

# River Wensum

## Restoration Strategy

Issue 14, September 2014

### Project scoops the inaugural England River Prize

We are delighted to announce that the River Wensum Restoration Strategy has beaten stiff competition from other projects around the country to win the inaugural England River Prize. The award was presented at this year's River Restoration Centre Annual Network Conference in Sheffield. We were also successful in winning the 'Large Catchment' category of the competition.

The England River Prize is awarded by a partnership of the River restoration Centre, WWF-UK, the Environment Agency and the International River Foundation, and celebrates successful approaches in river restoration delivering a wide range of benefits.



The project team accepting the award from IRF Ambassador Alastair Driver and RRC Chairman Fiona Bowles at the River Restoration Centre's Annual Network Conference in Sheffield

We thank you all for the support you have given us over the past few years, and without which our progress in restoring the river would not have been possible.

The award comes with a £10,000 prize fund which we will be using to further the aims of river restoration through the following activities:

- Developing relationships with universities and research institutes to help build the evidence base for ecological, geomorphological and fisheries benefits of river and floodplain restoration
- Providing interpretation boards at key public access sites to highlight the conservation value of the river
- Running a river restoration competition for communities along the Wensum



The judging panel were impressed with our holistic approach to river restoration, and the way that statutory agencies, professional advisors and local partners had pulled together to deliver significant habitat improvements to over 12km of the river.

## Get involved and enter our River Restoration Competition

We are inviting applications for small scale restoration proposals to locally improve the ecology of the Wensum and its tributaries. We will provide cash prizes to support the implementation of the best applications.

We can offer technical advice and assistance to ensure the appropriate consents and permissions are in place to deliver the works. Please feel free to contact us to discuss your proposal in more detail before you submit it.

Applicants should provide the following information:

- Brief description of the proposals highlighting the expected improvements / benefits
- Outline plan of the works
- Explanation of how the works will be delivered, along with a cost estimate

The applicant will need to have discussed the proposals with the landowner as permission will be required to implement any works.

Please email entries to [river.restoration@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:river.restoration@environment-agency.gov.uk) or by post to: Adam Thurtle, Environment Agency, Dragonfly House, 2 Gilders Way, Norwich, NR3 1UB.

The closing date is 31 October. Best of luck and we look forward to receiving your good ideas.

## River Tat restoration works

At the end of July we completed a further 730 metres of river restoration on the River Tat downstream of Tatterford Bridge. This section of the River Tat has been subject to the same physical modifications as much of the rest of the Wensum catchment, being over wide, over deep and straightened.



Before and after photographs of the River Tat showing bank re-profiling and redistribution of gravel bed to create a sinuous channel with varied bed levels



We have adopted a sustainable approach to river restoration, using spoil banks to narrow the channel, re-distributing the gravel bed material to create pool-glide-pool sequences and using timber from selective tree management to create woody deflectors and berms.

The project has provided a much improved habitat and we look forward to obtaining post-construction monitoring results to confirm the benefits. We had planned to extend the scheme downstream as far as Doughton Bridge. However, our local field team has been diverted to complete urgent coastal defence repair works resulting from last December's tidal surge event. We aim to resume work on the Tat and Wensum in spring 2015.



Installing a woody deflector on the River Tat. This helps to provide additional in-stream cover for fish fry and other wildlife.



One of the new gravel glides, installed at Pensthorpe in combination with a woody deflector to increase in-stream habitat diversity



Narrowing the channel using timber. This locally increases flow velocity, mobilising silt and sand to expose the gravel bed.

## Pensthorpe river restoration and habitat creation scheme

Work is nearing completion on a £680,000 river restoration and floodplain enhancement project at Pensthorpe Natural Park in Fakenham. Work has focused on a 2km stretch of the River Wensum and aims to preserve the chalk characteristics of the river and restore it to sound working order. The project will also create four large new reed beds and wet woodland.

River features such as berms, gravel glides, pools, pinned trees and deflectors are improving the quality and form of the river, while also creating essential habitats for species such as water voles, white-clawed crayfish, brook lamprey, brown trout, eels and otters.

The creation of the new reedbeds and wet woodland will enable Pensthorpe to have suitable habitat for breeding birds such as bittern, marsh harriers, Eurasian cranes and bearded tit. The project also aims to reconnect the river to the floodplain to allow natural flooding of areas when water levels are high.



The project team discuss the finer details of berm design with Jason Lovering of Five Rivers Environmental Contracting

The project, funded by Defra's Catchment Restoration Fund, is fully integrated with the aims and objectives of the River Wensum Restoration Strategy, and is being carried out in conjunction with the Environment Agency, Natural England and the local council.

Commenting on the project, Bill Jordan, Trustee, said "This work is absolutely fundamental to the longevity of the Wensum Valley as a prime spot for wildlife conservation in the UK. The work will prove vital in offering an alternative to the vulnerable habitats on the coast which can be so badly affected by the weather."



Two of the new wetland areas created within the Wensum floodplain at Pensthorpe. These are being planted with common reed, which is expected to quickly establish over the next few years and provide habitat for a range of specialised wildlife



Once established, with a new farmland hide and two other hides overlooking 15 acres of reedbed and open water habitats and the Wensum Valley, it will make a welcome addition to the Pensthorpe estate. New signage showcases the restoration work and habitat creation that have been carried out on the River Wensum.

Visit [www.pensthorpetrust.org.uk](http://www.pensthorpetrust.org.uk) or call 01328 851465 for more information and opening times. Parts of the river restoration scheme can be viewed from the public bridleway running alongside the river at Fakenham Common.

## Looking ahead

If you are interested in partnership working or would like further information, please contact us at the following email address:

[river.restoration@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:river.restoration@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Or by post to: Adam Thurtle, Environment Agency, Dragonfly House, 2 Gilders Way, Norwich, NR3 1UB.

To save resources we would very much like to keep as many people as possible informed by email rather than sending paper copies.

Please email us at the address above to be updated in this way. Please add your name and postal address in the body of the email so we can accurately identify you. Thank you.

