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

Upper Roding Trout Project

Project Lead

Company/ Organisation	Named Lead	Position
Roding Farm Cluster	Jane Donaghy	Roding Farm Cluster Co-host

Bluespaces Improved

Year	Claimed	Proposed	Reason For Any Change
5	7.2 km	7.2 km	-

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	October 2024	N/A	N/A
Water Environment Steering Group (Internal)	October 2024	October 2024	N/A
Water Environment Governance Group (External)	October 2024	October 2024	May 2025

Project Timescales

Candidate Project Approved	Project Initiated	Project Completed
October 2024	October 2024	March 2025

Project Summary and Highlights

Summary

The Roding Farm Cluster have delivered 7.2km of improvements to this accessible water environment.

The Upper Roding Trout Project has enhanced access to the River Roding through installation of two benches (one of which made by a local woodcarver), signage encouraging a walking route through 8 local farmers' land, and volunteering opportunities. The project has also improved the site for wildlife, biodiversity and water quality through the installation of bird and bat boxes, a new reedbed, a watercourse buffer habitat, water quality testing and brown trout habitat creation.

Highlights

- The demonstration of walking routes on five signs across the project area improves access to the water environment for the public.
- The installation of two benches, one of which was made by a local woodcarver and represents river wildlife, has enhanced access for the public to enjoy the blue space.
- Over 40 volunteer hours contributed to the project.
- Dappled shade creation has enhanced habitat for the Brown Trout, as recommended by the Wild Trout Trust.
- A reedbed and a bird habitat and watercourse buffer will provide direct benefits to water quality on the Roding.

Maps

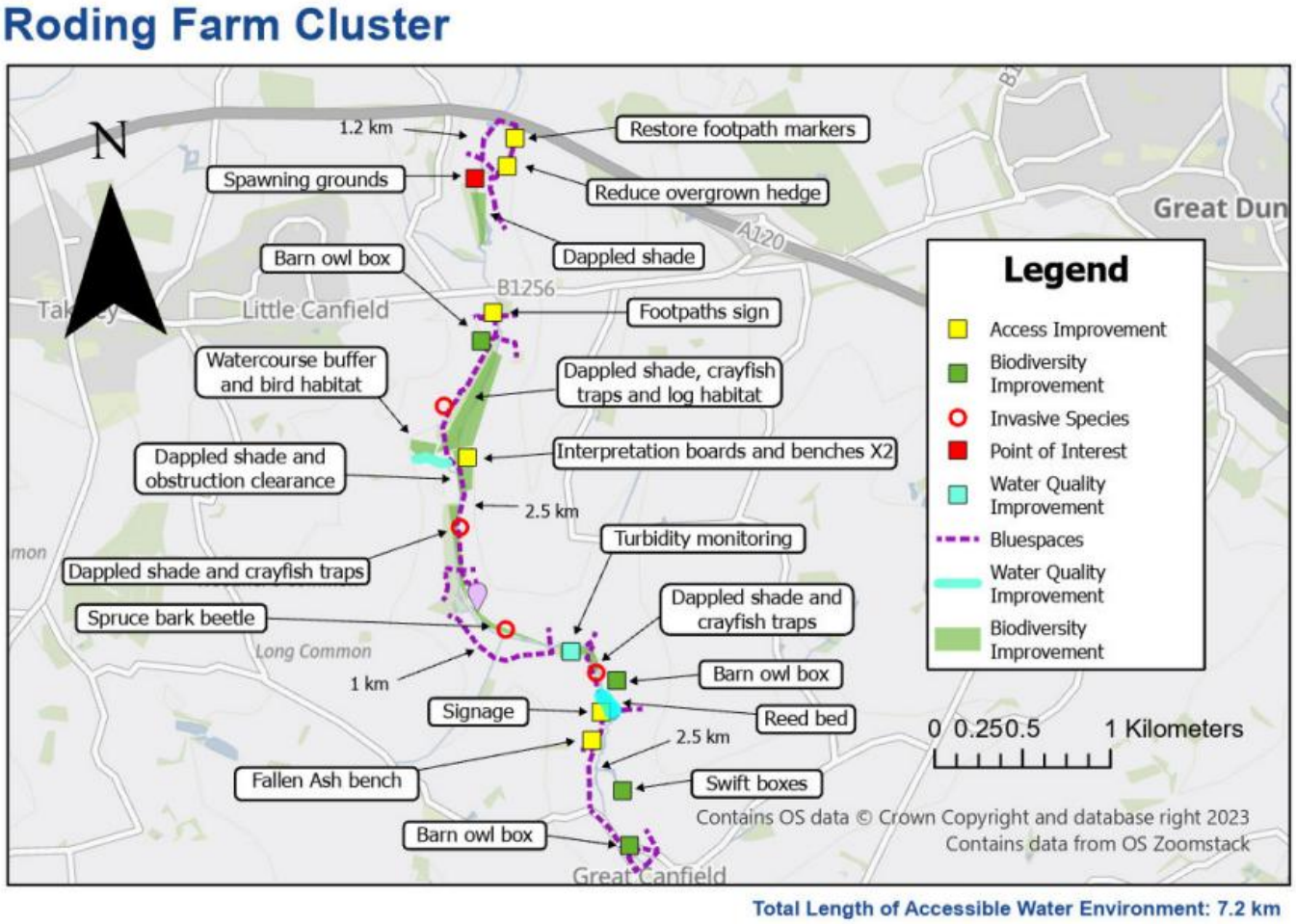

Figure 1: Bluespaces improved at the Upper Roding Trout Project

*Please note only one bench was installed midstream, crayfish trap locations were monitored but traps were not deployed and no spruce bark beetles were found on site during surveys

Project Outputs, Benefits & Evidence Against Criteria

Access, Facilities & Recreation

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
1. Access to the water environment will be enhanced through the installation of signage, three benches, restoration of footpath signage and the management of overgrown hedges impeding public footpaths. These measures will allow for increased views and enjoyment of the river. One bench will be made out of a local fallen Ash tree and will encourage learning about wildlife. Five interpretation boards will influence positive environmental behaviours, show local footpaths and increase enjoyment of the water environment. 2. Community volunteer events will help to remove bankside debris to improve water quality and avoid potential blockages in culverts downstream, and provide opportunities for the public to spend more time in bluespaces, enhancing their health and wellbeing. The impact of these volunteer days on participants' physical and mental wellbeing will be assessed through partner testimonies.	➢ A1: Increases access to, engagement with and enjoyment of the water environment ➢ A2: Benefits health and wellbeing through: ➢ A3: Influences positive environmental behaviors

Outputs

1. Access to the River Roding has been enhanced by the installation of five interpretation boards and two benches, including one carved ash bench from a fallen tree. Two weeping willows were put in beside one of the benches to make the area more inviting alongside enhancing dappled shade creation. The management of overgrown hedges encroaching onto footpaths has meant greater access and enjoyment for the public.Interpretation signage and carvings on the fallen Ash bench have educated the public on local wildlife and encouraged positive environmental behaviors.

2. 40 volunteer hours with 8 volunteers in total removing bankside debris helped avoi**d** potential culvert blockages downstream of the river. Volunteers feedback on the impact of these events on their wellbeing was very positive (see quotes later in the evidence form).

3. One Just an Hour event supported planting of reedbeds, strengthening the rapport between Essex and Suffolk Water and the Roding Farm Cluster while providing wellbeing benefits for Essex and Suffolk Water employees.

Evidence

Volunteers creating insect habitats

New benches and interpretation for the Roding

Interpretation signage with local walking route

Carved fallen ash bench

Before and after overgrown hedge management next to the public footpath

Wildlife & Biodiversity

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
1. The quality of the habitat will be improved by the installation of bird boxes, a wildflower buffer and the creation of deadwood habitats for invertebrates, hedgehogs and amphibians. Dappled shade will be generated along the river, creating habitat for the protected Brown Trout with the aim to increase their abundance along the Roding. 2. The invasive non-native species, Signal Crayfish will be managed through the installation of traps across the river and Spruce Bark beetles through surveying and monitoring	➢ 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. The quality of the River Roding wildlife and biodiversity for birds, invertebrates, hedgehogs, amphibian**s** and Brown Trout has been improved by the installation of over 10 bird boxes, a wildlife buffer, deadwood habitat creation and the creation of dappled shade.

2. Invasive non-native species have been managed along the River Roding by Signal Crayfish opportunistic culling (further advice from the Wild Trout Trust was that these traps may damage trout populations so it is best to just observe the INNS) and spruce bark beetle surveys (available on request) found no evidence of the beetle in the area.

3. The creation of a watercourse buffer and a reedbed habitat have provided extra benefits for biodiversity along the Roding.

Evidence




Bird and bat boxes made by the Scout group



Volunteer tree planting, creating dappled shade in thick brush and establishing deadwood habitats

Water Quality

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
1. Water quality will be improved by the creation of a watercourse buffer that will reduce agricultural run-off, and the creation of reedbed habitat which will help filter agricultural run-off while providing benefits for biodiversity. 2. Water quality testing of turbidity, ammonia and phosphate will be undertaken, and data shared with the Environment Agency, Thames21 and Bluespaces with the long-term aim to gain understanding to derive actions to improve the status of the river. 3. The dappled shade created through vegetation management will help improve the function of the river, allowing oxygen to flow in areas choked of light. River function will also be improved by the removal of bankside deadwood and debris.	➢ 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

1. Improvements to water quality were delivered through the creation of a watercourse buffer and a reedbed habitat that are reducing agriculture run-off.

2. Water quality monitoring by Hannah Checkers bought under the Bluespaces funding have provided valuable insights to the status of the river. These data will continue to be collected and are available on request.

3. The creation of dappled shade through vegetation management has improved the function of the River Roding allowing oxygen to flow in areas choked of light, alongside enhancing habitats for Brown Trout. The removal of bankside debris and deadwood has improved the natural flow of the watercourse.

Evidence



A sediment filled track leading to the new reedbed, new reedbed design, volunteers starting reedbed planting and seeding

Tractor view of the wildflower buffer strip being left after seeding

Volunteer carrying out water quality testing

Additional & Secondary Benefits

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
1. The removal of debris on the riverside will help reduce impacts on potential blocked culverts downstream, contributing to local flood resilience. 2. The Roding farm cluster fosters collaboration, community and wellbeing in a sector known for isolation: the project will benefit the local economy through working with local woodcarvers, tree surgeons and farmers. 3. Following the Bluespaces project, this team hopes to embark on a National Lottery Heritage Fund project in 2026, which has complimentary aims and will expand on these improvements.	➢ 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

1. Debris removal has helped reduce blocked culverts downstream, contributing to local flood resilience.

2. The local economy has benefitted from works in this Bluespaces projects for local woodcarvers, tree surgeons and farmers. Please see quotes from the Farm Cluster host later in the evidence form.

3. The Roding Farm Cluster team still hopes to embark on a National Lottery Heritage Fund project in 2026 and will be pleased to present the success of this completed Bluespaces project when applying for the fund.

Evidence

Bench installation celebration with the Bluespaces Delivery Manager, volunteers, the local public and local woodcarver (left)

Local woodcarver halfway through the fallen ash bench job (right)

There are still aspirations to apply for the National Lottery Heritage Fund this for 2026 to re-naturalise the river further upstream.

Customer Testimonies & Media

Volunteers Sue and Martin:

“We were here on holiday, this was a really great thing to be involved in ,it has made us want to volunteer on environmental projects more!”

Lead Partner Quotes & Testimonials

Jane, lead partner:

"This Bluespaces project has meant a huge amount to our Cluster, it has proven the ability of 8 of our farmers to work together for the benefit of soil, water and nature, whilst encouraging people from local communities to enjoy nature and create better access to water. Every Landowner who has been involved has felt the positivity and benefits of the project. We are so grateful to every organisation and volunteer who supported us."

Other Supporting Evidence & Data

About 100m of well overgrown hedge on site has been correctly layed in partnership with the EA and Hedgelife UK, the Bluespaces Delivery Manager (South East and East) also helped hedge laying on the volunteer day.

Hedge laying with Hedgelife and the Bluespaces Delivery Manager, Clemmie, and Project Lead, Jane