

Water Environment Improvements Project Evidence Form

Scope & Purpose

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

Project Name

Hummer Beck and Lower Gaunless Project

Project Lead

| Company/ Organisation | Named Lead | Position |
|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Wear Rivers Trust | Daniel Rutland | Volunteer & Engagement Officer |

Bluespaces Improved

| Year | Claimed | Proposed | Reason For Any Change |
|--------|---------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Year 5 | 6.7km | 4.3km | Additional work completed extends water environment improvements from 4.3km to 6.7km (see Figs. 1 & 2) |

Water Environment 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 | June 2023 | NA | N/A |
| Water Environment Steering Group (Internal) | June 2023 | June 2023 | N/A |
| Water Environment Governance Group (External) | June 2023 | July 2023 | May 2025 |

Project Timescales

| Candidate Project Approved | Project Initiated | Project Completed |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| July 2023 | July 2023 | March 2025* |

*The baseline water quality elements of this project were achieved through a phosphorus removal scheme at New Moors sewage treatment works which was managed by NWG separately to the Bluespaces programme elements, managed by partners, and signed off in December 2024.

Project Summary and Highlights

Summary

Wear Rivers Trust (WRT) and NWG have worked in partnership with Durham County Council (DCC), Environment Agency (EA) and the local community to deliver improvements to 6.7 km of bluespaces through the Hummer Beck and Lower Gaunless Project.

The project built on a NWG water quality improvement baseline, delivered through WINEP investment, to install permanent infrastructure to remove phosphorus from final effluent discharged from New Moors sewage treatment works (STW) which flows into the Hummer Beck. The water quality improvements, delivered by Dec 2024, have resulted in improvements towards Good ecological status for two waterbodies (currently at Poor (Hummer Beck) and Moderate (Lower Gaunless) ecological status).

This partnership project had a primary focus of complementing baseline water quality improvements through additional land management interventions. The Hummer Beck catchment is one of the most intensively farmed areas within the Wear catchment and poor agricultural management practices have been observed such as over-grazing, lack of bankside management, poor fencing, with fly-tipping also an issue (see supporting documents).

Educational activities have also been delivered in the project area, engaging volunteers through the John Muir Award. Existing community networks were utilised to attract additional volunteers to deliver the habitat tasks identified through farmer engagement and to clear rubbish from the watercourse. Access links with the National Cycle Network 715 have been improved with refreshed waymarking. Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) surveys have improved catchment records, while Riverfly surveys have contributed to monitoring of water quality and fish populations. Litter-picking events with local volunteers and organisations have further improved water quality by removing rubbish from within and adjacent to the watercourse.

Highlights

- Bank stabilisation activities completed at two locations, one at each end of the project area
- INSS mapped throughout Hummer Beck
- John Muir Award delivered to ten Primary Schools in Gaunless catchment
- Eight volunteer litter-picking events undertaken on the Gaunless
- A community group, the Gaunless Guardians is established and now conducting regular water quality testing, riverfly monitoring and reports any water quality issues to NWG and EA.



Hummer Beck and Lower Gaunless

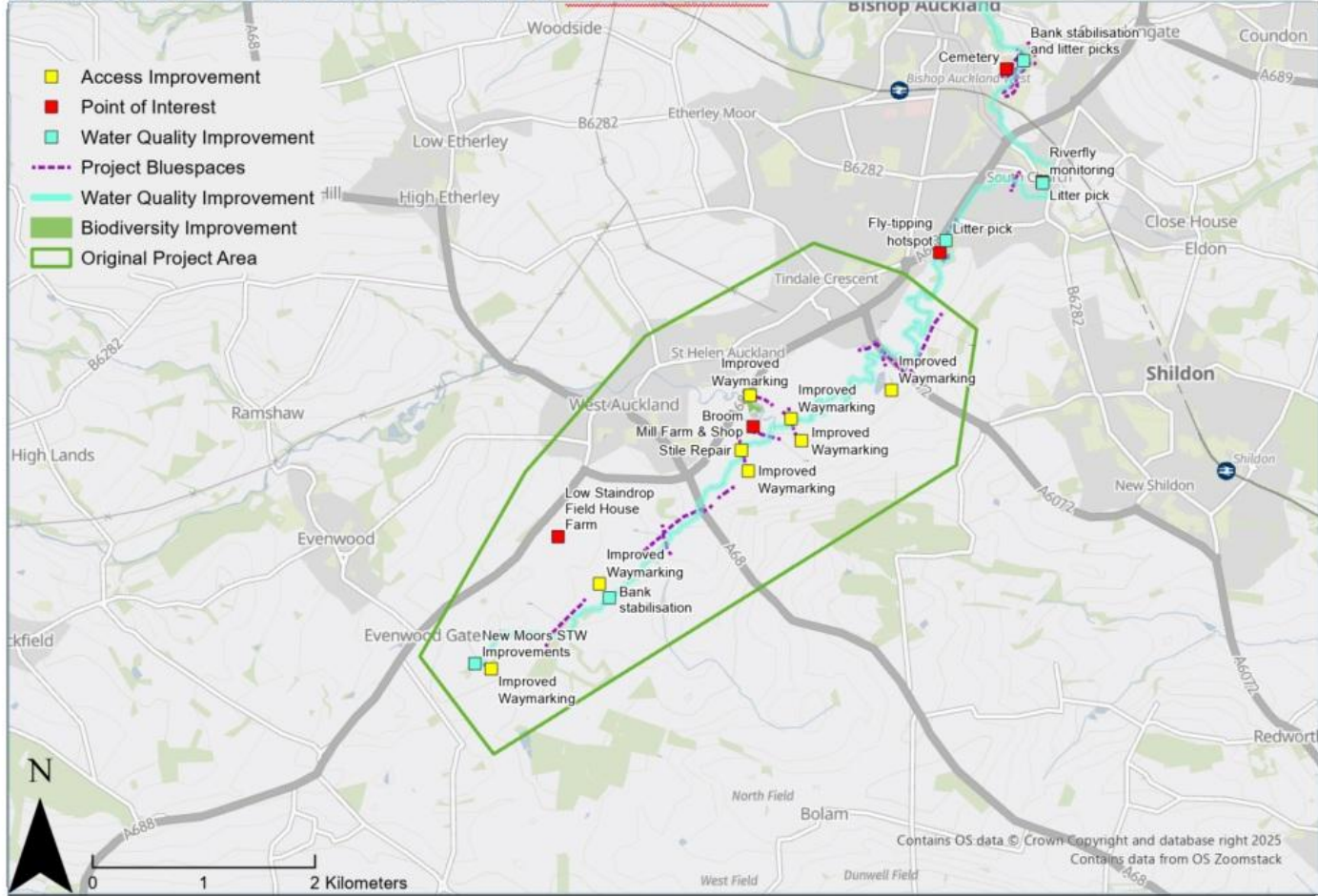
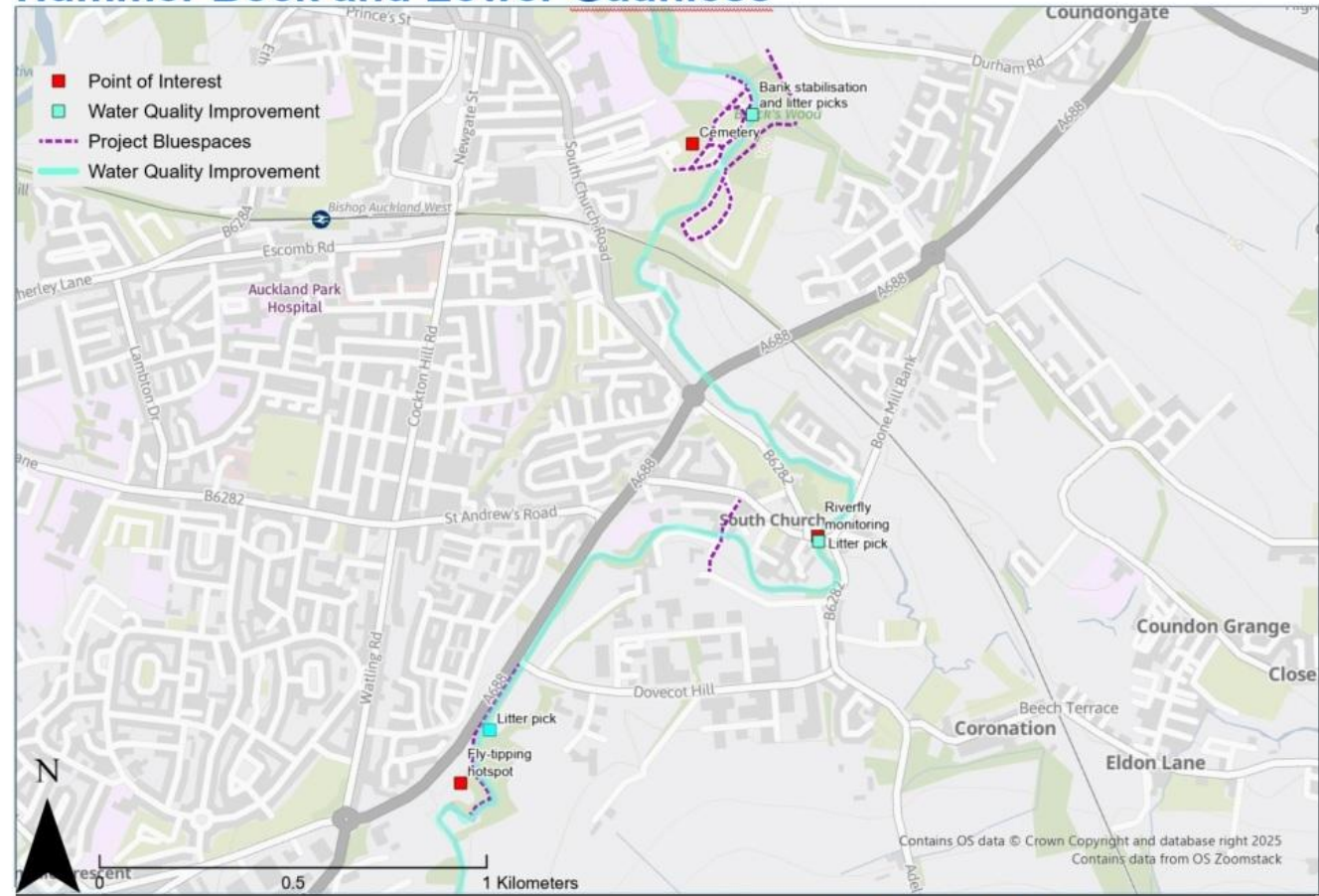


Figure 1: Bluespaces improved in the Hummer Beck and Lower Gaunless project area

Hummer Beck and Lower Gaunless



Total length of Bluespaces: 2.4 km

Figure 2: Detailed view of additional km of water environment improvements within Hummer Beck and Lower Gaunless project area

Project Outputs, Benefits & Evidence Against Criteria

| Access, Facilities & Recreation | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Expected Project Outcomes | Benefits |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education events delivery through the John Muir Award and volunteering will drive engagement and active participation. Renewed waymarking on existing routes and improvements to water quality and riparian environments will drive access and enjoyment 2. Engagement of volunteers mapping pollution pathways, INNS and delivering riparian habitat improvements will increase the time spent in nature and benefit mental and physical wellbeing 3. Engagement with landowners and volunteers will raise awareness of, and promote mitigation of, pollution and land management issues. Litter clearance events will raise the profile of plastic conveyance by rivers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A1: Increases access to, engagement with and enjoyment of the water environment ➤ A2: Benefits health and wellbeing through: ➤ A3: Influences positive environmental behaviors |
| Outputs | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Education</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WRT delivered the John Muir Award to ten Primary Schools in the Gaunless catchment over the 2023-24 academic year, and ran a week of activities in the summer holiday as part of Durham Council's Fun & Food event. <u>Volunteering</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight volunteer litter picking events were organised along the Gaunless, working with Bishop Auckland Fire and Rescue Service, DCC's Civic Pride team and NWG Just an Hour volunteers. The West Auckland and St Helens (WASH) group were supported with their regular litter-picks. • A newly formed community group, Gaunless Guardians, is now undertaking regular water quality testing at South Church, and monitoring outfalls. • A Big River Watch event was carried out on the Gaunless (3-6 May 2024). • River-fly training was delivered on the Gaunless and regular river-fly monitoring has commenced at South Church, extending the scope of the original project area to include additional river length. As a legacy of the project, more training is scheduled for April/May 2025 and a second monitoring site/group will be established at West Auckland. • Volunteers helped with two bank repairs at Bishop Auckland Cemetery and Low Staindrop Field House Farm (five and four volunteers respectively) <u>Waymarking</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkovers were undertaken of public rights of way (PRoW), and photos taken of sites needing attention. Six sites were identified as needing new signs, including Waymarking along cycle route 715. • Two footpaths adjacent to the cycle route have been improved. 2. <u>Pollution mapping</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following an informal meeting with local residents (15-20 attendees), a new community group, the Gaunless Guardians, was formed. This group now has water testing kits and carry out water sampling every month, as well as monitoring outfalls. They have a WhatsApp group and WRT are in regular contact for support. Trained volunteers have also recently commenced river-fly monitoring at South Church. <u>Riparian Habitat Improvement</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers were engaged with bank stabilisation work at Bishop Auckland Cemetery and Low Staindrop Field House Farm. Nine volunteers helped with collecting and bundling brash and putting in stakes and willow pegs. 3. <u>Pollution mitigation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Litter-picking activities, along with school-based education activities, have helped to raise awareness of plastic pollution, rubbish and fly-tipping in and along the Gaunless, including in its floodplain wetlands. • A commitment was secured from DCC to address fly-tipping enforcement in a rubbish hotspot. | |

Evidence



Schools engagement with John Muir award, including making litter-picking posters



Boats made during Food & Fun engagement event (left) and volunteers helping with litter picking



Water quality testing (left), river-fly monitoring (centre) and the Big River Watch (right)



Volunteer preparing brush for installation in bankside repairs, improved waymarking, and unblocked, reopened footpath

Wildlife & Biodiversity

Expected Project Outcomes

1. Several reaches of riparian habitat are degraded. Improvements such as bank stabilisation, leaky dams and improved riparian shading will benefit habitat condition and connectivity
2. Habitat improvements will benefit water quality and the suitability of the beck for fish through a reduction of high fine sediments. Increasing invertebrate communities; providing food for fish and habitat for spawning, including salmonids
3. No reliable reports of INNS exist for the catchment. A presence/absence survey will be valuable to confirm the beck is INNS-free or will map infestations for future management.

Benefits

- B1: Improves the quantity, quality and connectivity of habitats
- B2: Improves the conservation status and or abundance or distribution of species
- B3: Reduces risk or impact of invasive non-native species (INNS)

Outputs

1. Riparian habitat improvements
 - Bank stabilisation work in Bishop Auckland Cemetery was successfully completed in October 2024 and at Low Staindrop Field House Farm in April 2025.
 - Planting of c. 400 trees took place in a field beside the Gaunless at Broom Mill Farm.
 - Eight litter pick events improved habitats along the Gaunless, including in an area of wetland in the floodplain
 - Invertebrate life was documented through river-fly monitoring. Dippers, kingfishers, goosanders and other bird species were frequently encountered.
2. Silt and sediment reduction
 - Bank stabilisation work completed at Bishop Auckland cemetery in October 2024 has prevented further bank collapse and associated silt run-off despite high water levels during winter 2024/25. This work has extended the original project area further downstream, contributing to delivery of additional water environment improvements.
3. INNS
 - Through ad-hoc mapping during on-site visits, and a complete walkover in October 2023, INNS has been mapped throughout Hummer Beck, updating catchment records. There was no evidence of INNS, except at the confluence with the Gaunless which is more infested, especially with Himalayan Balsam. A large source of Japanese Knotweed on DCC-owned land was reported to them for their attention.

Evidence



Eroded river bank in cemetery before (left), during (centre) and three months after (right) bankside repairs



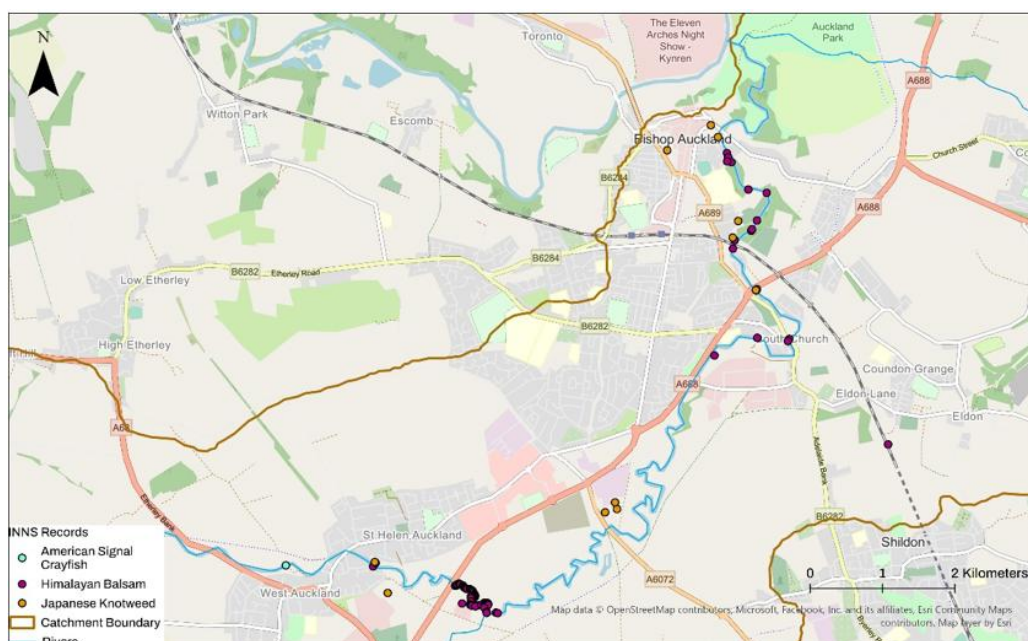
Eroded river bank at Low Staindrop Field House Farm before (left) and after (right)



Tree-planting area at Broom Mill Farm



River-fly monitoring



INNS records in the Hummer Beck and Gaunless catchment

| Water Quality | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Expected Project Outcomes | Benefits |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> NWG WINEP scheme to remove phosphorus from New Moors STW will improve river water quality and ecological status in the Hummer Beck to Gaunless waterbody. Farm engagement to reduce run-off from agricultural sources and physical habitat improvements will further facilitate improvement of WFD ecological supporting elements Hummer Beck is at Poor Ecological status under WFD for fish, invertebrates, Macrophytes and Phytobenthos Combined, and phosphate. Action to reduce agricultural diffuse pollution will contribute toward improvement to WFD status and will complement the reduced phosphate outputs from New Moors STW Reduced sediment inputs, through green bankside engineering and rubbish clearance will combine to improve the naturalisation, visual appearance, litter, and odour of the watercourse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ C1: Reduces pollutants entering waters from point or diffuse sources ➤ C2: Contributes towards improved status or no deterioration of rivers or bathing waters or protecting drinking water ➤ C3: Improves state and function of water, including naturalisation, visual appearance, litter and odour |
| Outputs | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>NWG WINEP scheme</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements at New Moors STW were approved on 15 January 2025. These works included installation of permanent infrastructure for chemical dosing and tertiary solids removal in order to reduce Phosphorus outputs to within regulatory-consented levels. Daily water quality testing between 19 and 27 November 2024 recorded a mean daily effluent P content of 0.131 mg/l, within the consented annual average of 0.4 mg/l. These improvements were funded separately through WINEP investment and, going forward, final effluent quality will be maintained as part of NWG's baseline operations. Bluespaces funding has delivered additional improvements over and above this baseline investment. <u>Farm engagement</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Output 2, below <u>Improving WFD status</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The WRT's Agriculture Team made visits to some local farms, though they have been stretched with priorities elsewhere and so didn't have the capacity to do more. Farm engagement was mostly with Broom Mill Farm and Low Staindrop Field House Farm. Tree planting took place at the former, and bank protection at the latter. Gaunless Guardians, established after a public meeting in July 2024, now conduct monthly water quality sampling, and monitor outfalls. Any identified issues are reported to NWL and EA, and data submitted to EA via Epicollect. A second public meeting with updates and a representative from the EA talking about water quality took place in Feb 2025. Following a training day in October 2024, monthly river-fly monitoring by volunteers commenced at South Church. A project legacy is the intention to extend this to more sites on the Gaunless, including the Auckland Project Deer Park. Three more local residents signed up for river-fly training in Spring 2025. <u>Silt and sediment reduction</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The original project ambition was extended to include bank stabilisation work in Bishop Auckland Cemetery. This was successfully completed in October 2024, contributing to delivery of additional 2.4km of water environment improvements. Bank protection work on the Hummer Beck, aimed at reducing silt and farm run-off, was completed in April 2025 at Low Staindrop Field House Farm. <u>Rubbish clearance</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eight litter pick events improved habitats along the Gaunless, including in an area of wetland in the floodplain | |


Evidence



Chemical dosing kiosks (left) and mecana and secondary dosing cabinets (right) at New Moors STW

| | | | |
|----|-----------|-------------|-------|
| 25 | | | |
| 26 | Tuesday | 19-Nov-2024 | 10.00 |
| 27 | | | 0.149 |
| 28 | Wednesday | 20-Nov-2024 | 10.00 |
| 29 | | | 0.092 |
| 30 | Thursday | 21-Nov-2024 | 10.00 |
| 31 | | | 0.177 |
| 32 | Friday | 22-Nov-2024 | 10.00 |
| 33 | | | 0.254 |
| 34 | Saturday | 23-Nov-2024 | 10.00 |
| 35 | | | 0.102 |
| 36 | Sunday | 24-Nov-2024 | 10.00 |
| 37 | | | 0.1 |
| 38 | | | |
| 39 | | Date | TP |
| 40 | | | |
| 41 | Monday | 25-Nov-2024 | 10.00 |
| 42 | | | 0.104 |
| 43 | Tuesday | 26-Nov-2024 | 10.00 |
| 44 | | | 0.105 |
| 45 | Wednesday | 27-Nov-2024 | 10.00 |
| | | | 0.098 |

Site lab data recording daily phosphorous content in final effluent discharged from New Moors STW



Caring for the Gaunless


Do you live, work or walk near the river Gaunless, and enjoy its wildlife? Are you concerned about pollution, sewage, rubbish and other problems affecting it? Would you like to become a Gaunless Guardian?

Please join us for an informal meeting to learn more, share your experiences, ask questions and discover how you could get involved in helping our river and its environment to thrive.

Tuesday 2nd July
6 pm – 7 pm
community room

Bishop Auckland Fire Station
Green Lane, Bishop Auckland, DL14 6RS

All welcome, no need to book
For more information, please contact Daniel Rutland,
daniel.rutland@wear-rivers-trust.org.uk



Caring for the Gaunless

Over the past year staff and volunteers from the Wear Rivers Trust have been actively caring for the river Gaunless and its environment. Come and hear about what has been happening, what remains to be done, and what happens next.

Representatives from the Environment Agency will be taking part to explain more about water quality and testing, and there will be opportunity to ask questions and share your ideas.

Tuesday 25th February
6 pm – 7.30 pm
Vinovium room

Bishop Auckland Fire Station
Green Lane, Bishop Auckland, DL14 6RS

All welcome, no need to book
For more information, please contact Daniel Rutland,
daniel.rutland@wear-rivers-trust.org.uk

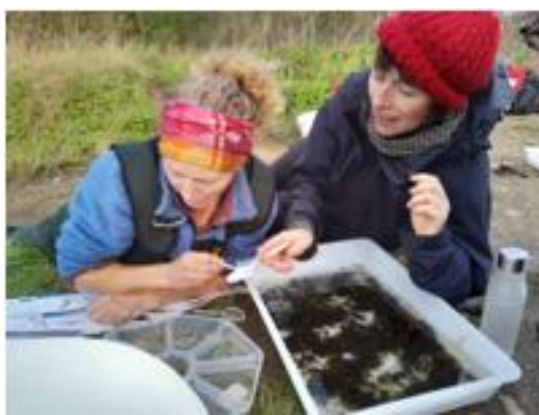
Public event fliers



Mine run-off reported to Coal Authority (left), private outfall reported to Environment Agency (centre) and local resident's photo of extreme Gaunless discolouration (right)



Water quality testing



River-fly monitoring



Bagged-up litter on cleaned river bank

| Additional & Secondary Benefits | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Expected Project Outcomes | Benefits |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved soil health and water infiltration will reduce the peak flows of the Hummer and Lower Gaunless Becks to reduce flood risk, but also buffer against low flows and maintain passage for fish 2. Working with farmers and land managers will support the aims of NWG to reduce phosphate 3. Project aligns to Wear Catchment Partnership plans and activities, and the North East Catchment Hub. It could be aligned with Local Nature Recovery Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ D1: Provides resilience and adaptation to climate change and/or reduces the risk of flooding ➤ D2: Provides benefits to local communities, the local economy or NWG ➤ D3: Supports strategic project or investment into strategic partnership or landscape/regional activity |
| Outputs | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bankside engineering has reduced sediment input and contributed to maintenance of river flow 2. Farmer engagement has raised awareness of the impact of land management activities on in-course water quality. 3. The project has engaged with Stuart Priestley of DCC and Stephen Thompson of DWT regarding biodiversity and the LNRS on the Gaunless floodplain. | |
| Evidence | |
| See evidence presented in above sections | |

Customer Testimonies & Media

Testimonies:

"Your work has not gone unnoticed, I have been approached by several service users commenting on the sterling work you and your volunteers have carried out, I have also taken notice of the works done thus far, your repair has held up well and doing as you say, collecting debris from the swollen river, please carry on the fantastic work you and the volunteers do so gracefully".

Tony Johnston, Bereavement Services Coordinator at DCC (re the bank stabilisation work at the cemetery)

It always a struggle to even find petty cash or to properly value volunteers. This in the last few months has been greatly aided by Dan and his team... I can state, that without fail Dan has always been attentive to our needs and requests. Even when he finds that our joint aims are in fact not joint aims, he will let us know that the team cannot attend, rather than just remain silent. We look forward to working jointly around the Bridge together with Historic England this coming season

John Raw, West Auckland and St Helen's (WASH) and Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway

'I have lived next to the Gaunless for 30 years but over the last 3/4 years have become worried by the smell and colour of the river. It is at times unpleasant to live beside whereas previously I have felt lucky to live next to the river.

Daniel has supported us to learn more about the river. He has organised us training such as the river fly testing. He has also provided us with water testing equipment and shown us how to use it. He has set up a spreadsheet where we can record the results and any additional information.

We have held our first meeting with good attendance following a leaflet drop to local residents and now we are all in email contact. We now have a much more coordinated approach to any issues/training/activities. We are planning a second meeting with a speaker to help us understand what we are testing for and what the results mean.

Daniel has responded to the needs of the volunteers by making time to plan for events on a weekend recognising that volunteers are working people too. Daniel is in regular contact with email and we have a Gaunless Guardians What's App group.

We have had some small success to improve the water quality by reporting a leaking main sewerage pipe which was repaired by NW.

I feel we have just got started. I know this is a small area of the Gaunless that we are concentrating on. If we can do more work together and can demonstrate and evidence the difference we have made, it could lead to replicating this in other areas. If we can evidence we have made a difference more people might join in. Rather than thinking that nothing changes, we could evidence that actually we can make a difference.

We wouldn't have been able to achieve any of this so far without Daniel. I hope we can continue to work with Daniel to establish regular volunteer engagement and make a real difference.

Jayne Price, local resident, and instigator of the Gaunless Guardians group.

The session was well organised and enjoyable.

Thoroughly enjoyed this session, lovely people. Making a positive change to help our environment :)

It was a great area to litter pick which is very beneficial for the wildlife so one achieves great satisfaction from helping. Everyone was friendly and Daniel the leader is very knowledgeable and experienced as well as being caring and friendly

Feedback left on Team Kinetic by volunteers who took part in our activities

Lovely dog walk this morning with the river devoid of rubbish. So much more pleasant for all.

WhatsApp message from South Church resident after litter pick there, March 2025

Media:

Northumbrian Water is in Bishop Auckland · Follow
1 May 2024 ·

👉 We're working with **Wear Rivers Trust (WRT)** to help protect the Hummer Beck and River Gaunless in County Durham.

👉 The team delivering a £4.3m project to upgrade our New Moors Sewage Treatment Works (STW), near Evenwood Gate, County Durham, have provided more than £14,000 of funding to WRT's Hummer Beck and Lower Gaunless Project, near Bishop Auckland.

👉 The funding is given through our Bluespaces programme, which goes above and beyond regulatory requirements when it comes to improving accessible spaces around water.

👉 The WRT project aims to support ecological improvements in the two watercourses, complementing our New Moors upgrades, which will improve the quality of treated water returned to the environment via the Hummer Beck.

👉 This Bluespaces funding will support improvements to 4.3km of accessible environments along and by the watercourses.

👉 The WRT project is also supported by @LLets clean up Bishop Auckland, Gaunless Gateway Big Local, Bishop Auckland and Shildon Area Action Partnership, Catchment Sensitive Farming (part of @Natural England) and the Environment Agency.

👉 You can sign up to WRT's Big River Watch event this Friday at <https://wear-rivers-trust.teamkinetic.co.uk/.../10220211>



29 3 comments 8 shares

Wear Rivers Trust · Follow
31 January ·

Litter Pick Success on the River Gaunless! 🌱

On Tuesday, we carried out a litter pick along a stretch of the Gaunless, on the outskirts of Bishop Auckland. An area which has unfortunately become a hotspot for fly-tipping. This accumulated waste poses a significant threat to wildlife, habitats and the river - which is vital for both natural and human communities. 🌱

We were joined by our dedicated volunteers, crew members from Bishop Auckland Fire and Rescue, and staff members from **Northumbrian Water**. 🌱

A heartfelt thank you to everyone involved! Your efforts have ensured that this litter won't end up in the river, protecting both our environment and the creatures that rely on it! 🌱

This litter pick is part of our Bluespaces Project funded by **Northumbrian Water**, where we are working to address issues that are affecting the Gaunless and its tributary, the Hummerbeck. To enhance the environment for both people and wildlife! 🌱

Want to conserve your local environment? Sign up to our volunteering platform to discover events happening near you! 🌱
<https://wear-rivers-trust.teamkinetic.co.uk/>
#wearriverstrust #wearconserving #conservation #river #BishopAuckland #environment #environmentalawareness #litterpicking



48 2 comments 10 shares

Wear Rivers Trust - Follow
20 March at 11:11 · 🌐

On Tuesday, Wear Rivers Trust were joined by our volunteers to conduct a litter pick on the wetlands of the River Gaunless! 💧
This litter pick was our final clean up, as part of our Bluespaces Project funded by **Northumbrian Water**. 🌱

Where we are working to address issues that are affecting the Gaunless and its tributary, the Hummerbeck. To enhance the environment for both people and wildlife! 🌿
Want to conserve your local environment? Sign up to our volunteering platform to discover events happening near you! 🌟
<https://wear-rivers-trust.teamkinetic.co.uk/>

#wearriverstrust #wearconserving #conservation #river #BishopAuckland #environment #environmentalawareness #litterpicking



16 2 shares
Like Comment Share

Wear Rivers Trust - Follow
10 January · 🌐

Winter is here, and our brash bundles are working hard to protect the riverbank on the River Gaunless from further erosion! 💧

As part of our Bluespaces Project funded by **Northumbrian Water**, we are working to address issues that are affecting the Gaunless and its tributary, the Hummerbeck. To enhance the environment for both people and wildlife! 🌿

Brash bundles are a nature-based solution, which help slow the flow of river water, to reduce erosion and stabilise the river bank... See more



39 8 shares
Like Comment Share

Wear Rivers Trust - Follow
22 October 2024 · 🌐

Today, Wear Rivers Trust staff and our volunteers have begun our riverbank erosion repair on a section of the river Gaunless. 🌟

Wear Rivers Trust is part of a Bluespaces project, funded by **Northumbrian Water**, to address issues affecting the River Gaunless and its tributary, the Hummer Beck. The project aims to enhance the environment for both people and wildlife, particularly in the parkland surrounding the Gaunless in Bishop Auckland Town Cemetery. 💧

After last winter's heavy rains caused bank erosion, the initiative will implement nature-based solutions to prevent further damage this winter. Thanks to the help of our dedicated volunteers we have made a start with repairing the riverbank using green engineering techniques. 🌿

We will be continuing with our work this Thursday and would be grateful for your help! 🌟

Want to conserve your local environment? To find out more please follow the link below. 🌟
<https://wear-rivers-trust.teamkinetic.co.uk/.../opportunity/>

#wearconserving #conservation #nature #BishopAuckland #greenengineering #volunteering



35 1 comment 2 shares
Like Comment Share

Wear Rivers Trust - Follow
25 October 2024 · 🌐

Green engineering update! 🌟

Following on from Tuesday's efforts, we have successfully completed our riverbank erosion repair on a stretch of the Gaunless! 💧

As part of a Bluespaces Project funded by **Northumbrian Water**, we are working to address issues that are affecting the Gaunless and its tributary, the Hummerbeck. To enhance the environment for both people and wildlife! 🌿

We have used an array of nature-based solutions to complete this erosion repair, to prevent further damage this winter. A big thank you to our dedicated volunteers, who have made a huge difference within the Wear catchment. As a small charity covering a wide area, the scale of work we do would not be possible without you! 🌟

If you too would like to make a difference and conserve your local area, you can sign up to our volunteer platform below! 🌟
<https://wear-rivers-trust.teamkinetic.co.uk/>

#wearconserving #Conservation #nature #BishopAuckland #greenengineering #volunteering



25 2 shares
Like Comment Share

Volunteering opportunities posted on WRT's Team Kinetic Volunteering Portal:

Spring Big River Watch, 03.05.24

Wear Rivers Trust are running a series of events across our catchment. Come along on Friday 3rd May to meet a member of the team, learn about our projects in the area, and help gather valuable information. Our Bishop Auckland event will focus on the river Gaunless within the deer park - at several points if time allows. Please meet at 4 pm at the Clock Tower arch off Bishop Auckland Market Place.

If you have access to a smartphone, please bring it along. Please also come dressed for the weather. The event will take place from accessible footpaths. Please sign up so we know to expect you. This opportunity is suitable for all ages, but please ensure that children are accompanied by an adult. Everyone welcome (no experience needed)!

Lower Gaunless Litter-picks, various locations from Bishop Auckland town centre to Tindale, 13.6.25, 20.06.24 and 20.08.24

Wear Rivers Trust is an active partner in a Northumbrian Water Bluespaces project to protect and improve the river Gaunless and some of its tributaries. We are working with local people to support a healthy environment that all can freely access, enjoy and feel proud of. Anyone is welcome to come and join us for this event, when we will explore some lovely open spaces and help keep them free of litter. All equipment will be provided, and no skill or experience is required - just a willingness to have a go. Some walking will be involved - max 3 km - and paths may be uneven, so please wear suitable footwear, and dress for the weather.

Litter picking is great for our mental and physical health as it allows us to spend time with like-minded people who care about the environment, whilst enjoying gentle exercise in the great outdoors. It contributes to community wellbeing by removing waste from the urban and green spaces and prevents litter from ending up in the local watercourses which can be extremely damaging to local habitats.

Litter-pick in partnership with WASH, West Auckland, 09.09.24

Wear Rivers Trust is an active partner in a Northumbrian Water Bluespaces project to protect and improve the river Gaunless and some of its tributaries. We are working with local people to support a healthy environment that all can freely access, enjoy and feel proud of. Anyone is welcome to come and join us for this event, which is jointly organised with WASH (West Auckland and St Helen's) in an area where litter tends to collect. All equipment will be provided, and no skill or experience is required - just a willingness to have a go. Some walking will be involved - max 2 km - and paths may be uneven, so please wear suitable footwear, and dress for the weather.

Riverbank Erosion Repair, Bishop Auckland Town Cemetery, 20 and 22.09.24

Wear Rivers Trust is part of a Bluespaces project, funded by Northumbrian Water, to tackle some of the problems faced by the River Gaunless and its tributary the Hummer Beck, and to improve their environment for both people and wildlife. The Gaunless flows through Bishop Auckland Town Cemetery, where its surroundings form attractive parkland, popular with local people. Last winter's heavy rains caused bank erosion and collapse in one area, and we are aiming to apply a nature-based solution - which will hopefully help to prevent further damage this winter.

This activity will be quite physical, though it won't necessarily require getting in the river (by volunteers, at least). We will be employing "green engineering" techniques using natural materials: essentially this means willow-weaving and wedging brash behind stakes driven into the river-bed. If this sounds like your idea of fun, please sign up! No prior experience is required, as we will have knowledgeable people on hand to guide us through the process. Health and safety considerations will be explained and adhered to.

The activity takes place over two days - Tuesday and Thursday - because there will be quite a lot of material to collect and preparations to be put in place for the actual repair. There is no obligation to sign up for both, though you might enjoy seeing the process through from start to finish, and priority for the second session will be given to those who also commit to the first.

Litter-pick near bypass, 12.11.24

Wear Rivers Trust is an active partner in a Northumbrian Water Bluespaces project to protect and improve the river Gaunless and some of its tributaries. We are working with local people to support a healthy environment that all can freely access, enjoy and feel proud of. Litter spoils both the river and our enjoyment of it, and the area we will focus on here is particularly blighted by it, bordering the main bypass road. Cans or food packets casually tossed out of car windows gradually collect in riverside vegetation and make their way down into the water, where they damage important wildlife habitats. As well as collecting litter, we will also attempt to identify and check on a couple of sewer outfalls on this stretch of the river.

Anyone is welcome to come and join us for this event: all equipment will be provided, and no skill or experience is required - just a willingness to have a go. Some walking will be involved - max 2 km - and paths may be uneven, so please wear suitable footwear, and dress for the weather. Litter picking is great for our mental and physical health, as it allows us to spend time with like-minded people who care about the environment, whilst enjoying gentle exercise outdoors. This is not the most scenic stretch of the Gaunless, and can be noisy with passing traffic, but we will make a significant difference where it is badly needed.

Healthy Walk at Hummer Beck, 19.12.24

We're almost at the winter solstice, and it can be hard to find the motivation to venture outside, especially with Christmas to prepare for. But there is still plenty to enjoy in nature, and even an hour or two of fresh air and exercise is a great tonic for mind and body. Join us for a gentle stroll near the Hummer Beck in the southwest corner of the Wear Catchment (just a mile or so away, water starts to flow towards the Tees). We'll enjoy seeing what bird and plant life we can find in these quiet rural surroundings, and also consider how healthy the watercourse and its environment appear to be. If there's time and inclination, we may continue for a coffee at Broom Mill Farm Café, where the beck flows into the river Gaunless.

The walk will be about three miles on easy level paths, but - inevitably at this time of year - is likely to be wet and muddy in places. Please wear suitable walking boots or wellies, and dress for the weather.

This activity is part of the Hummer Beck and Lower Gaunless Bluespaces project, funded by Northumbrian Water, who operate the New Moors water treatment plant beside the beck upstream.

River Gaunless Clean-up, 28.01.25

Here is an opportunity to help clean up a litter-infested stretch of the river Gaunless on the outskirts of Bishop Auckland. This area is prone to fly-tipping, and rubbish has accumulated along the banks, gradually making its way into the watercourse and so downstream. This not only looks unsightly, but poses a threat to habitats and wildlife, spoiling the river for both natural and human communities. A group of Wear Rivers Trust staff and volunteers recently litter-picked on a nearby stretch, and we'd like to continue upstream. This is a great way to make a visible difference in a relatively short space of time, whilst getting some healthy exercise and enjoying the company of others.

Lead Partner Quotes & Testimonials

Bluespaces has been a timely and effective scheme for the River Gaunless and its tributary the Hummer Beck. Funding from Northumbrian Water has enabled us to engage the local community in learning about, understanding, valuing and caring for these watercourses; in particular, the Gaunless, which flows past Bishop Auckland to meet the Wear.

There is a theory that the name Gaunless comes from an old word meaning “useless”, and the river has not always been treated with the respect it deserves, as the persistent problems with mine run-off and litter testify. It is also at the very edge of the Wear catchment, sometimes overshadowed by better-known rivers. We have been working with local residents to challenge these perceptions and begin a rehabilitation of the Gaunless and its environment, which have so much to offer in terms of ecology, biodiversity, education and leisure. The involvement of numerous schools and the formation of the committed Gaunless Guardians group have been key to this, and are a wonderful legacy.

As a local resident myself, and the member of WRT responsible for this project, Bluespaces has paid for the hours I have put in, organising public meetings, litter-picks, water-quality and river-fly monitoring and other volunteering opportunities. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to devote time to this effort, and I’m delighted with the energy it has already generated.

I have a sense that we are at a significant point for the Gaunless and Hummer Beck, with Northumbrian Water leasing land at Fylands, and both the Environment Agency and Auckland Project recently taking a more active interest in working with us to further our long-term objectives. An application to the Heritage Lottery Fund is also in progress. Bluespaces has paved the way for this, and provided the ideal foundation for ongoing engagement.

Daniel Rutland, Volunteer and Engagement Officer, Wear Rivers Trust

Other Supporting Evidence

Available on request:

- Presentations made to Gaunless Guardians (PowerPoint files)
- Gaunless Guardians monitoring records (Excel spreadsheet)
- Correspondence between WRT and Coal Authority, and RoW officer, DCC

Additional information relating to delivered outputs:

School engagement:

- The schools received three days of activities from Wear Rivers Trust and an environment-themed craft day from Daisy Arts. Wear Rivers Trust activities included visits to local wild spaces and Harehope Quarry to complete fieldwork. Each school achieved the John Muir award and pupils enjoyed the activities. Schools were: Oakley Cross, St Helens, St Johns, St Chads, Copeland Road, Thornhill, St Andrews, Woodhouse Close, St Josephs and Escomb.

Volunteer engagement:

- Litter-picks and surveying activities with volunteers highlighted the diversity of wildlife along the Gaunless, and supported greater awareness and appreciation of this in the local community. For example, otter prints were found and photographed regularly in a number of places.
- Volunteers with relevant expertise, including a consultant hydrologist, were engaged with pollution mapping and identifying pollution sources. This led to the identification of an area of colliery run-off (responsible for the regular discoloration of the river), which was flagged to the EA and the Coal Authority.

Future plants and project legacy:

- A grade II listed railway bridge over the Hummer Beck has been identified on Broom Mill Farm's land; a local railway appreciation group has been engaged about tackling the vegetation overgrowth, with potential for new interpretation signage.
- Emails were exchanged with Stuart Priestley (DCC ecologist) and others about a Local Nature Recovery Strategy in relation to wetlands in the Gaunless floodplain, especially in the light of new retail developments in the area.
- Discussions were held with NWL about land they are leasing beside the Gaunless and plans for Biodiversity Net Gain improvements in this area.
- Plans have been made for further work beyond the end of the Bluespaces project, for example the possibility of other wildlife improvements within the cemetery, including bird/bat boxes and native wildflower planting.