

Update on the Stroud Valleys Natural Flood Management work.

Stroud District Council started the “Stroud Rural Sustainable Drainage project in 2014, using funding provided by the Severn and Wye Regional Flood and Coastal Committee’s (RFCC) local levy. The project was one of the first nature-based solutions flood risk management projects to be implemented by a local authority in England. During the first 6 years of the project, over 750 interventions were installed throughout the catchment of the River Frome and working with over 25 local farmers and landowners managed to reduce peak flows in the Slad Valley by a significant volume, and contributed to the restoration of nature along 20km of stream and river.

The project, now renamed as the Stroud Valleys Natural Flood Management project, gained a further six years funding from the same source in 2021 and in January 2022, Chris Uttley, the original project officer, was reappointed to the role. The project now receives £80kpa from the RFCC and Gloucestershire County Council contributes a further £30kpa towards capital costs.

A partnership approach is key to achieving the project objectives, and there is close working with a wide range of public and third sector organisations, in addition to working directly with farmers and landowners, on whose land the interventions are installed, and the residents’ flood action groups. All works are allowed voluntarily onto land owned by others, but we are hopeful that changes to agricultural policy and funding to provide greater support for natural flood management in the coming years.

The table below shows the number of new interventions installed throughout the catchment since April 2021. It also shows the lengths and areas of stream and habitat created or restored, which are criteria on which our funding is partially based.

Waterbody	Length of watercourse restored (Km)	Area of water dependant habitat created (Ha)	Total area of habitat restored (Ha)	NFM measures implemented
Frome	0.16	0	0.17	20
Nailsworth	0.13	0	0.34	8
Slad	0.76	0.1	1.02	35
Painswick	1.99	0.4	0.44	54
Totals	3.04	0.5	1.97	117

So that SDC can monitor the success of the NFM work, the project is also initiating a new monitoring partnership with the national groundwater team of the Environment Agency and the science and research department of the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust in Slimbridge. The

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EA are donating monitoring equipment worth £80k to the project, to allow us to collect data about the impact the work is having on both reducing flood risk and increasing resilience to drought. The WWT will be working with SDC to deploy the equipment and record and analyse the results until 2027.

The Stroud Valleys Natural Flood Management project is a national exemplar for this type of work, and features as the case study within the new National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England. The project also receives international attention. For example, it was one of the case studies within the US Army Corps of Engineers “Engineering with Nature” Atlas and in July, the project hosted 32 visitors from National and Regional Government organisations from Hungary.

For further information, please see the SDC website:

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/flooding-and-drainage/stroud-rural-sustainable-drainage-rsuds-project>

Or contact the project officer direct on:

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