

Catchment Restoration Fund (CRF) Project Briefing Note

Wansbeck 100

The Wansbeck and many of its tributaries are currently viewed as 'failing' under the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The main reason for failure is numbers of fish.

The main issue behind this appears to be the amount of silt, sediment and nutrients that are washed into the rivers and streams from farmland and forests. Other factors include weirs that hold up fish migration, and a lack of bank-side and in-stream habitat.

This ambitious community project aims to help address these issues, and improve the quality, WFD status and local enjoyment of 100km of river and stream.

The rivers and streams that are part of the project include:

- The Upper Wansbeck
- The Font
- The Hartburn
- The Delf Burn
- The Ray Burn

The project will work closely with schools and communities to help renew local interest and 'ownership' of the rivers in this rural part of Northumberland.

Outputs will include:

- improvements to fish passage
- lengths of fenced buffer strip to filter out sediments
- new and improved wetland features to settle out sediment and nutrients
- improvements to vehicle crossings
- new native woodland
- work with farmers and land managers to reduce run-off in ways that reduce their costs
- engagement and communications activity with schools, communities and angling clubs

Description of Works

The project will deliver works in a number of different areas to achieve the required results across the catchment. These include:

Key facts	
River Basin District	Northumbria
Catchments	Wansbeck
Outcomes	Improved water quality, Improved fishery (brown trout, sea trout and eels), Improved bank-side and in-stream habitat, Improved farming practices, Improved community involvement, knowledge and ownership.
Start Date	November 2012
End Date	March 2015
Budget	£360k (£280k CRF)
Project Partners	National Trust, Environment Agency, Community Foundation

Work with schools and communities - The Wansbeck 100 project will work with schools in the area to involve young people in monitoring and assessing the current condition of the river and improvements as they start to be seen. Work will include invertebrate surveys, tanks of trout and invertebrates in the classroom, electro-fishing demonstration events and installing web-cameras to monitor otter movements. We will also provide training for angling clubs and communities to be able to interpret and assess the quality of THEIR rivers.

Bank side works - The project will deliver at least 15km of new fenced off riverbank. This will allow bank-side vegetation to become re-established and help to filter out sediments from nearby fields.



At least 18 new wetlands will be created to settle out sediments and create valuable new habitat. River-side tree planting using alders and willows will help hold banks together and reduce erosion. This will also create valuable habitat for a range of species. At least 5 Ha of new tree planting will be delivered by the project.

Existing vehicle crossing points at a number of sites will be improved to ensure that less material is stirred up and released into the river.

Work with farmers and land managers - The project will work very closely with farmers and land managers to help identify ways to reduce costs that also safeguard and improve the environment. Farm visits will help to find ways to reduce fertiliser and nutrient loss, and reduce the loss and compaction of valuable topsoil. The project will deliver at least 10 farm building audits and at least 10 soil husbandry visits.

Farmers are key to the success of the project, and we will make efforts to gather their ideas and suggestions and find ways to improve matters that work for them.

What will success look like?

We very much see the Wansbeck 100 as a community project, therefore success will include a high degree of local involvement and engagement. We would like to see the community taking greater ownership of their rivers, and start to identify and implement further on-going improvements.

The key aim of the Catchment Restoration Fund is to improve the WFD waterbody status of 'failing' rivers. Success will therefore include improving these towards 'good' (recognising that reductions in sediment input take time to translate to improved status). Linked to this improved 'status', we see success as including improved water quality, habitat and fisheries. We would like to see more of the local community enjoying these improvements and actively involved in ensuring their long term protection and enhancement.

About the team

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