

WILDER OUSE

VISION

To bring together people in the Sussex Ouse catchment to create a robust Nature Recovery Network, with restored ecological connectivity, ecosystem function and climate resilience.

Partnership Aims

1. Create resilience to climate change through Nature Based Solutions and Working with Natural Processes - working with others to recognise, protect, create and enhance natural capital throughout the catchment.
2. Work with landowners, managers and communities to deliver landscape scale collaborations which support and empower others to tackle big climate and biodiversity issues.
3. Advise and support regenerative landscape initiatives (such as regenerative agriculture), and develop visionary groups of collaborating landowners, working towards future proofing at a landscape scale.
4. Clearly map and present the Nature Recovery Network to Local Authorities, Parish Councils, local residents, landowners and other stakeholders so that it is universally recognised, protected and worked on collaboratively.

Ways of working

Over the next 5 years, the Wilder Ouse project will expand its core partnership by inviting other stakeholders to be active in its work - including Mid Sussex and Wealden District Councils, South Downs National Park Authority, Forestry England and appropriate Water Companies. We will engage with existing and emerging climate, biodiversity and landscape scale initiatives and will work collaboratively with Farmer Clusters. This includes aligning appropriate workstreams and technical expertise with the Weald to Waves initiative, taking a lead role on Parish and landowner liaison within the Ouse catchment and working with key partners such as Ashdown Forest Conservators and Wakehurst Place (Kew). We will collaborate on species co-existence programmes, and on the appropriate restoration of ecosystem engineers.

The project will collectively establish target areas and sub catchments upon which to focus our delivery work, including where to engage and link on Wilder Ouse and Environment Agency / Lewes District Council / Woodland Trust / Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust & Water Company (Catchment Sensitive Farming) delivery. The partnership will support the strategic work of each of its partners including linking to the LDC Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy, (Natural) Flood Management Plans and Biodiversity Strategy, Ouse Valley Climate Action project, Lost Woods of the Low Weald project, strategic landscape planning with the Woodland Trust, and finding new ways of working with the Environment Agency on Climate change and Flood Risk. We will work with Sussex Wildlife Trust to embed and articulate the work that the Wilder Ouse project delivers in their wider Vision, Climate Strategy & Nature Recovery strategies.

Over the next 5 years we will work with research institutions to expand our ability to accurately identify and quantify key natural capital outputs of the project. This includes incorporating existing and emerging science on carbon benefits of the natural regeneration of trees and scrub, new learning on carbon and methane benefits / dis-benefits of key habitat restoration work, and more accurate figures on likely flood storage capacity of our Natural Flood Management interventions. We will work with national institutions such as Natural England as they develop their work on SSSI resilience to Climate change and identifying habitat adaptation potential i.e. Floodplain Wetland Mosaics (as a replacement for Coastal Floodplain Grazing Marsh).

We will develop a means of annually monitoring the carbon footprint of the project, and evaluate the capacity of Wilder Ouse to reduce or eliminate its own carbon footprint, whilst adding value to a means of offsetting this.

Five Year Targets for Wilder Ouse	
Habitat Delivery and Nature Based Solutions	
Hectares of natural regeneration of trees support (& carbon impacts thereof)	Monitor and report
Report on the carbon storage of WO interventions	Monitor and report
Support the appropriate planting of trees	20,000
Restore priority habitat including meadows, wetlands and woodlands.	30 ha
Create additional natural water storage in the catchment	20,000,000 litres
Reconnect floodplain	3ha
Develop case study sites/projects for restoration of natural processes, the recovery of ecosystem engineers and the creation of more naturalistic and Wild habitats. Including at least one hybrid NFM/Flood risk & Climate change project with EA	3
Support the restoration of at least one breeding pair of beavers to the catchment (as a source population for catchment scale restoration).	1
Develop joint restoration guidance and wet woodland targets with Woodland Trust	Monitor and report
Store habitat based carbon for climate mitigation	10,000 tonnes p.a.
Strategic and Catchment Scale	
Provide expert technical advice to landowners	5,000 acres
Produce strategic catchment reports on Beaver feasibility, Nature Recovery Networks, Climate Resilience and Nature Based Solutions, Species / Habitat resilience + 1 other	5
Inspiring and Engaging the Community	
Develop a trained team of volunteers contributing to project monitoring	20+
Upskill a team of volunteers, professionals and contractors	20+
Generate at least 2 media posts p.a. for each partner of the project	10
Wild Woodlands leaky dam workshops for Lost Woods of the Low Weald	2
Hours of volunteer contribution	1000+
Community/Stakeholder groups engaged with	30+
Engage with all parish councils on existing W2W route, and Parish Councils on proposed source to sea Ouse W2W extension corridor	100% and 80%
Media and social media reach p.a.	50,000
Added Value	
Attract funding from grant sources or new partners over the next 5 years.	£50,000
Attract 'in kind' funding	£50,000
Follow up surveys to landowners of key sites to review impact	Minimum 5

Additional Outputs

In addition to the above the project will deliver the following outputs:-

1. Soil carbon / health and habitat carbon monitoring / restoration principles in line with national guidelines.
2. Mapping if / where a potential source to sea link route for the Weald to Waves corridor exists / is viable in the Ouse catchment.
3. Interpretation and mapping of Lewes District, showing important landscape and natural capital features, and landscape influences (such as sub catchments flowing into and out of the District).
4. Working with SxBRC, produce a species diversity assessment / resilience report for the catchment.
5. Agro-forestry / Silvo pasture guidance for the catchment and cluster farms with partners.
6. A method for monitoring how and where we have restored or enhanced ecological connectivity.
7. An evaluation of our EDI, social impact and/or behavioural change relating to our work
8. Ongoing reporting on Water Framework Directive delivery

Partnership

Wilder Ouse is a formal partnership, housed and managed by Sussex Wildlife Trust and currently funded by Lewes District Council, independent grant sources & the Woodland Trust.

The Environment Agency participate in the Steering group. Informal partners include the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust, Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers / South East Water, Wealden and Mid Sussex District Councils, County Councils, and other projects such as Ouse Valley Climate Action. Project partners may be added and removed depending on current projects, work themes, funding and grant sources.

Previous re-iterations of the Sussex Flow Initiative and TrUck have been funded by other grants and stakeholders including the Environment Agency.