

Appendix 1 Lewes District Council (LDC) Briefing: Natural Flood Management within the Ouse and Eastern Adur catchment

Lewes District Council's continued support of Nature Based Solutions to a climate resilient catchment. Current position and future.

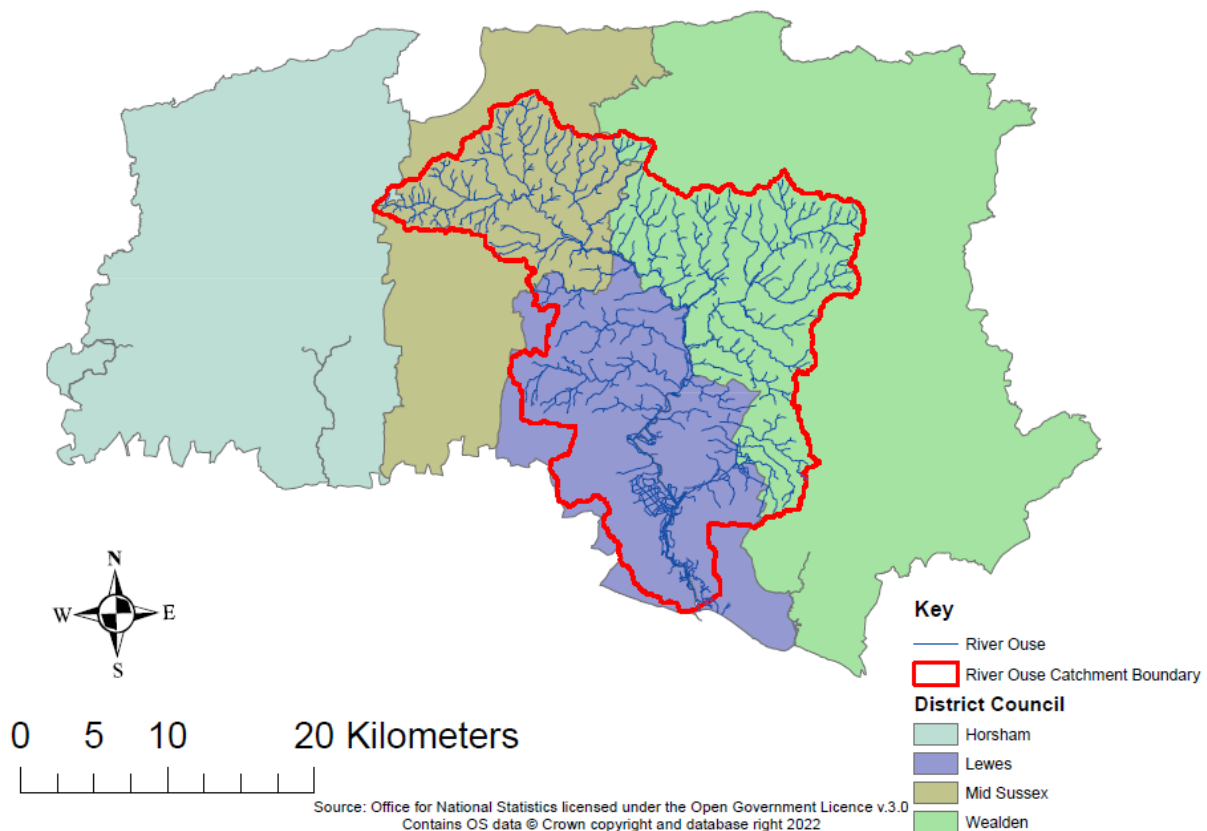
Introduction

LDC have been successfully working in partnership and delivering Natural Flood Management (NFM) projects with the Sussex Flow Initiative (SFI) and Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust (OART) since 2016.

This overview document builds upon the briefings presented in spring 2022 to Cabinet members for recycling, waste and open spaces and for sustainability, setting out the next steps for NFM in Lewes district, which encompasses the Ouse and Eastern Adur catchments.

We would like to expand the strategic context of the work being undertaken with stakeholders in the Ouse catchment, including the SFI and OART partnerships. The extent of the Ouse catchment is shown below.

River Ouse Catchment and District Council Boundaries



The approach going forward seeks to build upon the NFM work, and also support inter-linked projects such as habitat restoration, nature recovery and connectivity.

The strategic aims are to mitigate flood risk, improve water quality and availability and enhance biodiversity in the catchment area.

Many of these aims are achieved through NFM methods, some of which are below:

- Natural tree regeneration and hedge planting
- Ditch naturalisation
- Leaky woody dams
- Pond creation
- Swales/reconnecting rivers to flood plain
- Wetland creation

Background

Following Cabinet approval in 2016, LDC entered into a partnership with SFI and OART to deliver a range of initiatives to use natural processes to make space for water and thus reduce the risk of flooding in the Ouse Catchment. The present agreements end in March 2023. This paper sets out a proposal to take this important area of work forward, learning from our experience and adopting new and emerging ideas around climate resilience that align with this project and LDC's strategies and policies.

The SFI is a pioneering lowland Natural Flood Management project, working across the Ouse River catchment to reduce flooding by creating a climate resilient landscape. The SFI small team of experts work with communities and landowners to help people and wildlife to adapt better to extreme flooding and drought. The project is a collaboration between Sussex Wildlife Trust, the Woodland Trust, the Environment Agency, and Lewes District Council.

Sussex Flow Initiative uses a range of NFM techniques, to work with the natural landscape and natural processes to temporarily slow and store rain and flood water across the countryside. It lessens the flooding impact on people and infrastructure further downstream and increases the landscape's resilience to drought. The work that SFI undertakes creates additional benefits to society through carbon capture, by improving water quality, enhancing wildlife, engaging people with nature and restoring pollinator habitat etc.

SFI seeks to develop the approach to encompass wider outcomes reflective of climate change and the ecological crisis, delivering natural solutions, nature recovery and climate resilience at a catchment plus scale under the banner of 'Wilder Ouse' (see Appendix 2).

OART is a registered charity & member of the national Rivers Trust movement. Their aim is the protection and enhancement of two large rivers - the Adur and Sussex Ouse. They are the lead local organisation entirely focused on rivers and over the last 10 years they have delivered £5m of river habitat enhancements. As a grass roots organisation their aim is to involve as many people as possible. OART believe

that by working together, we can make our shared vision a reality: wild, healthy, natural rivers, valued by all.

LDC provides funding support for the SFI and OART, via payments to deliver specific outcomes each year. This comes to an end in March 2023.

Some of these outcomes and achievements are detailed below:

In 2021/2022 the SFI directly influenced through NFM measures 1,187 hectares of land through NFM projects, alongside providing advice to landowners on a total area of 3,328 hectares. The delivery of NFM projects over the year has led to a creation of water storage equivalent to 1,023,650 L per flood event. ⁱⁱ

The OART are delivering NFM projects across the Adur and Ouse catchments, and currently working in Ringmer, Wivelsfieldⁱⁱⁱ and with the Cuilfail community. Other projects they have helped deliver include the restoration of the River Ouse at Sheffield Park^{iv}, further information on the OART NFM projects are linked in the references.^v

Lessons Learned

In Winter 21/22 we reviewed NFM work and projects with OART and SFI. Drawing on the feedback, comments and ideas, LDC has reflected on how we continue to support and work with partners post-2023, and how this may be undertaken in a wider, strategic way.

Other reflections included, how we can build upon our partnership with OART, SWT, SFI, EA and others, and explore how we work with the Adur and Ouse Catchment Partnership, landowners, SDNPA, Farmers, Parish Councils, Southern Water, Southeast Water and others. We would also seek to widen partnership working where appropriate across the catchments.

Aligning with EA River Basin Management Plans could provide a framework to explore increasing biodiversity, reducing carbon footprints, as well as reducing the risk of flooding. Emerging farming and environmental management schemes will also influence projects and works, where they are possible and practicable across the Ouse Catchment.

There is a need to seek longer term funding for projects and working strategically and collaboratively with a range of partners and stakeholders.

Involving and working with landowners on projects opportunistically will be important. Also, how national agricultural land use policies and incentives may be integrated into this process.

From this feedback and reflection, LDC has developed aims and objectives, see below.

Strategic Aims

LDC seeks to continue support and delivery of NFM and wider linked projects, within the Eastern Adur and Ouse catchments and thus:

- Help to reduce flood risk through the delivery of NFM projects (not inclusive of coastal flood risk)
- Improve drought resilience (and climate resilience)
- Work with communities and increase their resilience to both flood, storm and drought events
- Enhance carbon sequestration
- Provide blue/green corridors for nature recovery and thus improve biodiversity
- Provide natural mechanisms for improving water quality

Objectives

- Continue to work in partnership and support organisations and groups across the Ouse and Eastern Adur catchment to deliver NFM projects
- Seek to work with the planning policy team, Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and Highways to input comments into strategic planning documents and planning applications and influencing the developing Local Plan.
- Working within LDC's council policies and strategic frameworks and any future relevant strategies that may be developed over this period. Notable strategies include the Lewes district climate change and sustainability strategy and the LDC Biodiversity strategy.
- Developing with partners a portfolio of catchment and sub-catchment opportunities that could be used to seek funding either from public sources, charities and or private investment. Using LDC seed funding to develop these projects.
- Seek to establish a long-term stream of funding and investment – public and private. Building on above.
- Working with partners to utilize a (standard) carbon counting methodology to apply to projects, (a unified approach across the catchments) portfolio of projects proving quantifiable tonnes carbon storage (E.g. SELEP pilot), water, and water quality
- Continue our excellent work, but even more strategically and collaboratively across the catchments to ensure best deployment of skills and resources
- Working with partners to increase the involvement of landowners and local communities, to help raise trust, awareness, knowledge and education
- Working with partners who monitor water quantity and quality so that natural mechanisms implemented for improving water quality can be captured

What work and projects are existing and can be built on?

This is not an extensive list of work and projects but is reflective of some key areas of work in 2022.

- Cockshut Wetland Habitat Creation (SDNP/21/06027/FUL)
- Ringmer Community wetlands (LW/21/0427)
- Hoath Wood Meeching Valley Leaky Dams implementation
- River Ouse Restoration at Sheffield Park: Reconnecting the floodplain and improving river channel to reduce flood risk downstream
- Feasibility study into reconnecting the River Ouse at Anchor Gate
- Ouse Valley Climate Action: There are opportunities with the longer term NFM project to work with the Ouse Valley Climate Action programme and potential to align projects to these objectives.
- Emerging projects from the River Plans for Bevern Stream, Longford Stream and Chalk streams around Ringmer
- Wivelsfield emerging community resilience plan (e.g. raingardens, leaky dams)
- Lost Woods of the Low Weald and Downs project: Woodland Trust, SDNPA and High Weald AONB

Funding

LDC would look to provide baseline funding from April 2023 to 2028 to continue NFM and nature-based solution projects across the catchments delivered by partners.

LDC funding could then also be used to attract additional funding from other sources to maximize financial resources (e.g. through match funding). The funding would act as seed money to support initial work, but we would seek to have longer term funding streams in place from a range of public and private sources.

Funding Name	Comment
Local Levy (Regional Flood and Coastal Committees RFCC ^{vi})	Available to apply for in mid - summer and mid- winter annually
Grant in Aid	DEFRA
Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF) funding	EA
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	
DEFRA Natural Flood Management Funding	DEFRA
Landscape Recovery Funding Options ^{vii}	DEFRA
Farming in Protected Landscapes ^{viii}	DEFRA. Programme runs until March 2024.

Examples of a selection of funding sources available are above, there are other funding opportunities available, not listed here. ^{ix} Partner organisations may have limitations on the funding streams they can apply for, which is why a strategic approach across organisations is required, so that funding opportunities can be maximized.

We would also explore other funding opportunities as they arise and support partners in strategic applications and bids for funding. **Next Steps and Longer-Term Plan**

We propose to continue developing this plan working and learning from others such as the Sussex Nature Partnership, Adur and Ouse Catchment Partnership, Sussex Bay, Wilder Horsham and universities etc.

The next steps of work would include:

- Work with partners and stakeholders to map and identify critical areas of importance and opportunities: map what has been achieved so far, understand what resources available. Explore other mapping techniques with partnership organizations, such as Water Yield Mapping. From this we could then develop a strategic plan which includes priority geographic areas for attention/focus, time-scales, and building longer term projects with targeted outcomes for delivery
- Developing a shared vision for the Ouse catchment (informed by mapping projects). This could include priority geographic areas for attention and build longer term projects with targeted outcomes for delivery.
- GAP Analysis- understand how we can meet aims and objective identified
- Continue to develop academic relationships with University of Brighton and Sussex University to quantify the benefit of reducing flood risk and focused research projects which would be beneficial across catchments. An example of this is working with the University of Brighton to host a 6-week student placement in early 2022, working on a project to identify opportunities for NFM projects within the Lewes District.
- Community engagement (working with partners to deliver): working with communities, raising awareness of flooding and flood risk, and improving community's knowledge. This could involve working with community flood groups. This could also include Citizen Science. We can look to work with the Ouse Valley Climate Action programme to align projects to these objectives.
- Working with partners to provide education and school engagement around NFM
- Align projects and work streams with River Basin Management Plans and develop this with partner organisations that work within the Ouse and Eastern Adur catchment
- Working with planning authorities and integrating project aims within local plans and building control

- Develop a project plan for the next 5 years
- Continue strategic approach together

Conclusions

These proposals have been discussed with senior officers and Lead members Cllr Julie Carr, Cabinet member for recycling, waste and open spaces and Cllr Matthew Bird, Cabinet member for sustainability and are presented to Cabinet, 8 December

ⁱ [SDNP, SFI & EA. 2020. Natural Flood Management Measures: A practical guide for farmers and landowners of the Solent and South Downs.](https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/SDNPA-Natural-Flood-Management-Measures.pdf) (https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/SDNPA-Natural-Flood-Management-Measures.pdf)

ⁱⁱ [Sussex Flow Initiative. 2022. Natural Flood Management Project. End of Year Report 2021/22.](http://www.sussexflowinitiative.org/uploads/1/6/3/1/16313516/sfi_eoy_report_21-22_final.pdf) (http://www.sussexflowinitiative.org/uploads/1/6/3/1/16313516/sfi_eoy_report_21-22_final.pdf)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Sussex World. 2022. Haywards Heath primary school helping to prevent flooding in the district.](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/haywards-heath-primary-school-helping-to-prevent-flooding-in-the-district-3711590) (https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/haywards-heath-primary-school-helping-to-prevent-flooding-in-the-district-3711590.)

^{iv} [National Trust. 2022. River Ouse at Sheffield Park.](https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sheffield-park-and-garden/features/river-ouse-at-sheffield-park) (https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sheffield-park-and-garden/features/river-ouse-at-sheffield-park)

^v [OART. 2022. Natural Flood Management.](https://oart.org.uk/project/natural-flood-management/) (https://oart.org.uk/project/natural-flood-management/)

^{vi} <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/southern-regional-flood-and-coastal-committee>. 2022.

^{vii} [Defra. 2022. Landscape-recovery-more-information-on-how-the-scheme-will-work](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-recovery-more-information-on-how-the-scheme-will-work/landscape-recovery-more-information-on-how-the-scheme-will-work) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-recovery-more-information-on-how-the-scheme-will-work/landscape-recovery-more-information-on-how-the-scheme-will-work)

^{viii} [Defra. 2021. Get funding for farming in protected landscapes.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes) (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes)

^{ix} [Catchment Based Approach. 2022.](https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/learn/find-funding-for-natural-flood-risk-management-projects/#:~:text=Local%20Levy%20(Regional%20Flood%20and%20Coastal%20Committees%20RFCC)&text=Funds%20are%20raised%20by%20a,and%20coastal%20erosion%20risk%20management) (https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/learn/find-funding-for-natural-flood-risk-management-projects/#:~:text=Local%20Levy%20(Regional%20Flood%20and%20Coastal%20Committees%20RFCC)&text=Funds%20are%20raised%20by%20a,and%20coastal%20erosion%20risk%20management).