

Water Environment Improvements Project Evidence Form

Scope & Purpose

This form is to be used by the Water Environment External Governance Group (WEGG), to review, validate and formally approve the length of Water Environment Improved for each project. The form will be completed by the Water Environment Team with support from project partners and presented to the WEGG. Upon formal WEGG approval, the km water environment improved will be recorded against the ODI and projects marked as completed on the Water Environment Scorecard and Mapping Portals.

Project Name

Frenze Beck

Project Lead

Company/ Organisation	Named Lead	Position	Contact Details
River Waveney Trust	Martha Meek	Development Manager	

Water Environment Improved

Year	Claimed	Proposed	Reason For Any Change
Year 1	1.5km	1.5km	N/A

Project Assurance

This project has been reviewed internally to ensure it has delivered benefits above and beyond our baseline and regulatory obligations to improve the water environment accessible to customers across at least two out of three aspects. Following our assurance process, the project was approved by both our internal and external groups for review before delivery. This form presents evidence of project completion and the outputs achieved, to request project sign off.

Level	Project Acceptance Date	Project Approval Date	Completed Project Sign Off Date
Project Team	February 2021	February 2021	NA
Water Environment Steering Group (Internal)	February 2021	March 2021	NA
Water Environment Governance Group (External)	March 2021	March 2021	

Water Environment Project Timescales

Candidate Project Approved	Project Initiated	Project Completed
March 2021	March 2020	March 2021

Project Summary and Highlights

Summary

This project has contributed to water environment improvements for customer benefit to 1.5 km of publicly accessible water environments, through the creation of new wetland habitat and access improvements at Frenze Beck, a 30-acre County Wildlife Site on the outskirts of Diss, Norfolk.

The Frenze Beck site has a range of wetland, meadow, pasture, and scrub habitats and is easily accessible by foot for those living and working nearby and is open to the public every day. It is maintained for wildlife and public access by volunteers and a volunteer site manager from the River Waveney Trust local group. Enhancements to Frenze Beck were largely covered by a successful Infrastructure Investment Fund (SIL) bid, however additional funds from Essex & Suffolk Water (ESW) filled a funding gap and enabled the community group project to be completed in Year 1 of the Water Environment Improvements scheme.

Enhancement works have involved the creation of additional wetland habitat and the lowering of the riverbank to allow the river to overtop into the newly created reedbeds and reduce pressure on the River Waveney at periods of peak flow. The creation of a new footpath, disabled access and boardwalks also formed major aspects of this project alongside repair works.

Additional funds from ESW have provided facilities to support bird nesting and visitor enjoyment of the water environment at this site, through the provision of bird boxes, seating and an interpretation board.



Images taken by visitors and volunteers over the past year at Frenze Beck

Frenze Beck



Total Length of Accessible Water Environment: 1.5km

Figure 1: Map of accessible water Environment at Frenze Beck



Figure 2: View from the path along Frenze Beck

Project Outputs, Benefits & Evidence Against Criteria

Access, Facilities & Recreation	
Outputs	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access path improvements including surface and fence repairs • New interpretation board • Repairs to existing boardwalks and the creation of new footpath and additional boardwalk • Purchase and installation of new sturdy recycled plastic benches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A1: Increased access to, engagement with and enjoyment of the water environment through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Free and accessible facility for all members of the public ○ Enhanced visitor experience at the site through facilities and repair works ○ Enjoyment and appreciation of the natural environment through enhanced biodiversity and wildlife ➤ A2: Benefits health and wellbeing through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engagement with nature and enthusiastic volunteers to share information provided at the site ○ Additional seating provides enhanced visitor enjoyment and a place to sit, watch, listen and reflex - benefitting health and wellbeing ○ Increased volunteer opportunities increases health and wellbeing
Expected Project Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved experience for visitors ▪ Additional visitors to the site to benefit from access to nature ▪ Engagement and recruitment of existing and new volunteers ▪ Year-round nature experience opportunities for adults and children 	
Evidence	
<p><i>“The Beck offers lovely riverside walks in a relaxing countryside environment with enclosed reed beds, the volunteers do an excellent job in maintaining the paths and cutting back invasive weeds and nettles, better seating would be good to allow one to spend time listening and watching the birds animals that live in this unique area” – customer/visitor</i></p>	
 <p>Limited (and old), seating at Frenze Beck replaced with new recycled plastic benches (middle image) Several additional benches have been included to enhance visitor enjoyment</p>	
 <p>Repair and clearance work along the riverside path</p>	

Frenze Beck Nature Reserve

The Frenze Beck nature reserve covers 14.5 acres and has been recently restored after a period of neglect during which it became overgrown and inaccessible. A network of paths have been created to take you through a mosaic of different habitats, including dry and damp meadow, ponds, hedgerows, ditches, reed beds and scrub. These habitats provide cover and food for a variety of wildlife and support many wildflower and plant species throughout the year.



Picture

D. Grazed Pasture

The central pasture is used for grazing cattle. At night the site is visited by bats, foxes, deer and hedgehogs. On some evenings a barn owl can be seen hunting over the cow pasture.

Look out for (flora) Ragged Robin, (fauna) Barn Owl, Common Gull, Green Woodpecker

Barn Owl

Picture

B. North Reedbed and Riverside

Reed beds provide an important habitat for mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates, both above and below water level. In spring and summer flowering plants attract many species of Butterflies and Moths. Within the reedbeds there are nesting birds such as Reed Warblers.

Look out for (flora) Meadowsweet, Russian Comfrey, Water Forget-me-not, (fauna) Reed Warbler, Blackcap, Moorhen, Small Red Damselfly, Peacock and Red Admiral Butterflies

Reed Warbler

The footpaths around the nature reserve are always open to pedestrians, but the car park is locked evenings and overnight. Please respect and protect the site and its wildlife by observing local byelaws (e.g. no fires or camping), pick up after your dog and use the dog bins at both entrances and take your litter home or use the litter bin in the car park.

F. Track to Sandy Lane & Angles Way

The hedgerows and grass verges are being managed so as to increase biodiversity. Hedgerows provide cover and food for many native species.

Look out for (flora) Bird's Foot Trefoil, Tufted Vetch, Common Knapweed, (fauna) Lesser Whitethroat; Chiff Chaff; Common Blue Butterfly

Picture

Common Blue Butterfly

E. Upper Meadow

Autumn mowing of the dry meadow and verges is encouraging more diverse wildflower species. These will attract more insects. Areas of scrub and bramble are left for cover and as a food source in autumn and winter.

Look out for (flora) Bee Orchid, Buddleja, Wild Carrot, Teasels, (fauna) Whitethroat, Gold Finch

Picture

Bee Orchid

Picture

C. Damp Meadow

This meadow is regularly flooded in autumn and winter, which produces different plant species from the drier areas.

Look out for (flora) Meadow Foxtail Grass, Welled Thistle, Marsh Woundwort, (fauna) Whitethroat

Field Vole

Picture

Purple Loosestrife

Picture

Water Vole



New interpretation now provided at the site



Contractors and volunteers creating new habitat and boardwalks along the riverside and connecting paths

Wildlife & Biodiversity

Outputs	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase and installation of bird nesting boxes • Creation and management of wetland habitat including reedbeds, ponds and ditches • Removal and control of non-native species (Hemlock) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ B1: Improves the quantity, quality and connectivity of habitats through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Habitat creation ○ Enhanced nesting opportunities birds (and potentially bats) ○ Restoration and management of existing habitats ○ Management of invasive species ➤ B2: Improves the conservation status and or abundance or distribution of species through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased nesting opportunities through provision of bird boxes - supporting and increasing nesting birds on site ○ Habitat improvements will support woodland and aquatic species on site

Expected Project Outcomes

- Range extension and species populations boosted as a result of habitat works and through the provision of bird boxes

Evidence



Area of reed cut for habitat management



Removal of non-native Hemlock from the site



Additional & Secondary Benefits	
Outputs	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowering of the river embankment works for flood alleviation and habitat improvements Increased access and enjoyment of the natural water environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ D1: Provides resilience and adaptation to climate change and reduces the risk of flooding through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flood protection benefits through overtopping of the river during periods of high flow ➤ D3: Provides benefits to the community, the local economy or NWG employees through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All access reserve located close to those living and working nearby (industrial estate adjacent to the reserve)
Expected Project Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetland enjoyed by local communities, visitors, and ESW customers 	
Evidence	
<p>Comments from residents recently discovering and enjoying Frenze Beck:</p> <p><i>“I have been living in Diss for 9 years and only walked round the reserve with my camera in March this year, why I have not visited before then I don’t know”</i></p>	

Customer Testimonies & Media

Some comments from visitors, taken from the Frenze Beck Facebook Page (<https://facebook.com/FrenzeBeck/posts/>):

I've just been for a stroll around the Beck, and it's looking great. Thanks to all the volunteers who make it so.

Frenze Beck is a treasure. Thank you for all your work.

Went for a walk along there. Good job everyone. Clean as a whistle.

It's great thank you for all your work. It has helped me survive this pandemic, I have been able to walk the dog from home to frenze Beck. We have followed the footpaths and discovered places we didn't know existed. Thank you everyone

Lead Partner Quotes & Testimonials

Chris Lewis, volunteer lead at Frenze Beck (May 2021):

“It’s been a real privilege to work with our group of committed volunteers, with wide-ranging interests in the flora, fauna and infrastructure of the site, and to see it restored over the last 4 years to its original design”

Comments from volunteers and visitors of Frenze Beck (May 2021):

"It has been very rewarding and fun doing a variety of tasks knowing that they will benefit the site and it's wildlife and plants in the future. Also, to provide a quiet, natural place for local people to enjoy. Something that has been particularly appreciated during the Covid months." – Tessa Greaves

“First visit, and I was enrolled. Yes, I am finding the work hard but thoroughly enjoying it – obviously this is helped by the friendly volunteers I have met” – John Pope

“Frenze Beck is becoming more and more popular with dog walkers and families, along with workers from the nearby industrial estate taking their breaks, many of which find the peaceful surroundings helpful for their mental health” - Volunteer!

The Beck offers lovely riverside walks in a relaxing countryside environment with enclosed reed beds, the volunteers do an excellent job in maintaining the paths and cutting back invasive weeds and nettles, better seating would be good to allow one to spend time listening and watching the birds animals that live in this unique area - visit!

Visitors often take an interest in the work we do to improve the walks and recognise the difficulties we have in maintaining a flood plain area on this beautiful site throughout the year.” - Steven Everitt

Other Supporting Evidence

The **Frenze Beck nature reserve** was created in 2003/4 from an area of marginal flood-prone land, by South Norfolk District Council, as part of the European ‘Transnational Ecological Network’ project.

Two reed beds, amounting to 1.5 hectares, were excavated with integral ponds and ditches so as to form stretches of open water and provide a range of wetland, meadow and pasture habitats.

The riverbank was also lowered and channels dug to allow the river to ‘overtop’ into the reed beds, thereby reducing pressure on the river at periods of peak flow. The beds were also designed to accept the run-off from the development along Sawmills Road, the reed acting as a natural filter for this water before it reaches the river.

After a period of neglect much of the wetland was overgrown with willow scrub, the open stretches of water were invaded by reedmace and common reed and the pathways fell into dis-repair.

But now the site is being restored by the River Waveney Trust, in partnership with South Norfolk Council. The Norfolk Wildlife Trust are also assisting with a 10 year restoration and management plan. The Frenze Beck nature reserve has now been designated as a **County Wildlife site**.

Some of the initial work has been funded by the Tesco ‘Bags of Help’ scheme, but most is being carried out by a team of dedicated volunteers.



Frenze Beck Nature Reserve

a wetland wildlife haven
on the edge of Diss

Sawmills Road
Diss
Norfolk
IP22 4GG

