



This document outlines the Suffolk Wildlife Trust strategy for our work on rivers and river wildlife between 2024 and 2030 in line with our wider goals of achieving 30% of Suffolk well managed for wildlife by 2030.

Our vision for rivers in 2030

By 2030, we would like to see:

Rivers in Suffolk are naturally functioning and diverse habitats with enough clean water to meet the needs of wildlife and people. Where there is space, rivers are connected to their floodplain and have wild margins, linking habitats across the landscape. Decision makers, local industry, landowners, communities, and individuals all value naturally functioning rivers and floodplains and act to protect them.

The vision above outlines the ideal situation, but we will not achieve this alone. This document examines how we will work at SWT to achieve this goal and how we can work with and support others to do this.



Figure 1. Suffolk Wildlife Trust Blackbourne Valley Nature Reserve

Our strategy for rivers in 2030

To recover nature in our rivers by 2030 in line with our vision we will:

- Focus on creating and delivering large and ambitious river, riparian and floodplain habitat restoration projects in line with our Habitat KPI, that contribute strategically to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy of Suffolk:
 - We will improve river habitats through 14 significant restoration schemes according to our KPIs.
- Enable action for rivers at any scale through our advice and training via the Wider Landscapes Team, supporting our operational KPI:
 - We will work with others to ensure 30% of Suffolk is well managed for wildlife by 2030.
- Advocate for positive change for rivers through the Planning and Advocacy Team with support from the Wilder Rivers Advisor, extending our influence and impact:
 - Space for nature will be embedded in local decision-making frameworks.
- Retain the ethos of SWT as a ‘doing’ organisation, delivering high quality work at scale for rivers and their wildlife, but focusing on delivering a smaller number of larger scale projects over multiple years, in line with our operational KPI:
 - We will work with others to ensure 30% of Suffolk is well managed for wildlife by 2030.
- Complete a repeat of the county wide water vole survey in 2025 and 2030 to inform our KPI:
 - In the rivers where we work, water vole evidence will increase by 50%.

Issues and the solutions we will focus on

Pollution

Diffuse and point source pollution, reducing water quality and increasing risks of eutrophication events, directly affecting aquatic wildlife and wider societal issues.

- Agricultural, including increased silt run-off:
Our focus will be to work with farmers and landowners to find solutions that will benefit water quality and wildlife. We will signpost to relevant initiatives where appropriate.
- Sewerage:
Through our non-regulatory engagement with water companies and our planning and advocacy work, we will support efforts by water companies to improve their infrastructure and practices to prevent sewage pollution impacting our rivers.

Low flows

Low flows (due to lack of rain and pressure from abstraction) lead to water quality issues. This issue will only increase with climate change and will lead to conflict between the water needs of people and nature.

- **Nature based solutions:**
Where possible, we will work with farmers and landowners to enhance and restore rivers and riparian wetlands so they can hold water in the environment for longer. This will mean rivers and their floodplains can continue to support wildlife and provide ecosystem services for people.
- **Advocating for a better plan:**
We will continue to engage in the water resources planning process, through our planning and advocacy work, to make sure the voices of nature are heard.

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

INNS, such as North American mink and non-native plant species, such as Himalayan balsam, impact on native wildlife populations through predation (for the former) and outcompeting native species (for the latter), leading to population declines.

- **North American Mink:**
We will continue to monitor and control mink on our reserves, plus encourage landowners who we work with to engage with the regional eradication project through the Waterlife Recovery Trust.
- **Himalayan Balsam and other INNS plants:**
Invasive non-native plant species, such as Himalayan balsam are widespread through Suffolk. We will focus on encouraging community groups to conduct monitoring and work parties and deploying resources where it benefits wildlife the most.

Modification

Over deepening and widening, leading to reduced flow velocity and increased silt deposition, impoundment reducing wildlife transit routes (fish passage) and embankments/ disconnection from the floodplain, limiting functionality, and reducing riparian habitat quality.

- We will work with farmers and landowners to deliver large-scale restoration projects that address these issues and bring about wildlife benefits in the wider catchment. We will work in partnership with other organisations to expand our reach.

Poor management leading to habitat degradation

A lack of understanding of naturally functioning rivers and floodplains leading to poor management, such as unnecessary dredging and excessive vegetation clearance.

- We will provide advisory visits to farmers and landowners, focusing on sensitive river and riparian habitat management.
- We will deliver training, events, and communications for farmers, landowners, community groups and individuals aimed at increasing knowledge and understanding of natural functioning rivers, their wildlife and what can be done to protect them.

Land use pressure (focus via Planning and Advocacy team)

Pressures such as building in the floodplain, nutrient and recreational pressures from new developments and lack of buffer between agricultural land and rivers.

- We will advocate for positive agricultural land management through the work of the whole Wilder Landscapes Team.
- We will advocate for positive planning policy that fully accounts for river pressures through the planning and advocacy team.