



the River Restoration Centre

Working to restore and enhance our rivers

Technical Advice

River Cuckmere, East Sussex

Catchment Assessment and Habitat Enhancement Options

KEY INFO

Date: February 2021

Client: South East Water

Type: Catchment Assessment with
comment on Habitat enhancement

Themes: Habitat enhancement



The River Cuckmere catchment consists of seven waterbodies, all of which are failing for chemicals under the Water Framework Directive. The catchment is also under significant pressure from extensive realignment and resectioning. South East Water asked the RRC to carry out site assessments of the River Cuckmere to assess its hydromorphological condition and the restoration options at Arlington Reservoir.

Following a one-day walkover and River Habitat Surveys, the most important catchment impacts were identified as poor water quality, altered flow regime, poor longitudinal connectivity, altered channel form and fine sediment accumulation. At Arlington Reservoir, a large weir disrupts longitudinal connectivity and fish passage, contributing to a severely modified and unnatural channel.

The RRC suggested a range of options such as buffer strips and macrophyte habitats to reduce sedimentation and improve water quality. Additional suggestions included removing weirs to improve longitudinal connectivity and fish passage. To improve fish habitat at the Arlington Reservoir site, the RRC suggested the use of pre-planted coir mattresses combined with large, anchored trees, enhancing connectivity with terrestrial vegetation in the concreted reaches.

