

# Wear Rivers Trust

*'Helping To Protect Our River Wear'*



*Business Plan*

*2019—2024*



# Wear Rivers Trust

## *Business Plan 2019—2024*



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## Introduction

Wear Rivers Trust is a charity which was formed in 2008 initially operating purely on a voluntary basis, employing the first staff member in 2010. The Trust has since developed and now has eight Trustees and eight staff.

The Trust is a recognised and valued partner delivering land and river improvement projects with other environmental and community organisations, government agencies, local authorities, Northumbrian Water and universities, engaging local communities to care for their local river reaches and using the skills of our trusted volunteers to help us improve the quality of our River Wear and its tributaries.

This Business Plan sets out our ambitions for the Trust for the period 2019 to 2024.

## About Wear Rivers Trust

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## Our Mission Statement

The mission of the Wear Rivers Trust is to conserve, protect, rehabilitate and improve the landscape and watercourses of the whole River Wear catchment, from the watershed to the estuarine and adjacent coastal areas, through involving individuals, local communities, businesses, government agencies and public bodies with proactive improvement works and monitoring and by increasing awareness and understanding of the environmental factors that influence the river and its associated wildlife, whilst helping to promote the river as a recreational feature for the enjoyment of all.



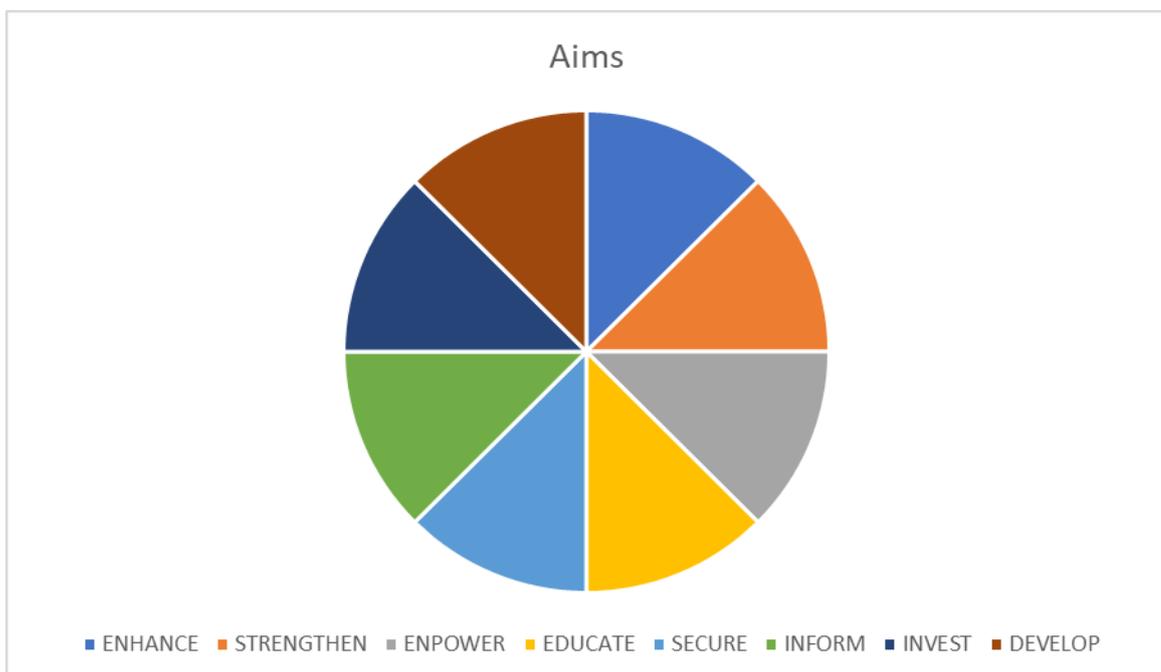
## What we do

We undertake a wide range of activities to understand and to address the multiple post-industrial and modern urban and rural pressures across the River Wear and its tributaries. These activities include mapping, monitoring and physical interventions to improve water quality, invertebrate and fish populations, Non Native Invasive Species and riverside tree cover. Monitoring provides “before” data as baseline and measures ecological responses “during” and “after” project completion.

Working through local communities and volunteers, and in partnership with other organisations, underpins all that we do. Working with schools is particularly important to us and is very rewarding. Inspiring the next generation and through them their parents is key to local people participating in, and leading, the care or restoration of the river reach or stream where they live or work.

The need to preserve and grow “Natural Capital” and the recognition of “ecosystem services” in improving health and well-being together with the importance of a healthy environment to economic regeneration are important strategic drivers.

## We will.....



## Our Objectives

- ⇒ Work with organisational and community partners throughout the Wear catchment, neighbouring regional river catchments, across the UK and internationally to deliver effective best practice; integrating urban and rural land, surface and groundwater water management for the benefit of the people and the environments in which they live and work.
- ⇒ Build strong and sustainable long term relationships with local residents, landowners, community groups, businesses and organisational partners. Promote a joined up approach to strategic and project planning, development and on-the-ground delivery, ensuring that barriers and opportunities are recognised and managed.
- ⇒ Work to improve the ecological condition of the whole Wear catchment by influencing land urban and rural management practices and improving river channel structures.
- ⇒ Support and encourage better public access to, and understanding of the land and river environment. Improve river recreation and access opportunities that allow the public to enjoy our river environment in an environmentally sensitive way.
- ⇒ Encourage direct action, thorough participation in and leading Local Management Groups, developing and delivering environmental improvement.
- ⇒ Work with schools to inspire the next generation and through them their parents. Continue to develop specialist education material to support teachers in delivering key elements of the National Curriculum in a practical and fun way.

## Our Plan for 2019 to 2024

Our ambition is to focus and expand on what we already deliver by reaching out to a wider audience and to work with them to help look after our River Wear and all its tributaries across the Wear catchment from source to sea, including coastal waters.

### [ WE WILL DO ..... ]

Avoid working in isolation through hosting the Wear Catchment Partnership,. We proactively work and find common ground with public, private and other charitable organisations, who have varying responsibilities for, and interests in, land and water management.

### [ WE WILL ACHIEVE .... ]

Delivery of a more joined-up and effective approach, sharing priorities, knowledge and resources. This will enable complementary and cost-effective opportunities to be identified, achieving wider ecological and social benefits, linking into health and wellbeing and economic regeneration objectives.

### [ WE WILL DO ..... ]

Work through the Greening Twizell Partnership to improve the ecology and reduce flood risk from the top to the bottom of the Cong Burn and its tributary Twizell Burn. Improve local amenity by creating an attractive, green corridor providing an ecologically diverse and relaxing environment for local residents to enjoy.

### [ WE WILL ACHIEVE .... ]

The restoration to a natural channel of a 200m long concrete section of the lower Cong Burn from Cone Terrace to the A167 road bridge will help fish re-populate the burn and reduce flood risk. This key project complements other linked works planned to restore habitats, improve water quality, reduce flood risk and improve access across the upper catchment.

## Our Plan for 2019 to 2024

### [ WE WILL DO ..... ]

Widen networks and gain access to high quality technical expertise through working with European partners to deliver two multi-national partnership projects. **Topsoil** concentrates on the inter-relationship between surface waters and groundwaters. **Carbon Connects** will measure the carbon stored when degraded peatlands are restored.

### [ WE WILL ACHIEVE.... ]

**Topsoil**, using example case studies, promotes the existence of pollution pathways from surface to groundwater, arising from agricultural and urban land management to decision-makers. **Carbon Connects** will restore a 10ha specimen site, promote the benefits of healthy peatlands and improve the availability of plug plants to support further restoration.

### [ WE WILL DO ..... ]

Using drone and satellite technology map the spread of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) together with opportunities to plant 22,500 riverside trees over four years to stabilise riverbanks. This work will reduce erosion, improve water quality and keep river waters cooler, helping fish to survive forecast higher summer temperatures.

### [ WE WILL ACHIEVE.... ]

Trained volunteers will physically control the spread of INNS from catchment headwaters, downstream. INNS control and tree planting will enhance wildlife corridors, provide measurable ecological and flood risk reduction, whilst improving public awareness through engagement with angling clubs, land owners and community groups.

## Our Plan for 2019 to 2024

### [ WE WILL DO ..... ]

Through the Gaunless Local Management Group we will work with farmers to reduce agricultural pollution whilst providing habitat creation and volunteering opportunities and delivering farm business benefits. Secure funding to continue education work with local schools and to improve the ecological condition of the whole catchment.

### [ WE WILL ACHIEVE.... ]

Continued support to schools delivering the John Muir award to successive year groups, using specialist school packs. Work **towardan** ecologically improved land and water environment complementing the bid to award the Stockton & Darlington Railway UNESCO World Heritage site status by the 2025 bicentennial, widening awareness of rivers to a wider audience.

### [ WE WILL DO ..... ]

Work in 3 Weardale sub-catchments to stabilise historic lead mining infrastructure to reduce the erosion of contaminated mine spoil. Promote the adoption of Natural Flood Management measures, both in Weardale and the River Browney, to improve water quality and reduce downstream flood risk.

### [ WE WILL ACHIEVE.... ]

Joined up discussions with farmers allow the delivery of a range of environmental and farm business benefits at the same time, building strong and productive long term relationships. Actions taken to reduce flood risk are likely to reduce field run-off, improve soil management and reduce erosion, improving nutrient retention and improving water quality.

## Our Plan for 2019 to 2024

### [ WE WILL DO ..... ]

Working through the Coastal Streams Partnership continue habitat and channel improvements and business engagement across Peterlee Industrial Estate, along the Wapping Burn, the wider Castle Eden Dene catchment and other coastal streams.

### [ WE WILL ACHIEVE.... ]

Complementing our work in the upper Weardale headwaters, engage with businesses and the wider community to reduce the volume of plastics, industrial and agricultural pollution discharging to coastal sea waters from these self contained catchments.

### [ WE WILL DO ..... ]

Engagement with Business through our 'Corporate Partnership Programme', aligned with a more effective communications strategy directed toward the general public. This approach will develop into a more flexible , less project-driven approach to funding, and will include crowdfunding and individual giving.

### [ WE WILL ACHIEVE.... ]

Better corporate and community communication will achieve greater recognition and understanding of the importance of integrated land and water management; to environmental and social wellbeing and the potential for economic regeneration., whilst allowing us to respond to need more effectively.

## How we will achieve our plan

### *Fundraising*

The Trust must achieve financial resilience through the creation of core reserves in line with the Charities Commission Guidelines to be sustainable in an unpredictable, complex and competitive funding environment. To do this we are developing the Corporate Partnership Programme to build reserves and to reduce dependence on project-specific funding, which severely reduces our ability to respond to need and opportunity. Critically this will allow us to more effectively sustain established relationships, for example being able to deliver specialist educational support to partner schools over successive year groups. Most funders value novelty above sustaining tried and tested techniques with established partners, often leading to a disconnected “stop-go” approach as projects are completed without follow-on funding being secured. The Trust is also exploring crowdfunding and individual giving to further widen our funding base.

### *Staff, governance and support*

Full time employees: Director, Senior Project Officer, two Project Officers, Volunteer Co-Ordinator, Office and Business Development Manager.

Part time employees: Education Officer (with support), Administrator.

Given the demand for our services the Trust expects to increase capacity by at least two full time equivalent staff over the period 2019-24.

Trustee Board: The Trust’s work is further supported by a board drawn from varied professional backgrounds. Trustees meet together on a quarterly basis, overseeing the Trust’s activities, financial management and governance, in addition to supporting several specialist sub groups.

Independent preparation of annual accounts and financial advice is provided by Ribchester’s Chartered Accountants

## The catchment area of the River Wear

Rising in the North Pennines several small streams drain from the hills between Killhope Law and Burnhope Seat to form the headwaters of the River Wear. The Wear begins where the Burnhope and Killhope burns merge at Wearhead. The high energy, rocky upland river flows eastwards through Weardale, gradually widening and deepening as it is joined by tributary rivers and streams, meandering its way through the more fertile flatter lowlands in the East of the county. The river is tidal from Chester le Street to Wearmouth, Sunderland, where it discharges to North Sea coastal waters. The Wear catchment has an area of 1080 square kilometres or 417 square miles. The main river is 97km or 60 miles long from Wearhead to Wearmouth. A series of deep wooded valleys or coastal denes arise independently from the Wear and discharge to the sea.

