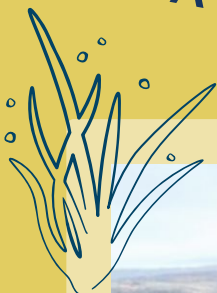




Newsletter

Summer / Autumn 2024

Water quality



River Restoration

We are working with the Environment Agency to undertake a major river restoration project in the Breamish Valley. During 2023 and 2024, designs have been developed and finalised, water quality and sediment monitoring initiated and planning permission has been secured. Construction works are due to start in late September 2024 with the River Breamish reconnected to its floodplain by creation of new channel excavations, floodplain scrapes, wetlands, embankment breaches and construction of woody dams in the existing channel. It is hoped work will be complete by November 2024. The scale and ambition of the project will be showcased in a project film released later this year.

Soil Analyses

Work is well underway with land managers in Northumberland to improve water quality by targeting soil health. Soils in bad condition can severely impact water quality, biodiversity and productivity of land. Soils in 'target' sites are being assessed and detailed advice given on how to enrich and fortify those identified as poor. Full sampling began in June 2023 and has now taken place on 17 target farms supported by colleagues from Natural England's Catchment

Sensitive Farming (CSF) unit. Over the next 30 months we will take a deep dive into exploring soil biology, composition and structure, nutrient and mineral content and levels of activity by soil fauna, such as earthworms and soil microorganisms. Two demonstration projects are also underway to test the benefits of cover crops and farmyard manure as soil improvers. In 2024 the team will begin interpreting lab results and start planning a series of demonstration events.





Wetland Creation

We are constructing a series of wetland systems on the Northumberland Coast to entrap sediment and nutrients before they enter the watercourse. The initial sites are in the vicinity of Budle Bay and target locations where excessive nutrient outflow has been recorded and problematic alga blooms observed. Designers Blue Green Studio were appointed in Autumn '23 and submitted their first concept designs in November. So far this year, designs have been agreed and consents and permissions progressed. It is hoped that contractors will be appointed to enable delivery in the autumn. If successful, this innovative work could inspire the wider adoption of wetlands to mitigate diffuse pollution.

River Woodland

We are working with the Tweed Forum to promote and enable an uptake of riparian (river-edge) planting across the Tweed catchment. Native riverbank woodland has a number of benefits for diffuse pollution, habitat creation and flood mitigation. Landowner engagement has been positive with a number of farmers stepping forward to take part in the project. So far, two sites (totalling 15 ha) have already been planted on the Leader water, a tributary of the River Tweed SSSI, with further sites in the pipeline for this winter. A demonstration project is also underway exploring plastic-free tree guards and solar-powered water troughs.



The Tweed Story

We are supporting the delivery of Destination Tweed, a source-to-sea trail celebrating and sharing the nature, history and stories of the River Tweed to increase understanding and custodianship. Specifically, we are assisting with Tweed WATCH, a campaign to engage children and young people. Education and Engagement officer Jenny Holmes is developing an education programme that celebrates the importance of the river, whilst prioritising the needs of teachers and young people in the area. A range of Curriculum for Excellence and National Curriculum linked workshops have been developed with a focus on trees, riverbank wildlife, invasive non-native species and water pollution. Work has also begun on developing an education resource pack for teachers and group leaders, providing support in delivering river-themed, Curriculum for Excellence-linked sessions for pupils.

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