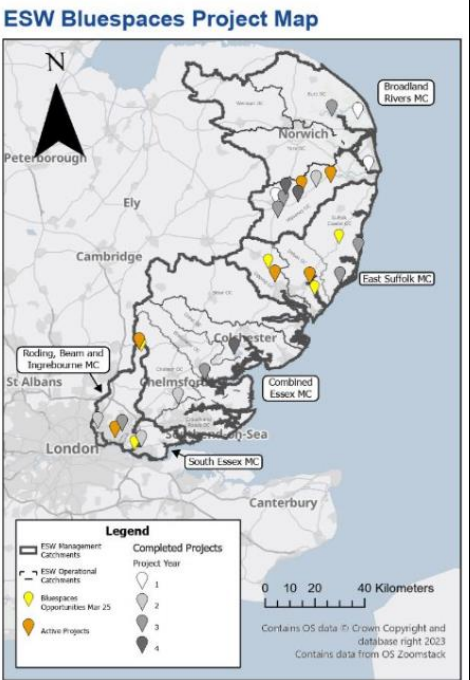
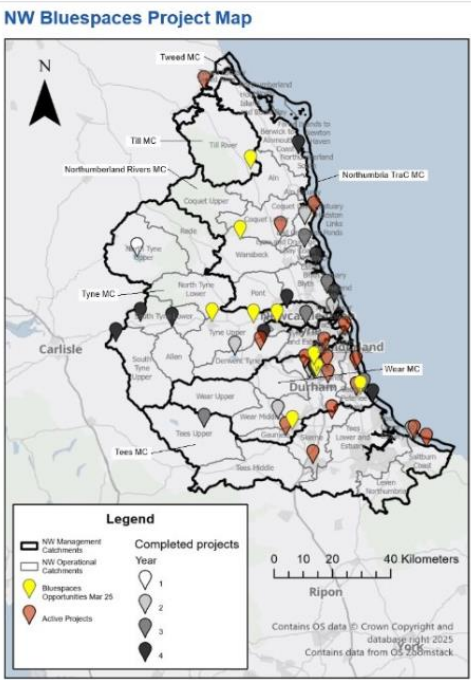


Meeting Notes		Meeting: Water Environment Governance Group	
Attendees: Richard Powell (Chair), Graham Dale, Fiona Morris (for first hour), Clare Deasy, Clemmie Moule, Sian Whitehead		Date: 27/01/25	Location: MS Teams
Apologies: Mike Jeffries, Anna Gerring, Jo Matthews, Zoe Frogbrook		Distribution: Attendees and Apologies	
Note: A full set of documents is available in the Water Environment Governance Group SharePoint Site https://nwgcloud.sharepoint.com/sites/TD0273/dcs/			
No.	Agenda Item and Notes		
1	Introductions CD and RP welcomed everyone to the meeting. All members were introduced to each other: Fiona is the EA Account Manager in Operational Catchment Services; Richard was on the NWG Water Forum and he also chairs the WEGG group; Graham (CCW) was on NWG’s Water Forum until last March; Clare brought Bluespaces with her from the Wastewater department when she internally moved over to Water Environment Improvements in March 2024; Clemmie is the ESW Bluespaces Manager at Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust working part-time on Bluespaces and delivering ESRT-related projects part-time; Sian was welcomed to the group as the NW Bluespaces Manager at Durham Wildlife Trust.		
2	Review of Actions No outstanding actions from previous meeting.		
3	Water Environment Team Update & Discussion Year 5 Programme Update Currently 133.6 km forecast for Year 5, including 9.2 km carryover for three projects, totalling 22 projects. Potential total could be as much as 263.4 km , 15.4 km over our target of 248 km. GD queried if all the remaining year 5 projects are to be finished by March and wondered if there was enough time for that to happen. CD responded that three projects are to be signed off today and the rest are due to be completed by end of March, with final sign-off in May. Project progress is being tracked and projects will be presented to the group for sign-off as they reach completion. We have accounted for some unexpected project delays (eg. due to weather) by leaving 15.4 km of slippage in our target of 248 km of improvements. We will stagger the projects so not all require sign-off at once.		

Overall AMP7 Programme Summary

Bluespaces has delivered **44 projects** to date including 17 Year 5 projects, taking the total to a potential **61 projects** across the scheme. Just under six hundred thousand pounds have been spent or mobilised for the Bluespaces Scheme, a large proportion of that was spent this year (approximately three hundred and fifty thousand pounds).

Area	Project	Status	ODI km
NW	Longdike Burn Wetlands	In Progress	4.3
	Water and Wellbeing - Teesmouth & Castle Eden Dene	In Progress	17.5
	Destination Tweed	In Progress	16.0
	Stockton Becks Restoration	In Progress	13.5
	South Burn River Restoration	In Progress	3.2
	Skerne Bridleway and River Restoration	In Progress	3.6
	Old Durham Beck: Renewed	In Progress	7.8
	Cut Throat Dene Restoration	In Progress	5.0
	Links with Nature	In Progress	6.8
	Hummer Beck and Lower Gaunless	In Progress	4.3
	Hauxley Hide and Trail Renovation	Completed	2.4
	James Steel Park Nature Trail	In Progress	1.2
	*Wilder Coast (Carried over from Year 4)	Completed	7.7
	*Healing Hazel Dene (Carried over from Year 4)	In Progress	0.5
	*Ebchester (Carried over from Year 4)	Completed	1.0
	Caring for Cocker Beck	In Progress	4.1
	NW Sub Total		98.9
ESW	Martlesham Wilds	In Progress	6.9
	Tin River	In Progress	3.1
	Gipping Improvements	In Progress	11.8
	Gores Brook	In Progress	2.5
	Starston Beck	In Progress	3.2
	Upper Roding Trout Project	In Progress	7.2
	ESW Sub Total		34.7
NWG			133.6



From 2020 – 2024 across the 44 projects delivered, the Bluespaces scheme reaped a massive number of benefits including tree planting, volunteer days, engaging the public, new wetland creation and public or training events. Even more benefits are to be expected to be delivered in Year 5 of the Bluespaces scheme, of which we will have more information at the beginning of the new financial year.

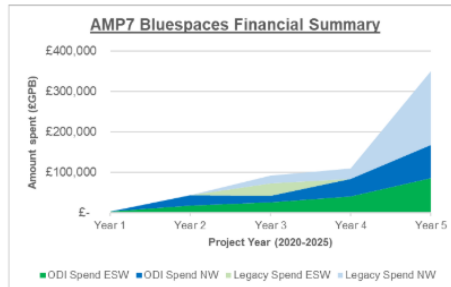
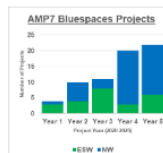
Spend has been weighted towards latter years as the start of programme was taken up with workshops and developing partnerships / projects. Summary of benefits delivered will be updated at the end of year 5 projects, so there will be more to report.

Some of the projects are part of bigger partnerships to which Bluespaces has contributed a relatively small portion, but which has helped the partners deliver overall outcomes.

Overall AMP7 Programme Summary

- 61 projects 39 for NW and 22 for ESW
- 263.4 km forecast
- £598,176 invested
- Masses of benefits, with a minimum of...
 - 7615 trees planted
7108 in NW and 507 in ESW
 - 5337 volunteer days
3062 in NW and 2275 in ESW
 - 5043 members of the public engaged
4510 in NW and 533 in ESW
 - 416.6ha ha of new wetland
0.7ha in NW and 415.9ha in ESW
 - 197 public or training events
185 in NW and 12 in ESW
 - 118 new benches
71 in NW 47 in ESW
 - 44 fish passage features
13 in NW 31 in ESW

NWG Totals (Years 1-5)	
Total Km Signed Off	129.8
Total Km ODI Forecast* Current ODI estimate	263.4
NWG AMP7 Target Km	248.0



Celebrating AMP7 Programme Success

NWG would like to recognise the successes of the programme by issuing awards to a small number of projects. This will help raise awareness of the programme in our communications, and allow us to highlight areas where we think partners have achieved excellence in their delivery of Bluespaces projects. The proposed awards include a Salmon Award (NW exemplar), Saltmarsh Award (ESW exemplar), Mallard Award (best value), Willow Award (best engagement), Kingfisher Award (best photos and/or videos), Riverfly Award (outstanding reporting and monitoring).

We suggest each category has one winner, and these are shortlisted by the programme team and the decision on the winner is taken by the WEGG. Winners could receive a wooden plaque and a commitment to project development support or working together in the future (TBC). These are up for discussion and will not be awarded until the end of AMP7 when Year 5 sign-off is completed with the APR submission in June 25.

NWG would also like to host a celebration event to mark the completion of the first five years of the programme, and the start of the second phase of activity. We propose this could link in with the awards above. Ideas are welcome. It is likely this would take place between July and September in the NW region.

GD thought that the celebration event is a good idea and that the awards cover a good range. The more publicity we can get the better. Not only does the publicity help NWG but it also gives recognition to all those working hard on delivering the projects. The awards will also help advertise the AMP8 programme. For voting, we'll need to present a shortlist to WEGG. FM agreed that it's a great idea and happy to be involved but suggested that we also consider projects that may not have achieved everything, but the partners have really persisted in spite of problems encountered.

RP asked if there is there a biodiversity award? We should have something to recognise biodiversity gain and we need to consider further. SW comments on the difficulty of quantifying these aspects. RP suggested incorporating this into the Kingfisher award and having the best photo of wildlife that has since appeared on site. FM stated it

would be helpful to have a shortlist (of three) for each category, with an explanation of criteria used to select candidates. For each category, we may also wish to have something for each of the runners-up to recognise them.

The group agreed having the celebration event located near one of the completed projects but have it somewhere as accessible as possible to accommodate those travelling from the south. Heidi would also be invited, and it would be planned around her calendar.

ACTION: Bluespaces team to arrange a celebration event for the Bluespaces team, WEGG members and NWG Chief Executive.

AMP8 Look Ahead

AMP8 will not include any ODI aspect, NWG worked quite hard to get Bluespaces on the non-statutory WINEP scheme. EA teams have accepted Bluespaces onto WINEP. AMP8 will try and achieve a similar amount of km as the first five years but with ambition to deliver even higher quality projects on both small-scale and landscape-scale, the latter potentially bringing in significant co-funding to the regions. We have significantly more funding in this second phase (£6.6 million). GD asked if the three areas of improvement will be the same as AMP7? CD responded that we want to take the best from AMP7 but also take advantage of it being more flexible whilst noting almost all AMP7 projects have covered all three aspects of improvement (access, biodiversity and water quality). RP supports having aspects of improvement to clearly show what difference the scheme is making.

Bearing in mind our AMP7 £3,000 per km, we realise this is not enough alone to deliver the improvements we are looking for thus we have costed £28k per km for AMP8,, assuming this would be co-funded and we would contribute half so £14k per km. We have also taken feedback from our partners who have struggled planning Bluespaces projects due to delivery, time or financial constraints and so we are proposing some finance for project development partner support. We are also exploring the idea of having a tiered funding scheme to promote both smaller community projects and larger catchment-scale projects.

AMP7 Programme Review

An AMP7 review will inform what strengths the programme can build on and changes to be made. We have developed a partner feedback form to assess what challenges and successes partners have found in the scheme. We are exploring moving the governance structure to just one approval group, for instance we would condense WESG and WEGG into one group that also includes our key partner organisations (DWT and ESRT). Our funding approach will also go under review, exploring the benefits and drawbacks to staggered payments – NWG's finance team will be advised. Project monitoring, tracking and evidencing will be streamlined for efficiency – current ideas hope to minimise duplication and explore online reporting platforms. Communications will be improved possibly through a comms pack sent out with funding packs and having a structured comms programme.

FM commented having a traffic light system for project monitoring to help tease out where there may be issues whilst keeping the process simple. RP pointed out that there are very good examples of grant giving and receiving with DWT and ESRT, and that agreeing a simpler structure would be good. GD thought the structure could reflect the size of the scheme, if projects had to put in weeks of monitoring there may not be enough incentive in the scheme for partners to do this - we want to encourage people to do this not see the programme tied up in admin to the extent it would slow things down. RP liked the tiered approach and the idea of staggered funding; he recommended looking at Branch-out fund processes; he also thought it would be good to have external independence in the governance group.

	<p>CD has proposed we have members from the WEGG to sign-off projects in AMP8.</p> <p>GD thought that the mapping tool is a good tool for customers but that he would like it to be updated with project photos. CD commented that how we use this mapping tool as we go forward into AMP8 is part of the AMP7 review.</p> <p>ACTION: Bluespaces team to include how we use GIS and mapping in the AMP7 review.</p> <p>ACTION: Bluespaces team to add photos of each completed project to the online mapping tool.</p>
4	<p>Project Sign-Offs</p> <p>Note that MJ and GD emailed comments in advance: GD said ‘I have read the three packs and they are all great projects which I would be happy to sign off (additional project comment input into the notes below).’: MJ said ‘I have read over the projects and enjoyed the detail in each of the packs. Here are some brief comments (input into the notes below)’. FM gave her apologies as she had to leave but thought the projects all looked great and she was happy to approve them.</p> <p>Ebchester Riverside Access – MJ thought this was ‘a fascinating spot, at the foot of a very steep road, near an old Roman crossing point, with cultural links to rowing, which was once a surprisingly widespread sport in the north east amongst working class communities. Great to see this opportunity being restored’. MJ also noted it is good to see access improved here and the provision of showers; the spot is also less than a km downstream from a significant NW sewage works. RP commented on the total project cost and Bluespaces input, one aspect in regard to the boathouse was not relevant and a bit confusing. RP was in support of signing-off the project. GD thought that the report is a little confusing because it has a detailed cost breakdown for the boathouse refurbishment project, which was not part of the Bluespaces work, but doesn’t have detail of how the Bluespaces funding was used and suggests clarity of this in the evidence pack.</p> <p>ACTION: SW to change the Ebchester evidence pack to clarify the benefits from Bluespaces and remove non-relevant figures.</p> <p>DECISION: WEGG agreed to approve sign-off for the Year 5 Ebchester Riverside Access Project, 1 km</p> <p>Hauxley Hide & Trail Renovation – MJ stated their position as Trustee of NWT, who delivered this project, and their bias but also commented how the footpath improvements and wheelchair accessibility have meant a lot to users. RP loved the comments and thought it had been a great project. GD agreed, he enjoyed the brass rubbing trail, he and RP are both very happy to sign off.</p> <p>DECISION: WEGG agreed to approve sign-off for the Year 5 Hauxley Hide & Trail Renovation Project, 2.4 km</p> <p>Wilder Coast 2022 to 2024 – MJ thought that this was a ‘great project, not least because it is focused on quite deprived areas’ and supported the report content although suggested for future projects more specific links to Bluespaces-specific-delivery and other funded delivery be made. GD commented that one of the most impressive things about the project was how many people were engaged throughout the project; however, as the project officer was funded by the overall project funding, it was difficult to tease out what exactly was down to Bluespaces. RP commented on how Bluespaces being one of three funders for the project officer was inspiring, and that should be captured on the evidence form. CD commented further on how we communicated the benefits Bluespaces has achieved. CD and GD noted the benefit of the project legacy delivered, we now need to think how we can help maintain projects and momentum e.g. maintenance funding will need to be worked through with the AMP8 governance group as they will be signing off on what is spent (CD). Going forward it would also be great to have a legacy pot aside for previous projects to upgrade, renovate or mend some of the things previously delivered.</p> <p>ACTION: SW to revise the evidence pack to bring out the benefits from Bluespaces (e.g. funded c. one third of the project officer role) and remove non-relevant figures.</p>

	<p>ACTION: AMP8 governance group to consider how to cover maintenance costs for projects and keep up project momentum post-Bluespaces.</p> <p>ACTION: Bluespaces team to consider a legacy pot for previous projects to further improve or maintain their accessible water environment, including repair/maintenance of previously delivered outcomes and more. Bluespaces team to do an assessment of each project to see what legacy funding would be appropriate. Launch the legacy as part of the celebration.</p> <p>DECISION: WEGG agreed to approve sign-off for the Year 5 Wilder Coast 2022 to 2024 Project, 7.7 km</p> <p>In summary, WEGG agreed to sign off 3 projects with a total of 11.1 km against the ODI.</p>
5	<p>AOB</p> <p>GD stated that unfortunately he may not go forward onto the new AMP8 panel due to where he currently lived.</p> <p>RP thanked the Bluespaces team for all their hard work on these projects.</p> <p>ACTION: CM / SW to send out a schedule to WEGG members for which projects will need reviewing for sign-off and when.</p> <p>ACTION: CM / SW to seek feedback from RP and GD on how they think the WEGG has worked and what changes may be needed for governance of the AMP8 programme.</p>