**Media Release**

**28 July 2021**

**Wooler Water Reconnection Project Receives £500,000 from the Government’s Green Recovery Challenge Fund**

An innovative environmental project that will remove a major barrier to salmon migration on Northumberland’s Wooler Water and create a new heritage trail, improved habitat and education and recreational programmes that connect people with nature has received a £500,000 grant from the UK Government’s £40 million second round of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, a multi-million-pound boost for green jobs and nature recovery

*Reconnecting the Wooler* *Water* will see the removal of the deteriorating Haugh Head Ford and its associated check weirs and reconnect 22 km of the Wooler Water to the River Tweed catchment, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to its high conservation value and ecological importance

The £1.7 million project will reconnect the river with its floodplain, restore a more natural water flow and provide space for the river to move and accommodate high flows. Haugh Head Ford is also a man-made barrier to fish migration on the River Tweed system – a designated as a Special Area for Conservation (SAC) for Atlantic Salmon, and its removal, combined with improvements in the surrounding river habitat, will enhance the conditions needed to enable young and migrating salmon to thrive. The Tweed salmonid fishery is worth an estimated £24 million a year to the local economy and supports over 500 jobs\*.

The project will create a new 1.5 km heritage trail and footbridge to provide Wooler residents and visitors with continued and safe access to the countryside and a series of initiatives will be developed to help to connect the community with nature. Primary and secondary school children and scout groups will learn about topics ranging from local history, river morphology and geology, to nature and wildlife, river life and the countryside code. Recreational activities to be developed include guided walks on subjects such as history, geology, birdsong, wildflowers, insects, family wildlife walks, fungi, photography and poetry. Young people will be introduced to angling and there will be opportunities for all groups to participate in citizen science through counts of fish and instream invertebrates.

Led by Scottish Borders-based environmental charity, [Tweed Forum](https://tweedforum.org/),the *Reconnecting the Wooler* *Water* project is a partnership between Northumberland County Council, Tweed Foundation, Lilburn Estates, Middleton Estates, the Glendale Gateway Trust, Wooler Parish Council, Glendale Local History Society and Wooler Caravan Park. The project’s remaining £1.2 million funding costs will be provided by the Environment Agency and work is expected to commence in late Summer.

Luke Comins, Director, Tweed Forum said; “The ford represents one of the biggest remaining obstructions to fish passage in the entire Tweed system and has been deteriorating for a number of years. Through this long-planned project, we are using nature to resolve this man-made problem by reconnecting the river with the floodplain and creating conditions that will help to enhance fish survival, improve biodiversity and provide increased community access and opportunities for education and improved wellbeing. We’re extremely grateful to the Government’s Green Recovery Challenge Fund and the Environment Agency for enabling us to proceed with an initiative that will provide multiple benefits for residents and visitors to Wooler,”

Ninety nature projects across England have been awarded grants from £68,100 to £1,950,000 to create and retain over 1,000 green jobs, backed by the Government’s £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

Work will be carried out on over 600 sites from North Northumberland to the tip of Cornwall, and combined with the first round, almost a million trees will be planted, contributing towards the Government’s commitment to treble tree planting rates across England by the end of this Parliament.

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund is a key part of the Prime Minister’s 10 Point Plan to kick-start nature recovery and tackle climate change. Connecting people with nature is another priority theme: by increasing access to nature and greenspaces, projects will support both physical and mental wellbeing. The Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund was developed by Defra and its Arm's-Length Bodies. The fund is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England, the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission.

**Environment Minister, Rebecca Pow, said:**

“The diverse and ambitious projects being awarded funding today will help environmental organisations employ more people to work on tree-planting, nature restoration and crucially, help more of the public to access and enjoy the outdoors.

“Through our £80 million Fund, we are on track to support over 2,500 jobs, plant almost a million trees and increase nature recovery at a huge scale across the country, which will help us deliver against our 25 Year Environment Plan.”

**Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive, National Lottery Heritage Fund, said:**

“From wetland restoration, to creating wildlife-rich habitat for bees, it is vital that we value, protect and rebuild our natural heritage. This new funding will not only allow projects to carry out direct conservation which is essential in protecting our biodiversity, but it will increase awareness of how and why we need to change our behaviours in order to protect our future.”

**Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:**

“By supporting jobs from Northumberland to Somerset, the Green Recovery Challenge Fund will help deliver a nature positive future. The fund supports young people to develop skills needed to protect nature, build back greener and prepare for climate impacts, like floods and heatwaves.”

 **Natural England Chair Tony Juniper said:**

“Our environmental and conservation charity sector does an incredible job in protecting, improving and restoring the natural environment for the benefit of communities and the economy.”

**Forestry Commission Chair Sir William Worsley said:**

“This funding will help deliver thousands more trees and help us achieve our target of trebling tree planting rates in England by the end of the Parliament. We need to work towards net zero emissions by 2050; to address biodiversity loss; to better connect people with nature; and to create more green jobs in doing so. Trees are central to this and the projects being awarded these grants will have a hugely important role in helping us realise these objectives.”

**A full list of awards is available to view at: https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/publications/green-recovery-challenge-fund-second-round-decisions-july-2021**

**ENDS**

**Issued on behalf of Tweed Forum by Artisan PR. For further information on the *Reconnecting the Wooler Water Project*, please contact Karen Finlay, Artisan PR, Tel: 07803 945043**

**For further information on the *Green Recovery Challenge Fund*, please contact Faith Mall, Media and PR Manager, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Tel: 07747 062932, email: faith.mall@heritagefund.org.uk**

**Notes to editors**

The Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund was developed by Defra and its Arm's-Length Bodies. It is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England, the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission.’

**About The National Lottery Heritage Fund**
Using money raised by the National Lottery, we Inspire, lead and resource the UK’s heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities, now and in the future. [www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk/)

\*Source: https://www.rivertweed.org.uk/news/?p=5348