



**River Chess  
Smarter Water  
Catchment**

# Working together to protect and enhance our water environment

What our partnership in the River Chess  
catchment has achieved this year

Smarter Water Catchment Plan  
Update Document  
March 2024

Working in partnership



CHILTERN'S  
CHALK STREAMS  
PROJECT



**Chilterns**  
National  
Landscape

**Chiltern**  
Society



**Environment**  
Agency

**Affinity**Water



**Herts &  
Middlesex**  
Wildlife Trust



**Queen Mary**  
University of London



# Welcome to this update

In March 2021, we collectively set out a 10-year plan to protect and enhance the River Chess catchment. Throughout 2023/24, we continue to deliver the actions outlined in this plan and have begun collecting data to demonstrate the additional benefits of this programme.

We've been able to measure how working in partnership can leverage additional match funding, support and create new jobs, enhance and create habitat and biodiversity and increase engagement and public awareness across a river catchment. All of the insight gathered is being used to inform our long-term strategy for partnership working across the Thames region.

## Working in partnership

We've been working with many different partners across the River Chess catchment, bringing together expertise from many specialisms to make sure our future plans are robust and right for the local environment and communities.

Our partners include water companies, regulators, non-government organisations, academia and local interest groups – all have given either finances or in-kind support to help make this project a success.

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# What we're aiming to achieve

Throughout 2023/24, we've focused on delivering the actions set out under each of our key themes. The main focus has been on analysing data to shape our strategies and delivering interventions across the catchment.



## River Chess strategy



### Aim for 2024/25

Our aim is to collate the benefits and lessons learnt from all three Smarter Water Catchments projects and disseminate this information in 2024/25.

On the next page is a case study on some of our collaborative work within the River Chess catchment and the benefits it's delivered so far.

## Putting the green governance in place

A steering group with representatives from across the different sectors has guided the development and delivery of this catchment plan. We also have technical working groups for each key theme, bringing in additional stakeholders who are responsible for ensuring the best plan is in

place to achieve our objectives. It's also critical that Catchment Partnerships have the resources to partner with us, so we're funding multiple positions to support with facilitation, community engagement and data collection & analysis.

## What's our collective vision for the River Chess catchment?

Our collective vision is that the Chess catchment is a jewel in the heart of the Chilterns landscape. We want to create a place where people are working together to protect and improve the water environment for everyone. From the headwaters in Chesham to its confluence with the River Colne in Rickmansworth, we want the River Chess to possess the clean, plentiful, flow characteristics of a healthy chalk stream. We want to ensure that the river is sensitively managed, meeting the needs of all those that rely on its resource whilst enabling it to reach its full biological potential, supporting rich and diverse

populations of fish, birds and other wildlife. We also want the wider catchment to be a working landscape that is managed for the benefit of both people and wildlife. We want to minimise the impact of pollution, flooding and non-native invasive species and conserve a connected mosaic of wildlife-rich habitats. We want to create a natural and attractive amenity for people to enjoy and improve social wellbeing for present and future generations. We've identified year-on-year actions under each of our key themes so that we can work towards this vision together.

## Steering group members

Affinity Water  
Buckinghamshire Council  
Chilterns National Landscape  
Chiltern Society  
Environment Agency  
Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust  
Sarratt Parish Council  
Thames Water  
The River Chess Association



# A project case study:

## Restore Hope Latimer

Start date: 04/01/2021 End date: 01/03/2024



Children river dipping in the Chess.

Restore Hope Latimer, the River Chess Association and Thames Water delivered four separate nature driven SWC projects incorporating local, junior and corporate volunteer time.

The purpose was to restore one kilometre of chalk stream via woody dam installation for the benefits of water voles and brown trout, erect riverside fencing to restrict cattle riverbank access, create an orchard to improve water quality through reducing runoff, whilst provided biodiversity enhancement and habitat for insects and birds and to support arable reversion.

### Objectives

- 1 Improve Habitat:** Install woody features, remove overgrowth, increase vegetation and plant trees.
- 2 Engage Volunteers:** Promote a variety of activities and utilise staff days.
- 3 Arable Reversion:** Increase the number of acres of grassland.
- 4 Create an inclusive space**

### Outcomes

- Created 47 wood habitat features including deflectors and berms which altering the flow and sediment dynamics to improve habitat diversity and quality
- Implemented several other feature types along the reach, including tree hinges, narrow marginal shelves, and instream islands
- Installations delivered through volunteers, staff day for Chiltern Society and Chilterns National Landscape, and four corporate days (two days each from Thames Water and Affinity Water)
- Transformed 120 acres of arable land to grassland. Facilitated by the installation of 51km of fencing which improved security
- Conducted soil sampling to provide context on the ground
- Volunteers planted an orchard that included 12 native apple trees
- Installed 1.4km of fencing to protect the riverbanks by allowing more targeted, seasonal grazing of cattle



First physical evidence of otters in the Chess Catchment.

### Project highlights

- Successfully secured wildlife cameras and captured the first physical evidence of an otter in this area
- Created an inclusive and safe environment, such as facilitating wheelchair access that enabled a student to participate in class activities at a protected section of the land, where she could dip her feet into the water. The impact of this experience resonated with the student, who later returned with her parents
- Highlighted the broader advantages of creating a connection with nature, especially through shared experiences and cherished memories
- Participated in a BBQ event on the estate. This event included attendees who had never previously visited the site, enhancing community engagement and awareness

### Project costs

- **Total Costs:** £101,204
- **Thames Water Contribution:** £84,135
- **Public Funding:** £17,069 – Green Recovery, Countryside Stewardship

### Future plans

Woodland projects are being considered for our next nature-based initiative.

**restore hope**  
Transforming Lives and Communities

**Chilterns National Landscape**

**River Chess Smarter Water Catchment**

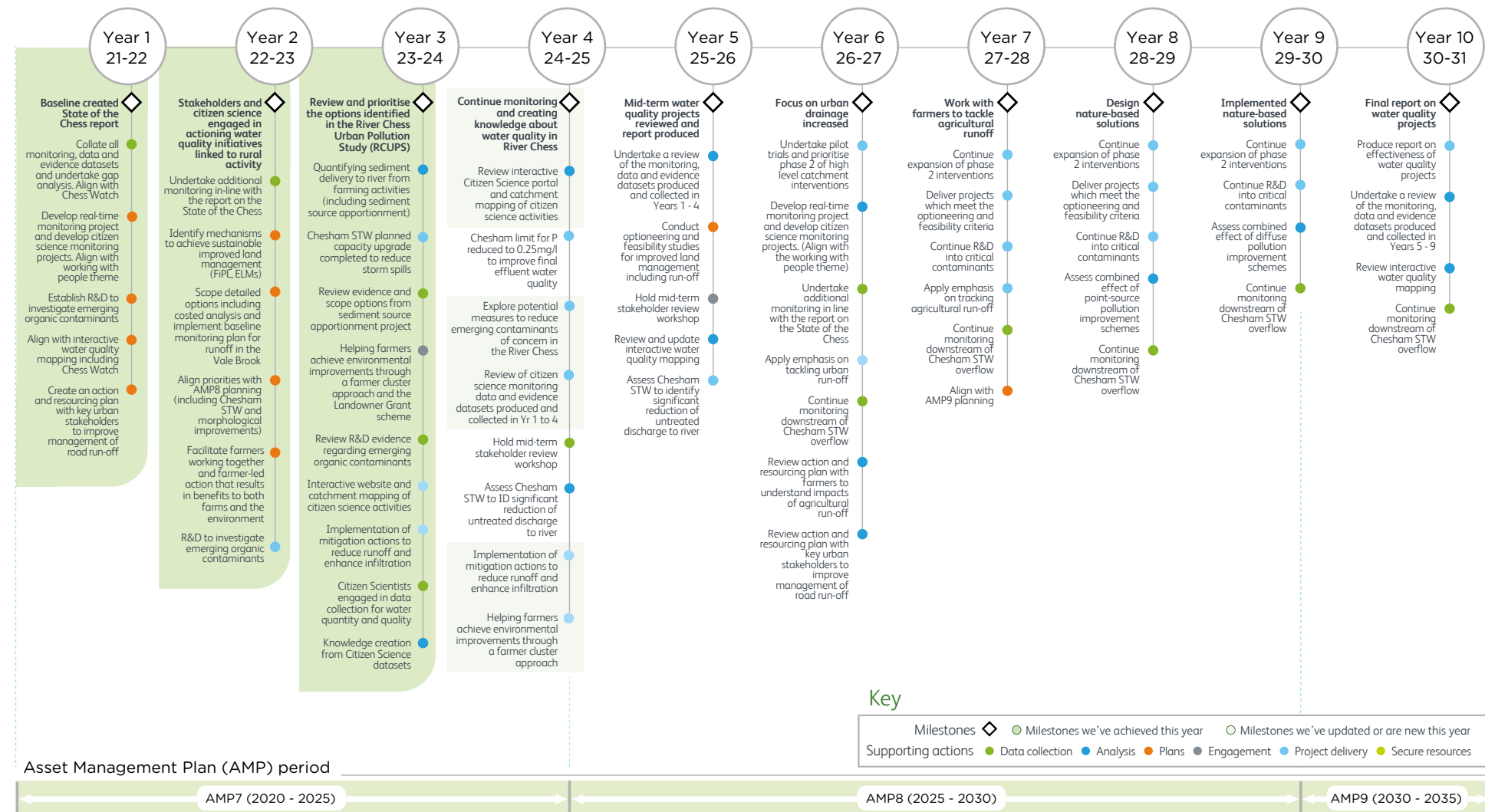
**Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs**

**Thames Water**

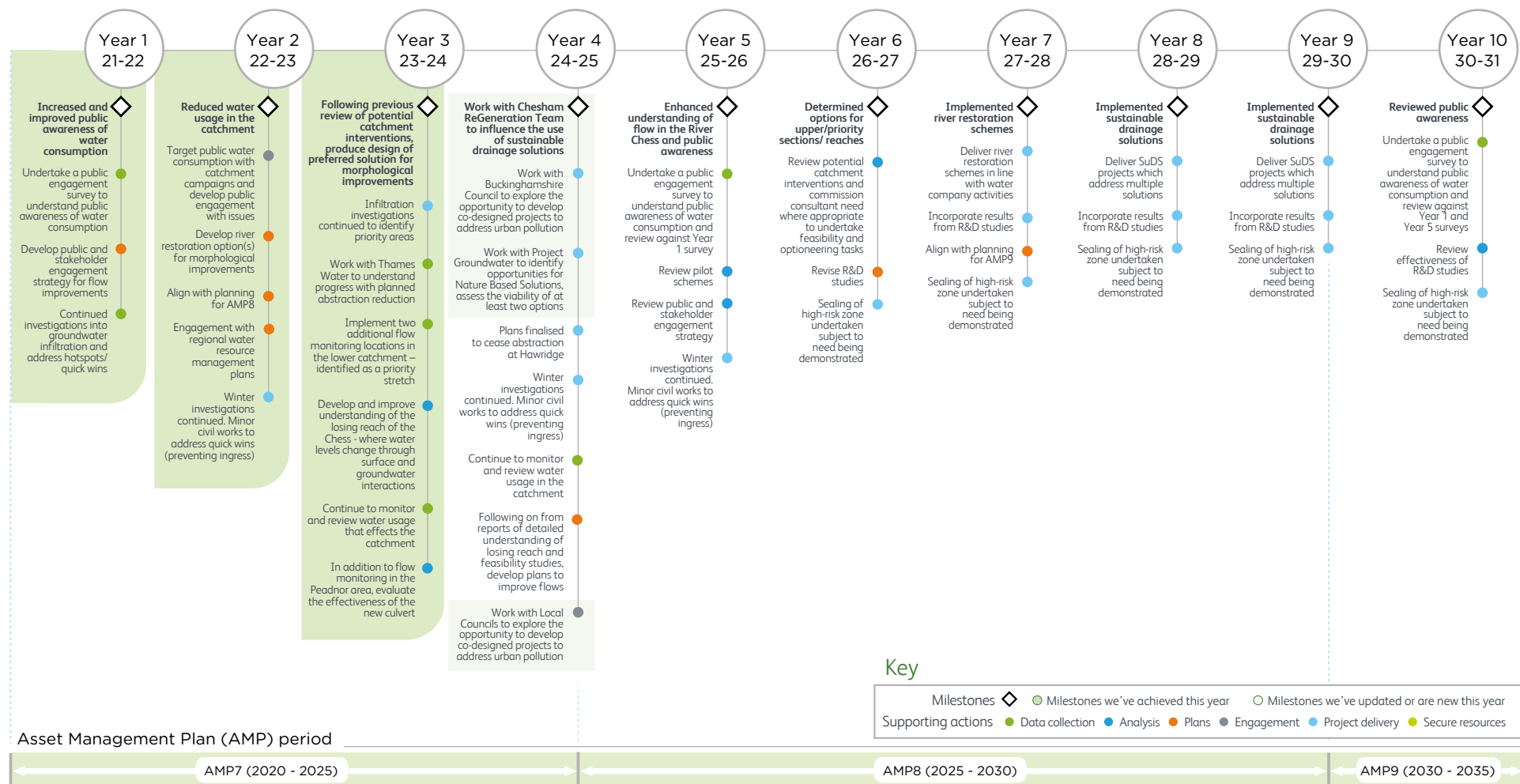
# Delivering our shared long-term plan

Here are the milestones we achieved in 2023/24, after in-depth analysis some of next year's milestones have been updated, which we've highlighted.

## Improving water quality action plan

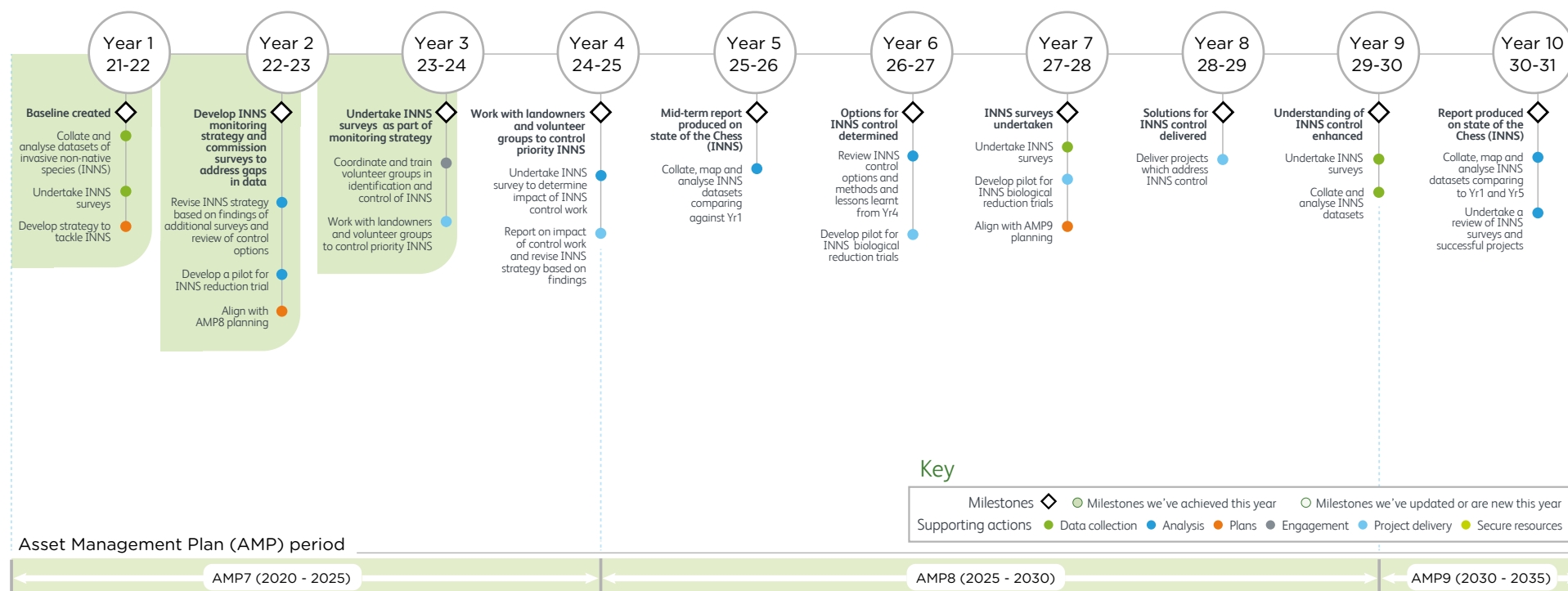


# Managing flow action plan

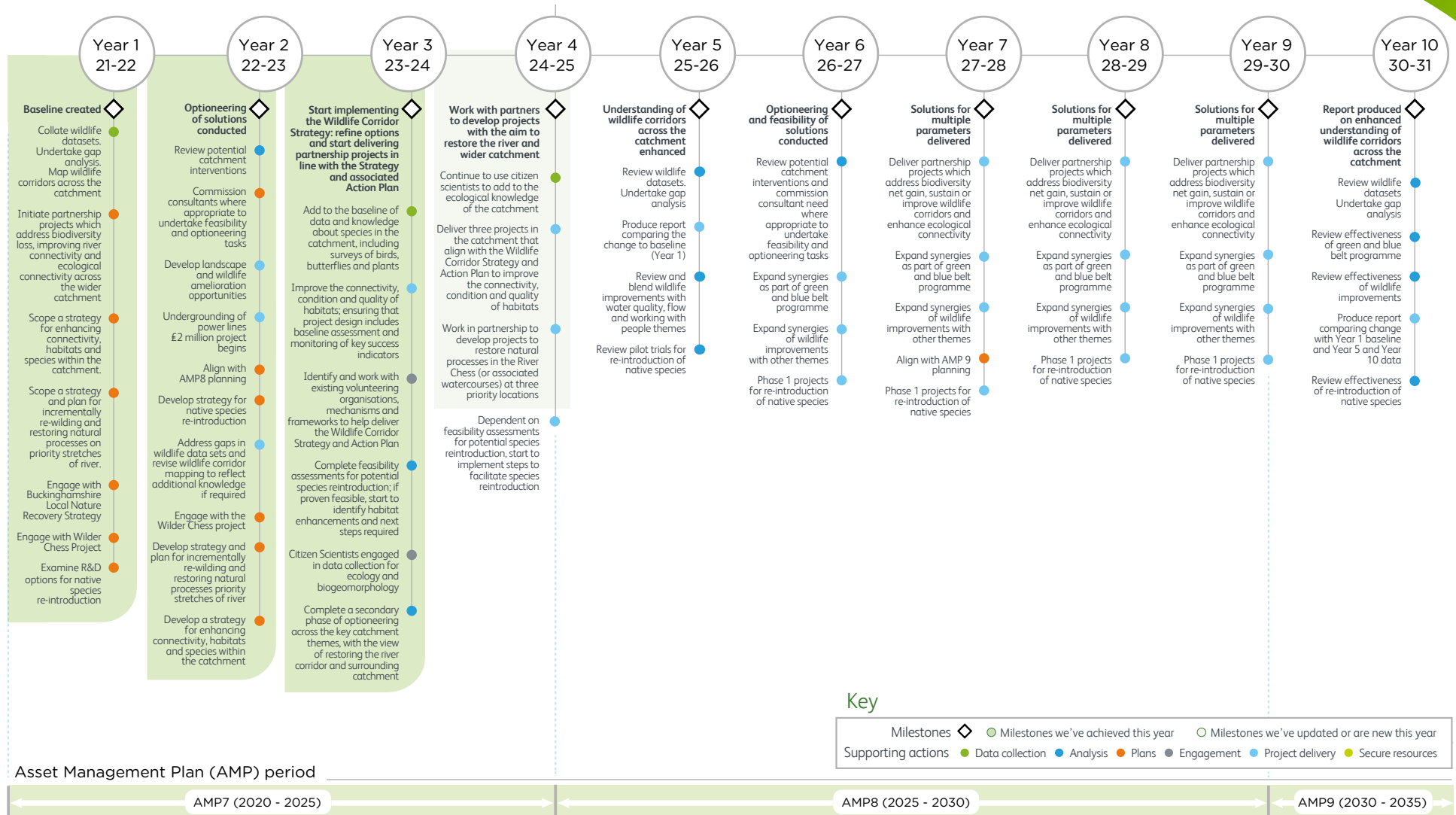




# Control of invasive non-native species action plan

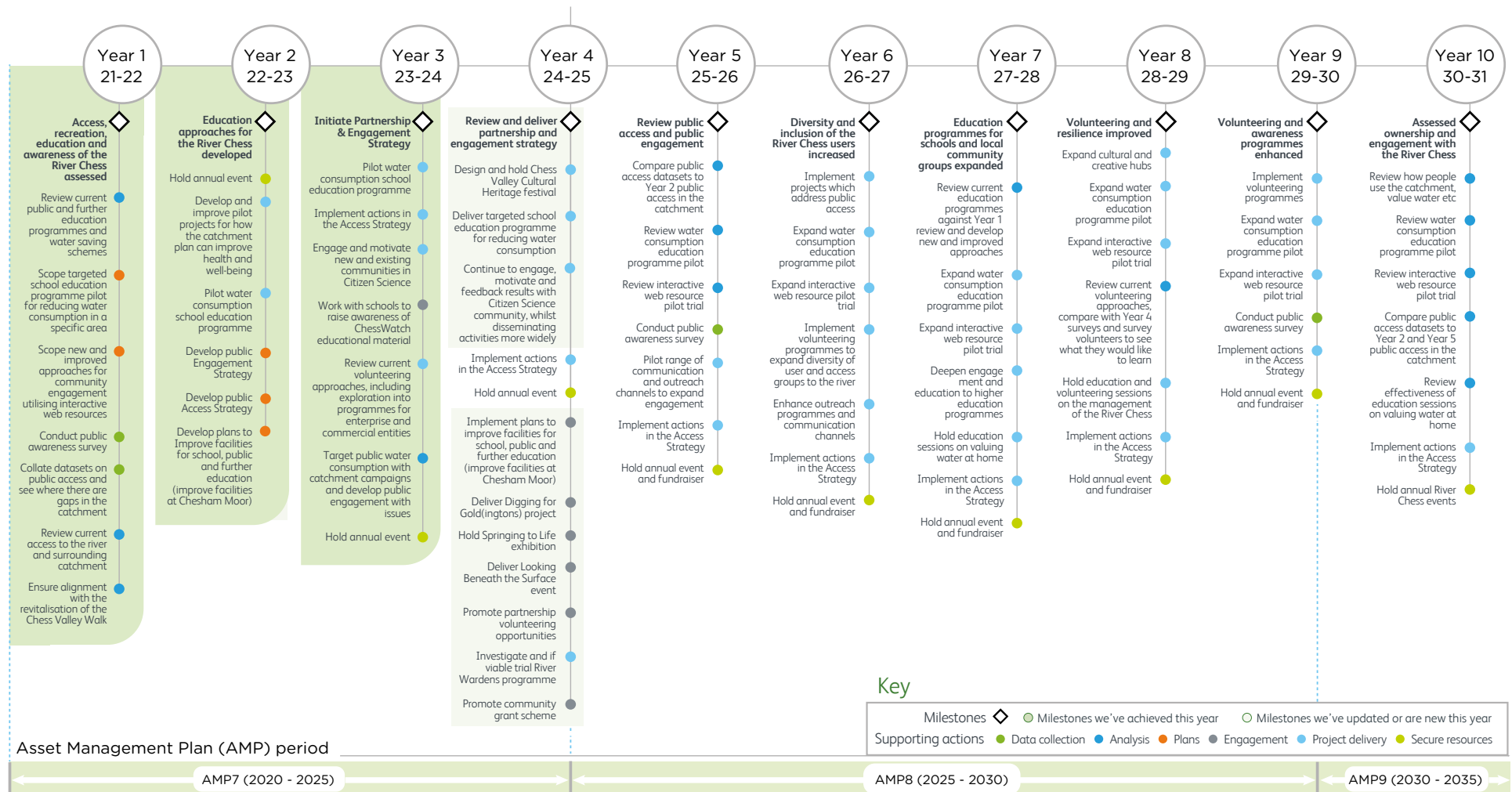


# Improving wildlife corridors action plan

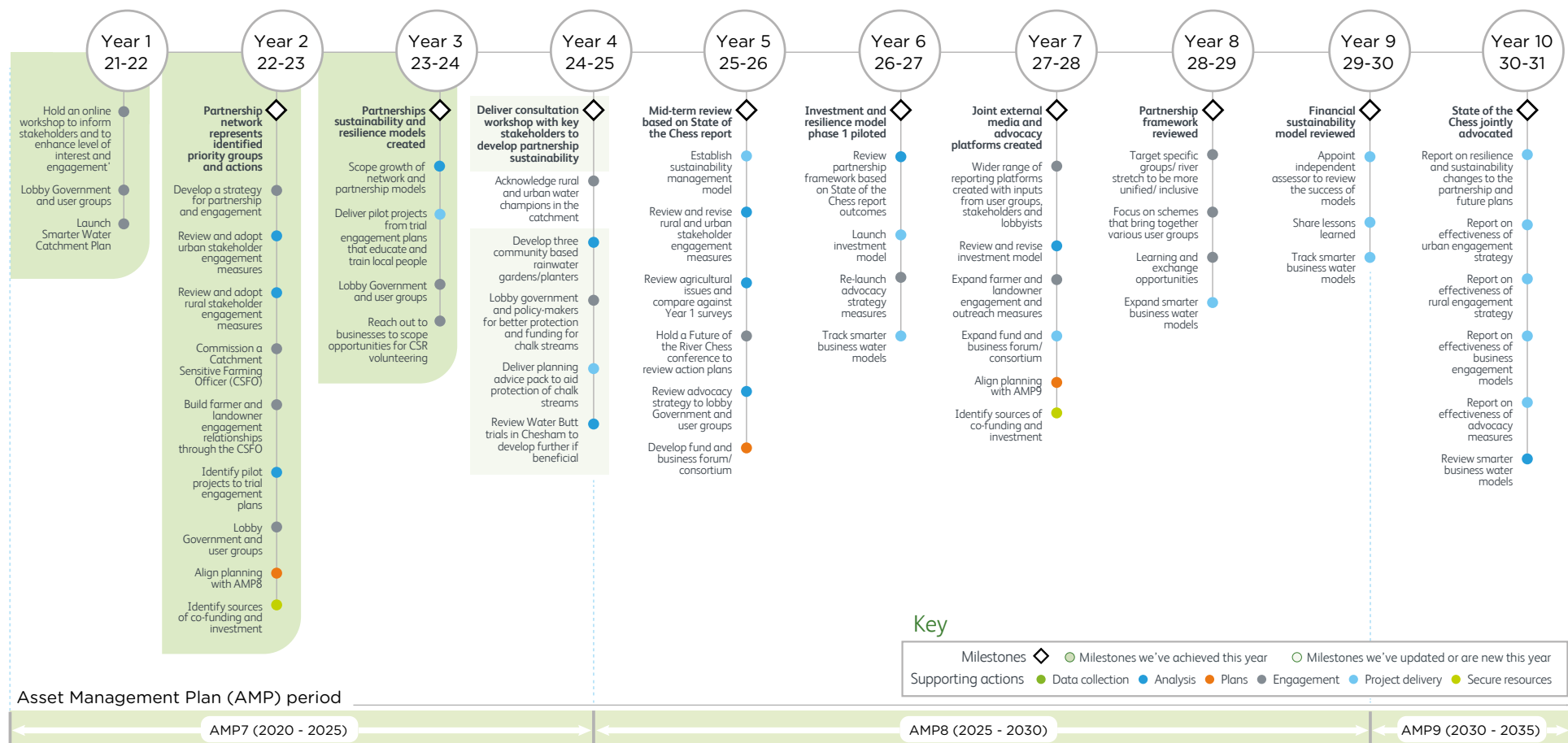




# Involving people action plan



# Working together action plan





# Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank all the organisations and individuals in the partnership who've contributed their valuable technical inputs, insights and time. Through various forums and engagement platforms, we've been able to jointly develop this plan. We greatly appreciate everyone's commitment and enthusiasm, so we can collectively achieve this vision and deliver the plan.

The information provided in this plan is correct as of 31 March 2024 and has the formal support of all key stakeholders.

## Partners

Affinity Water	Environment Agency
Amersham Birdwatching Club	Hertfordshire County Council
Blackwell Farm	Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust
Buckinghamshire Council	Latimer Park Fly Fishers
Chenies Fly Fishers	Loudwater Residents Association
Chenies Parish Council	Mott MacDonald
Chesham & District Natural History Society	Queen Mary University of London
Chesham Environment Group	Restore Hope
Chesham Renaissance CIC	River Chess Association
Chesham Town Council	Sarratt Parish Council
Chilterns Chalk Streams Project	Sustainable Chesham
Chilterns National Landscape	Three Rivers District Council
Chiltern Society	

## Photography

Front cover and pages 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 photos taken by Allen Beechey, Chilterns National Landscape	Page 2, 5, 10 photos taken by Thames Water
Page 3 photo taken by Paul Jennings, River Chess Association	Pages 4 and 11 photos by Restore Hope





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## Would you like to work with us?

We'd really welcome your views on this smarter water catchment plan. Please share your thoughts and ideas on an email to our dedicated team at [partnerships@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:partnerships@thameswater.co.uk).

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