Water Environment Improvements
Candidate Project Evidence Form

Assurance

Information provided in this form will be used by the Bluespaces Team and the Bluespaces Governance Group to confirm that the project has delivered benefits above and beyond NWG's baseline and regulatory obligations to improve the water environment accessible to customers across at least two out of three aspects. The form presents evidence of project completion and outputs achieved to support formal approval of the length of bluespaces improved for the Water Industry Natural Environment Programme (WINEP).

Assurance Level	Project Approval Date*	Completed Project Sign-Off Date*
Bluespaces Governance Group (External)	27th August 2025	2nd March 2026

**To be completed by Bluespaces Team*

Project Information

Project Name

Fiddler's Hill Improvement Project

Project Lead

Company/ Organisation	Named Lead	Position
Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust	Andy Went	Natural Rivers Manager

Bluespaces Improved

Year	Proposed	Delivered*	Reason For Any Change
2025/26	3.7km	4km	Paths reassessed at end of project

**To be completed by Bluespaces Team*

Project Timescales

Candidate Project Approved	Project Initiated	Project Completed
27th August 2025	September 2025	March 2026

Project Summary and Highlights

Summary

Fiddlers Hill Meadow is an area of rough grazed land on the banks of the River Colne in Fordham, Essex, 4.5km upstream of the City of Colchester. This area is important for the recovery of key species such as water vole and internationally important wading birds as a seasonal migration stopping point.

This project reduced flood levels along the road and bridge on the border of the site, further alleviating flooding downstream, by creating 5ha of wetlands, which are a priority habitat. Achieved by digging wetland scrapes to retain floodwater and redistribute water flow to the meadow at a faster rate. These scrapes have created a wetland feature as a result that can now be used for seasonal livestock grazing and their presence will improve soil and water quality, providing carbon sequestration in the long-term.

Project work included the installation of bird and bat boxes, the installation of interpretation boards and community action with the local parish council and local primary school to include classroom activities and a field visit to increase the local children's awareness of their local environment.

Highlights

- 5ha of priority habitat wetland creation.
- The installation of 12 bird boxes and a hibernacula habitat.
- Press releases regarding the project have been created and have garnered interest from the BBC (links supplied in media section).
- School visits to the site went very well with Project Manager Andy Went and Project Officer Luke Farnish. Allowing the groups of school children to witness how the site has developed as the wetland creation work has occurred.
- At present, the only work left to complete is the installation of the interpretation boards which are bought and being created, due to be installed in April / May.

Digger breaking ground at Fiddler's Hill

Maps

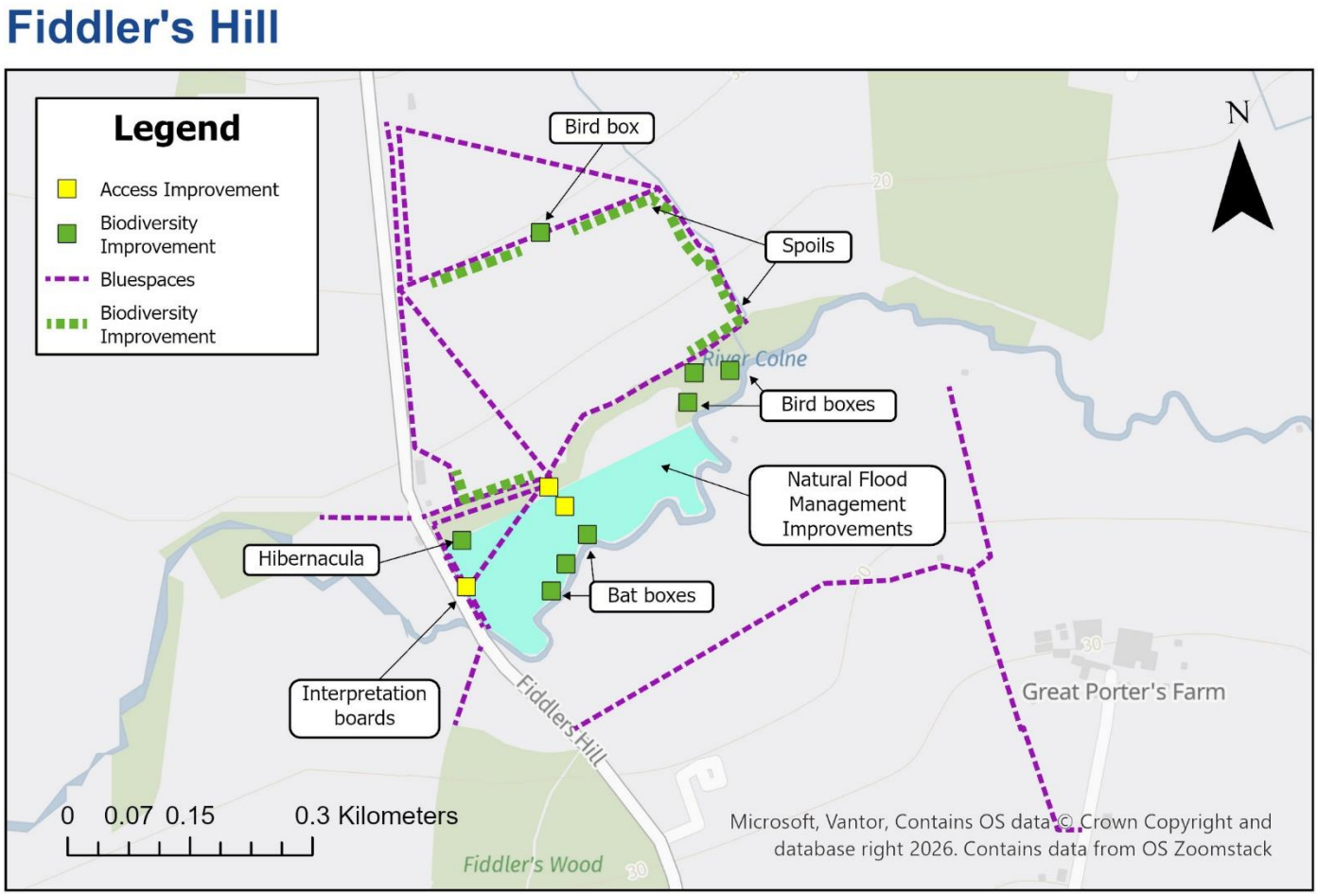


Figure 1: Bluespaces improved at Fiddler's Hill

Project Outputs, Benefits & Evidence Against Criteria

Access, Facilities & Recreation	
Expected Project Outcomes	**Benefits**
1. Creation of wetlands will result in new areas for wildlife to inhabit, allowing for visitors to enjoy a more diverse array of habitat at Fiddler's Hill. 2. Installed interpretation boards will allow fuller understanding of the completed work and expected results such as improved flood management and increased biodiversity. 3. Along with public access, engagement of local schools to encourage positive landscape stewardship and understanding of biodiverse habitats.	➢ A1: Increases access to, engagement with and enjoyment of the water environment ➢ A2: Benefits health and wellbeing through: ➢ A3: Influences positive environmental behaviors

Outputs

1. 5ha of Wetland have been created. This creation of fenland and scrapes will over time fill and create a fluctuating wetland habitat will create landscape suitable for wading birds, and other taxa that require a similar habitat. This will increase the diversity and natural beauty of the area and will encourage greater use of visitors and higher levels of engagement.

2. Three interpretation boards will be placed Spring 2026 that will display information about wildlife found in the area, and the project work that has taken place.

3. Two groups of school children from Fordham All Saints Primary School have visited Fiddler's Hill with Project Manager and Project Officer. These groups were able to witness the finishing works and learn about the processes that have occurred for this work to complete. They also learned about the wildlife that currently and will call this area home. The groups were able to witness wildlife including a red kite and a clouded yellow butterfly, which resulted in lots of enthusiasm from the group. This was also complimented by in-class lesson teaching KS2 classes about river function and species that may be found near to rivers.

Evidence

Fordham All Saints Primary School Visit

Aerial view of wetland in flood

Scrape creation in progress

Wildlife & Biodiversity

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
1. Creating well connected habitats will result in increased numbers of appropriate taxa. Habitats will be improved in water and soil quality. 2. By providing habitats for species formerly not in residence, this will result in their appearance.	➢ B1: Improves the quantity, quality and connectivity of habitats ➢ B2: Improves the conservation status and or abundance or distribution of species

Outputs

1. Creation of the new wetland habitat will reduce flooding and improve soil and water quality. This has already been seen in the January – February 2026 winter flooding period. Pictured below in the evidence is the site's bordering road that regularly experiences winter flooding, and typically would currently be flooded however with the presence of the newly created natural flood management, the road and associated bridge remains clear.

2. There is now increased habitat availability for amphibians, bats, birds, reptiles and mammals. Resulting in increased biodiversity and volume of species in the area. Completed water vole assessments showed no activity, however the creation of the habitat may encourage them in the future.

Evidence

Reduced flood risk to the road due to presence of created wetland – able to take on excess water from winter flooding.

The present wetland is now a new habitat for wildlife to experience and thrive

Water Quality

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
1. Formerly arable /grazing land used for a differing habitat will prevent pollution that may have previously occurred and would with future arable use. 2. Formerly arable/grazing land used for a differing habitat will prevent pollution that may have previously occurred and would with future arable use. 3. Planned engagement and management through Woodland Trust will result in long term river improvement.	➢ C1: Reduces pollutants entering waters from point or diffuse sources ➢ C2: Contributes towards improved status or no deterioration of rivers or bathing waters or protecting drinking water ➢ C3: Improves state and function of water, including naturalisation, visual appearance, litter and odour

Outputs

1. Wetland excavation has retained floodwater and redistributed water flow to the meadow at a faster rate, reducing downstream flooding and improving the river for river users downstream.

2. The creation of wetland features including fens, scrapes, channels and ponds has been delivered. The site will be used for seasonal livestock grazing, will provide improvement to soil and water quality and provide carbon sequestration in the long-term.

Evidence

Wetlands successfully dug to retain floodwater during winter flooding.

Additional & Secondary Benefits

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
1. Flood risk is managed through nature-based solutions. 2. Through this work accessibility and engagement will be increased. 3. Work and results contribute to targets for Nature Recovery.	➢ D1: Provides resilience and adaptation to climate change and/or reduces the risk of flooding ➢ D2: Provides benefits to local communities, the local economy or NWG ➢ D3: Supports strategic project or investment into strategic partnership or landscape/regional activity

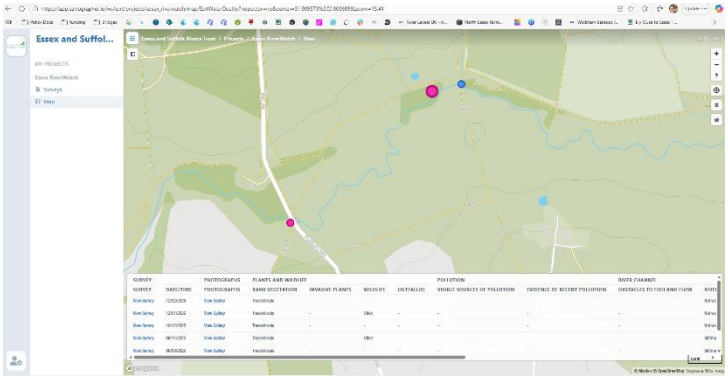
Outputs

1. Wetland work will increase soil moisture levels, providing resilience to climate change.

2. Addition of a local point of interest for community and visitors to the area.

3. Increased and connected habitats, local community engagement and improved water quality.

Evidence



Fiddler's Hill area included in Citizen Science work with Essex RiverWatch – monthly water quality assessments.

Engagement visit with schools, improved point of interest for community – increased wildlife for visitors etc.

Customer Testimonies, Media and Lead Partner Quotes

Essex flood defence project completed after three years - BBC News – The work on Fiddler's Hill resulted in a BBC article 28/11/25 detailing the work completed and aims achieved. Quotes:

"Andy Went, natural rivers manager at Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust, said: *"By restoring wetland features, the project seeks to reduce local flood risk, whilst creating a richer, more sustainable environment for wildlife and the community."*

Matt Butcher from the Environment Agency, said: *"The project creates more space for water on the River Colne floodplain upstream of Colchester, whilst establishing valuable wetland habitat that will help retain water in the landscape during dry periods."*

Essex wetland project will reduce flooding and restore nature - GOV.UK – Information on the work completed so far has been published on the Gov website as a press released 27/1//25. Quotes*: "The Fiddlers Hill wetland project in Fordham, Essex has recently been completed. This natural flood management scheme increases the meadow's capacity to hold water during heavy rainfall whilst creating habitats and enhancing biodiversity."*

Luke Farnish, Project Support Officer with Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust *"This site has brought together a wide range of environmental enhancements to increase the biodiversity of the Colne valley, whilst also alleviating flood risk, making an excellent examples of where nature and people can benefit from the same actions.*

Various project updates have been shared via social media on the Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust social media channels. This has included project work, and the school visit, the final link is a video including the project site as part of a wetlands video by The Wildlife Trust.

Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust Media Post: Exciting update on... - Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust | Facebook

Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust Media Post: Two groups of pupils from... - Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust | Facebook

Video from Essex Wildlife Trust highlighting the creation of a wetland habitat: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/essex-wildlife-trust_worldwetlandsday-activity-7424029223905828864-cTvv?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAFgqUBYB5me3-EQ8b0jMT1cthxs4QuWqgTo

Project Delivery Statistics

	Activity	Data	Grid Reference (if applicable)
Engagement	Number of volunteer days (volunteers x tasks)	9	
	Number of volunteer tasks	1	
	Number of volunteer hours	5	
	Number of individual volunteers	1	
	Number of school children engaged	60	
	Number of school/ community groups engaged*	3	
	Members of public engaged with	Approx 550	
	Number of public events/ training events held*		
	NWG Just an Hour opportunities		
Access	New or upgraded paths (m)	m	
	Number of new furniture installed (e.g., seating, signage)	3	
	Number of new furniture upgraded/ repaired	1	
Biodiversity	Area of new woodland created including scrub (ha)	ha	
	Number of trees planted	20 planted in winter '26	
	Area of woodland enhanced/ restored	ha	
	Length of hedgerow planted	m	
	Area of grassland created	ha	
	Area of grassland enhanced/ restored	10 ha	
	Number of INNS addressed*		
	Number of habitat features installed (e.g. nest boxes)	12	
Water	Area of new wetland created	5 ha	
	Area of wetland enhanced/ restored	0.5 ha	
	Number of in-channel/ fish passage features		
	Length of river enhanced	0.1 km	