



Inspiring & Leading Action
for
Healthy Rivers

Impact Report

Annual Report 2025-2026

Restoring Rivers. Building Resilience. Connecting People & Nature.



Our Vision

Our vision is a rich and diverse water environment that supports wildlife and inspires communities to protect and enhance their local rivers.

This report sets out the progress we've made over the past year



Director's Message

This report captures a year of steady progress in how we restore rivers across the Adur and Ouse catchments.

We've continued to deliver practical improvements on the ground — reconnecting rivers, working with natural processes, and tackling pressures on water quality. At the same time, we've strengthened the partnerships that make this work possible, working closely with landowners, communities and organisations across the catchment.

What feels particularly important this year is how our approach continues to evolve, moving beyond individual projects towards more coordinated work across catchment, linking projects together and combining delivery with monitoring, enabling us to focus more clearly on the causes of the challenges our rivers face.

As a result of this our monitoring network has grown significantly, combining our laboratory testing with citizen science approaches, enabling us to build a much clearer picture of river health and target action more effectively.

Alongside this, we've invested in planning for the future. The Adur Landscape Recovery partnership has set out an ambitious long-term vision for the Adur — one that brings together farming, nature and water management at scale and we're excited to see this move into a funded delivery phase in the coming year.

This report allows us to report and reflect on what has been achieved for our rivers over the past year whilst laying out next steps for the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust as we continue to build the momentum of positive change across our area.

None of this would be possible without the support of our partners, volunteers and communities. Thank you to everyone involved — your contribution is what makes this work possible.

Peter King
Director



Our Impact at a Glance 2025–2026

Restoring rivers. Working with nature. Delivering change across the Adur & Ouse catchment.

Working with Natural Processes



4,340

Floodplain trees planted



940m

Hedgerow planted



19

Riparian wetlands

511

Volunteer days



Community Connections



48

Volunteer activities delivered



14

Community presentations



62

Citizen scientists monitoring

9.4km

River connected for fish passage



Working with Land



38

Farm advisory visits

134

Leaky dams installed

1.38m

Litres of water stored



Restoring Rivers



2.4 km

River habitat enhanced



3.9 km

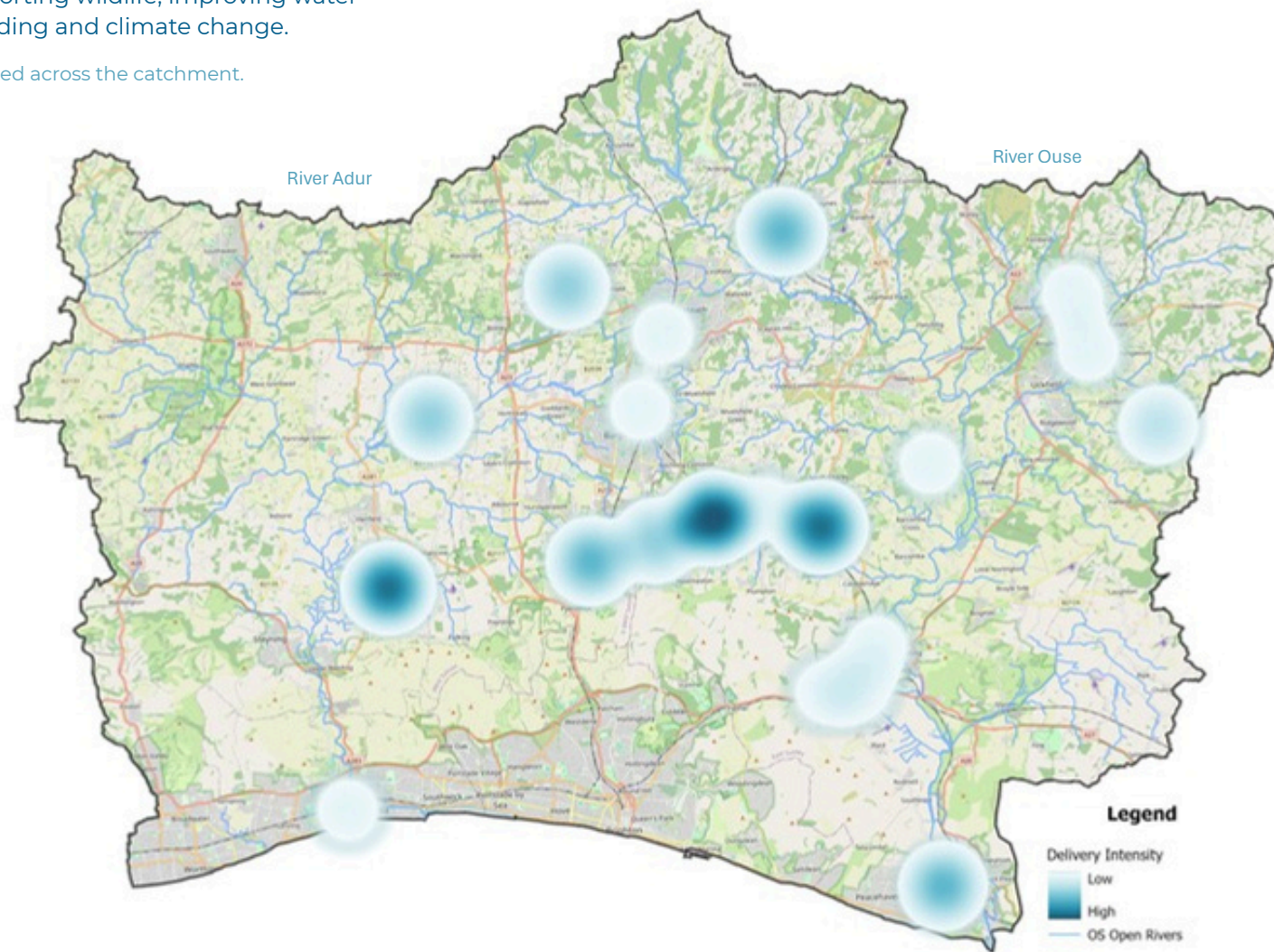
Invasive species removed

Two Rivers One Catchment

Working across the Adur & Ouse catchment to restore rivers, support nature, and build resilience

Our work spans the Adur & Ouse catchment, from headwaters to the coast. Projects are delivered across multiple sites, often combining nature-based solutions to restore rivers, improve habitats, and slow the flow of water. By working at a catchment scale, we connect rivers with their surrounding landscapes — supporting wildlife, improving water quality, and building resilience to flooding and climate change.

This map shows where delivery is concentrated across the catchment.



Restoring Rivers

Bringing rivers back to life — for wildlife, people, and the future

Barrier removal & connectivity

- Culvert removed and farm bridge installed
- Reconnecting a key stretch of river for wildlife
- Removal of a key barrier on the Cockhaise Brook

Habitat Restoration

- 2.4km of river channel enhanced
- Restoring natural processes and river function

9.4 km

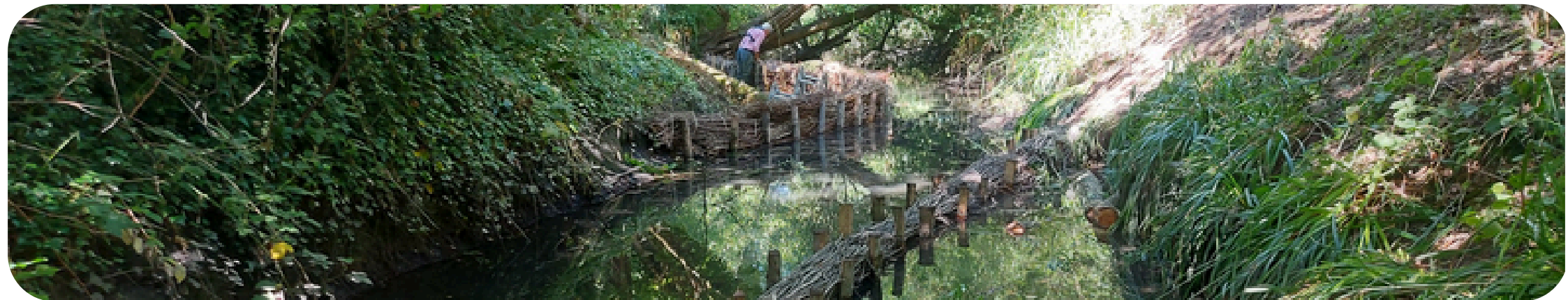
River reconnected
for fish passage

Opening up the river by removing barriers and restoring natural flow

This year we delivered major river restoration projects across the catchment — removing barriers, enhancing habitats, and completing long-term restoration work.

Teville Stream Restoration

- 10 berms installed to introduce sinuosity
- Urban stream reconnected with natural processes
- Marks completion of restoration work started in 2019



Chalk Waters

Restoring the Lewes Winterbourne — from source to town

A chalk stream restored through multiple interventions

The Lewes Winterbourne is a rare chalk stream — but decades of modification have left it disconnected, degraded, and under pressure.

This year, we've worked across the catchment to restore natural processes, improve habitats, and lay the foundations for long-term recovery

Wetlands & ponds

- 3 attenuation and wildlife ponds created
- Reconnecting stream to historic floodplain
- 180,000 litres of water storage
- Supporting wildlife during dry periods



Channel improvements

- Erosion control along key sections
- Banks reprofiled and stabilised
- Tree thinning to increase light
- Habitat and vegetation recovery



Reducing pressures on the stream

- Invasive species removal across multiple sites
- Urban runoff and pollution addressed
- Stream cleans removing historic waste
- Improving resilience to future impacts



Designing the future river

- Groundwater investigations completed
- Plans to remove concrete channel sections
- Modelling future flow and resilience
- Major restoration works planned



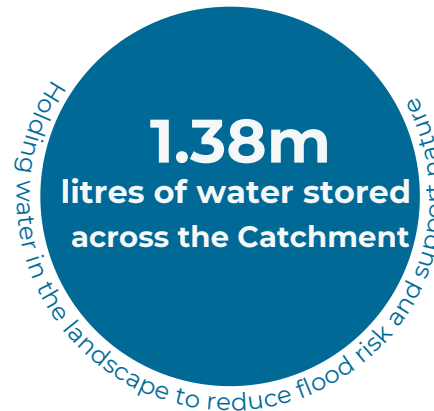
Community action

- 24+ volunteers supporting delivery
- Schools engaged in SuDS design
- Winterbourne Festival > 1000+ attendee
- Local people shaping future plans



Working with Natural Processes

Slowing the flow — reducing flood risk and restoring natural function across the catchment



Across the Rivers Adur, Ouse and Uck, we are working with landowners and communities to slow the flow of water, reduce flood risk, and restore natural processes at a landscape scale.



Slowing peak flows to reduce flood risk



Floodplain reconnection where possible.



Reducing runoff from fields and tracks.



Building long-term climate change resilience.

Since 2016, our partnership work with Lewes District Council has delivered:

**Building
resilience
since 2016.**

LAND & WATER

- 9.2 hectares of wetland created
- 1.2 km hedgerows planted
- 18.7 million litres of water stored

FLOW MANAGEMENT

- 225 leaky dams installed
- 26 attenuation features
- 7 water retention swales

COMMUNITIES

- 9 schools engaged (425 pupils)
- 8 communities involved
- 6 rain gardens installed

Water Quality & Citizen Science

Understanding our rivers — through data, people, and long-term monitoring

Supported by

ANCIENT
+ BRAVE



79
Monitoring Sites
across the
Catchment

This year, we expanded our water quality monitoring across the catchment — combining professional analysis with citizen science to better understand river health, identify pressures, and inform action.

Citizen Science

- Riverfly monitoring across multiple sites
- Water Rangers programme growing
- Volunteers trained and supported
- Sea Trout monitoring programme continued

Monitoring & Data

- Regular sampling across catchment
- Middle Ouse lab testing programme
- Nutrients, turbidity, and chemical indicators
- Building long-term datasets

Targeted Investigations

- PFAS investigation (Teville Stream)
- Sussex Chalk Network (spring monitoring)
- E. coli testing introduced
- Identifying pollution sources



112

Volunteers involved



445

Samples collected



22

Sub-catchments monitored



21 km

of river surveyed for Sea Trout



8

flow gauges installed

Why this matters

Good data leads to better decisions — helping us target restoration, influence policy, and protect rivers for the future.

Managing Invasive Species

Protecting our rivers from invasive plants and restoring native habitats

Supported by

ANCIENT
+ BRAVE



Invasive non-native species threaten river health — outcompeting native plants, altering habitats, and increasing flood risk. This year, we focused on targeted control at key sites — working with volunteers and landowners to tackle source populations and support long-term recovery.

Targeting source populations

- Identifying upstream source populations
- High probability of eradication at key sites
- Coordinated control across sub-catchments
- Preventing downstream re-invasion

Community action on the ground

- 42 volunteers engaged
- Training in identification and biosecurity
- Volunteer-led balsam control events
- Working with local groups and landowners

Long-term control and recovery

- Multi-year control programmes
- Native species returning following removal
- Continued monitoring after clearance
- Integration with wider restoration projects

Before



After



195

Volunteer hours



5

Source sites targeted

How we work



Identify source populations



Control upstream first



Repeat over multiple years

Why this matters

Invasive species control requires sustained effort over many years. Without continued management, **they rapidly return** — undoing restoration work and preventing native habitats from recovering.

A Vision for River Recovery at Scale

A 20-year vision to transform the Adur catchment
reconnecting rivers, restoring habitats, and building resilience at landscape scale

27
land managers
involved

760 ha
of habitat set
for restoration



This year, we led the development of a landscape-scale recovery plan for the Adur catchment — working with farmers, conservation partners and local authorities to design a 20-year vision for nature recovery. While delivery is still to come, this work lays the foundations for one of the most ambitious river restoration programmes in the region.

Landscape-scale restoration

- Reconnecting river and floodplain habitats
- Creating wetlands, saltmarsh and woodland
- Improving habitat condition across the catchment

Working with natural processes

- Restoring natural river function
- Increasing water storage across the landscape
- Reducing flood risk and improving drought resilience

Supporting nature and people

- Enabling sustainable farm businesses
- Strengthening community connection to the river
- Delivering long-term environmental and economic benefits

What this plan will unlock



Habitat restoration across hundreds of hectares



Reconnected floodplains and wetland



Improved river connectivity for wildlife



More resilient food production systems



A scalable model for nature recovery

Delivered in partnership with



Where we are now

- Detailed landscape recovery plan completed
- Partnership established across landowners and organisations
- Submitted to Defra's Landscape Recovery programme
- Funding decision pending

Working in Partnership

Collaborating across the catchment to deliver lasting change

35+ Partners - One Shared Vision

Our work is built on strong partnerships — bringing together landowners, communities, local authorities and environmental organisations to deliver change at scale. From on-the-ground delivery to strategic planning, collaboration underpins everything we do.

Landowners & Farmers

- 65 land managers engaged
- Farm advisory and collaborative delivery
- Supporting sustainable land management

Public Sector Partners

- Partner with local authorities and Environment Agency
- Aligning projects with policy and funding priorities
- Delivering coordinated action across the catchment

Environmental Organisations

- Partnering with conservation organisations
- Sharing expertise to guide restoration
- Delivering joined-up action for nature at scale

Water & Infrastructure

- Working with water companies and infrastructure providers
- Addressing pollution and runoff pressures
- Integrating nature-based solutions into delivery

Communities & Volunteers

- Schools, groups & citizen scientists engaged
- Volunteers supporting monitoring and delivery
- Building local stewardship and long-term care for rivers

Working with partners across the catchment



What Partnerships enable



Delivering projects at scale



Access to funding and data



Knowledge & Expertise



Long-term Catchment Planning



Community Engagement & Stewardship

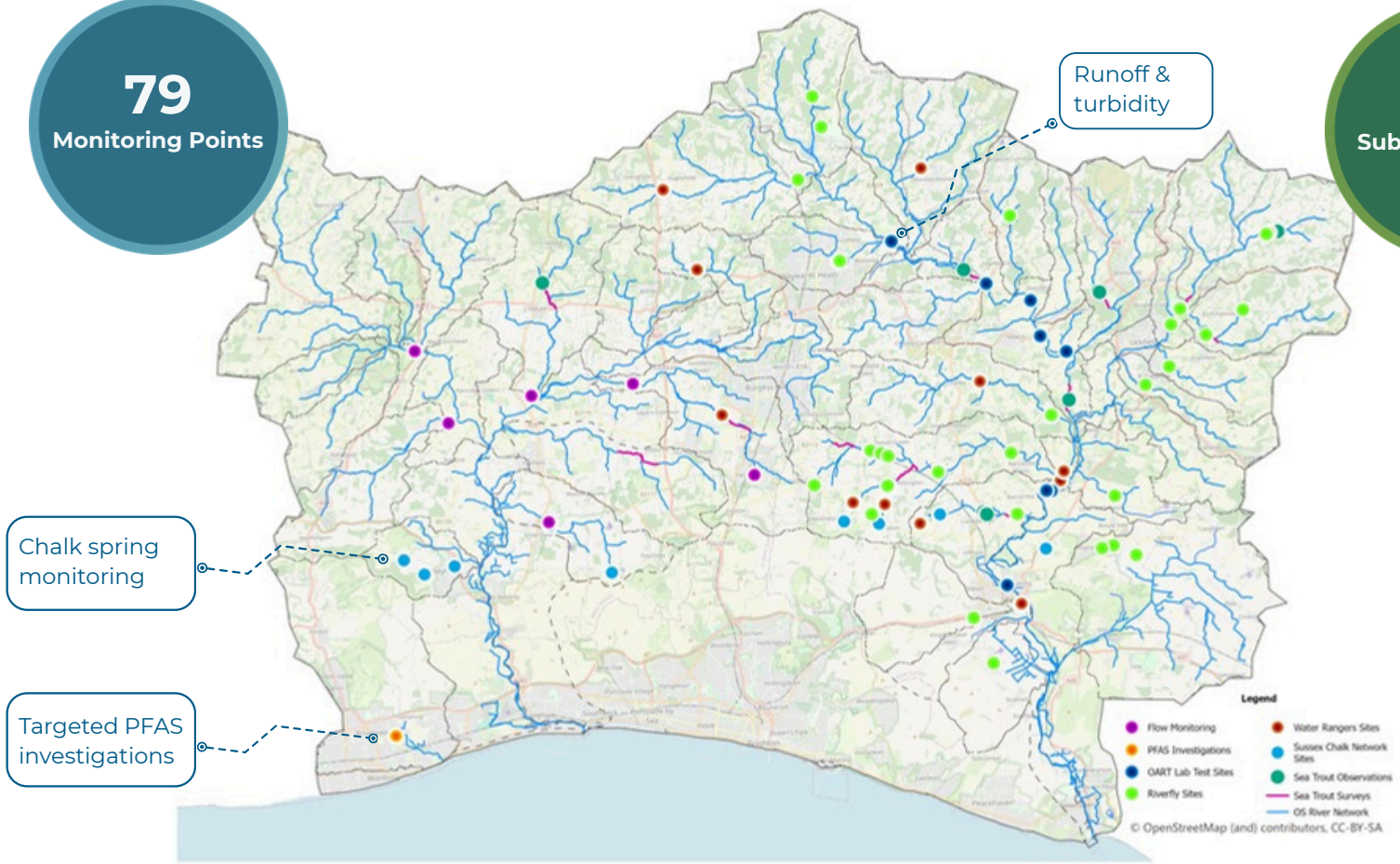
From Monitoring to Action

Better data. Better decisions. Better rivers.

This year, we expanded monitoring across the catchment — building the evidence needed to target restoration and influence change.

79
Monitoring Points

22
Sub-catchments



Supported by

ANCIENT
+BRAVE



445
Samples Analysed

112
Volunteers

21
Km of Sea Trout
Surveys

8
Flow Gauges

Identifying pollution hotspots • Understanding pressures • Targeting action

Delivering Change Across the Catchment

Restoring rivers. Supporting nature. Working with people — at scale.

This year's work is part of a long-term shift — from isolated projects to coordinated, catchment-scale river recovery.

What this adds up to



Connected Rivers

Barriers removed & habitats restored across multiple catchments



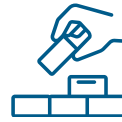
Natural Processes Restored

Water slowed, stored and managed across the landscape



Strong Partnerships

Landowners, communities and organisations working together



Foundations for the Future

Plans, data and relationships in place to scale up delivery

From Delivery to Evidence Led Action

Our work is supported by growing data and monitoring — helping us understand river health, identify pressures, and target future action more effectively.

What Happens Next



Expanding partnership delivery



Strengthening monitoring and evidence



Securing long-term investment



Scaling up landscape recovery

Restoring rivers. Supporting nature. Connecting people — for the long term



This work is made possible by people — from volunteers and communities to partners and supporters across the catchment.

As we continue to scale our work, collaboration remains at the heart of everything we do.

Stay connected, get involved, or find out more:

Visit: www.oart.org

Follow our work and upcoming activities

Get in touch to collaborate or support delivery

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