

An aerial photograph of the Broken Bridges Nature Reserve CIO. The foreground is a lush green field with scattered trees. In the middle ground, there is a large industrial or commercial area with several large buildings and parking lots. In the background, a dense residential area is visible, with a prominent church spire rising above the rooftops. The sky is clear and blue.

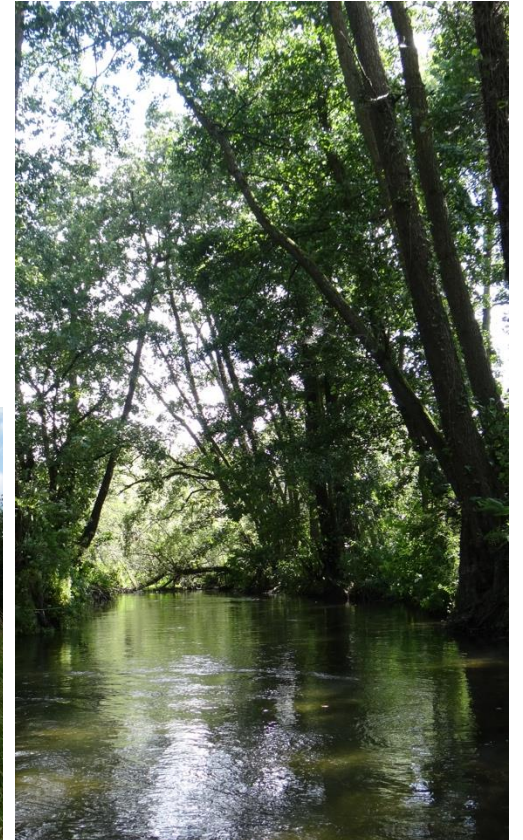
Broken Bridges Nature Reserve CIO Update

9th June 2025

<https://mybrokenbridges.org.uk/donate>

Agenda

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- **Highlights**
- **A Nature Corridor**
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Our Purpose

To promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment by promoting biodiversity at Broken Bridges and associated natural environmental sites, for the wellbeing, education and economic benefit of current and future generations of Salisbury residents and visitors.



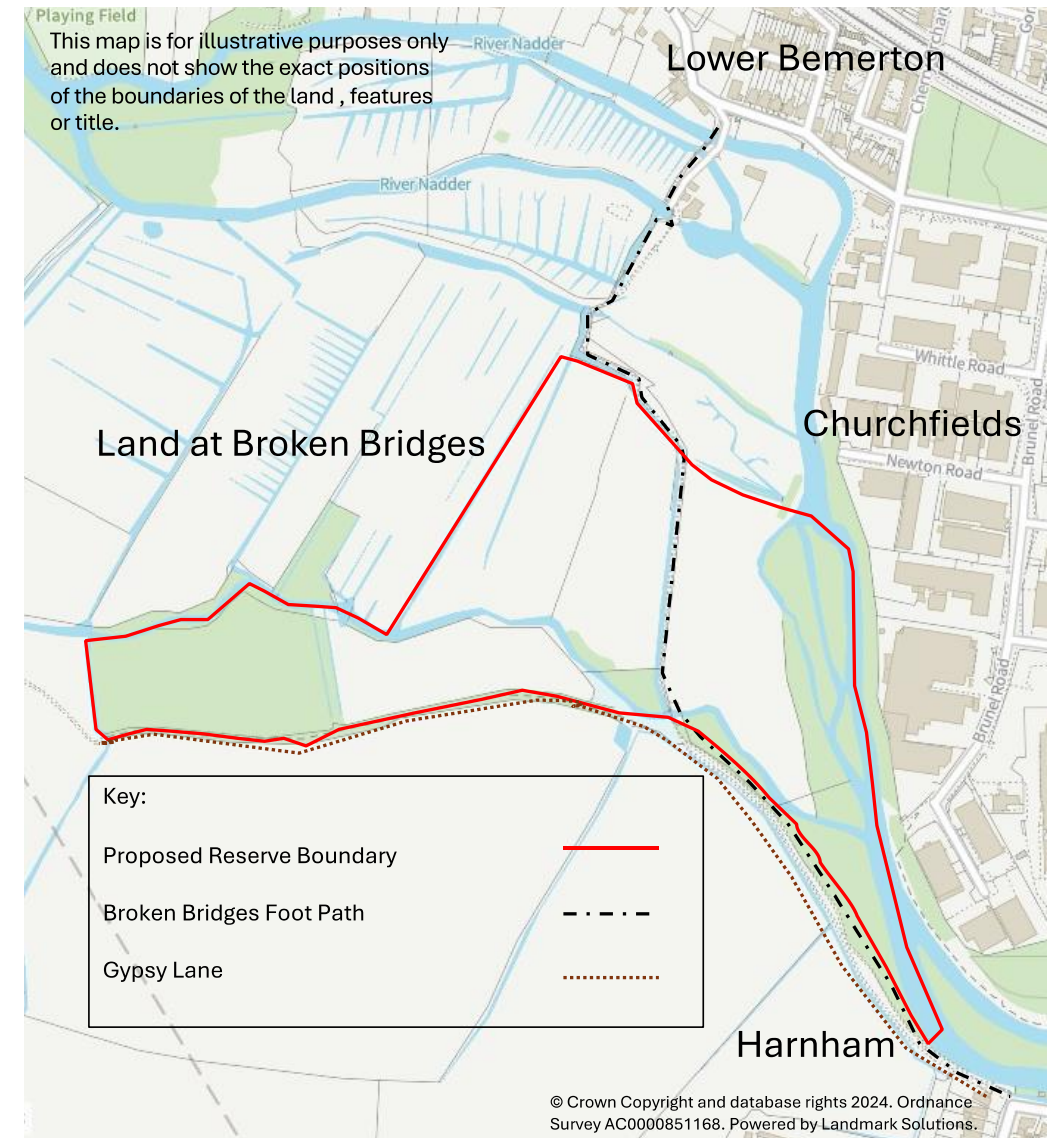
News Update

1. Our Plan is on track
2. As of 12 May 25, we became a charity
3. We have the funds to purchase the site
4. Our legal team, Batt Broadbent, are working with the vendor's team
5. We hope to complete in the next few weeks
6. Fund raising now switches focus to improving the footpath and conservation work



A Nature Corridor

- **Broken Bridges Nature Reserve is part of a green corridor which extends into the heart of Salisbury city. This includes the Churchfields riverbank, Nadder Island, Middle Street Meadow and the Harnham Water Meadows.**
- **The total acreage is 35 acres or 14.2 hectares, comprising approximately 2/3 unimproved water meadows and 1/3 woodland.**
- **The River Nadder and Spring Creek together with their banks are part of the River Avon System SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and SAC (Special Area of Conservation).**



River Nadder

- The river is part of the River Avon Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC), two of the highest levels of protection for sites of nature conservation value. Spring Creek is also part of the SSSI.
- Otters are known to be present, but the population of water voles has been decimated due to the presence of Mink. Kingfishers and little egrets are a common sight, herons visit from the heronry at Britford and many water birds including water rail, moorhen and little grebe are present.
- The distribution of both the invasive species Himalayan and Orange Balsam is extensive on the riverbanks and in the meadows on the reserve. Currently this is being eradicated as part of the 'Source to Sea' Project carried out by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Rivers team. We will be organising volunteer groups to help with this in summer.



Floodplain Meadows

- Floodplain meadows have been part of our historic landscape for hundreds of years but have been in steep decline since 1940 due to intensive agriculture, water abstraction, nutrification and/or lack of management and neglect. As a result, floodplain meadow remains one of the rarest lowland grassland types in the UK. The importance of these meadows is now recognised by the Floodplain Meadows Partnership for their floristic diversity and the range of wildlife they support, storage of carbon, sediments, nutrients and floodwaters and for their cultural and historic significance. [Classified as neutral MG9]
- These meadows are suffering from neglect due to inappropriate grazing and this has resulted in the loss of some rare wildflowers as shown in the report below.
- Grazing will be re-introduced, once the fencing is repaired, at an appropriate intensity to restore the vegetation to a healthy condition.



Carr Woodland

This is wet woodland dominated by willow (salix); it is a rare habitat with its own special ecology.

Salix fragilis is prone to frequent failure with branches and sometimes whole trees falling. The branches re-root and create an extension of the original tree. If a whole tree falls it will lie horizontally but still be attached at its root plate. New shoots will rise skywards, supplied with water and nutrients from the original roots, these new shoots soon become trees often called *phoenix* trees.

Wet woodland is important for flood water storage and water purification and supports a wide variety of amphibians, insects, birds and bats. Most of the woodland will be left to natural regeneration, only the trees close to the footpath will be managed for public safety by pollarding (where the upper branches are trimmed) or coppicing (where the trees are cut to just above ground level) this will prolong the life of the trees.

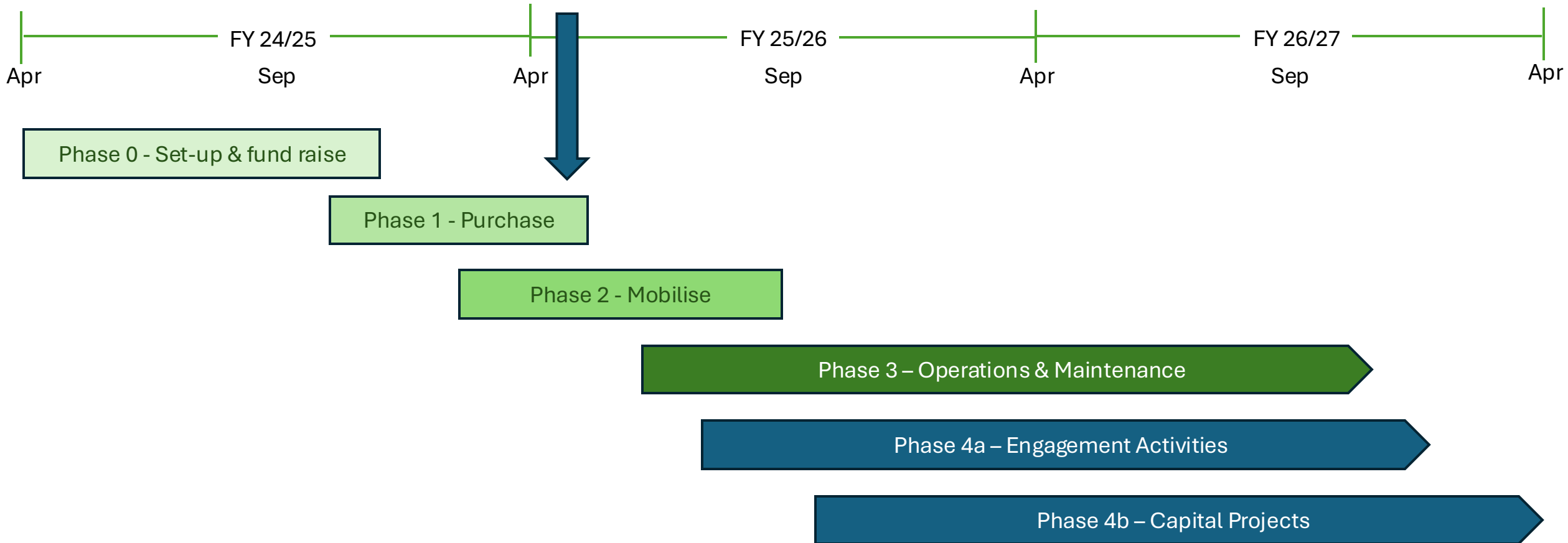


Ephemeral Ponds

- Improved habitat for wetland species, by creation of ponds or scrapes and management of ditches, will be considered in consultation with the Environment Agency. This would increase floodplain storage capacity, reducing flooding downstream by slowing the flow back into the river.
- Ponds created in depressions are ephemeral or temporary. Filled by rainwater and flooding, the pool then holds water until it can drain away or is evaporated. They are great for wildlife such as amphibians, as their short duration prohibit fish, which are predators of Amphibians' tadpoles. They would also attract a variety of wildlife such as dragonflies, damselflies, and freshwater invertebrates and encourage ground nesting birds such as snipe.



Outline Plan



Phase 2 - Mobilisation Priorities

1. **Tree Management**, the identification, evaluation and mitigation of risks, particularly in relation to the public right of way. We commissioned a tree survey and have allocated budget for the immediate remedial works identified.
2. **Signage** to educate and inform the public on the environment, their safety and the rules we will ask them to follow.
3. **Fencing**, the repair and relocation of fencing, to ensure public safety, improve appropriate access and enable conservation grazing. We have identified the need for widening the footpath corridor and are negotiating with potential conservation graziers.
4. **An Environmental Survey** will be undertaken by professionally qualified volunteers to establish the environmental base-line which will inform future work and priorities.
5. **Public right-of-way**, is in a poor state of repair. We are working with Wiltshire Council, the Ramblers and local groups on a plan to undertake urgent repairs. We are working with the Environment Agency on the design of a longer-term solutions which will be the subject of a specific fund-raising campaign.

Phase 3 - Operations & Maintenance

1. **Removal of Himalayan Balsam by volunteers, supervised by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Water Team.**
2. **Control of invasive mink by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to allow water vole population to recover.**
3. **Conservation grazing**
4. **Biodiversity activities informed by Phase 2 Environmental Survey supported by volunteers and partners**
5. **Review, repair and maintenance of flood storage capacity of the meadows.**

Dactylorhiza incarnata
a marsh-orchid



Lost from many sites in Wiltshire, Broken Bridges has a rare subspecies which needs to be protected.

Phase 4a – Engagement Activities

- **Monitoring and Evaluation.** Baseline data will be completed on plants, trees, fungi, birds, bats, insects and mammals and will be repeated annually to assess the performance and effectiveness of management programmes, projects, and policies, ensuring desired results are achieved.
- **Education.** We will welcome secondary school students for field studies. This will form part of the new Natural History GCSE, which starts in Sept. 2025. A-level students of Environmental Studies, Biology and Geography will also be invited to use the site for field work and practical volunteering. We should be ready to enable students to use the site by summer 2026.

There will also be opportunities for younger children to join in fun activities such as stream/pond dipping, bug hunts and identification.
- **Well-Being.** There is now growing evidence that being out in nature benefits both our physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. The existing good community links through local charity Safer and Supportive Salisbury will be utilised to engage with social prescribers and community connectors in delivering health and wellbeing opportunities at BBNR.



Phase 4b - Capital Projects

Dependent upon grant applications and fundraising:

- **Build a viewing platform suitable for wheelchairs with board walk access.**
- **Possible creation of a scrape and pond to encourage pond life and wetland birds.**
- **Provision of seats on viewing platform and beside Spring Creek.**
- **Possible erection of a hide at some future date.**

Ophioglossum vulgatum
or 'Adders-tongue'



*Abundant in 2009,
none found in 2024*

