



BRANCHOUT
NORTHUMBRIAN WATER

BRANCH OUT FUND

WHAT IS THE BRANCH OUT FUND?

A healthy natural environment is essential for supplying top quality drinking water. Northumbrian Water set up the Branch Out fund in response to the need to build resilience in the region's natural environment.

It aims to help adaptation to the effects of a changing climate whilst bringing benefits to water, wildlife and communities.

The purpose of the fund is to enable local communities, land managers, other organisations and individuals to make a difference to the natural environment within Northumbrian Water's operating area.

WHY BRANCH OUT?

The natural environment is at the heart of Northumbrian Water's business. The 2.6 million customers in our region who receive our high quality drinking water all benefit from us helping to maintain the natural environment in a healthy state.

The link between health and the countryside is well known and many of the Branch Out projects will encourage people to be outside, visiting sites and learning more about their local countryside.

Increasing the resilience of our ecosystems is at the heart of this initiative. Enhancing, buffering and linking habitats will help the flora and fauna using them to be better placed to deal with whatever changes in the climate occur.

The effects of improving water quality will not only benefit the natural environment but will also help reduce the cost of water treatment.



APPROACH TO PROJECTS

Branch Out projects will be delivered via partnership working. This can be building on existing partnerships or creating new ones. Working in partnership means benefits can be maximised by different groups of people all working towards the same aims.

Branch Out encompasses projects ranging from a landscape scale with many partners to smaller community and farm based projects.

WHO CAN APPLY?

The fund is open to organisations, community groups or individuals from the public, private, voluntary and education sectors who have projects that can make a difference to the wildlife and communities in the area that Northumbrian Water operates in.

CASE STUDY

COLD BLOODED AND SPINELESS - NORTH PENNINES AONB PARTNERSHIP

The wonderfully named 'Cold Blooded and Spineless' project has been developed by the North Pennines AONB to empower local people to take action to discover, record, monitor and celebrate invertebrates. The project is responding to the influential 'State of Nature' report which found that 66% of known invertebrates have declined in 50 years and that information on upland invertebrates is particularly lacking. This is a five year project and Branch Out money has helped to unlock hundreds of thousands of pounds of Heritage Lottery Funding. The first two years of the project have already seen fantastic success with over 800 people engaging with the various training workshops and public events held. Six local schools are also actively involved and have worked with an artist to produce an invertebrate trail at Derwent Reservoir creating insect mosaics and engravings on rocks.

Northumbrian Water employees also got involved, volunteering their skills to create a 'Bee Wall' as part of the invertebrate trail. The 23 identification workshops run so far were fully booked and have already led to over 1000 online invertebrate records being submitted that can inform the management of the AONB. The project continues to build a pool of highly trained volunteers and to engage with the public to raise awareness of these small but valuable animals in the North Pennines.

www.northpennines.org.uk/Pages/Cold-bloodedandSpineless



GREAT CRESTED NEWTS, NATIONAL TRUST GIBSIDE ESTATE

The National Trust's Gibside Estate near Rowlands Gill in Gateshead has a number of ponds which are home to great crested newts. This species is protected across Europe because their numbers have dropped significantly over the last 30 years as many ponds and associated habitats have been lost.

The National Trust developed a specific project for great crested newts at Gibside which included the creation of new ponds, restoration of existing ponds and provision of educational opportunities for visitors to the estate. The Branch Out funding enabled the release of a SITA grant which enabled the creation of two new ponds and clearance of four existing ponds around the estate. Plants suitable for the newts to lay their eggs were also placed around some of the new ponds. Other over-grown ponds were also cleared by volunteers and terrestrial habitats improved by adding log piles and sympathetically managing grassland and woodland adjacent to ponds. A series of events and workshops were also held for local people to find out about great crested newts and how they can make newt-friendly habitats in their gardens. National Trust employees have also held pond dipping days for visitors and community groups to look at all the creatures living in the Gibside ponds.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/gibside>

PRESTWICK CARR LIVING LANDSCAPE, NORTHUMBERLAND WILDLIFE TRUST

As one of the earliest Living Landscape schemes in the North East the Prestwick Carr project aimed to reverse years of drainage and agricultural improvement to restore a historic wetland. Restoration work has concentrated on two main areas; the MoD owned core of the site where tree removal and ditch blocking has taken place along with the installation of a bridge to improve access and to enable grazing by ponies and cattle.

The second area, owned by Newcastle City Council and now leased to Northumberland Wildlife Trust has seen a variety of management work including extensive rush cutting. This has helped open up a previously almost closed sward of rushes that was of limited value to waders

and other ground nesting birds. Grazing has also been introduced to this area to further break up the dense rushes. Northumbrian Water's Branch Out Fund was used as a third party contribution to secure other funding sources such as a Biffaward.

www.nwt.org.uk/what-we-do/living-landscapes/prestwick-carr

HOW TO APPLY?

Complete an application form and send it in to us. Application forms can be found at:

www.branchout-nw.co.uk

Completed forms can be sent to:

branchout@nwl.co.uk

Conservation, Northumbrian Water,
Boldon House,
Wheatlands Way Pity Me
Durham DH1 5FA

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further background information, case studies, and guidance notes can be found on the website.

www.branchout-nw.co.uk

