

River Clun Recovery Project - April 2015

The River Clun is set to benefit from more than £360,000 of funding over the next 4 years to help conserve freshwater, riparian and small woodland habitats throughout the Clun Catchment.

Awards from WREN Biodiversity Action Fund, Woodland Trust and Severn Rivers Trust will enable the Shropshire Hills Area of Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership to support farmers to undertake catchment wide measures to help return the Clun Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to favourable condition. The project will also be working to extend areas of existing good freshwater habitat (Recovery Sites) to provide an in-catchment refuge for critically endangered pearl mussels.

Subject to approval, the Fund is open to any landowner in the Clun Catchment. It has minimal Red Tape, any capital works will be mutually agreed and managed by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership. The project has the following elements:

Two Recovery Sites:

The project will work to restore/extend in-channel and riverbank habitats upstream from the Clun SAC to create recovery sites for pearl mussels.

Capital Items Include (where appropriate):	% Funding Rate
Riffle Creation, Riverbed stabilisation, Channel naturalisation, Riparian tree planting, Woodland restoration, Barrier removal etc.	100

A Catchment Wide Scheme:

This element of the project is focussed on resource protection measures particularly those that reduce sediment and nutrient transfer to the River Clun and its tributaries. The project will work with farmers to address sediment and nutrient runoff and to reconnect fragmented riparian habitat; undertaking a programme of works as follows:

Capital Items:	% Funding Rate
Riparian tree planting to offset losses due to alder disease	Up to 100
New woodland creation (small woodland, shelterbelts etc.)	Up to 100
The coppicing of dying and over-mature alders to rejuvenate stools and stabilise eroding riverbanks	Up to 100
The pollarding of over-mature willows	Up to 100
The fencing of rivers and streams to allow natural regeneration	Up to 100
Provision of alternative livestock watering	Up to 100
Revetment to stabilise eroding riverbanks	Up to 100
Existing farm track and gateway improvement to attenuate runoff	Up to 75
Watercourse crossing improvements	Up to 100
Small scale Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems (RSuDS) scheme	Up to 100

Survey: Lower Clun dye tracing survey of highway gully pots and sub-surface conduits to map pathways to the Clun SAC

This project is funded by:



Multiple benefits

Besides the obvious wildlife benefits an aesthetically beautiful, healthy and ecologically functioning river corridor delivers much more:

- Rivers and woodlands are great places to relax, enjoy and explore, they are also important for individual wellbeing and for social and cultural activities. Therefore significant for small businesses, many of which are in remote places and rely upon the tourism generated by the high quality landscapes of the Shropshire Hills.
- The habitats managed or created by this project will add to the green infrastructure of the farm to help farm businesses.

Functioning riparian woodlands/shelter belts help create microclimates - Reducing extremes of weather. For example, exposure to cold and wet is reduced to improve young lamb survival. Whereas improved underfoot conditions help reduce lameness and exposure to soil borne pathogens such as liver fluke.

Woodland shelter increases soil temperature and moderates wind speeds to reduce evapotranspiration of water and extend the growing season for grass.

Good fences and controlled livestock watering aid stock management. Less contact with neighbouring animals improves biosecurity, while less standing in mud and poo means cleaner animals.

Riparian woodlands create a buffer between the river and the field which safeguards farm boundaries from erosion and prevents valuable soil and nutrients entering a river, stream or ditch.

Well managed riparian woodlands are a valuable resource which can produce timber products, firewood or woodchip to provide additional income or reduce reliance on costly fossil fuels.

Strategically placed woodland or in-field buffers can reduce nutrient losses and soil creep on steep land.

- This in turn, helps improve water quality to provide cleaner drinking water and to reduce reliance on costly 'end of pipe' remediation.
- Riparian and other woodlands created/restored will help water to infiltrate soils rather than allowing it to run off, this will contribute to reducing high and low flow extremes and help protect downstream properties at times of flood.
- With increasing emphasis on resource protection, the measures available via this project will help to deliver cross-compliance obligations and may also contribute to Ecological Focus Areas as part of 'Greening' measures

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