

Water Environment Improvements Project Evidence Form

Scope & Purpose

This form is to be used by the external Water Environment Governance Group (WEGG), to review, validate and formally approve the length of bluespaces improved for the Water Environment Improvements ODI. The form will be completed by the Water Environment Team with support from project partners and presented to the WEGG. After formal approval, the km of water environment improved will be recorded against the ODI and projects will be marked as completed on the Water Environment Scorecard and illustrated as delivered in the Bluespaces Mapping Portals.

Project Name

Parish Ponds Bluespaces

Project Lead

Company/ Organisation	Named Lead	Position
Woolsington Parish Council (WPC)	John Littleton & Joanne Couchman	Parish Council Members

Bluespaces Improved

Year	Claimed	Proposed	Reason For Any Change
Year 4	1.2 km	1.2 km	NA

Water Environment Assurance

This project has been reviewed internally to ensure it has delivered benefits above and beyond our baseline and regulatory obligations to improve the water environment accessible to customers across at least two out of three aspects. Following our assurance process, the project was approved by both our internal and external groups for review before delivery. This form presents evidence of project completion and the outputs achieved, to request project sign off.

Level	Project Acceptance Date	Project Approval Date	Completed Project Sign Off Date
Project Team	October 2022	NA	N/A
Water Environment Steering Group (Internal)	November 2022	November 2022	N/A
Water Environment Governance Group (External)	November 2022	November 2022	May 2024

Project Timescales

Candidate Project Approved	Project Initiated	Project Completed
November 2022	January 2023	December 2023

Project Summary and Highlights

Summary

Bluespaces funding has supported delivery of a multi-partner project to improve 1.2 km of water environment at a Woosington Parish Ponds, in the upper Ouse Burn catchment, west of Newcastle.

Woosington Parish Council (WPC) considers it a priority to future-proof The Parish Ponds as an important bluespace/greenspace area as the population of the area is expected to expand through housing development. It is expected and hoped that the site will become an important oasis for wildlife to thrive, as well as an essential recreational area for residents, contributing to their increased wellbeing. This project has supported delivery of phase 2 of The Parish Ponds project, set out within the Woosington Parish Council (WPC) Management Plan, and informed the development of the next phase supporting wider site ambitions. This work has enhanced the local site for both nature and people through footpath and habitat creation and improvements, together with offering community engagement activities for local residents.

This site was visited by the Bluespaces Delivery Manager on 17/04/24 to view the improvements made in this project.

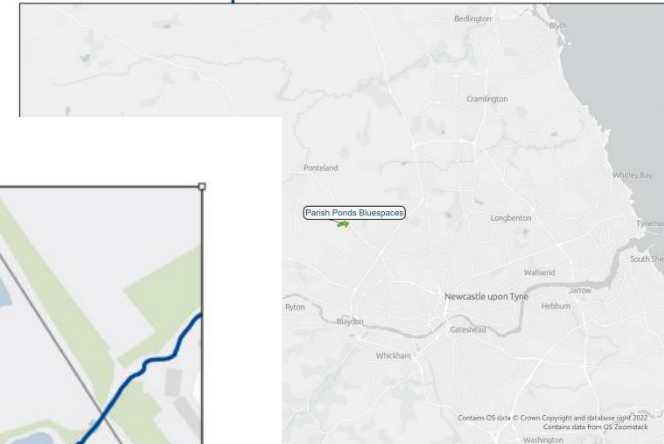
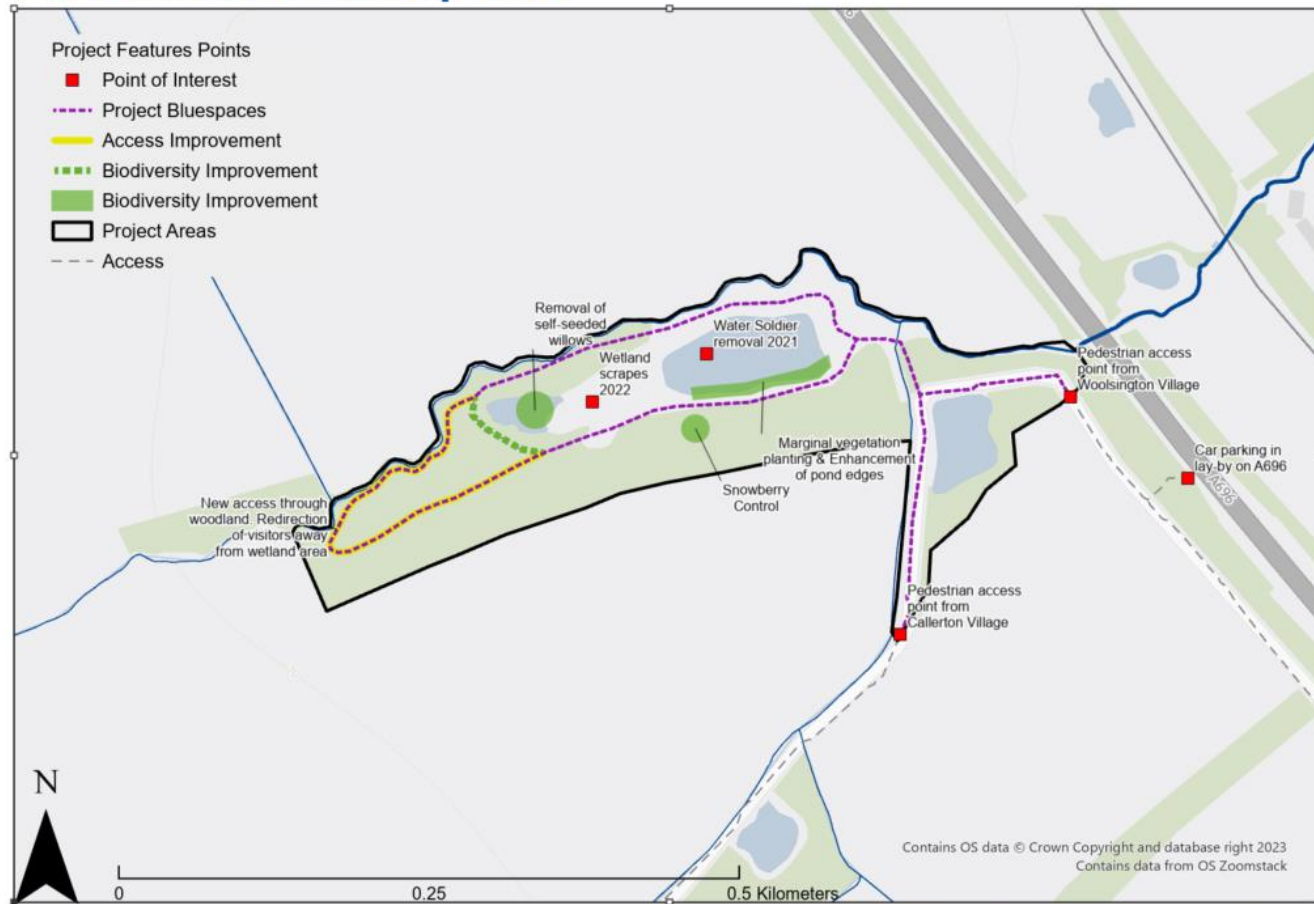
Highlights

- Creation of a new woodland footpath, to form a longer circular route around the Main Pond whilst diverting visitors away from important wildlife areas to reduce disturbance.
- Habitat improvement works to the ponds including marginal vegetation planting, enhancement and diversification of pond edges, creation of shallow scrapes and shelter coves for wildlife and removal of self-seeded willow saplings.
- Educational days including pond dipping, guided walks with ornithologist and botanist, river dipping, invertebrate sampling and interactive river models.
- Volunteering opportunities for site maintenance including litter picking.



Maps


Parish Ponds Bluespaces



Total length of Bluespaces: 1.2km

Bluespaces improved at the Parish Ponds, Woolsington

Project Outputs, Benefits & Evidence Against Criteria

Access, Facilities & Recreation	
Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New access through woodland will direct visitors away from the wetland area while retaining views of open water and wetland. 2. The project will provide the community with the opportunity to experience new habitat in addition to the open green & blue space benefiting health & wellbeing 3. Community visitor days will be offered delivered by specialists covering topics such as Birds, Butterflies and Moths, Insects, and Wildflowers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A1: Increases access to, engagement with and enjoyment of the water environment ➤ A2: Benefits health and wellbeing ➤ A3: Influences positive environmental behaviors
Outputs	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 500m of woodland footpath was created, completed by Haywood Contracting in March 2023, providing new access around the western end of the wetlands to divert visitors away from the informally designated 'conservation' area. A short path was introduced in a second phase enabling access to a small area of the wetlands for visitors to appreciate the beauty of the wetland area and its surroundings. 2. Previously there was no access to woodland at the site. The new path provides a woodland walk option, thereby enabling visitors to experience the pleasures of woodland habitat and wildlife. In order for the public to enjoy this, a small area was created in the woodland for recreational purposes, adjacent to the path, with 3 log seats made from trees that had been cleared for the creation of the path. 3. Through the project activities, 250 members of the public were engaged. This included 3 community events hosted by project partner Tyne Rivers Trust: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 24 June 2023 litter picking and minor site maintenance - 22 July 2023 Educational Day 'Understanding Pond Life' – pond dipping and invertebrate sampling, guided walks with ornithologist and botanists - 30 Sept 2023 Educational Day at Woosington village green - 'Understanding Your Local River' - river dipping and invertebrate sampling, SUDS house model, interactive 3D river model, hapazome printing (the Japanese technique of smashing flowers and leaves into fabric as leaf dye) Event reports are available on request. 	
Evidence	
	
<p>New woodland footpath</p>	



Clearing with seating and new wetland viewpoint



Litter Pick & Site Maintenance, June 2023



COMMUNITY EDUCATION DAY Saturday 22 July 2023 at the Parish Ponds
Hosted by the Tyne Rivers Trust and Woolsington Parish Council

- Pond dipping - with Simone Saville, Tyne Rivers Trust
- Listen to life under the water with hydrophones – with Simone Saville
- Guided walk with ornithologist Michael Turner 11am - 12 noon
- Guided walk with ecologist Mike Thompson looking at the wildflowers 1pm - 2pm



Despite the wet conditions the event was well attended and enjoyed by everyone. As can be seen by the records, there was no shortage of species seen. The amount of water species seen was considerably improved and more varied since the last water sampling was undertaken in 2020. The Tyne Rivers Trust believes that this is due to the significantly increased oxygen levels following the removal of Water Soldier, which was choking the large pond. The Parish Council financed the removal of Water Soldier by specialist environmental contractors in July 2021.



Small Green Grasshopper



Canada Goose family with 9 Goslings



Stickleback (above)



Water Stick insect (below)



Wildlife & Biodiversity

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Removal of self-seeded willows will conserve wetland habitat and new access through woodland will direct visitors away from wetland area of pond to protect biodiversity and habitat for aquatic life. 2. Management of invasive Snowberry from surrounding vegetation will protect grassland areas. 3. Introduction of appropriate wildlife habitat to encourage pollinators, Dragonfly & Hedgehog (bird boxes, bat boxes, insect hotels etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ B1: Improves the quantity, quality and connectivity of habitats ➤ B2: Improves the conservation status and or abundance or distribution of species

Outputs

1. The self-seeded willows were excavated and removed by Haywood Contractors in September 2023, and the area has recovered well. The new woodland trail is being used by visitors, with the western side of the pond now more protected from disturbance.
2. Excavated material was used to bury an area of Snowberry; future monitoring will take place to assess the effectiveness of this method. The control and monitoring of invasive species is embedded into the current site management plan. A new plan is commissioned for 2025 due to the change in landownership, which will include invasive species control and monitoring.
3. Haywood Contractors undertook major works to the Main Pond in September 2023 to benefit wildlife by providing more marginal vegetation planted close to the banks to support pond edge habitats, and creating inlets and outlets with shallow scrapes excavated on the southern boundary of the main pond to create shelter coves and protruding banks. Dragonflies have been seen laying eggs in the pond and birds including herons and more duck species (e.g. gadwall) are now using the marginal areas.

Evidence



Removal of large sections of self-seeded willow saplings from the wetland area, excavated scrapes for new habitat



Snowberry control area and new varied habitats in the main pond

Additional & Secondary Benefits

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Benefits to the local community through recreation, mental health and physical well-being, local primary school visits, and potential for social prescribing. 2. Project will provide support for development of the Nature Park project, including building ambition and securing funding for further access and recreational facility improvements in the long term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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. The new footpath and habitat improvements to the site are easily accessible to the local community – the site is only a short walk from the village of Woolsington. Community events have helped the local community to engage with the site, encouraging future use for recreation, which contributes to health and wellbeing. A number of local children have been engaged through the project’s community events programme.
2. Additional investment has been secured for this project as a result of the NW Bluespaces contribution, from the Parish Council, the Local Authority, Tyne Rivers Trust and in-kind volunteer contributions. Press releases have been issued to promote the success of the project and its aspirations. As a consequence of these activities, discussions are now in place between the new landowner (Taylor Wimpey & Persimmon Homes since November 2022) and the Parish Council, together with the Local Authority, Northumberland Wildlife Trust and other potential sponsors, regarding the creation of a Nature Reserve and also exploring potential links to the wider rights of way network, which will be developed through further phases of the site management plan.



Evidence

Community event reports have been provided by the lead partner and are available on request, as well as a large number of testimonials and feedback received from site users. Some material is included here and in the sections below.






Bluespaces Project: "Understanding our River in Woolsington"

A community event, hosted by Tyne Rivers Trust (TRT) and Woolsington Parish Council, was held on the Village Green, Woolsington, on Sat 30 September 2023. This was the third of our community engagement events. All are part of our biodiversity project, aimed at protecting and enhancing the area in and around the Parish Ponds and the Upper Ouseburn, for the benefit of both nature and people.

Over 40 adults and children enjoyed learning about our river, the Ouseburn, its importance and how to look after it. There were plenty of fun activities to enjoy, plus the opportunity for some enthusiasts to get wet. Some of the highlights are featured in this bulletin.








Above: The river model - a 3-D interactive model which simulates rain and river flow
 Below: Invertebrate sampling - using sweep nets for river dipping and trays for kick sampling to learn what's in the river. We were pleased to find a lot of Stickleback fish

Lovely examples of 'Hapa Zome', a form of Japanese art printing using the plants' natural dyes, which proved a very popular activity

Below: Some entries for the 'Paint the Fish' competition, to be judged soon by TRT

Customer Testimonies & Media

Newcastle nature scheme aims to improve health of Ouseburn ponds

The Parish Ponds project has been backed by a grant from Northumbrian Water

NEWS By [Tony Henderson](#)

05:02, 24 SEP 2023

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Comments



Clearing the invasive water soldier plants (Image: Supplied picture)

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Link: [Newcastle nature scheme aims to improve health of Ouseburn ponds - Chronicle Live](#)

Project Video link: <https://www.facebook.com/northumbrianwater/videos/414272041546116>

Northumbrian Water @NorthumbrianH2O - Apr 6

We're pleased our bluespaces fund is helping to transform Woosington Parish Ponds in Newcastle.

The first phase has improved the habitat and led to the return of water bird species.

This phase will create a new woodland walk & a small clearing with log seating. ❤️

2 3 702

NWG (Northumbrian Water Group)
20,685 followers
2m · 🌐

We're so pleased that funding from our bluespaces scheme is helping to transform Woosington Parish Ponds in Newcastle.

The first phase of the project has seen improvements to the habitat which has led to the return of water bird species, and this phase will help to create a new woodland walk and a small clearing with log seating.

Bluespaces is all about enhancing spaces around water, making sure they're enjoyable for people and help nature to thrive!

Find out more 📍 <https://lnkd.in/eFX2Q7g6>

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'The work that has been undertaken around the Parish Ponds has been greatly appreciated by our young family. My two boys now love to visit the ponds and dip for any bugs in the water and we enjoy watching the swans and ducks that we now see there. The 'Understanding your River' day was a huge hit...'

SW Woolsington

'I think the Bluespaces Project has been an outstanding success. The Ponds have been transformed, it's brilliant to see wildlife returning to the ponds. The walkways have made access easy and accessible, which allows inclusion for all. It's such a lovely place to visit.'

LM Woolsington Parish Council Etal Lane

'We are fortunate to live in the Parish Ponds vicinity on the newly built Kenton Bank Hall development and have (over the last 3 years) had the pleasure of seeing the area develop.... The ponds area in particular has been completely transformed... The new walk through the woodland is fantastic not only for conservation of the area, but for the educational value it gives to the community... My wife & I were lucky enough to attend some of the community events also. The "Understanding Your Local River" in Sept (Village Green, Woolsington) with TRT - river dipping, invertebrate sampling, SUDS house model, river model, hapazome printing was incredible & both Northumbrian Water Group & the Parish Council should be commended for this. To see the delight & enthusiasm on children's faces, as they took samples from the river & learnt about the amount of pondlife, invertebrates etc was an absolute pleasure. FYI the litter picking events have also been a bigger success that you may think, with residents continuing this activity beyond the areas and timescales of the events. So much so that my wife & I often incorporate this into our regular walks around the ponds & Woolsington Parish Area.'

TD & WD Kenton Bank Hall

'All of the adaptations have made things more accessible for families. The educational session on the river was absolutely fantastic. Not just educational but also really engaging for children of all ages. It was really well received by all who attended and really promoted a sense of community and communal responsibility.'

CV Woolsington

'It was also very encouraging to see almost no litter or any signs of the fires and the vandalism that was so commonplace. It would seem the improvements that have been made to the ponds has dissuaded the antisocial behaviour that was commonplace in previous years. Long may it remain so. I'm not sure who has carried out all the work or where the funding has come from but the improvement is quite amazing.'

LK Woolsington

'Woolsington Parish Ponds are a fantastic facility easily accessible to the public.'

SB Woolsington

Lead Partner Quotes & Testimonials

'Woolsington Parish Council was delighted to work in partnership with the Northumbrian Water Group on its Bluespaces project. Bluespaces supported Parish Council ambitions to preserve and enhance natural habitats for wildlife and provide increased provision for community access at the Parish Ponds. The project enabled the creation of a new footpath through woodland and the management of a wetland habitat. It also provided invaluable opportunities for community engagement events and volunteering sessions, overseen by Tyne Rivers Trust. Furthermore, this grant funding acted as a seed and, as a result, additional investment was attracted from other sources.'

'The Bluespaces project was a huge success and Members of the Parish Council would like to express their sincere gratitude to Northumbrian Water Group and Tyne Rivers Trust for their input and support throughout.'

Woolsington Parish Council

'Tyne Rivers Trust have worked on the ponds site for a number of years now. It is great that our volunteers can return to a site over time for a series of practical tasks, they can see the changes and feel a sense of ownership in the habitat and recreational amenity created. We are looking forward to more events and tasks in the future and see Woolsington Ponds as a pivotal gem amongst our ambitions for the whole of the Ouse Burn catchment, working through the Ouseburn sub-Catchment Partnership.'

Ceri Gibson CEO Tyne Rivers Trust

'All of the work you [Woolsington Parish Council] do is absolutely amazing, it's a pleasure working with you. Through sheer determination and hard work you continue to create wonderful habitat and improve the area for the benefit of people and wildlife. The Parish Ponds are an absolute gem and a wonderful place to be. We will continue to support you in any way we can.'

SS Tyne Rivers Trust

Other Supporting Evidence

Partners and contractors involved and activities supported

Woolsington Parish Council	Strategy and funding
Ouseburn Sub-Catchment Partnership	Project work and advice
Tyne Rivers Trust	Education/ volunteer days
Northumberland Wildlife Trust	Site visits, advice and policy
Environment Agency (EA)	Site visits, advice, permissions and feedback
Newcastle City Council	River quality advice
Woolsington Residents Association	Newsletters, volunteers
Taylor Wimpey & Persimmon Homes	Landowner, funding and support
Haywood Contractors	Habitat improvements
OS Ecology	Baseline ecology survey

'To me it looks like the bluespaces project has been a full success. It resulted in a more natural and higher quality bluegreen space around the Woolsington Parish ponds with improved accessibility for the nature lovers in your community. The engagement events raised awareness of your valuable work and helps connect communities with nature. We know that spending time in nature has mental health benefits. The improved bluegreen space around the ponds has become an excellent asset for recreation and education. By unblocking the inlet and outlet pipes to the main pond, you have facilitated the passage of water through this pond, which will help with the retention and attenuation of peak flows in the Ouseburn and reduce flooding risks further downstream. I believe this balancing effect of the pond and its riparian forest could be further enhanced to achieve both flood risk mitigation and water quality benefits, for example by capturing suspended solids from soil erosion in the forest and pond'

DW Newcastle University