

Press release: Project launched to protect the Ouseburn River

Groundwork North East & Cumbria is working with partners from across the region to protect and preserve the upper part of the Ouseburn River.

The charity has secured £200,000 from the Environment Agency to fund the Ouseburn River Restoration Project.

Working with partners including landowners, communities, schools and local businesses, Groundwork will carry out a number of enhancements to the river and the surrounding environment to improve water quality through a number of environmental improvements.

The project will implement several physical measures to slow the flow of the river, including widening it at strategic points, sculpting areas of the river bank, altering meanders and installing silt traps.

In addition to the physical work, the Ouseburn River Restoration Project will also work with farmers and landowners about how to manage fertiliser and sediment run off, which causes high levels of phosphorus in the river, this diminishes invertebrate life and affects all aspects of river life.

Lesley Silvera, Senior Project Officer at Groundwork North East & Cumbria, said:

It's fantastic that the Ouseburn River Restoration Project is now off the ground. Over the next two years, we will be working closely with third parties to improve the water quality and ecology of the river.

We'll also be looking to survey and eradicate invasive species, remove litter, monitor wildlife and plant trees, which will keep the river cool, create riverbank habitats and help prevent bank erosion.

We will be working in partnership with Newcastle University, the Environment Agency and Tyne Rivers Trust to observe and measure water quality to gauge the success of the scheme, which will also inform future work on the river.

Lucy Mo, the Environment Agency's Project Manager responsible for funding this work added:

The health of our rivers is better than it's ever been with drastic improvements to water quality over the past 20 years. However, there is still more to do and by working with partners on projects

such as the Ouseburn River Restoration Project we can play to different organisations' strengths and deliver more.

We're pleased to be part of this exciting project, which will improve in-river and bankside habitats, and will also give us more water monitoring data and analysis.

The work is funded primarily through the Environment Agency. Additional funding is from Groundwork NE & Cumbria, Northumbrian Water Ltd, Newcastle University. Partners include Environment Agency, Northumbrian Water Ltd, Natural England, Tyne Rivers Trust, Newcastle City Council and Newcastle University.

Press release: Work completed at Tetney Haven to reduce flood risk and benefit the environment

The Environment Agency has de-silted a section of the Tetney Haven, helping reduce flood risk and boosting the area's ecology.

The work, part of the EA's regular maintenance programme, saw excess silt removed from approximately a kilometre of the Louth Canal and from around the sluice gates at Tetney Lock.

Silt builds up naturally at the sluice as it settles when the flowing water in the channel loses momentum at the sluice gates. Removing it means water can continue to flow easily from the canal into the Haven.

Along with other routine maintenance on the channel, removing the silt helped reduce flood risk to approximately 500 local homes and businesses.

The nutrient-rich silt was then spread on the salt marsh adjoining the banks of the channel, and work was also done to improve drainage on the salt marsh. These improvements help the natural wetting and draining cycles of the soil that encourage vegetation to grow.

The plants help prevent erosion and stabilise land which serves as a front line of flood defence by absorbing much of the force of tidal waves.

This work has also helped improve, preserve and extend the salt marsh's ecology, made up of salt-tolerant plants and up to 300 species of invertebrates, half of which are unique to this environment. These conditions, in turn, provide valuable habitat for migrating birds, some of which are endangered.

Andy Charlesworth, Asset Performance Advisor with the Environment Agency, said:

This is a perfect example of how we aim for the most benefit for people and the environment from everything we do.

We have a regular programme of inspection and maintenance on our flood defences, and we're always looking for ways to achieve extra benefits at the same time. In this case, while we had our equipment on-site, we were able to use it in another way to give a boost to ecological conditions in the surrounding area at no extra cost.

De-silting Tetney Haven took just over seven weeks and cost £127k. It was last de-silted 10 years ago, and the Environment Agency's modelling shows it is unlikely to be needed again for another decade.

De-silting is not always the best solution for reducing flood risk; we carefully consider each situation on a case-by-case basis to determine whether de-silting is cost-effective and will have the desired result of reducing risk.

In the next financial year, the Environment Agency will spend approximately £12m on flood defence maintenance to reduce risk to local communities.

Although the Environment Agency continually invests in maintaining and improving flood defences, no defence can ever completely remove the risk of flooding; therefore we'd encourage people to sign up for our free flood warnings by calling 0345 988 1188 or visiting www.gov.uk/flood.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- The Environment Agency is required to prioritise funding for asset maintenance and repair where it will have the most benefit in reducing flood risk.
 - Saltmarsh provides vital habitat including food and roosting opportunities for over-wintering birds such as seed-eating twites, which are on the [Birds of Conservation Concern 'red list'](#), and waders such as redshank. Saltmarshes support around half of the UK's breeding redshank population.
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[Press release: Tamworth angler fined for obstruction after fishing illegally](#)

On 7 March 2017 at Nuneaton Magistrates' Court, Michael Hawkeswood of Ealingham, Wilnecote was fined £286 for wilfully obstructing a constable in the execution of his duty, with costs of £172 and a victim surcharge of £30 imposed after a prosecution by the Environment Agency.

Mr Hawkeswood also faced charges of fishing without a rod licence, failing to state his name when addressed by an Environment Agency enforcement officer and using behaviour that is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. Mr Hawkeswood received no additional penalty for these charges.

The offences took place on 21 August 2016 at Pooley Park Pools, Polesworth. Mr Hawkeswood was convicted in his absence.

Andrew Eardley of the Environment Agency said:

The majority of anglers fish legally and purchase a rod licence. With an annual licence costing £30 it seems ridiculous that anglers risk a significant fine.

The minority of anglers that fail to buy a rod licence are cheating their fellow anglers and the future of the sport. Rod licence cheats risk a criminal conviction, a significant fine and could lose their fishing equipment.

It's good to see that the courts take instances of obstruction against enforcement officers seriously and that offenders are prosecuted.

Money from rod licence sales is invested in England's fisheries and is used to fund a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers including protecting stocks from illegal fishing, pollution and disease; restoring fish stocks through re-stocking; eradicating invasive species; and fish habitat improvements. Rod licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing and to encourage participation in the sport.

You need a valid Environment Agency Rod Licence to fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel in England. Buying a rod licence is easy, simply visit www.gov.uk/fishing-licences/buy-a-fishing-licence.

Anyone witnessing illegal fishing incidents in progress can report it directly to the Environment Agency hotline, 0800 80 70 60. Information on illegal fishing and environmental crime can also be reported anonymously to Crime stoppers on 0800 555 111.

Press release: East coast surge prompts people to sign up for flood warnings

More than 2,000 people in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire signed up for flood warnings in just two days when flooding threatened the east coast in January.

The number of local registrations jumped by 7 per cent, Environment Agency figures have shown.

Nearly all the new sign-ups occurred on Thursday 12th and Friday 13th January 2017 when forecasters predicted that high tides combined with weather conditions could cause widespread coastal flooding.

Fortunately the event passed without flooding any homes in either county, but the Environment Agency is reminding everyone to sign up, as figures show that only 18 per cent of the total number of properties at risk in the area are fully registered.

Anyone can check whether they are at risk and register for warnings by calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188. You can also make sure your contact details are up-to-date and choose how you'd prefer to be contacted – by mobile, text, landline or email – if flooding was expected.

Ben Thornely, Area Incident Manager, said:

We're glad to see people listened to our advice during the surge. It means another 2,000 families will have early warning should flooding be expected – early warning that could give them extra time to protect themselves and their homes.

That's why we're encouraging everyone to sign up now – before the next surge or storm.

The service is free, and it's the most simple, specific and timely way to find out when you're at risk. You can tell us how best to reach you with vital information that's updated every 15 minutes.

All it takes is a simple phone call or you can visit www.gov.uk/flood to find out more.

Notes for editors:

- In January, the amount of fully-registered properties increased by 7 per cent, from 28,500 to 30,500.
- However, only 18% (30,500) of the 169,500 of properties at flood risk in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire are registered with Floodline.
- People who proactively contact Floodline to provide their contact details and preferred method of contact are considered to be fully-registered.