

Staffordshire Trent Valley Catchment 2025 Update

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What is the Catchment Based Approach

The catchment based approach is about using collaboration to maximise the natural value of our environment. A healthy water environment means better places to live, where people and wildlife flourish.

The approach builds a partnership working to improve water habitats within a river catchment and creates information sharing network of people invested in their local streams, ponds, rivers and wetlands

If you would like to know more or join the mailing list for catchment update, please email:

stvcaba@staffs-wildlife.org.uk

Species spotlight

Orange-striped stonefly - *Perlodes mortoni*



Nymph life stage of the orange-striped stonefly - Nick Mott



Adult life stage of the orange-striped stonefly - Nick Mott

A sentinel species for clean and cold streams. The common name derives from the visible orange stripe on the adult running from the top of the head and across the prothorax (the first body section after the head). It spends winter as a nymph and emerges as an adult in spring.

Stoneflies are an ancient group of insects, with similar shaped fossils found from about 250 million years ago. They are omnivores with large jaws they use to predate of other aquatic invertebrates. The adults, like many stoneflies, are not very good at flying, but have strong legs for clinging onto rocks in high winds or fast flows. This species was found in streams running through Cannock Chase, during surveys conducted in autumn 2023 and spring 2024. Read the full survey report that also includes assessments of water and habitat quality as well as management recommendations on the Cannock Chase National Landscape website [here](#).



Catchment Based Approach

Shugborough Estate, Duck Covert: River widening and floodplain restoration

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust have partnered with the National Trust, the Environment Agency, and DEFRA's Farming in Protected Landscapes programme with support from Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership, to boost biodiversity in a 30-acre area of the historic Shugborough Estate. The restoration work, completed by Ebsford Environmental, has transformed the floodplain near Duck Covert, part of the Trent and Sow Washlands project, creating a healthier wetland habitat and increasing the area's capacity to store water.



The site before works began



The site in the last stages of completing work

22 Ha

of wetland enhanced

The restoration work on the River Trent consisted of removing the steep and over-high embankment and widening the river to enhance 0.6km of river habitat. The section of river had been dredged many times over the years resulting in steep banks with a bund on top that was higher than the floodplain. This disconnected the river from the floodplain and prevented water from flowing over the field in times of flood. In the floodplain, we created five scrapes and three wetland areas. The creation of these shallow depressions allows the field to hold more water as temporary ponds for a longer period of time. The wetland areas are excavated deeper than the scrapes and can hold even more water. Each feature has variation in the shape and depth, which allowed there to be both deeper and shallower parts. This creates a mosaic of microhabitats and provides the ideal conditions to suite a range of species.

The spoil was used to create a low terrace in the field; this helps enhance views down to the river from the house and provides a place out of the floodplain for grazing animals to use in the event of flooding.



8 lapwings
have since
been spotted
on site

Three of the field floodplain excavations, one of the wetlands at the back of the image along the tree line and then two scrapes in front

"We're delighted with the results of this work, and have been pleased to work in partnership with our neighbours at Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. Shugborough Estate has a long and rich history of working with water through innovation and agriculture. This project builds on that legacy by enhancing our floodplain habitat for wildlife, while ensuring the estate remains a welcoming place for people and nature alike."

Greg Williamson,

Lead Ranger for Shugborough Estate

After the scrapes and wetland areas were dug on the site, they filled with water very quickly and dragonflies and small birds were seen exploring and foraging in them before the machinery had even left the site. Otters are known to use the site, and some shallow footprints were seen along the riverbank. A variety of birds have been observed on the site since the work was completed including Black Headed Gulls, a Kestrel and even a flock of about 8 Lapwings were seen using the site. It is hoped that wading birds such as Lapwings will breed on site in the future as the field is not accessible to the public and there is historic records with the neighbouring field is called Lower Lapwings. Excitingly, signs of Beavers have also been recorded on the site just a month after the works were completed!

Ella Moore
Conservation Officer for Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Friends of Bilbrook Update

The Friends of Bilbrook was formed in October 2011 as a not-for-profit community group improving the open spaces in Bilbrook. Over the last 14 years we have evolved into a conservation group.

Our first conservation project was in 2012, we applied for 400 trees from the Woodland Trust to plant to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. These were planted on land owned by South Staffordshire District Council in February 2012 by The Friends of Bilbrook, The Forest of Mercia, local Schools and playgroups, 2078 Boscobel Squadron ATC and members of the community. We have added to the wood over the years and believe we have planted around 1000 trees.

We have been amazed and delighted with how quickly an amenity grassland has become a thriving woodland full of different species and varied habitats in such a short space of time. We have five species of Bat, 136 species of moth at the moment of writing this article. We have the first reporting of a Spindle Moth (*Ypsolopha mucronella*) in Staffordshire, and whilst moth trapping in August spotted the first Lesser Stag Beetle in the wood. We have Wood Mice, Field Vole, Bank Vole, Common Shrew, and Weasel. In Spring 2024 The Belvide Ringers ringed 900 Siskin in the wood, a couple were re-caught in Scotland!



Siskin caught during bird ringing

In 2014 we began to monitor the health of The Moat Brook which runs alongside our wood, now known as Jubilee Wood. We began to test monthly for phosphate, ammonia, turbidity, temperature and complete kick samples twice a year. As a result of monitoring, we were able to report several instances of pollution from the housebuilding happening across the road and as a result the developers were ordered to change their working practices preventing more pollution. We have also reported compost high in nitrates being placed too close to the brook, as this would have allowed nitrates to wash into the brook during heavy rainfall, impacting on the eco system. As a result, the farmer was ordered to move the compost back from the brook. We have also been fighting Himalayan Balsam along the brook for the past eight years and are beginning to notice native plants returning in some parts of the banks.

We have been part of multiple river and floodplain restorations as the brook was straightened out for agricultural purposes a long time ago. With support and funding from the EA and Waterside Care, we have worked to reinstate the wiggles of the brook by felling trees, creating leaky dams and building diversion structures. There have been huge changes in the brook as it has developed gravel beds, sandy sections, deep pools and riffles. Our restoration work expanded to include a project on Banks Field (owned by Bilbrook Parish Council) in Bilbrook to reinstate Wetlands next to the Moat Brook further down stream from Jubilee Wood. In discussions with the Parish Council and the tenant farmer, we have been able to fence off a large strip of land along the brook for wetland creation and tree planting. With support from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and Environment Agency funding, we have been able to create a number of scrapes along the strip of land to form pools. The area managed with grazing in September.

Not long after the first restoration project we saw trout eggs and as a result were awarded the Trout in the Town Bronze award. On our camera traps we have seen Otters, Egrets, Herons and Kingfishers. This year we have noted Common Sandpiper, Woodcock, Snipe, Lapwings, many Damselflies, Four Spotted Chaser and Broad Bodied Chaser Dragonflies as well as Emperor Dragonflies.

Our Aim:

To make Bilbrook a better place for people and wildlife whilst making it more resilient to climate change and biodiversity loss.



Lesser Stag beetle caught with moths

136

species of moth recorded



One of the scrapes created in the edge strip of Banks Field



We have loved networking over the years and forging partnerships with the Belvide Ringers who hold bird ringing events two or three times per year, the Staffordshire Bat Group who hold a bat walk every year, Robbaston College whose students carry out small mammal trapping every year, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust who have supported us with river restoration projects, the Environment Agency who have supported us with pollution incidents, the Riverfly partnership, The Trent Valley partnership and The Forest of Mercia who have given help and advice with tree planting and tree management.

The Friends of Bilbrook within the brook securing large wood to vary flow

We all know the healing power of nature and many of our volunteers tell us how much better they feel after a session of tree planting or Balsam bashing. However, we must also remember our responsibility to heal nature, and that is why Friends of Bilbrook is so passionate about the work we do. Our waterways are struggling and we need to monitor what is happening to then take the appropriate action to bring them back to health.

Human-induced climate breakdown is happening now and we can see that as over the years the health of the brook has slowly declined. The temperature of the water is slowly rising and our score for Riverfly is slowly going down. We know the work we are doing is having an impact and we love to celebrate our successes but we also know there is much more to do.

Learn more on their website: www.friendsofbilbrook.org

Annette Lloyd
Treasurer of Friends of Bilbrook

Kingston Brook River and Floodplain Enhancement

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust partnered with the Environment Agency has delivered river and floodplain restoration work along the Kingston Brook and surrounding floodplain woodland in Stafford. This is thanks to the support of landowners Kingston Pool Covert North Ltd. who are a community group which own the northern part of the site and Stafford Borough Council who own the southern section of the site as well as Environment Agency funding.



Before confluence widening excavation (11-03-25)



During the work (12-03-25)



After work was finished and vegetation grown (19-11-25)

This river and floodplain restoration project is aimed at making improvements to river and floodplain biodiversity, supporting aquatic invertebrates and fish. This work continues to improve the nature recovery network through Stafford as it builds on the previous work of Stafford Brooks National Highways funded project. The enhancements were delivered in two stages, starting within the community owned woodland north of Weston road in March 2025, followed by work in the Staffordshire Borough Council owned woodland south of the road in September 2025.

In the northern part of the woodland, we blocked ditches to hold the spring water that runs into the brook in the woodland for longer, created ponds, and widened a confluence. The confluence widening has tripled the amount of stream habitat available for aquatic plants and invertebrates in addition to added variety that will hopefully increase the diversity of species. We hope that this area becomes a breeding area for fish and better connects the brook with the former reedbed. The floodplain interventions target improving the wet woodland. Wet woodlands are host to an amazing variety of mosses, ferns, fungi, insects, amphibians, and birds. It will take a few years for the vegetation to change but there have been sightings of dragonflies by the new ponds already.



One of the sections of gravel inputted to create a riffle

The chute that was dug is upstream of the riffles at just above the low water flow height and filled with water as the riffles started to hold back water. We wanted to work with the woodland mimic the way water naturally flows around obstacles and shaped the chute around mature trees creating three tree islands. Visiting the site after rainfall we could see the chute working in directing so of the higher flow through the woodland before joining back with the main channel as the stream goes into a culvert. We hope that in making areas of the floodplain wetter with pools of water, that the previously dominant Himalayan balsam will be replaced sedges and native wetland plants.

The woodlands have truly been transformed supporting more wet habitats than ever before. The path the machinery needed to take has opened new views through the tree and allows light to reach new parts of the understory. We are excited to hear stories from the local community as the woodland changes.

Trent Valley Way

A path connecting people to the Trent

Running from the source of the River Trent in Biddulph, to where it connects with the sea at the Humber Estuary, the Trent Valley Way is a 304KM walking route that flows through the heart of England. It weaves its way through market towns, big cities, and rolling countryside. Trent Rivers Trust see themselves as the custodians of the Trent Valley Way, driving interest and investment into the route to make it attractive and accessible for anyone looking to journey outdoors. We've most recently been driving activity and action in Stoke-on-Trent through UK Shared Prosperity Fund to help connect people to the main route, support improvements to the health of the Trent, and help to create features which the people of Stoke will hopefully love to visit.



The chute photographed looking away from the brook looking at the tree islands

Thea Margetts
Living Floodplains Officer for Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

We have been out and about in Stoke during the three years of the project, attending events alongside fantastic local groups and communities. We organised and led walks aiming to connect people to the river and the Trent Valley Way route. Alongside introducing people to the main path, we established a number of circular routes. Our work helped with the sign posting and accessibility of the paths, where possible, to make the beautiful nature by the river easy to reach and build the confidence of people to get outdoors. We have been happy to support the fantastic Running Out of Time Relay in 2024, advocating for their message of species and habitat protection and connections with the outdoors.



304Km
walking route

The Trent Rivers Trust Team with the Stoke FC mascot at the Running Out of Time Relay in 2024



The three murals painted by artist Tom Edwards by the river near Boothen, kingfisher emerging from water (left), head of a heron (centre) and swimming trout (right).



Joe Foster the Trent Rivers Trust project lead sat on the Bucknall Park interpretation feature (above), one of the bench bubbles that also acts as a way marker (left)

We have been fortunate to gain the support of some wonderful artists to help us create and install some fantastic features within Stoke-on-Trent that people can see while walking the Trent Valley Way. After gathering feedback from local people in Bucknall Park, we have installed an interpretation feature that doubles as a bench. This highlights the heritage of the River Trent and Stoke itself, using designs from local school children, and messages of hope and inspiration. We also worked with local artist Tom Edwards to create three amazing murals right beside the river near Boothen; again working with local school children to understand what they think bests represent the river through the species which live and use the water. We are really proud of the designs and so thankful for all the people who helped to make these features a reality.

We have been showing that we care about this amazing route and river. We have been able to resurface damaged sections, update signage and markers, remove litter, and clean graffiti through this project. Bringing together voices of volunteers and local people was at the forefront of our plans, delivering action to make the route safer, healthier, and more inviting for all.

We hope to see further investment in the Trent Valley Way across the entire length of the River Trent, to help promote and improve the route as much as possible. Our aspiration is to see the route adopted and loved by communities all across the catchment. We hope to be able to support them to showcase their care and attention for the River and wild spaces wherever they can long into the future.

Tom Aplin

Partnership and Engagement Manager for Trent Rivers Trust

Funding opportunities



£50-£500 to individuals, community groups, schools and organisations to encourage people to get outdoors and have great experiences that otherwise couldn't happen. The trustees meet every 2 months to consider applications.

https://alpkit.com/pages/foundation-apply?brid=xfmY07hvZZ-dBGDT87_xlw



£300- £20,000 to fund community-led projects that improve the environment and help people connect with and enjoy nature where they live. Open to applications with decisions in 16 weeks after submission.

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/funding-programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-england-environment>



£10,000 and £75,000 to not-for-profit, local authorities projects Habitat & Biodiversity Grant Scheme funds projects that improve natural habitats, creating healthy environments for native species. Application by 8 January 2026 with projects deliverable within a year.

<https://www.veoliatrust.org/funding/>

Staffordshire Trent Valley Catchment Partnership

The partnership is a group of organisations that are working with local committees, landowners and business to recreate one of Britain's great network of wetlands for wildlife and people.

Thank you to the partnership member who wrote articles, the wider partnership and the Environment Agency who fund the partnership.



Staffordshire
Wildlife Trust



**trent
rivers
trust**



Transforming the
Trent Valley



**Environment
Agency**



**Catchment
Based Approach**