

## Catchment Restoration Fund Project Briefing Note



### Diffusing the Issue in Rural Ribble

Diffusing the Issue is a partnership project that will use CRF funds to improve watercourses in areas of the Ribble Catchment that are intensely farmed. Diffuse pollution, poor habitat and obstructions to fish passage are causing certain watercourses in these areas to fail to meet the required standards under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The watercourses most affected are;

- River Loud
- Stock Beck
- Skirden Beck
- Easington Brook
- Swanside

Work has already been undertaken by the Environment Agency and the Ribble Rivers Trust to address the reasons for failure. In order to ensure that the priority waterbodies achieve Good Ecological Status under the WFD, the creation of riparian buffer zones, farm infrastructure improvements and the reconnection of habitat are necessary. Through targeted farm visits, the Ribble Rivers Trust will seek to identify ways in which diffuse pollution can be reduced, in a way that is sustainable and beneficial to farmers and landowners, as well as the environment.

Through restoration work, the project will address issues including:

- Sediment which has a direct adverse effect on water quality.
- Fertiliser run off into rivers which can cause nutrient enrichment and impact negatively on river ecology.
- Barriers to fish migration, preventing fish from reaching habitat that modelling shows they should be present in.
- Interrupted natural downstream movement of substrate which reduces spawning habitat for salmonids.
- Poor in-channel and riparian habitat for riverine species
- Failed bathing water standard in coastal reaches due to presence of excess pathogens attributable to upstream sources.

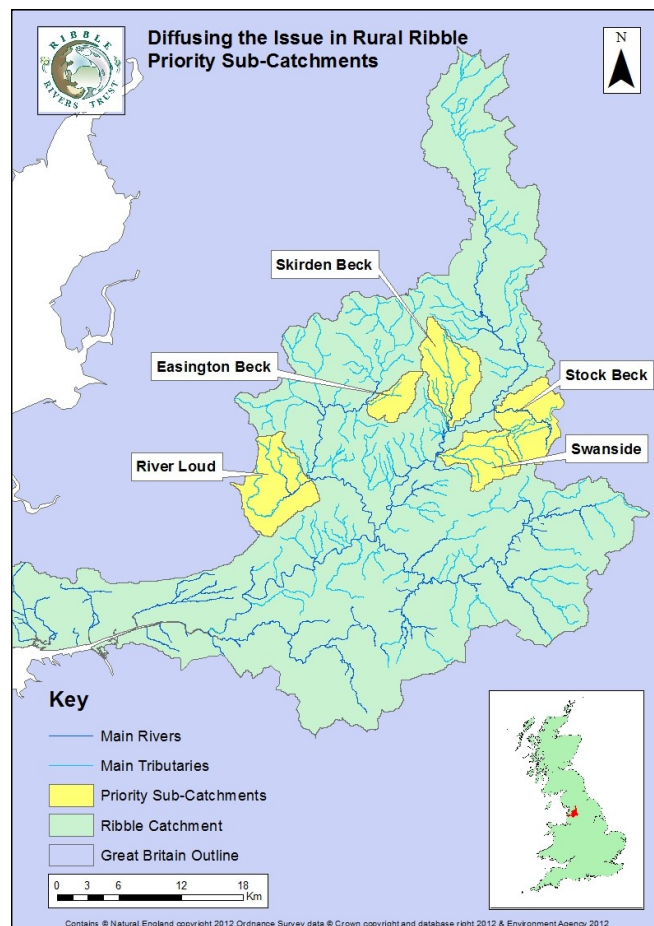
#### Key facts

<b>River Basin District</b>	North West
<b>Catchments</b>	Ribble & Loud
<b>Outcomes</b>	<p><b>Improved river water quality</b> - reduced diffuse and point pollution sources.</p> <p><b>Improved bathing water quality</b> - reduction in pathogens from rural sources.</p> <p><b>Improved biodiversity</b> - increased riverine habitat, connectivity and re-naturalisation.</p> <p><b>Social</b> - improved environment for recreation.</p> <p><b>Economic</b> - improved inland fisheries and estuary shell fisheries.</p> <p><b>Climate change mitigation</b> - carbon sequestration and shading</p>
<b>Start Date</b>	1st July 2012
<b>End Date</b>	31st March 2015
<b>Budget</b>	£751,200 (£459,700 from CRF)
<b>Project Partners</b>	RSPB, Durham University, Myerscough College, Environment Agency, Forest of Bowland AONB, Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, Ribble Valley Borough Council, Pendle Borough Council, Ribble Fisheries Consultative Association.

## Description of Works

To tackle the issues faced by the 5 priority sub-catchments, the Diffusing the Issue project will manage delivery of the following activities:

- **Pinpoint farm visits** - a dedicated Agricultural Project Officer will liaise with farmers and landowners and look at ways in which farm infrastructure can be improved. This may be anything from rainwater harvesting to changes in slurry management plans, which will help to reduce the impacts on the watercourses that flow through the farm. Small quick fixes will be delivered through this project, but close collaboration with Catchment Sensitive Farming will ensure that works carried out have maximum impact and prevent duplication.
- **Fencing** - where agricultural practices are causing the watercourse to fail to meet WFD standards, riparian fencing and associated drinking points will result in multiple benefits. The poaching of riverbanks by livestock will be reduced, as will the associated excess sediment inputs. Vegetation will become re-established along the riverbanks, therefore increasing riparian habitat and biodiversity. This will result in the establishment of a buffer zone that will reduce the amount of nutrient run-off that enters the watercourse from farmland and roads. It will also aid in reducing pathogens in the water that may cause Bathing Water Directive Failures in the Ribble Estuary and along the Fylde Coast .
- **Tree planting** - where there is sufficient area between the fence and the watercourse, native trees will be planted to provide additional bank stabilisation. Once matured, the trees will also create shading over the watercourse and reduce the effects of the expected rise in water temperature attributable to climate change. If the planting area is sizeable, this could result in financial benefits to the farmer/landowner.
- **Reconnecting habitat** - where an obstruction to fish passage exists within the river channel, the project will look to remove it, or at the very least, make it passable. This will not only open up more habitat to migratory fish, but where removal occurs it will also return the sediment movement to a more natural regime.



## What will success look like?

As a charitable organisation, the Ribble Rivers Trust want to work with farmers, landowners and other associated partner organisations to ensure that our priorities are aligned in order to achieve farm management solutions that benefit both people and the environment. Through education, we hope that farmers and landowners will take ownership of the issues affecting their watercourses, ensuring that they understand their direct and indirect dependence on these natural resources and the services they provide. Our principal aim is to see these 5 priority watercourses achieve Good Ecological Status under the Water Framework Directive. This will mean that the water quality is improved, the amount of riverine habitat is increased and the fragmented habitat is reconnected, resulting in a better river environment that can sustain greater biodiversity. It is also hoped that these improvements will impact positively on bathing water standards of the North West coastal regions.

### About the team - Ribble Rivers Trust

**Project Manager** - Sarah Bolton

**Admin, Finance, PR** - Catherine Birtwistle

**Director** - Jack Spees

### Other contacts

**Environment Agency** - Helen Dix



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