# 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

Martlesham Wilds

## Project Lead

| Company/ Organisation | Named Lead | Position |
|---|---|---|
| Suffolk Wildlife Trust | Michael Strand then Alex Downing | Philanthropy Manager |

## Bluespaces Improved

| Year | Claimed | Proposed | Reason For Any Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 6.9 km | 6.9 km | N/A |

## 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 | March 2023 | N/A | N/A |
| Water Environment Steering Group (Internal) | March 2023 | March 2023 | N/A |
| Water Environment Governance Group (External) | March 2023 | March 2023 | June 2025 |

## Project Timescales

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

## Project Summary and Highlights

**Summary**

Suffolk Wildlife Trust has worked with NWG and partners to improve 6.9 km of bluespaces through creating a new 117-hectare nature reserve beside the River Deben at Martlesham.

Due to unforeseen timescales required for site planning permission, part of this project's expected wildlife outcomes are still in planning and have not yet been delivered (saltmarsh incursion and invertebrate bunds). However, this project has delivered several alternative benefits for wildlife such as black poplar planting, hedge laying, bat and bird boxes alongside several engagement and species monitoring events.

**Highlights**

- The securing and transformation of a large area of former arable land adjacent to the river and estuary to a nature reserve has enhanced public enjoyment of this water environment, benefited wildlife and helped address issues of run-off improving water quality
- The restoration of two ponds has improved the quality and connectivity of habitats
- Two new wildlife viewing platforms are currently under construction for installation on site to further increase access to and enjoyment of the blue space for the public
- The installation of 8 interpretation boards has increased engagement with this water environment
- One locally crafted bench has been installed on site and two more are under construction
- Almost 4,000 volunteer hours logged for 55 volunteers in 2024, 4778 school children engaged and 6403 engaged across various talks, guided walks and training sessions

## Maps

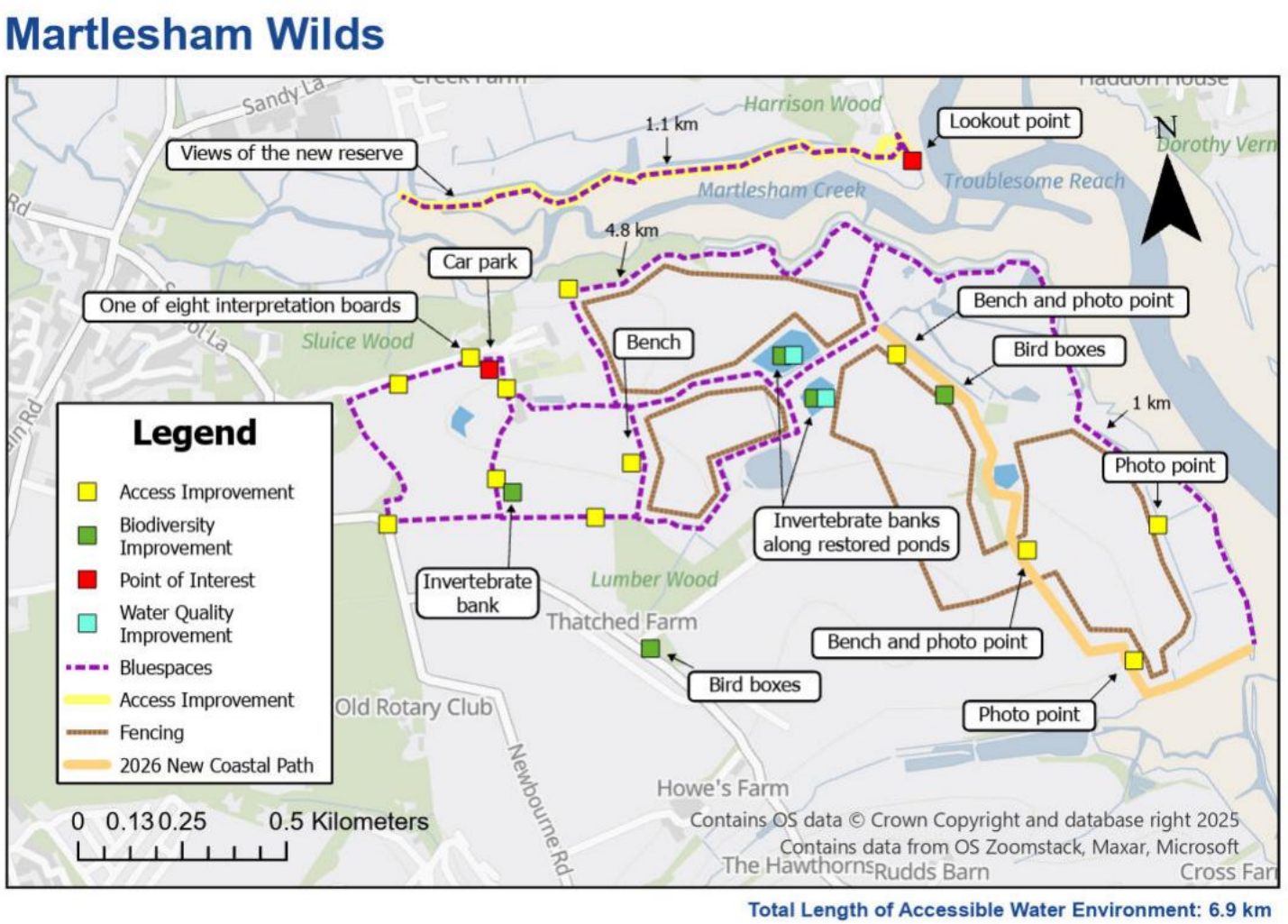


Figure 1: Bluespaces improved at Martlesham Wilds

## Project Outputs, Benefits & Evidence Against Criteria

### Access, Facilities & Recreation

| Expected Project Outcomes | Benefits |
|---|---|
| 1. The reserve is fully accessible to the public and has great views from the other side of the river which is a very popular walking route. New way markers, interpretation boards and wildlife viewing areas will increase access, engagement and enjoyment of the water environment<br>2. Installation of bike rack and partnership with First Buses will encourage a range of diverse visitors travelling sustainably to visit and enjoy the site and the benefits of the water environment<br>3. The reserve will create additional wildlife habitat and improve the site for visitors, benefiting health and wellbeing and encouraging positive environmental behaviours | ➢ A1: Increases access to, engagement with and enjoyment of the water environment<br>➢ A2: An increase in the abundance of saline plants and habitat for wildfowl, fish & crustaceans.<br>➢ A3: Influences positive environmental behaviors and health and wellbeing. |

**Outputs**

1. Eight new interpretation boards have been installed, these holding boards increasing community engagement with this new nature reserve will be replaced with specific maps of the area and way markers once further works have gone underway on site. Two new wildlife viewing areas are under construction and will provide greater engagement for the public (invoices and evidence of works available on request). One bench has been installed on site along the 'solstice path' and two are under construction by a local woodcraftsman (invoices and evidence of works available on request).
2. A partnership with First Buses was not possible due to road constraints. A bike rack has not been installed but other access improvements in the form of several engagement events such as guided walks, talks and volunteer training have provided alternative benefits to allow visitors to enjoy the site.
3. Additional wildlife habitat improvements have taken place across the site including various engagement events and volunteer trainings to carryout wildlife surveying. A volunteer team of 55 energetic and very active volunteers has also been recruited. Positive comments on how events and training sessions have benefited volunteers health and wellbeing are included in the Customer Testimonies section.

**Evidence**

One of the many public walks and training butterfly monitoring volunteers


One of 8 new interpretation boards

One of the locally crafted benches in the 'Solstice Path'

## Wildlife & Biodiversity

| Expected Project Outcomes | Benefits |
|---|---|
| 1. Restoring and protecting the saltmarsh habitat will increase the abundance and distribution of saline plants and increase habitat for roosting and feeding wildfowl, fish and crustaceans. Protecting the saltmarsh will help stabilise the coastal area, protecting it from inundation and erosion<br>2. Breaching the sea wall will provide additional habitat and reconnect the sea with the land as well as increasing the amount of habitat<br>3. Creating invertebrate bunds and ponds will improve the quality, quantity and connectivity of habitats and increase the abundance of associated species | ➢ B1: Improves the quantity, quality and connectivity of habitats<br>➢ B2: Improves the conservation status and or abundance or distribution of species |

### Outputs

1. The creation of saltmarsh habitat has taken longer than originally expected and is due to take place over the coming years. Other wildlife improvements such as 1km of hedge creation and grazing animals on site have provided additional benefits for the quality and connectivity of habitats.
2. The creation of saltmarsh habitat has taken longer than originally expected and is due to take place over the coming years. Other wildlife improvements such as the installation of 20 bird and 15 bat boxes alongside black poplar planting have provided additional benefits for the abundance of species.
3. Two ponds with invertebrate banks on site have been restored improving the quality of the habitat for wildlife and biodiversity. Invertebrate bunds are due to be created later in 2025 past the Bluespaces timescale.

### Evidence



Pond restoration works underway and complete with new invertebrate bank

Previous overgrown shaded low oxygen pond

1km of new or infilled hedge on-site

Black poplar planting


One of 15 bat and bird boxes

## Water Quality

| Expected Project Outcomes | Benefits |
|---|---|
| 1. Ongoing and planned engagement with local landowners and Anglian Water will help address run-off/pollutants helping to buffer the reserve and improve the condition and status of the river<br>2. Securing a large amount of former farmed land adjacent to the river and estuary as a nature reserve will reduce pollutants and run-off<br>3. A former largely arable farm will be transformed into a nature reserve with creation and restoration of saltmarsh, grazing marsh and ponds, which will provide improvements to the state, function, visualisation and naturalisation of water in the area | ➢ C1: Reduces pollutants entering waters from point or diffuse sources<br>➢ C2: Contributes towards improved status or no deterioration of rivers or bathing waters or protecting drinking water<br>➢ C3: Improves state and function of water, including naturalisation, visual appearance, litter and odour |

### Outputs

1. Pollutant run off from the reserve into the surrounding river have been reduced through hedge buffering and the conversion of cultivated land to a nature reserve halting the application of fertilisers to the land and the prevention of bare soil being left to elemental exposure. In the future while wetland enhancement works are being undertaken. Land drains will be crushed wherever possible, thereby restoring a slower and more natural flow of water through the site.

2. An arable farm next to the nature reserve was secured by the trust to create the site and land management improvements are hoped to help reduce pollutants and run off.

3. The arable farm has been successfully transformed into a natural area with improving the state, function, visualization and naturalization of the water environment. Saltmarsh habitat will take several years to establish.

### Evidence



Arable farm transformation to spring vegetation (left to right)


Arable farm reverting and self-seeding trees emerging

## Additional & Secondary Benefits

| Expected Project Outcomes | Benefits |
|---|---|
| 1. Saltmarsh, ponds and grazing marsh habitats are all effective carbon and water stores. Protection, creation and restoration of these areas will help provide resilience and reduce flood risk in a changing environment<br>2. The reserve is accessible to visitors and residents and will be of direct benefit to the community<br>3. SWT is a strategic partner and helping to create a SWT new nature reserve will assist with landscape scale nature recovery | ➢ D1: Provides resilience and adaptation to climate change and/or reduces the risk of flooding<br>➢ D2: Provides benefits to local communities, the local economy or NWG<br>➢ D3: Supports strategic project or investment into strategic partnership or landscape/regional activity |

### Outputs

1. The creation of saltmarsh habitat has taken longer than originally expected and is due to take place over the coming years. Grazing marsh has also taken longer than expected to establish. However the water supply to marsh areas, the majority of the fencing for livestock and all the solar power troughs have been installed in preparation for future work.

   Other secondary improvements have provided additional benefits such as contributions to the local economy through a local craftsman designing and creating three bespoke benches for the site, benefiting the local community by working with university students to survey on site, and collaborations with the River Deben Association to carry out fish surveys and training.
2. The reserve is accessible to visitors and residents close to the areas near the church where several interpretation signs show a map of the site. Access is possible via the church car park and the engagement events delivered through this project have promoted the reserve throughout the community, encouraging more people to enjoy the space.
3. Suffolk Wildlife Trust has strategically engaged several key stakeholders throughout the process of landscape scale recovery. The Environment Agency, Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust, the East Suffolk Catchment Partnership, Essex Wildlife Trust and The National Trust have all been taken on tours around the site over the past year.

### Evidence

Grazing marsh habitat preparation through solar powered troughs and fencing installation

Members of SWT and the River Deben Association carrying out fish surveys at Martlesham Wilds (on the River Deben)

## Customer Testimonies & Media

Quotes from volunteers taking part in events, showcasing wellbeing benefits:

- *Dan "The celebration afternoon was brilliant. With so many people involved in so many different activities, it was great to get everyone together to share our experiences."*
- *Alison "Thank you Charlie and JJ, so much for a fantastic afternoon. Your enthusiasm is infectious! What an action packed and informative session it was. It is great to hear about all the aspects of Martlesham Wilds -it is a real privilege to be part of this exciting project."*

Quotes from volunteers who had been influencd to start positive environmental behaviours at home beaucese of a talk at Martlesham Wilds:

- *"I have taken several friends around the site and explained what is going on. …This Autumn I didn't clear the garden as I usually would have done, but left plants standing or used 'cut and drop'. I didn't cut the grass around the edges of the lawn until the Autumn and left it to grow long throughout Spring and Summer. I have created a log pile at the top of the garden. Christmas and birthday gifts to family members have been bug hotels."*
- *"I've built a minibeast home in own garden, and was able to recognise and therefore protect, stag beetle larvae."*

Quote from the engagement wardens group, a really positive team who walk The Wilds, chat to people and report back – excerpts from What's App group: *Steve "A few more out on the Wilds this morning (11-12): 10 walkers, 4 runners, 4 dos (2 on 2 off); spoke to half of them, all interested and positive about how the Wilds might change. Was asked when the new KC111 footpath might be open?"*

## Lead Partner Quotes & Testimonials

*We are extremely grateful to Essex and Suffolk Water's Environment Team for awarding Suffolk Wildlife Trust a Bluespaces grant to the tune of £24,000. It has made a significant contribution in helping to transform the former arable land adjacent to the River Deben at Martlesham Wilds to a nature reserve. The grant has facilitated improved access and enjoyment for the public to visit this water environment as well as benefitting wildlife.*

**Alex Downing, Philanthropy Manager at Suffolk Wildlife Trust**