

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

Working in partnership



















Smarter Water Catchment Plan Update Document March 2024

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.

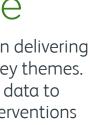
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What we're aiming to achieve

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.







Aim for 2024/25

Our aim is to collate the benefits and lessons learnt 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 right 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

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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







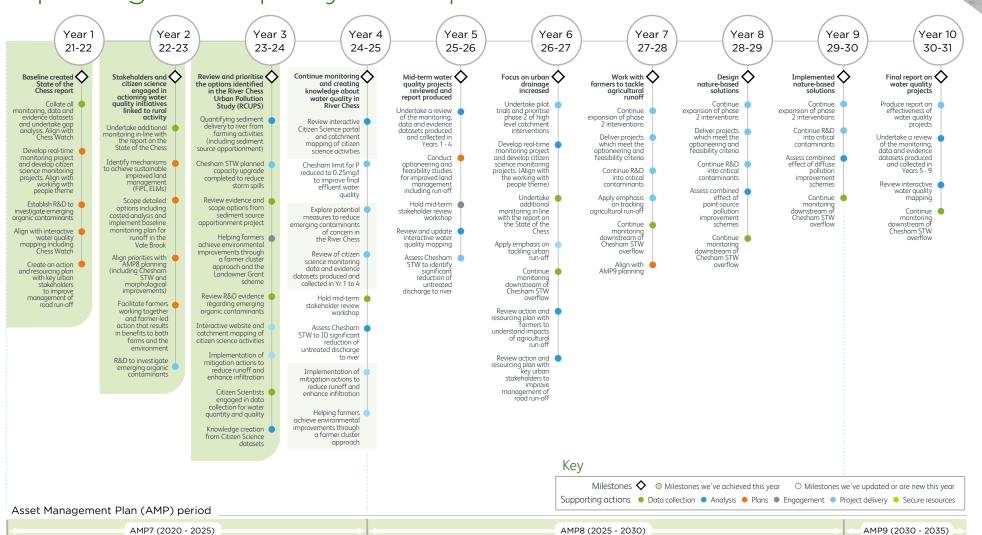




Delivering our shared long-term plan

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

Year 1

21-22

Increased and

water

improved public

awareness of

consumption

Undertake a public

understand public

vareness of water

Develop public and stakeholder

engagement strategy for flow

investigations into groundwater

address hotspots/

improvements

infiltration and

Continued |

consumption

engagement

Year 2

22-23

Following previous or review of potential

interventions, produce design of

eferred solution for

investigations continued to identify

Water to understand

progress with planned

abstraction reduction

monitoring locations in

the lower catchment -

identified as a priority

Develop and improve understanding of the

losing reach of the

surface and

interactions

catchment

groundwater

Continue to monitor

In addition to flow

monitoring in the

Peadnor area, evaluate the effectiveness of the new culvert

and review water usage that effects the

Chess - where water

levels change through

morphological

improvements

Infiltration

priority areas

Work with Thames

additional flow

catchment

Reduced water our usage in the

catchment

catchment

Target public water

campaigns and

develop public

restoration option(s)

for morphological

improvements

Align with planning for AMP8

Engagement with

regional water

management

investigations continued. Minor

address quick wins

(preventing ingress)

civil works to

resource

plans

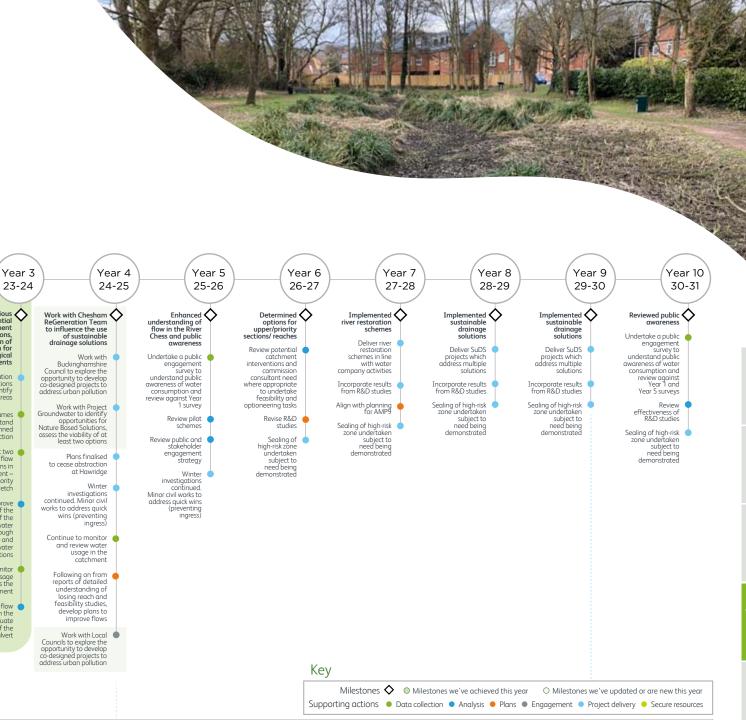
Winter

engagement

with issues

Develop river

consumption with



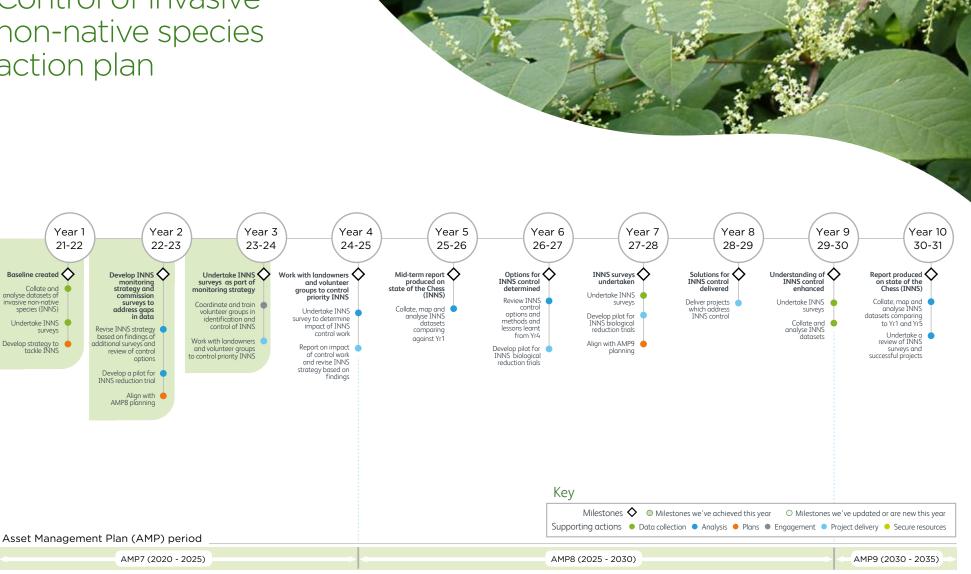
AMP8 (2025 - 2030)

environment - Update document enhance our water protect and Working together to

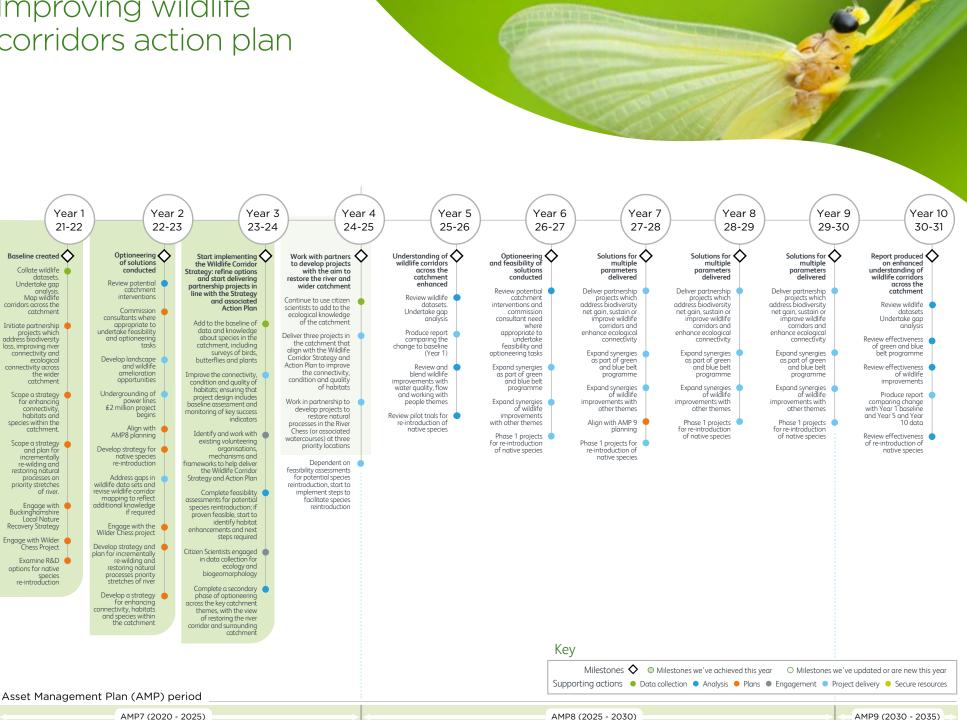
AMP9 (2030 - 2035)

AMP7 (2020 - 2025)

Control of invasive non-native species action plan



Improving wildlife corridors action plan



Involving people action plan





revitalisation of the

Chess Valley Walk

Develop public Access Strategy Develop plans to Improve facilities for school, public and further education (improve facilities at Chesham Moor)

Pilot water consumption school education programme Develop public | Engagement Strategy

Year 2

22-23

Education 🔷

approaches for

the River Chess

Hold annual event

developed

Develop and

improve pilot

projects for how

plan can improve

the catchment

health and

well-being

commercial entities Target public water consumption with catchment campaigns and develop public engagement with issues

Hold annual event

Year 3

23-24

Initiate Partnership

& Engagement Strategy

consumption school

Implement actions in

the Access Strategy

Engage and motivate

new and existina

communities in

Citizen Science

ChessWatch

Review current

exploration into

programmes for

enterprise and

volunteering

Work with schools to

raise awareness of

educational material

approaches, including

education programme

Pilot water

Hold Springing to Life exhibition Deliver Looking Beneath the Surface Promote partnership volunteering

Investigate and if viable trial River Wardens programme Promote community | grant scheme

Key

Milestones 🔷 O Milestones we've achieved this year O Milestones we've updated or are new this year Supporting actions • Data collection • Analysis • Plans • Engagement • Project delivery • Secure resources

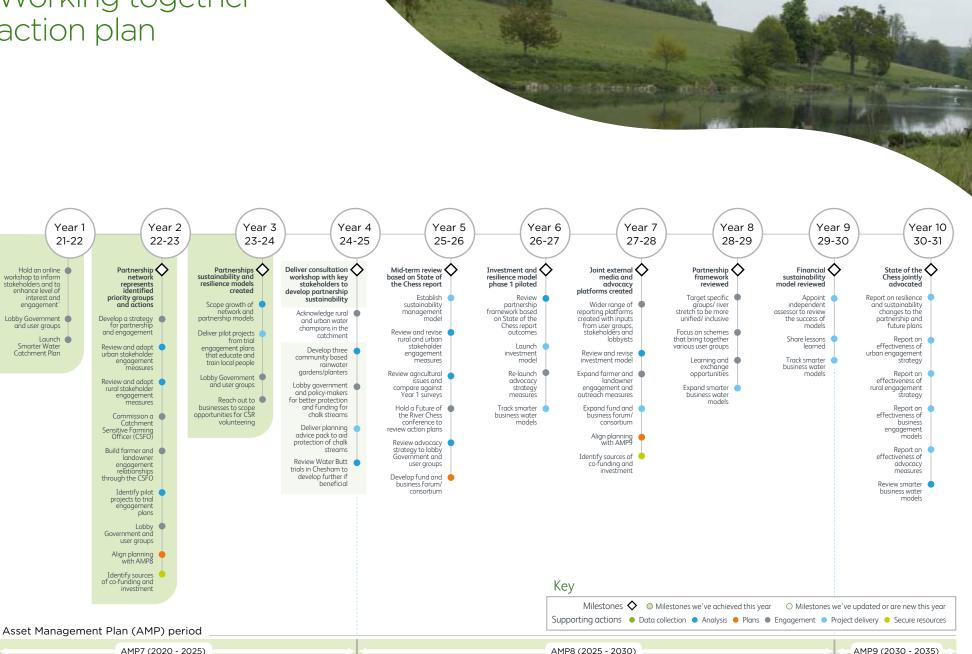
Asset Management Plan (AMP) period

AMP7 (2020 - 2025)

AMP8 (2025 - 2030)

AMP9 (2030 - 2035)

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

Amersham Birdwatching Club

Blackwell Farm

Buckinghamshire Council

Chenies Fly Fishers

Chenies Parish Council

Chesham & District Natural History Society

Chesham Environment Group

Chesham Renaissance CIC

Chesham Town Council

Chilterns Chalk Streams Project

Chilterns National Landscape

Chiltern Society

Environment Agency

Hertfordshire County Council

Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust

Latimer Park Fly Fishers

Loudwater Residents Association

Mott MacDonald

Queen Mary University of London

Restore Hope

River Chess Association

Sarratt Parish Council

Sustainable Chesham

Three Rivers District Council

Photography

Front cover and pages 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 photos taken by Allen Beechey, Chilterns National Landscape

Page 3 photo taken by Paul Jennings, River Chess Association Page 2, 5, 10 photos taken by Thames Water

Pages 4 and 11 photos by Restore Hope





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.

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