for Healthy Rivers

Impact Report 2024 - 2025

Governance and Administration

Charity Name: Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust

Charity Number: 1082447

Registered Address:
The Saw Shed,
The Old Sawyard,
Parham Park,
Pulborough,
West Sussex,
RH20 4RP

Directors & Trustees:

The Directors of the Charity are its Trustees for the purpose of Charity law.

Philip Evans(Chair)

Robin Akers (Vice Chair)

Simon Turner

Ruth Wallis

Sam St. Pierre

James Ebdon

Lydia Burgess-Gamble

Dave Brown

Rod Yuill

Staff Team

Peter King – Director

Rachel Paget – Operations Manager

Jess Duggan – Administrator

Lois Mayhew – Catchment Manager (Catchment Partnership)

Alistair Whitby – Senior Project Officer

Tara Dawson – Catchment Officer– River Adur

Jo Owens - Catchment Officer – River Ouse

Director's Message

What a great year we've had at the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust. Over the past 12-months we have continued to deliver positive results for the two rivers in both delivering physical improvements and increasing our evidence-base and understanding of where our resources should be focused in the future.

Last year we set out an ambitious vision for the two rivers, setting targets for achievement by 2030 and we've made a great start moving towards those targets.

Progress has been made across all key project areas such as:

Chalky Waters, our flagship chalk stream restoration project, has made key steps on the Lewes Winterbourne, Teville Stream & Ferring Rife.

The Adur Adaptation project completed its first year, creating wetlands, installing leaky dams and planting hedgerows.

Our Urban Wetlands project has been examining nature-based solutions across Newhaven and Lewes.

Our Citizen Science programme has taken a giant leap forward thanks to our new partnership with Ancient+Brave through the 1% for the Planet movement. A total of 15 Riverfly sites have been established on the River Ouse, which is great progress against our target of 100 by 2030.

Our partnership with Lewes District Council moved into its eighth-year and continues to delivery Nature-based-solutions across the lower Ouse. Alongside wetland creation on the Bevern and Longford Stream sub-catchments we've been following the success of the Cockshut project by developing plans across other land owned by the Council. These should start to see action in the coming year as we continue to build a wetland-based nature recovery network across the catchment.

Add to this the work across the Ouse tackling non-native invasive species, investigations into the potential to create a large wetland nature reserve near Newhaven, our leading role in the Adur River Recovery Project and our continued hosting of the Adur & Ouse Catchment Partnership and you can see that once again our impact has been diverse and meaningful.

A great honour this year was being presented with two awards at the South Downs National Park Design Awards for the partnership Cockshut Stream Restoration project, the Landscape Design Award & People's Choice Award.

OART could not have the level of impact it does without the dedication of our staff whose tireless enthusiasm to improve this area is inspiring. Along with the staff, I must thank our Trustees, Members, Supporters, Partners and Funders who enable us to continue to inspire and lead on action for healthy rivers.

We look forward to the next 12-months and the launch of new initiatives and projects across the catchment.

Peter King
Director

Achievements 2024 - 2025

2
Chalk Stream Projects

3.8km
of River Enhancement

114
Farm Visits

1.2ha
of Wetland Created

1
Rainscape Completed

Invasive Species Removed from **3.6km** of River

36
Volunteer Activities

132
Leaky Dams Installed

27
Riverfly Surveys Undertaken

96
Water Quality Tests Completed

200m
Cross-slope Hedgerow Planted

26km
of River Surveys

25
Community Talks & Presentations

Ouse Valley NFM

In Partnership With

Lewes District Council

Now in its eighth year, our partnership with Lewes District Council on the Ouse Valley Natural Flood Management (NFM) project has continued to deliver a range of initiatives which make space for water, manage flood risk and restore natural processes across the River Ouse catchment.

Using nature-based solutions we have been able to attenuate flows and enhance water retention, helping to restore areas of diverse habitat supporting a range of aquatic and terrestrial species. We have targeted excesses of surface water with the installation of natural flood management measures on overland runoff pathways to help manage peak flows in the river and the risk of sudden downstream floods.

Wetlands

We have worked with landowners across the Bevern Stream and Longford Stream to retain greater quantities of water within the riparian zone (10m from the riverbank). Located to either intercept surface water or trap floodwater, features such as scrapes and ponds have been constructed. These have been designed to attenuate 16% of surface water flows from the watershed area (10mm rainfall event) reducing flood peaks and providing greater infiltration to the land.

Slowing the Flow

Leaky dams have been constructed across multiple runoff pathways storing water behind each barrier and slowing the flow across 31.52ha of upstream catchment. These surface water dams have positive biodiversity benefits, replicating naturally fallen trees to create a variety of complex and niche habitats. They also help conserve water, retaining it locally to support the river in times of water scarcity.

Rivers & Ditches

Many sections of the Longford Stream were historically reprofiled as an anti-invasion strategy (a line of WW2 pill boxes follow the course of the Longford and River Ouse) and further dredged to aid agricultural drainage. This has resulted in an over deep channel which not only rapidly moves water downstream but also lacks some of the basic habitat requirements for our freshwater species.

We've increased channel roughness to slow the flow, large wood of different shapes and sizes were anchored securely within the watercourse. Adding large wood mimics the effects of naturally occurring woody debris to hold back water and helps increase flow variation and provide a greater complexity of habitats for aquatic wildlife.

We've also worked with landowners to trial alternative ditch designs, mimicking natural stream function and characteristics with a meandering low flow channel and associated wetland habitat. Altered profiles enable better vegetation growth, filtering sediment before it reaches the river channel whilst also increasing marginal habitat for species like dragonflies and damselflies.

Storing the Storm!

OART continued to build on its 'Storing the Storm!' initiative by installing our 50th rain-planter, this one at Newick Primary School, addressing issues with nuisance surface water at the rear of the school which was impacting the playground. Pupils assisted with all aspects of the build, learning how sustainable drainage mimics natural processes, allowing water to be absorbed by plants instead of flowing directly into the drainage systems.

Chalk Stream Resilience

In Partnership With Southern Water

Broadwater Brook

A few years back, OART worked closely with landowners at the Sompting Estate Trust to deliver enhancements to the Broadwater Brook, realigning a 1km section of this ephemeral chalk stream away from its heavily polluted and culverted course. This has seen major improvement to the upper reaches of the stream and, with extensive restoration to Brooklands Lake at the downstream end, the middle section was the last bit to enhance.

Supported by the Southern Water Chalk Stream Resilience Fund, a series of berms were constructed to narrow the channel and create that all important wiggle! The installation of these berms will have multiple benefits for the stream. Initially left unfilled, they capture sediment, allowing it to settle in the still backwaters created by these structures and kick-start the natural process of river re-meandering within the existing channel profile.

At the points where the stream profile is narrowed, the faster flow will also help to oxygenate the water which will benefit fish & other wildlife in both the stream itself and downstream habitats such as Brooklands Lake. Berms also diversify the flow regime towards a more natural dynamic in an otherwise over-deep and uniform channel. Once vegetated, additional marginal habitat will establish for freshwater invertebrates, wetland plant species and odonata, and provide refuge areas for young fish.

We're seeing the results already as between 6-12 inches of sediment has been captured over winter and that all important marginal vegetation is starting to appear from the upstream seedbank.

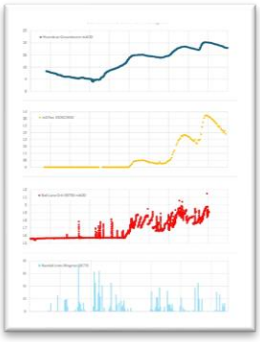
A massive thank you to our Volunteer Team who came out to help with this project, no vehicle access was possible, so everything was done by hand and that was hard work! We have agreed with Southern Water to continue this project into 2025 with additional habitat being installed during the summer.

Alongside these enhancements to the Broadwater Brook, we have been undertaking assessments and surveys of two other chalk streams on the outskirts of our catchment area. These appraisals have focused on whether there is an impact of abstraction from the Worthing Chalk block on these often overlooked but hugely important watercourses (the only recognized chalk stream in our operational area being the Lewes Winterbourne). We have presented the results of these surveys to Southern Water and continue to discuss appropriate actions to improve the health of these streams and rifes.

Winterbourne Restoration

Despite being designated as a chalk stream priority habitat, the Lewes Winterbourne has been significantly modified over the past 50 years. These modifications have resulted in a uniform channel, much of which has been straightened, culverted, embanked and disconnected from its floodplain and riparian margins. To varying degrees, the stream is impacted by road run-off, abstraction, siltation, over-shading, algal growth, barriers to fish passage and spread of invasive non-native species. We are seeking to address these issues, restoring the stream to its ecological potential.

One of the priority projects for the Winterbourne Restoration is to re-naturalise the bed of the river as it flows alongside the Bell Lane Recreation Ground. Currently, this whole section has been reinforced with concrete, but no one can tell us why! Over winter, we have been conducting groundwater studies to understand the interaction between rising groundwater and the capacity of the channel. The question is – can we remove the concrete bed from the channel?



Our interest in investigating how the concrete bed/bank reinforcements are impacting the streams biodiversity saw us collaborate with the University of Brighton. We've been comparing macro-invertebrate diversity across three stretches of the Lewes Winterbourne with different bed substrates. Using freshwater invertebrates as bio-indicators of river health, weekly sampling has been undertaken to analyse differences in populations. Initial findings show that, unsurprisingly, biodiversity is significantly lower in the reinforced sections with limited abundance or diversity of invertebrates found at Bell Lane. Upstream, where natural gravels are still present a high abundance of freshwater shrimps and at least two stoneflies (generally good indicators of river health) were recorded. However, a relatively high abundance of leeches and algal growth indicates organic pollution and partial eutrophication from various pollution sources - full results of this analysis will be available later in 2025.

Wetlands & Water Storage

Close to the source of the Winterbourne's chalk springs, is one of the areas with potential to slow, catch and store water in a new marginal wetland, providing nature-based solutions to reduce peak flows in Lewes along with year-round wetland habitat, acting as a refuge area for wildlife when the stream is dry. Over the past year we have worked with the landowners to bring forward the design and with the support of Hanover Displays Ltd, based in Lewes, this new wetland area will be constructed early in 2025.

Marginal Habitat

We've worked with allotment holders and residents to tackle bank erosion, fly-tipping and invasive non-native species along the length of the stream. Thanks to the hard work of local volunteers, we cleared 19 tonne bags of non-native species, two of which are listed on Schedule nine of the Wildlife & Countryside Act and four on the Global INNS database. Many had obviously escaped from gardens and all areas were re-planted with native vegetation to make sure the banks don't erode into the stream.

This year the Lewes Winterbourne Project has been supported by:

Environment Agency · Lewes District Council · Southern Water · South Downs National Park Authority · HANOVER

A Focus on Newhaven

In Partnership With

Lewes District Council

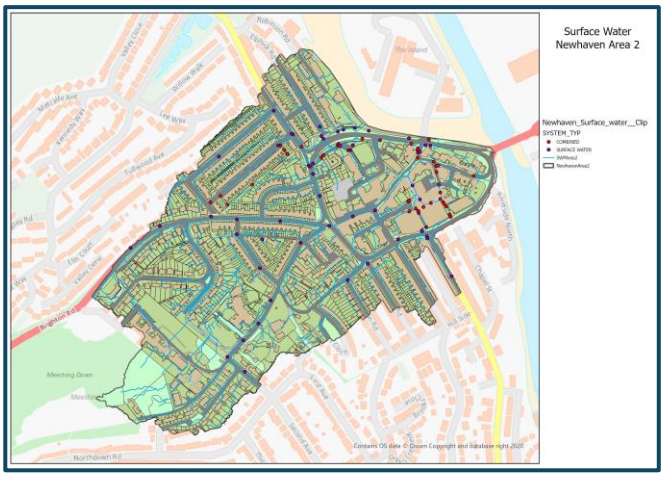
South Downs National Park Authority

Surface water flood risk to infrastructure and property in areas of the Meeching Valley in northwest Newhaven arises from a combination of spring water and surface water run-off from the steep valley sides, both during and following heavy rainfall. During March 2025 OART repaired and installed new natural flood management (NFM) measures within Hoath Wood on surface water flow paths impacting homes on The Fairway. Our approach was to deploy sufficient small NFM features within the area, targeting multiple sources and pathways of water, to have an impact on attenuating a proportion of the flow. Over 40 leaky barriers were repaired or installed, along with the restoration of small temporary ponding areas, to create a network of runoff attenuation features throughout the woodland. Temporary signage was put up on the entrance points to the woodland to inform the community of the aims and benefits of the work.

43 volunteers were involved in installing the different measures, bringing an in-kind benefit of over £3.5k to the project. Further in-kind contributions were made by the Environment Agency which supplied some of the materials used; by-products of their forestry management work to restore Sussex ancient woodland and enhance its biodiversity.

Re-Thinking Surface Water Management

Over the past year, we've been looking at the surface water management plan for Newhaven, seeking opportunities to use a higher level of nature-based solutions to reduce the risk of sewer flooding and CSO discharges resulting from inundation of the drainage system. We've identified seven separate surface water catchments and isolated those where combined drainage systems are creating problems and have identified a range of solutions, from small scale property level water capture to larger urban wetlands. Late in 2024, we hosted a meeting for Town Planners to present a draft of these ideas and encourage their adoption into future regeneration plans for the area. A full report is being compiled, and we expect this to be published in Autumn 2025.



Newhaven Nature Reserve

In Partnership With

South Downs National Park Authority

Nestled at the bottom of the River Ouse, between the towns of Newhaven and Seaford sits the Ouse Estuary Nature Reserve; a 38.7ha site consisting primarily of floodplain grazing marsh, a priority habitat which is of high importance for the conservation of biodiversity. Over the past year, we have been engaging with several landowners and local stakeholders to understand the potential to enhance the existing reserve and extend its reach across a further 58ha of the surrounding landscape.

Supported by the South Downs National Park and the Ouse Valley Climate Action project, inspiration was taken from local resident Charlie Grimble who conceived the idea of a Newhaven Nature Reserve around 8 years ago.

The remit of this work was to undertake a scoping exercise on the opportunities for enhancing, connecting and managing habitat in the lower Ouse Estuary, drawing on interviews with local landowners, land managers and other relevant local groups, experts and ecologists. The scoping exercise also examined previous studies and research and undertook a series of site visits to build a broad picture of options, challenges and opportunities which could be developed over the next couple of years.

Our thinking at OART always considers the future landscape and how we must make it adaptable to climate change. We know that this future presents challenges to our water environment and those communities who live close to our rivers and seas. Therefore, we have been assessing not restoration of previous habitats but how this area can be used as a biodiversity hotspot which also provides services such as natural flood management and carbon sequestration.

From the vegetated shingle (a fascinating and often overlooked habitat) on the beach, through lagoons, meadows and floodplain grazing marsh, we have identified options to enhance, protect and adapt the area which meet these aspirations. We have found a general support amongst all those we have engaged with to consider change, some at a large scale, some with smaller interventions, but all important to providing long term resilience to our water environment.

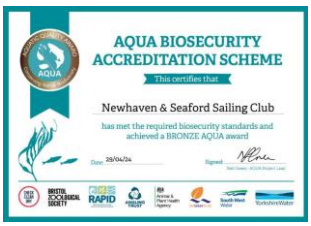
A detailed report of our findings has been produced and submitted to a range of authorities for consideration, and we look forward to being involved in future enhancements and developing management plans for this area which could provide another piece in our expanding network of coastal wetland environments along the Sussex coast.

INNS Project

Leading the partnership-based Ouse Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) Project we have been focused on coordinating approaches to biosecurity, control and monitoring of our target. A critical element of this is biosecurity, making sure new species are not entering, and those present not being spread further. Raising awareness and promoting effective biosecurity measures across all stakeholder groups is an ongoing activity, with actions to raise awareness being aligned, yet fluid, to allow new ideas to compliment a structured programme of activities.

Over the past year the project provided training to local groups, installed interpretation panels, created leaflets, attended community events and developed biosecurity charters focused on raising awareness and reducing the spread of species. As part of this work, the project has produced a biosecurity article for the Newhaven Port Authority which will be included in the next iteration of their Code of Practice for Recreational Users.

A fantastic result for the project was working with Newhaven & Seaford Sailing Club to achieve the first Aqua Award for Biosecurity in the Southeast. The award scheme, which has 3 stages - Bronze, Silver and Gold - was piloted in the Southwest by Bristol Zoological Society, South West Water and APHA, and is now being rolled out nationally. Following a series of site meetings and discussions, the project supported the Club's efforts to achieve their Bronze Award with further work ongoing to raise this to Silver.

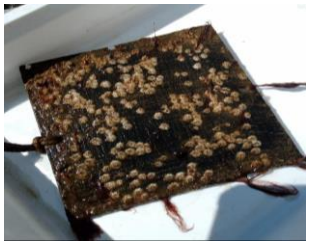


Alongside monitoring and biosecurity, the project is undertaking strategic control of INNS, using both traditional methods and piloting new technology.

One of these new methods has been piloted on the Cockshut Stream where a large area of Japanese Knotweed had established. Using Rootwave's© electrical treatment, each plant is "zapped" with a 5000V charge, destroying the root system of the plant, and preventing re-growth. We expect our trial area of 500m^2 to be completely free of Japanese Knotweed within 2-3 years, which is much quicker than chemical injection treatments and provides a chemical free process of control which boils weeds from the root upwards. The technology is relatively new but advancing all the time and offers a chemical free, time-efficient, means of knotweed control.

Throughout the year, we removed American Skunk Cabbage and Himalayan Balsam from 1.6km of the upper Ouse and clearance of Canadian Waterweed from a large pond on the edge of the Glynde Reach.

The biggest monitoring success has been at the bottom of the catchment. Settlement panels were installed to monitor invasive molluscs entering the catchment. Simple, yet effective, these panels have already captured over 800 Darwin's Barnacle, a species recorded as absent during surveys only five years ago. We are now monitoring the reproductive rate, undertaking studies into habitat preferences and investigating control methods.



This year the Ouse INNS Project has been supported by:

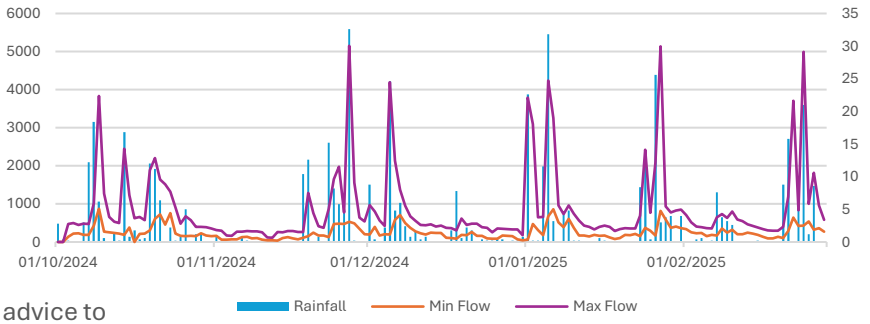
Environment Agency
Lewes District Council
Southern Water
South Downs National Park Authority
south east water
ANCIENT + BRAVE

Adur Adaptation Project

In Partnership With Environment Agency

It's been a successful first year of delivery on the Adur with progress made against all the project targets.

With such little understanding of the hydrology of the river (with only 2 operational flow gauging stations) our first task was to increase monitoring of flow conditions and how individual sub-catchments respond to rainfall. StarFlow QD monitors have been installed on the Honeybridge Stream, Woodsmill Stream and Adur West providing coverage of 40% of the catchments flow. As they collect data, they will enable us to understand which areas of the River Adur are most important for slowing flows and monitor our progress in meeting the project targets. Over the next year we will be installing additional monitoring equipment to get whole catchment coverage.



The project team has been out delivering advice to landowners and installing nature-based solutions to slow the movement of water.

The highlight of the year was undoubtedly the creation of 17 new scrapes and retention ponds near Partridge Green. Combining our funding with a grant from the Wilder Horsham project has facilitated the storage of 1.2m litres of water. The creation of these areas showed immediate benefit with over winter bird surveys recording 60 lapwing using the site.

Volunteers helped to install leaky dams and plant cross slope hedgerows at three sites in the headstreams of the river system, all slowing the flow in our priority sub-catchments

As with all projects it is important we engage with all stakeholders, raising awareness of pressures in the catchment and the importance of landscape adaptation to mitigate climate pressures. A series of talks have been given to community groups, parish councils, and landowner forums. We also liaise with other projects developing or delivering improvements, ensuring that we align our thinking and engagement, and working together to deliver bigger, better and more joined up approaches to enhancing the catchment.

There is a lot planned for the coming year with the project pipeline for deliver getting larger and more exciting all the time.

1,283,000l of storage

0.3ha of Wetland created

83 Leaky dams installed

200m of hedgerow planted

120 Landowners engaged

49 Volunteers contributing 540 hours to the project

Citizen Science Monitoring

In Partnership With ANCIENT + BRAVE

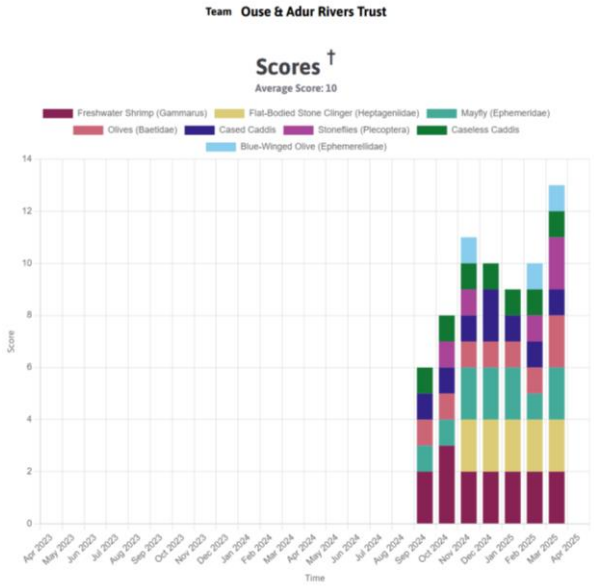
Riverfly Partnership

Thanks to our Partnership with Ancient + Brave, through our membership of the 1% for the Planet network, we have made a great start in establishing our Riverfly Monitoring programme on the River Ouse. Riverflies are used in biological monitoring because they have different tolerances to the impacts of pollution, so their presence, absence, and diversity can serve as indicators of water quality and river health. Whilst most water quality testing provides a snapshot of that moment in time, the benefit to Riverfly is that it provides information on pollution events which may have occurred when sampling was not being undertaken.

Over the year we worked with the Riverfly Partnership to certify 19 volunteers to undertake surveys. From this, our first 11 sites were established and monitoring commenced in September. So far, 27 samples have been collected across these sites and we are pleased to note none of the samples fell below the Trigger Level (whereby the Environment Agency would be notified).

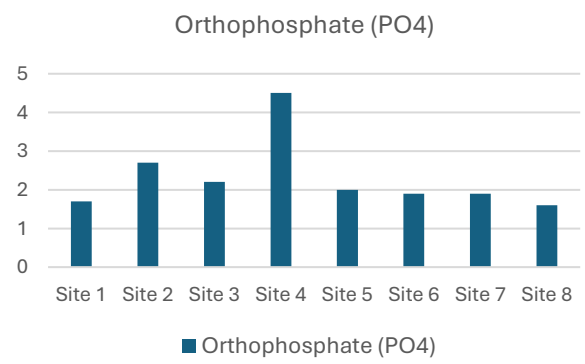
In fact, we're seeing an average score of 10, indicating that the Riverfly community is not being heavily impacted, but it's not necessarily at its best. A score of 10 implies that some, but not all, of the expected Riverfly groups are present, and there are likely moderate abundances within those groups.

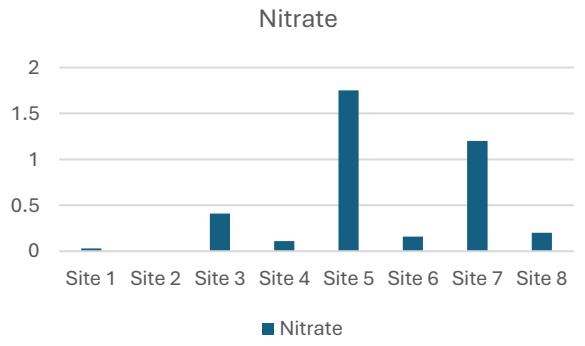
Along with Riverfly sampling, each of these sites are also being monitored for the presence of Invasive Non-Native Species and, overwinter, forming part of our sea trout watch programme.



Chemical Testing

This year's chemical testing programme has been concentrating on eight sites across the River Uck and Ridgewood Stream, providing important information as we get ready to launch the Uck Adaptation Project. Every month our dedicated Water Testing Team collect samples for analysis at our laboratory near Barcombe. There are a few months to go to collect the required 12-samples but averages across the sites to date are shown below and give us a good indication of where to prioritise our focus on water quality (for Orthophosphate we are looking for results below 0.2 to meet Good Ecological status (0% of our sites meet this criteria), for Nitrate below 2 meets good ecological status (100% of our sites)).





Thank You to all our Citizen Science volunteers for collecting this valuable information, to the landowners for allowing us access and taking such an interest in river health, and to the Sutton Hall Estate for allowing us to set up our laboratory on your land.

Other News

Recognition for the Cockshut Project

In 2023, OART , in partnership with Lewes District Council and Lewes Railway Land Wildlife Trust, we delivered the Cockshut restoration project which realigned this degraded chalk stream and created c.6ha of wetland on Lewes Brooks SSSI. In October last year, the project was recognized in the South Downs National Park Design Awards, winning both the Landscape Design Award and the Peoples Choice Award. Huge thanks to the wider team of CBEC Eco-Engineering and Ebsford Environmental for making this project the success it has been; the awards are great but the establishment of the site and the benefits it is already bringing to nature are even more satisfying.

Insure4Nature Launches

Insure4Nature is a new company giving 100% of its profits to environmental restoration projects in the UK. It is an insurance service that will fund nature recovery in the UK. The idea is to create a perpetual revenue stream of funding for environmental restoration projects. Income is generated from sales of home insurance - for both new and renewing insurance policies – hence it will be continuous funding as people renew their policies with Insure4Nature and they are confident it can raise an additional £100 million to be invested in nature within a decade.

What makes this particularly exciting is that it is the brainchild of local entrepreneurs in Barcombe, right in the heart of our patch. Throughout the development of this groundbreaking initiative (funded via a NEIRF application to Defra) OART along with other local environmental stakeholders were extensively consulted on not only the idea but also the implementation plan for distributing funding.

Next time your home insurance is up for renewal give it a go - you might save some money and you'll definitely be helping restore nature in your local area - https://insure4nature.com/

A Step Forward for River Rights

Over the past two years there has been much press and publicity about the River Ouse gaining Legal Rights.

Whilst we are still a long way from that being reality, a pioneering charter which sets out the principles under which rivers should be considered in decision making has been supported by Lewes District Council. Created by our friends at Love Our Ouse, with advice and guidance from OART and other local e-NGOs this is a positive step forward in raising the issues facing our rivers and changing the narrative around their importance within our landscapes.

Meanwhile, the Rivers Adur & Arun have also seen the adoption of A Declaration for River Recovery by Horsham and Arun District Councils. Working closely with the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust and our colleagues at the Western Sussex Rivers Trust the declaration sets out clear priorities for enactment by the Councils, working with partners to ensure these two rivers are considered in decision making across the Councils' activities.

These motions and their support do not provide any additional legal protection for the River Ouse or provide any additional leverage to enforce the wide range of existing legislation which should be protecting our rivers. However, they do create a small step-change in how rivers are perceived and considered and provide a platform which advocates for putting the needs of rivers and streams at the heart of local decision making.

Over the next few years there will no doubt be a lot more discussion on this issue as those working on this initiative seek to expand its support beyond Lewes District Council and understand how the principles can be implemented at the scale required to add tangible benefit to our rivers.

New Funding Partnerships

In 2024, we were delighted to be invited by Uckfield based Ancient + Brave to become an Environmental Partner to the 1% for the Planet movement; a global network with thousands of incredible businesses and environmental organizations working together to support people and the planet.

Ancient + Brave is one of the highest scoring B Corp wellness brands in the world putting people and the planet at the heart of everything they do. It is a corporate sponsor of Rainforest Concern and are Climate Label certified and we are honoured by their support and interest in our work to protect and enhance the local water environment.

This partnership with Ancient + Brave has seen us able to invest in both our Citizen Science and INNS projects, two of the vital elements of our work which are always difficult to find sustained funding for. The impact of these projects is not only to the environment but also to all the people who get involved, helping to build out evidence base and boost native biodiversity, over the past year, this has been to over 150 individuals.

As part of this partnership we provide opportunities for the amazing staff at Ancient + Brave to get involved in our activities, from building leaky dams and habitat creation to removing INNS, we managed to get everyone out and about, getting wet and muddy, and learning more about the work they are supporting.

We are excited about this developing opportunity and look forward to reporting back on the future impacts and improvements delivered by this partnership.

For more information on Ancient + Brave, please visit their website **https://ancientandbrave.earth/**

ANCIENT +BRAVE

1% FOR THE PLANET – ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNER –

Adur & Ouse PARTNERSHIP

Catchment Partnership Develops

Since 2013, the OART have hosted the Adur & Ouse Catchment Partnership. This brings together a wide range of organisations including government agencies, local authorities, e-NGOs, academic institutions , business, cluster farms, and water companies. The idea is to work collaboratively on the “big issues” - those which singular organisations cannot effectively tackle alone.

Since its conception the Partnership has developed two catchment management plans, developed and delivered several projects and brought those with potentially conflicting motivations together to find mechanisms for working closely on improving the condition of the whole catchment.

Whilst a small amount of funding is provided to the Partnership through Defra it has always been frustrating to see the potential but not meet it due to resourcing issues. In 2024 the South Downs National Park Authority provided funding to compliment that from Defra, and with that, we have employed a Catchment Manager to push forward our ambitions for more joined up approaches.

Lois joined OART in October 2024 with the remit of re-structuring the Partnership and driving forward the various strands of work which are at early stages of development.

Five months on and the difference is already obvious, the new structure is popular and working well with a steering group formed to direct the workstreams and a programme of monthly workshops planned for the wider network of organisations and projects operating across the area. The first of these will be focused on environmental water resource planning combining the obligations of water companies creating drought plans (for supply) and drainage and wastewater plans (for waste) with the aspirations of environmental organisations and regulators.

We welcome Lois to the team and look forward to supporting the Catchment Partnership into the future.

Exciting Times in 2025 - 2026

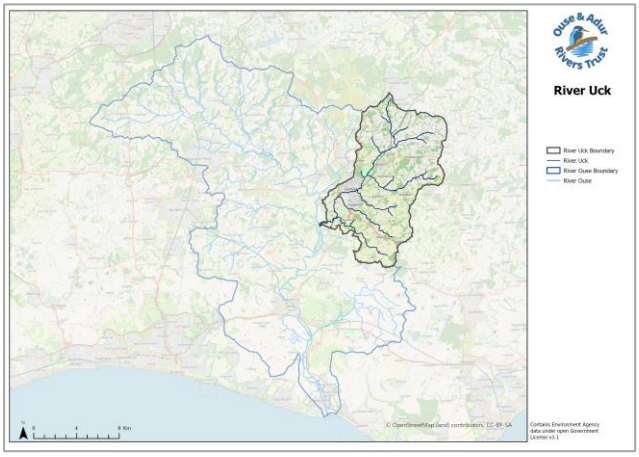
We're Unlocking the Uck

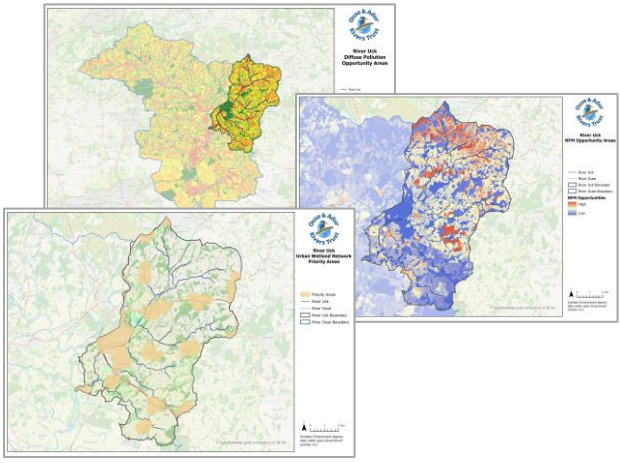
The River Uck, the largest tributary of the Ouse, contains seven individual waterbodies. It also contains all of those classified as "Bad" under the Water Framework Directive in our catchment. Whilst much of our area is covered by multiple projects, there is little attention on the River Uck and in Spring 2025, we will be launching the 'Unlocking the Uck' project.

Taking our learnings from the Adur Adaptation Project we will follow a similar approach as we seek to implement nature-based solutions to address issues of water quality, fish passage, flooding and nature recovery. Initial funding has been secured from the Environment Agency to get started, allowing us to engage with landowners, deliver small scale projects, and build a pipeline for long term, strategic, delivery of improvements.

We'll also be focusing our Citizen Science monitoring on the Uck, building on our existing data and raising both our own, and the river communities, knowledge and awareness of the catchment.

It's great to be getting going on this project and we look forward to updating on progress throughout the year.





The River Uck covers the northeastern area of our catchment with much located in the High Weald (left). Unlocking the Uck will be using a range of existing data to tackle issues of water quality, flood risk, non-native species and connectivity both in and out of the channel. We'll also be expanding our data through Citizen Science approaches across the area.

Landport Brooks

Following the success of the Cockshut Restoration Project, we've teamed up again with Lewes District Council to deliver more wetlands around the town. Landport Brooks sits next the River Ouse at the bottom of the Landport Estate. Recently purchased specifically for nature restoration, the site contains a remnant chalk stream (the Papermill Cut) which has been blocked and segmented and offers plenty of opportunity for enhancement. Part of the site is designated as a SSSI, for its rare Lowland Fen habitat and historically being one of the largest breeding areas for common toad in Sussex, with up to 30,000 once recorded. Sadly, recent surveys have shown toads to no longer be present and our developing plans will look at a combination of chalk stream restoration, expanding the Fen Habitat and creating habitat suitable for the toads to return.

And finally.....

Thank you to all our members, volunteers, supporters, and funders for making this year such a success, we couldn't have done it without you.

To find out more about our work and how you can support us in creating high quality environments take a look at our new website

www.oart.org.uk

We always enjoy discussing rivers, and learning from those who live, work and play across the catchment. You're very welcome to contact us

info@oart.org.uk