

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

Haltwhistle Riverside Park

Project Lead

Company/ Organisation	Named Lead	Position	Contact Details
South Tynedale Railway	Ian Millward	Volunteer Coordinator	volunteering@south-tynedale-railway.org.uk

Water Environment Improved (NWG use only)

Year	Claimed	Proposed	Reason For Any Change
Year 3	0.9 km	0.9 km	N/A

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	January 2022	January 2022	N/A
Water Environment Steering Group (Internal)	January 2022	January 2022	N/A
Water Environment Governance Group (External)	January 2022	January 2022	May 2024 (For Review)

Project Timescales

Candidate Project Approved	Project Initiated	Project Completed
January 2022	January 2022	May 2022 and ongoing

Project Summary and Highlights

Summary

Bluespaces funding has supported delivery improvements to 0.9 km of water environment at Haltwhistle Riverside Park in West End, Haltwhistle, Northumberland.

The park is an area of reclaimed railway yard to the south of Haltwhistle railway station and is bordered by the River South Tyne. It includes the old railway of the Alston branch line. The area of the former old railway yard is covered almost exclusively by Silver Birch, whilst the riverside has greater diversity of flora but is a much smaller area. There are two water outlets in the park which form a small stream.

The Haltwhistle Riverside Park project, led by South Tynedale Railway volunteers, is endeavouring to develop the neglected railway yard and adjacent riverbank into a valued public amenity and wildlife park, introducing trees and new habitat to encourage more animals and birds into the area.

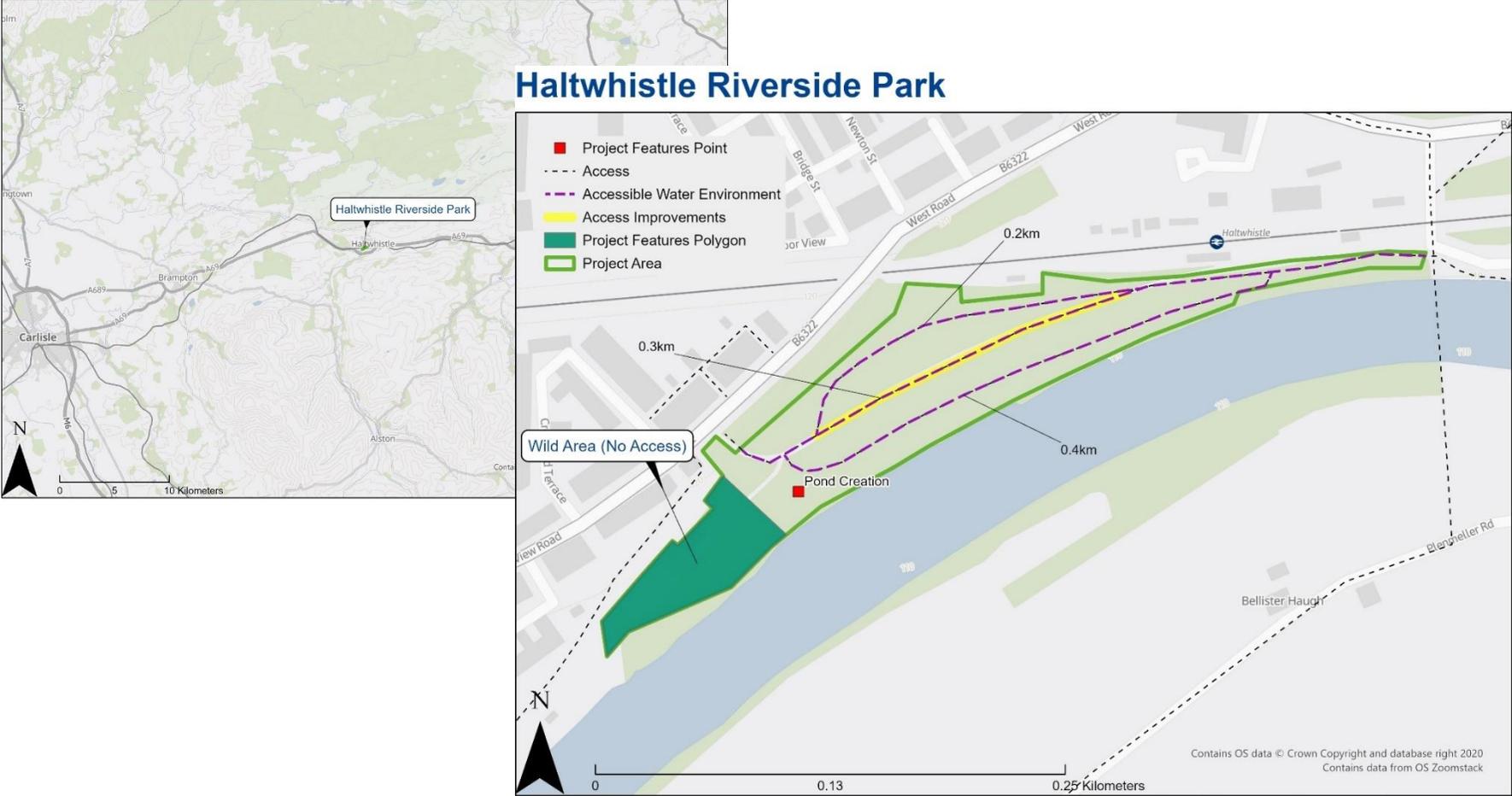
Improvements delivered through Bluespaces have transformed the area for the local community, with a plan of more work to do in the future led by volunteers.

Highlights

- Access improvements including new steps and path resurfacing to make the main pathway accessible to all and provide better access to the riverside
- Planting of 300 trees and shrubs, a wildflower meadow and memorial orchard, creating a wider diversity of trees and wildflowers on the site
- Creation of a small wildlife pond which can be used as a dipping pond for children



Maps



Total Length of Bluespaces: 0.9km

Bluespaces improved at Haltwhistle Riverside Park

Project Value, NWG Investment & Impact

Total Project Value:

£13,700

Year	Bluespaces Improved	NWG Investment		ODI Reward (£7676/km)
		Baseline	Above & Beyond	
Year 3 2022/23	0.9 km	£0	£3,500	£6,908

NWG has committed to reinvest at least 50% of reward received from this ODI in new projects, after programme costs. The company has already exceeded this commitment each year. In Year 5, the final year of the ODI, 13 projects are already in delivery through partners to improve over 90 km of bluespaces, representing £253,000 of above and beyond investment.

Income Sources	Funder
£6,200	South Tynedale Railway (in kind 124 volunteer days in 2022)
£1,000	Haltwhistle Town Council (for general expenses)
£3,000	Karbon Homes (for tools and path building)
£3,500	NWG Branch Out
£13,700	Total



Project Outputs, Benefits & Evidence Against Criteria

Access, Facilities & Recreation	
Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Restoration of an ‘eyesore’ and fly tipping site into a safe, natural and easily accessed amenity to be used by the community, which will benefit residents and improve health and wellbeing. 2. Access improvements will make the main pathway wheelchair friendly. 3. Picnic benches and seating installation will benefit users of the site. 4. Pond creation will provide a dipping pond facility for children at the site. 5. Health and wellbeing benefits for the local community through delivery of improvements by volunteers working outdoors and engaging with nature, including easily accessible activities such as litter picking, planting wildflower seeds and bulbs and acting as informal park wardens. 6. Project will provide an educational resource for the local school and there are opportunities for other volunteer groups including youth groups to make use of the area. South Tynedale Railway volunteers’ knowledge of the species and habitats on site will also be increased through use of wildlife cameras and surveys 	<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. A large area at the site has been cleared of rubbish. This uncovered hardstanding material on which a shed was built for the purposes of volunteer tool storage, saving the volunteer team storing and transporting equipment from their own homes. Equipment has been also been donated by residents and local businesses to help restore the site. Compost bins have been created which anyone from the community can use. The site therefore offers a community resource as well as a recreational area for enjoyment. 2. Access has been provided to two ends of the park has been created, with hard surfaces now in place. Steps to the river area have also been provided in two places and have been positively received, allowing more users to access the riverside. 3. A forest school seating area has been created within the park which is now in use. The installation of picnic benches and seating is planned in 2024, with this work delayed due to wet weather. 4. A pond area in a new scrape has been created, and a leaky dam outlet from the pond has been stabilised and the walkway strengthened to create safer access for visitors. 5. Volunteering opportunities have been provided through this project, including tree planting, wildflower meadow sowing and litter picking, providing health and wellbeing benefits to the local community. The “Ellie’s Orchard” area was created by volunteers in memory of local a Chamber of Commerce member. 6. A space at the site has been developed for the local Stomping Grounds Forest School to use. The South Tynedale Railway volunteers have plans to view and monitor the enhanced wildlife now using the through the use of wildlife cameras and surveys. 	
Evidence	
	
<p>Site clearance uncovered a hardstanding area, where a shed to store equipment was installed</p>	



New entrance at West End by volunteers, clear paths have been created through scrub and woodland areas



FOREST SCHOOL for 0-5s AND THEIR PARENTS/CARERS

TUESDAYS 10.30-12.30
Dukes Hagg Wood, Prudhoe

WEDNESDAYS 10-12
Benwell Nature Reserve

THURSDAYS 10-12
Haltwhistle Riverside Park

THURSDAYS 9.30-11.30 and 12.30-2.30
Gateshead Riverside Park

07736990489

The Therapeutic Forest Approved Practitioner

FSA Forest School Provider

STOMPING GROUNDS



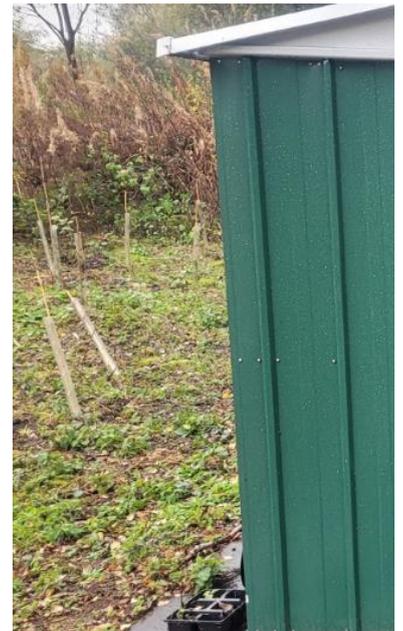
Education/Forest School Area and Stomping Grounds Advert



New steps being installed by volunteers



Pond and leaky dam outlet



Trees planted near to shed

Wildlife & Biodiversity

Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Woodland management and thinning of birch and trees affected by ash dieback along with planting hedgerows and trees around the site will improve the appearance of the area as well as providing additional cover and food for wildlife 2. A small pond will provide habitat for frogs, dragonflies, etc. 3. Installation of Bird and Bat Boxes to provide additional habitat 4. Volunteer efforts to manage invasive species aim to remove Himalayan Balsam from the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ B1: Improves the quantity, quality and connectivity of habitats ➤ B3: Reduces risk or impact of invasive non-native species (INNS)

Outputs

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thinning of birch and afflicted ash trees has been undertaken, allowing creation of new deadwood habitat piles across the site. 300 trees, including bushes and hedgerow trees have been planted, and a community orchard. Over 20m² of wildflower meadow has been created with seeds gathered from sites around the Haltwhistle area. 2. A pond area in a new scrape has been created to provide new water habitat for wildlife. 3. Bat and bird boxes have been installed on site, providing nesting opportunities in areas where mature trees are lacking. 4. Himalayan Balsam has been cleared from the site, and this will be an annual task for the foreseeable future which volunteers are committed to continue.

Evidence



Trees planted



Wildflower meadow



Habitat Pile created from cleared wood



New bat and bird boxes installed at the site



New hedgerow



Volunteers removing diseased ash trees



New pond with a leaky dam outlet

Additional & Secondary Benefits	
Expected Project Outcomes	Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The park provides an arboretum protected from any farming practice or expansion of the town, and greater numbers of trees will help offset CO₂ emissions. 2. Maintenance of the culverts will improve drainage by ensuring that excess water drains into the river. 3. Park has been identified by the Town Council as an asset for the Haltwhistle in Bloom project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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
Outputs	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 300 trees were planted in this project, as well as a pond created, which provide habitat and will sequester carbon. 2. The pond outlet has been improved with a leaky dam which been stabilised to improve drainage to the river, and maintenance of the park and all its features will be an ongoing activity for committed volunteers. 3. The park project has involved multiple partners including Haltwhistle Town Council, Railtrack, Karbon Homes, Potts Plant Hire and The Woodland Trust. The Haltwhistle in Bloom project has not developed for 2023, but this site could be an asset for future years due to the improvements and the community legacy delivered in this project. 	
Evidence	
<p>See above sections and customer testimonies.</p>	

Customer Testimonies & Media

Testimonies from customers:

“Thank you so much for all your care and work at the area. It’s a wonderful space.”



It's fantastic to see the work being done at Haltwhistle Riverside Park by the **SOUTH TYNEDALE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY**.

Their project to take the derelict site and turn it into an amazing community facility is supported by our Branch Out environmental fund, plus tireless volunteers and a wide range of other partners (see below).

Despite Covid having slowed down progress, they've created safe paths, made the riverside accessible, stabilised a natural pond, cleared invasive non-native species, and enhanced habitats for a whole host of species.

A space has also been developed for the local forest school, **Stomping Grounds Forest School**, to use.

SOUTH TYNEDALE RAILWAY LIMITED

Partners: Railtrack Haltwhistle Town Council Karbon Homes Potts Plant Hire The Woodland Trust



1 comment · 1 repost

Stomping Grounds Forest School North East
6 February 2023 · 🌍

I headed down to Haltwhistle Riverside Park this morning to check our little spot there. Local residents had shared concerns about damage at the weekend, with broken bottles, rubbish, upturned furniture and dismantled fencing reported. These lovely members of Haltwhistle community then tidied up the rubbish, put furniture back and left it looking more like its old self - thank you for taking care of our spot in this wonderful public site. We LOVE that it is being used by everyone with a sense of shared responsibility for its care. I did some more litter picking today and collected a bag full, but there are lots of tiny shards of brown glass amongst the leaf litter that pose danger to children and animals - please take care if you're passing through.

I put up a reminder about our upcoming Under 5s sessions starting March 2nd on the gate and stuck my big head in the frame - come join us and see why our forest school spot is so valuable to this community!
<https://bookwhen.com/stompinggrounds?tags=haltwhistle...>

37
7 shares
Like Comment Share



Our Under 5s forest school at Riverside Park was fully booked within a few hours of publishing, so we're using some of our Haltwhistle Partnership funding to offer free Family Fun forest school sessions - same venue but at the weekend! There are dates in July, August, September, October and December. Head over to our page to book.



Stomping Grounds Forest School North East
June 11, 2022 · 🌍

We are so excited to bring our free Family Fun forest school sessions to Haltwhistle, fully funded by Haltwhistle Partnership Karbon Homes
This FREE session w... See more

20
17 comments 1 share
Like Comment Share

Lead Partner Quotes & Testimonials

An elderly resident thanked the group for the steps, as it was the first time that he had ever been able to go down and walk by the river. The public have been so pleased with our effort so far that they have given the group gifts of trees, bulbs and seeds. They also help by doing rubbish collection when passing through the site.

Ian Millward, Volunteer Liaison Officer, South Tynedale Railway

Other Supporting Evidence

Partner Website: <https://www.south-tynedale-railway.org.uk/>