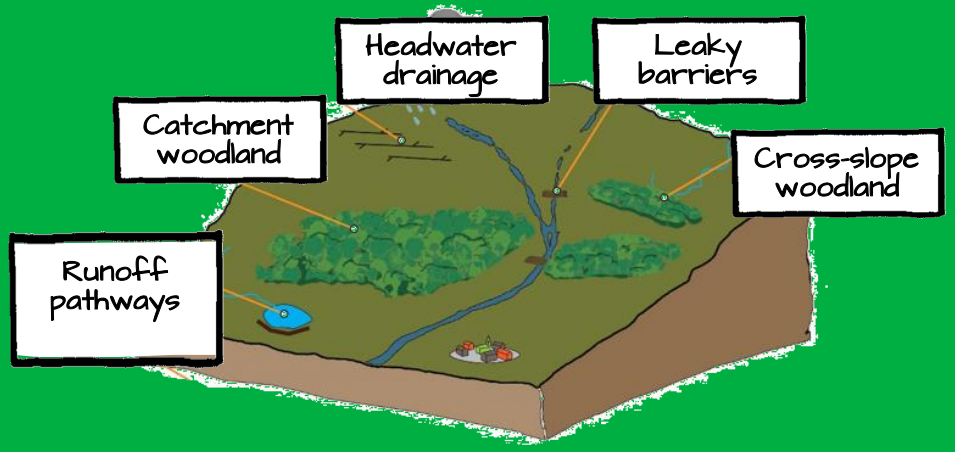
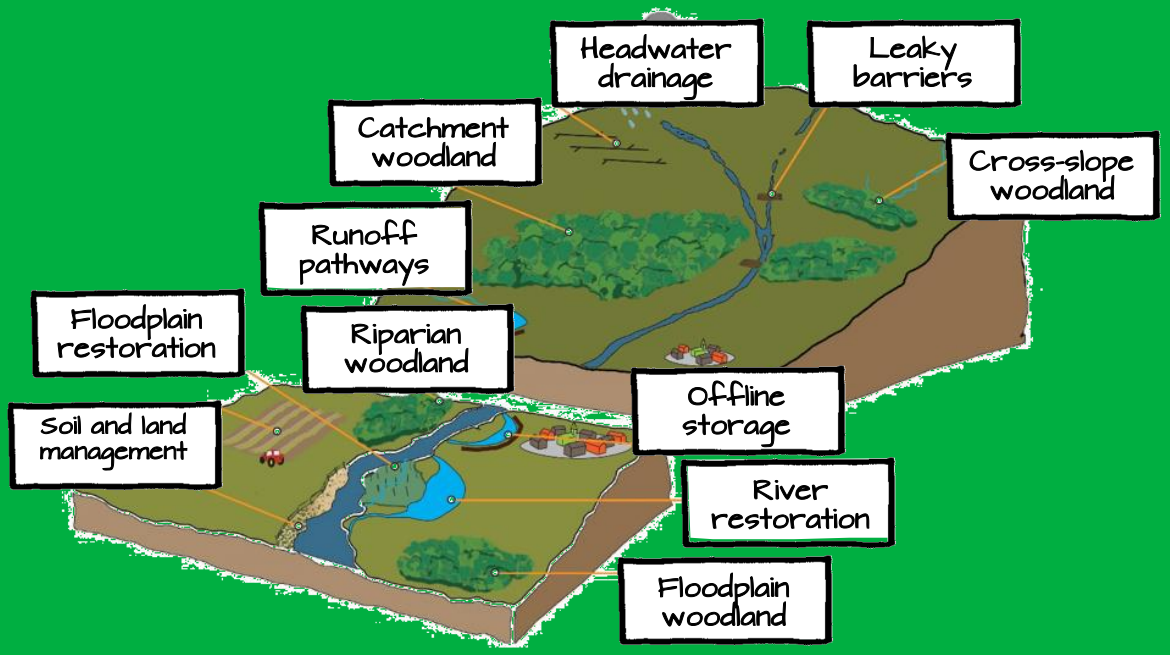
# Working with Natural Processes – the evidence behind Natural Flood Management

**Dr Lydia Burgess-Gamble – Principal Scientist, Environment Agency**


Headwater drainage
Leaky barriers
Catchment woodland
Cross-slope woodland
Runoff pathways


Headwater drainage
Leaky barriers
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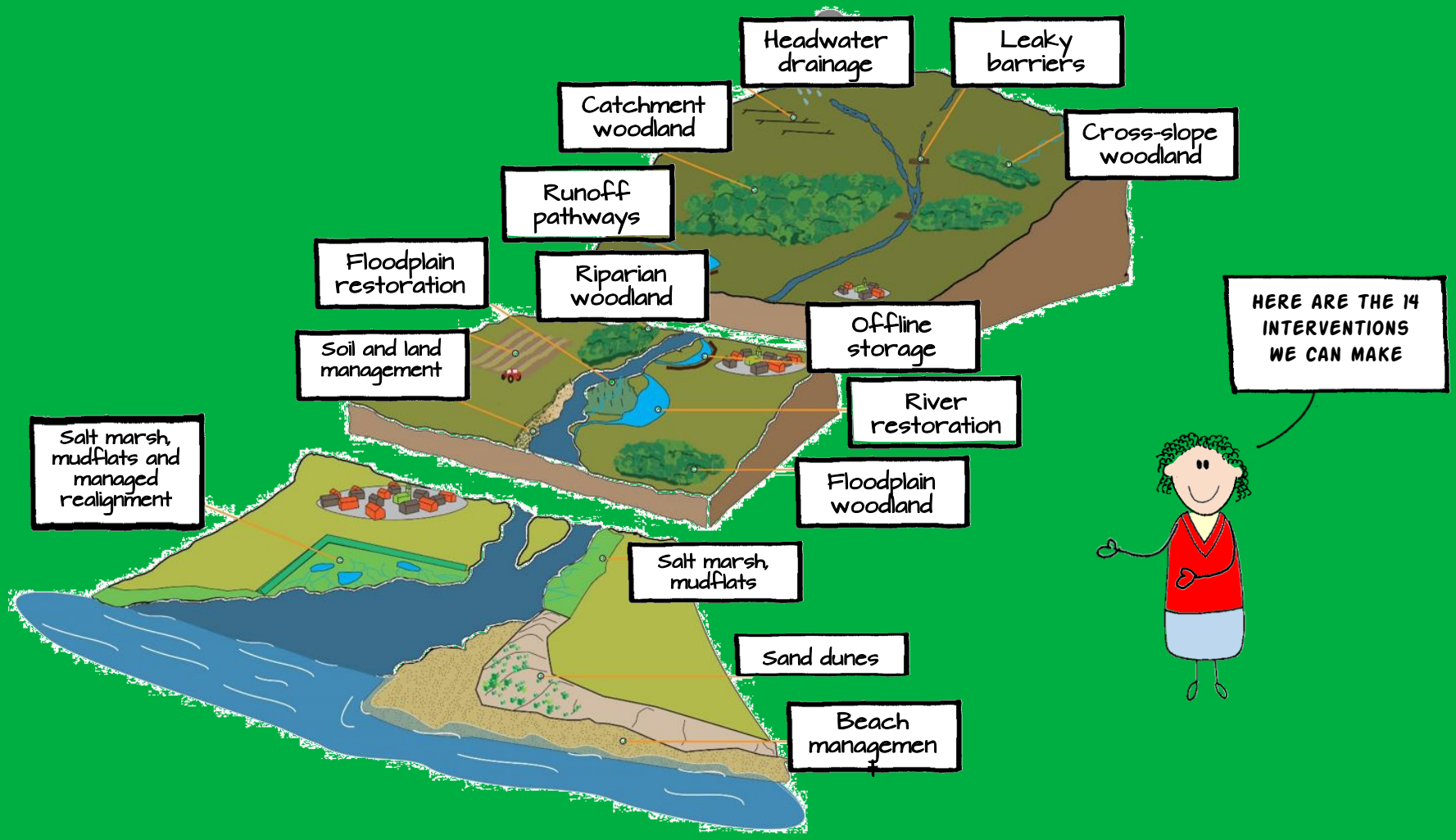
Runoff pathways
Floodplain restoration
Riparian woodland
Offline storage
Soil and land management
River restoration
Floodplain woodland


Headwater drainage
Leaky barriers
Catchment woodland
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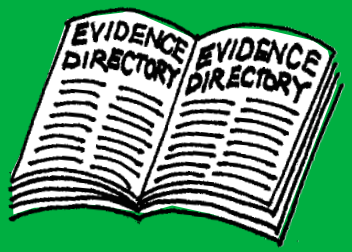
Runoff pathways
Floodplain restoration
Riparian woodland
Offline storage
Soil and land management
River restoration
Salt marsh, mudflats and managed realignment
Floodplain woodland
Salt marsh, mudflats
Sand dunes
Beach managemen
HERE ARE THE 14 INTERVENTIONS WE CAN MAKE

1

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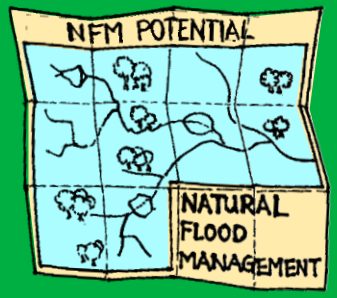
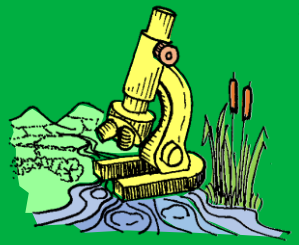
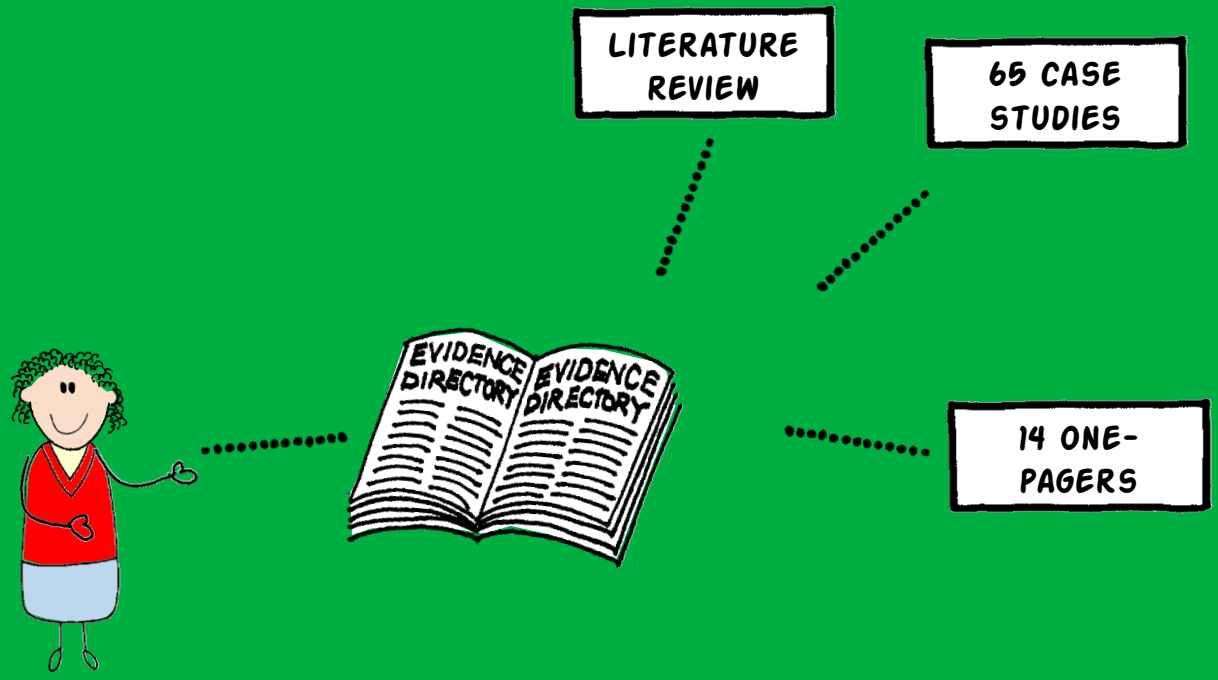


3

RESEARCH GAPS AND MONITORING


LITERATURE REVIEW
65 CASE STUDIES
EVIDENCE DIRECTORY
EVIDENCE DIRECTORY
14 ONE-PAGERS

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government

Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Natural Resources Wales

Environment Agency

SEPA Scottish Environment Protection Agency

WOODLAND TRUST

# Working with Natural Processes – Evidence Directory

SC150005

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government

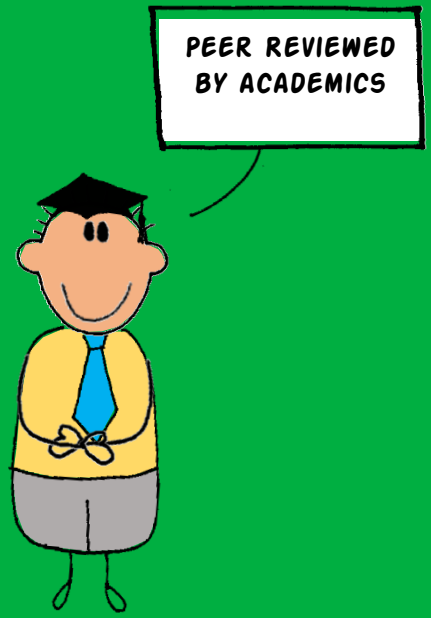
Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Natural Resources Wales

Environment Agency

## Appendix 1. Working with Natural Processes - Evidence Directory Literature Review

SC150005





## Case study 6. Chelmer Valley Local Nature Reserve

**Author: Trevor Bond**

**Main driver: Habitat improvement**

**Project stage: Completed spring 2016**

Photo 1: River Chelmer, Chelmer Valley Local Nature Reserve (source: Chelmsford City Council)

**Project summary:**

The Chelmer Valley Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is a much loved open space situated to the north of Chelmsford city centre (Map 1). Approximately 2.5km long, the Chelmer Valley LNR consists of parkland, green spaces, unimproved grassland, ponds, wet margins, riparian woodland and the River Chelmer itself (Photo 1).

As part of this project, informal embankments created through years of dredging were lowered and the won material was used within the river to construct earth berms. This improved floodplain connectivity, created marginal habitat for plants and restricted the width of the active river channel, encouraging geomorphic processes. In addition, flood risk modelling of the scheme has shown flood risk benefits emerging from the project during particular flood frequencies.

**Key facts:**

Flood risk modelling indicated that the scheme would lead to a small, net decrease in lateral flood extent during both 10% and 1% annual exceedance probability (AEP) events. Modelling also suggests reduced flood depths of up to 0.3m in some locations during a 10% AEP event and reduced flood depths of 0.15m in some locations during a 1% AEP. The reduced flood risk is believed to be due to the improved connectivity between the main river channel and the floodplain, which means water evacuates onto the floodplain earlier and the flood peak is marginally reduced.

## Case study 11. Low Stanger Floodplain Reconnection Project

**Author: Ian Creighton**

**Main driver: Flood alleviation**

**Project stage: Completed 2015**

Photo 1: Downstream breach, Low Stranger Farm (source: West Cumbria Rivers Trust)

**Project summary:**

There have been significant flooding issues in the town of Cockermouth in recent years. A new flood defence scheme was constructed in 2014, which was overtopped by Storm Desmond in December 2015. There is no single solution and it will need multiple and varied solutions working with landowners to help flatten the flood peak in order to reduce future flood risk. At Low Stanger Farm (see Map 1), the existing flood embankment was breached along 4 sections to increase flood storage when the River Cocker is out of channel (Photo 1).

**Key fact:**

Survived Storm Desmond intact! An additional flood storage area of 5ha was created.

## Case study 12. Slowing the Flow at Pickering

**Authors: Tom Nisbet, Huw Thomas, Philip Roe**

**Main driver: Flood risk management**

**Project stage: Multi-objective, long-term, demonstration study**

Photo 1: Woody dams upstream of Pickering (source: Forest Research)

**Project summary:**

The project was established in April 2009 to look at how changes in land use and land management can help to reduce flood risk for the town of Pickering in North Yorkshire (Map 1). It was 1 of 3 pilot projects funded by Defra in response to Sir Michael Pitt's Review of the 2007 floods in England and Wales and has led to greater working with natural processes. The project's overall aim is to demonstrate how the integrated application of a range of land management interventions/measures can help reduce flood risk at the catchment scale, as well as providing wider multiple benefits for local communities. A strong local partnership was formed, which put in place an agreed set of measures designed to reduce the chance of flooding in the town from 25% to 4% or less in any given year. Initial results have been very positive and work continues to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures in reducing flood risk.

**Key facts:**

An analysis of flow measurements from the Boxing Day 2015 storm event, when 50mm of rain fell over a 36-hour period, concluded with a relatively high degree of certainty that the project measures prevented flooding to a small number of properties in the town. It was estimated that the measures reduced the flood peak by 15–20%, with around half of the reduction due to the upstream land management interventions and half due to the large flood storage bund. The results are consistent with other observations that show the measures to be working as expected in reducing flood generation by storing and slowing flood waters within the catchment.

## Case study 16. Belford Natural Flood Management Scheme, Northumberland

**Authors: Alex Nicholson (Arup), Paul Quinn (Newcastle University), Mark Wilkinson (James Hutton Institute)**

**Main driver: Flood risk management – repeated flooding in the community of Belford**

**Project stage: Completed 2015**


Photo 1: Belford Natural Flood Management project with pictures of some of its interventions (source: Newcastle University)

**Project summary:**

The Belford Burn is a small stream that runs through the centre of Belford village, hard up against garden boundaries and walls. The 6km² catchment is predominantly rural upstream of the village and is privately owned by 3 main landowners. Prior to the scheme, the burn presented a risk of flooding to 54 properties and a caravan park from a 1 in 100 year event. However, 25 properties were at risk from a 1 in 2 year event.

Belford village flooded 10 times between 1997 and 2007. The flood in 1997, which inundated the East Coast mainline railway, is estimated to have a return period of between 10 and 20 years. Traditional flood defences were not adopted owing to a lack of space between properties and the watercourse, and an unfavourable cost–benefit assessment at the project appraisal phase.

65 GREAT EXAMPLES PROVIDED BY YOU!

## Case study 17. Blackbrook Slow the Flow, St Helens

**Authors: Mike Norbury, Rick Rogers, David Brown**

**Main driver: Flood risk management – repeated flooding in the Blackbrook area of St Helens (October 2000, September 2012 and 26 December 2016)**

**Project stage: Seeking funding opportunities to implement a catchment-scale Natural Flood Management Plan**

Photo1: Engineered dam 2 – attenuation and suspended sediment settlement during flood flows

**Project summary:**

Blackbrook in St Helens, Merseyside, experiences repeat flooding from a combination of main river and surface water sources. There are 18 properties at flood risk, 3 of which are businesses; a major truck A-road is also at risk. The current flood risk is high.

Blackbrook has a 5% chance of flooding in any given year and sits in a low-lying bowl at the confluence of 5 rapid response catchments whose upstream area is 27km². The property level protection put in place has had limited success, partly due to a failure in its operation at the time of the last flood (26 December 2016). Flooding also occurred on 28–29 October 2000 and 24–26 September 2012.

Capital solutions to reduce the flood risk are prohibitively expensive, as culvert enlarging would be required to reduce the flow constriction. Such considerable capital interventions do not qualify for full funding under HM Treasury rules on cost–benefitratios. Significant additional funding would therefore be required.

## Case study 47. North Norfolk Coast

**Authors: Sue Rees and Oli Burns**

**Main driver: Habitat creation, improved and more sustainable defences**

**Project stage: Constructed – several schemes in different years: Brancaster 2002; Holme Dunes 2004; River Glaven 2006; Cley to Salthouse 2007; Titchwell RSPB 2011 (Photo 1); Blakeney Freshes 2014**

Photo 1, Titchwell (source: Mike Page RSPB)

## Case study 50. Medmerry Managed Realignment

**Author: Robert Harvey**

**Main driver: Improved defences and habitat creation**

**Project stage: Completed 2013**

Photo 1: Medmerry managed coastal realignment site, 19 October 2013 (source: © Environment Agency and John Akerman ABPmer)

**Project summary:**

The Medmerry Managed Realignment scheme in West Sussex (Photo 1) was identified in the Pagham to East Head Coastal Strategy (2009). The project came about through a combination of the need to improve flood risk management and the requirement of the Environment Agency's Regional Habitat Creation Programme to create intertidal habitat. The Environment Agency purchased most of the land required for the project and constructed 6.2km of new retreated sea defences, tied into the existing shoreline with rock revetments. Additional land was contributed by RSPB.

The project provides a 1 in 100 year standard of defence in year 100 (increased from 1 in 1 year standard prior to implementation) to 348 properties, the road serving Selsey and a waste water treatment works. It has created 183ha of intertidal habitat and 60ha of transitional grassland. Mitigation was also provided for 50ha of freshwater Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within and around the realignment area. The project has increased recreation and tourism, creating new amenity and providing both new and replacement footpaths, cycleways and bridleways. Most of the land within the project area has been leased by the Environment Agency to RSPB for management as a nature reserve.

# River Restoration

Environment Agency

## What is it?

Historically rivers have been modified for many reasons (e.g. navigation, development, flood risk management).

River restoration is the reinstatement of the natural physical processes and features (e.g. pools, riffles) that are characteristic of a river.

It can help reduce flood risk, by slowing the flow of water within the channel.

Mayes Brook river floodplain restoration post-construction (source: Environment Agency)

### Case studies

- River Avon
- Dorset Frome
- Mayes Brook
- New Forest

## Flood Risk Benefits

### Summary

- Can slow flood flows and decrease conveyance through the reintroduction of features which encourages the river to reconnect with its floodplain where it can store water and attenuates peak flows d/s
- Can reduce flood risk, the extent of this effect depends on length of river restored relative to catchment size
- Once constructed should last forever, pace at which it becomes effective will vary between rivers, there can be delay whilst morphological adjustment occurs
- Should require limited maintenance

| Catchment size | Flood magnitude | Modelled or observed? | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| Medium | Small | Observed | In a 25 km² catchment in the New Forest Bear et al (2006) found river restoration led to a 21% reduction in flood peak and a 33% increase in peak travel (2year recurrence). |
| Small | Large | Modelled | Restoration reduced water velocities for a 1 in 100 year flood by 41% (Keesstra et al., 2012). |
| Local/ Small | Not provided | Modelled | Restoring reaches of 5-10 km can provide tangible attenuation of peak flows (Sholtes and Doyle, 2011). |
| Medium | Not provided | Modelled | Restoring 5km of the Cherwell's channel reduces peak flow by a 10-15% and increases peak floodplain water levels by 0.5-1.6m (Acreman et al., 2003). |
| Medium | Medium | Modelled | Restoring meanders in a 1km reach in a 17 km² catchment, reduced flood peaks by less than 1% for 2 to 50 year return period (Sholtes and Doyle, 2011). |
| Large | Not provided | Modelled | River restoration in headwaters of 400 km² catchment, reduced peak flow by 14% (Liu et al., 2004). |

## Multiple Benefits

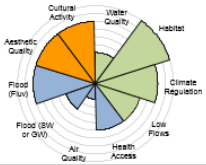
### Summary

- River restoration can provide a wide range of benefits across most ecosystem services (see benefits wheel).

**For example:**

- Regeneration benefits of improving the river and surrounding park at Mayes Brook was valued at £7.8 million over 100 years, based on the uplift to property prices (Everard et al., 2011).
- On the River Frome (Dorset) river restoration is expected to also help manage diffuse pollution, accumulating silt on the floodplain.

### Benefits wheel




### Monetary value estimate(s)

| Case study | Benefits | Costs | BCR |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mayes Brook | £245k | £750k + approx. £5k pa | 7:1 |

Source: Eftec (2017)

River restoration benefits recreation and tourism, the estimated per person per trip value provided by rivers and floodplains is £3.35 (Sen et al., 2012).

## Knowledge gaps

**Gaps:**

- Limited field-based evidence that demonstrate its flood risk benefit

**More information needed on::**

- Standard of flood protection provided by river restoration
- FCRM benefits of different types of river restoration at different spatial scales
- Conveyance capacity of restored rivers
- Water storage effects of restoration

## Key reading and maps

**Reading:**

- Green approaches in river engineering
- Manual of River Restoration Techniques
- River restoration and biodiversity

**Maps:**

- Wetland vision
- Strategic National Opportunity Maps (England)
- NFM Opportunity Maps (Scotland)

## Terms of reference

Terminology

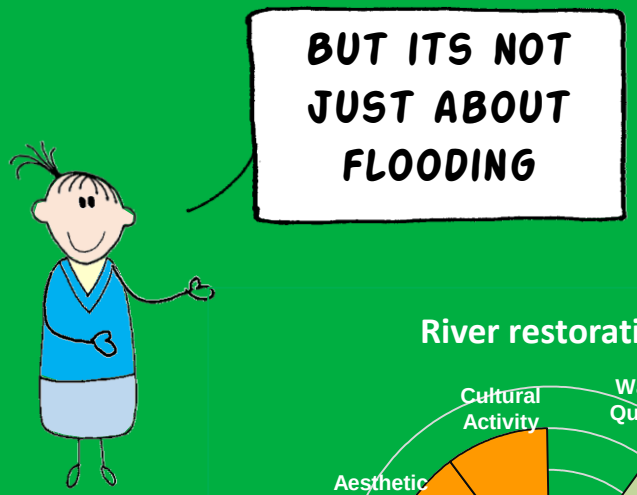
Benefits wheel

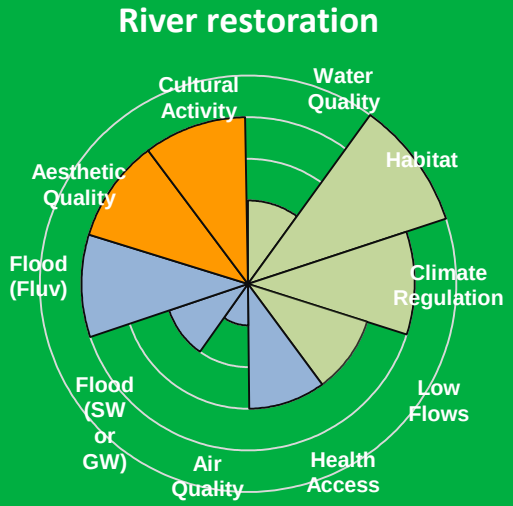
For each measure we have summarised the multiple benefits which the measure could provide using a Benefits Wheel which covers 10 benefit indicators that have been ranked on a scale from 1 to 5 to give an indication of the relative contribution the measure can make to the provision of a certain benefit.

References

More details on the references and case studies discussed here can be found in the following documents:
SC150005 – Working with Natural Processes – Evidence Directory
SC150005 – Appendix 1: Evidence Directory Literature Review
SC150005 – 68 individual case studies

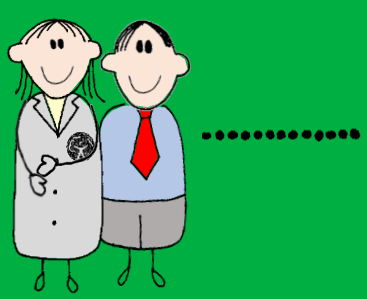
Infographic poster produced by Environment Agency - Flood and Coastal Risk Management Research | Published in October 2017 v2.0 | Design by Lydia Rogers-Hamblin | For further information contact: RCRMResearch@environment-agency.gov.uk | Icons from Noun Project | Followed by:

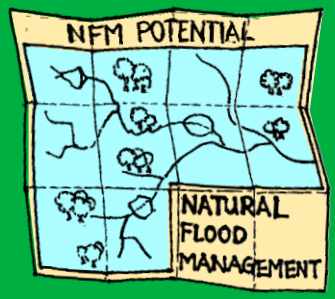


USER GUIDE

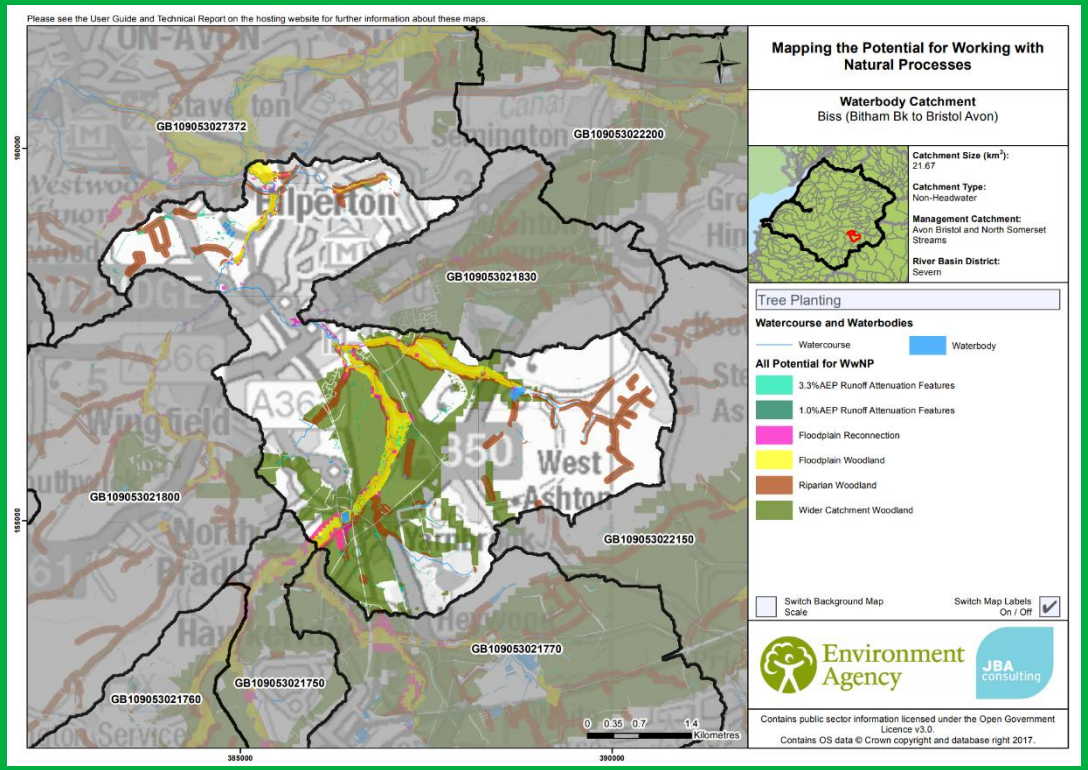
TECHNICAL GUIDE






SUPPORTING GUIDE


RUNOFF ATTENUATION + GULLY BLOCKING
RIPARIAN WOODLAND
FLOODPLAIN WOODLAND
CATCHMENT WOODLAND
FLOODPLAIN RECONNECTION


Please see the User Guide and Technical Report on the hosting website for further information about these maps.
Mapping the Potential for Working with Natural Processes
Waterbody Catchment
Biss (Bitham Bk to Bristol Avon)
Catchment Size (km²):
21.67
Catchment Type:
Non-Headwater
Management Catchment:
Avon Bristol and North Somerset Streams
River Basin District:
Severn
Tree Planting
Watercourse and Waterbodies
Watercourse
Waterbody
All Potential for WwNP
3.3%AEP Runoff Attenuation Features
1.0%AEP Runoff Attenuation Features
Floodplain Reconnection
Floodplain Woodland
Riparian Woodland
Wider Catchment Woodland
Switch Background Map Scale
Switch Map Labels On / Off
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Kilometres
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# Appendix 2: WWNP and landowner considerations

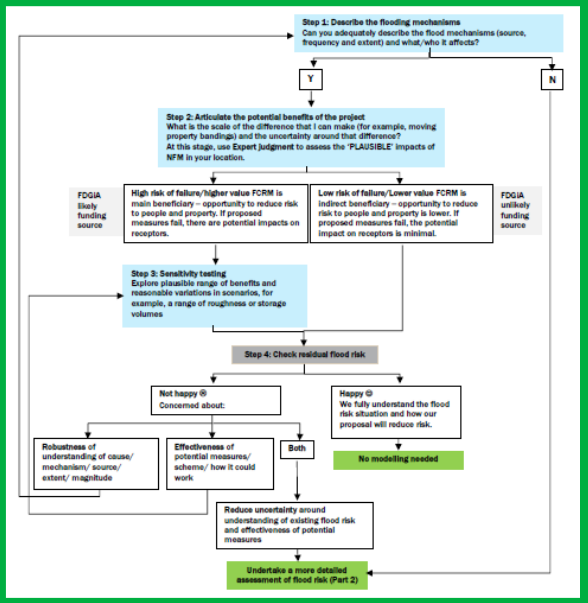
The WWNP potential maps should be used in conjunction with early and full landowner and occupier engagement. It is also essential that wider farm business issues are taken into account. This appendix provides further guidance on landowner/occupier considerations and principles for engagement on NFM.

It is important to note that the mapping findings do not oblige landowners and occupiers to get involved in WWNP schemes. Practical, regulatory and permitting, or farm business reasons may exist which prevent NFM implementation being possible in locations highlighted on the maps.

## Landowner/occupier considerations

Landowners and occupiers have a range of considerations to take into account in relation to NFM. These include, but are not limited to:

- Terms of farm tenancy agreements
  - The landowner/tenant relationship is a crucial part of decision making in farm businesses.
  - Both parties will need to be consulted in relation to any proposed NFM schemes.
  - *Tenancy agreements* may contain terms regarding the use of the land or the condition it must be retained in. *Common land* is a piece of land in private ownership, where other people have certain traditional rights to use it in specified ways, such as being allowed to graze their livestock. Care must be taken to ensure NFM activities do not breach the conditions within agricultural tenancy or commons agreements.
- Eligibility for payment schemes
  - Involvement in measures such as planting trees and storing water could affect eligibility for the Basic Payment Scheme (under the Common Agricultural Policy), Countryside Stewardship and other environmental agreements.
- Availability of funding
  - Landowners/occupiers will need to obtain capital funding to cover the costs of implementing the scheme and whilst there may be funding available, it may not always be accessible.
  - They may also be a need for ongoing revenue funding to cover maintenance costs, or the costs to repair or reinstate land after an inundation event.
- Riparian rights and responsibilities
  - Riparian responsibilities include allowing water to flow in its natural state, keeping the watercourse free of debris and obstructions and maintaining banks and beds.
  - Measures such as woody material in the watercourse and tree planting may impact on these responsibilities.
- Consents




HOW DO I USE THESE MAPS?

# It’s not new

# It works

**Typically reduces flood risk for smaller floods in small to medium sized catchment**

**It complements rather than replaces traditional engineering**

**It almost always achieves multiple benefits for people and wildlife**

BUT


MIND THE GAP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**The Evidence Base:**

www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-with-natural-processes-to-reduce-flood-risk

**Email:**

wwnp@environment-agency.gov.uk