



Waveney, Lower Yare
and Lothingland
Drainage Board

Starston River Habitat Enhancement Project

December 2024

About the project

This is a partnership project between the Environment Agency and the Waveney, Lower Yare and Lothingland IDB (WLYLIDB), working with local landowners to improve river habitats and their connectivity through the village of Starston.

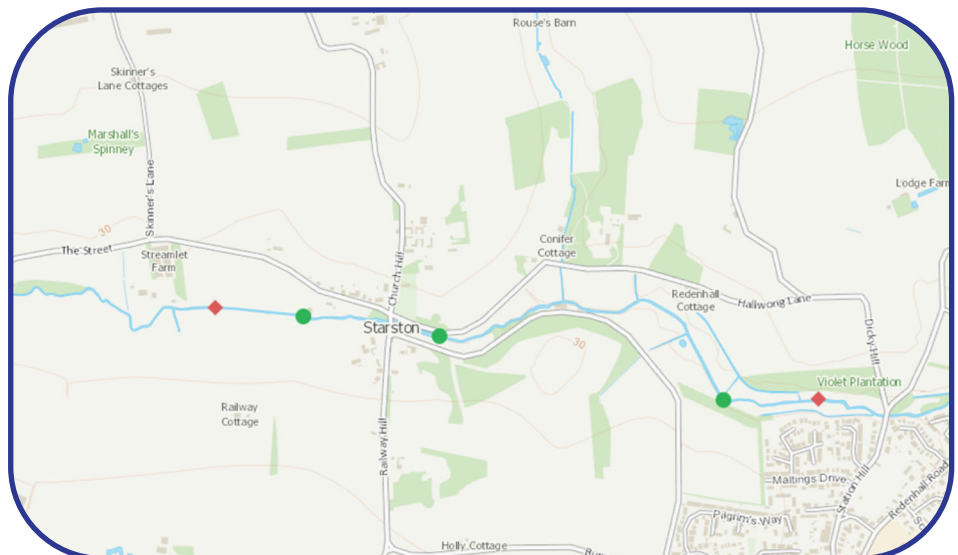
Funding is provided by Defra's Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF) with additional contributions from the WLYLIDB, Essex & Suffolk Waters' 'Blue Spaces' funding and Norfolk County Council Highways.

Project history

The Environment Agency commissioned JBA consulting in 2020 to undertake a feasibility study to look at the removal of 3 weirs and re-naturalisation of the channel at Starston following conversations with the Internal Drainage Board and local landowners. In 2020 JBA undertook further survey, design work and options appraisal work in collaboration with landowners.

In 2023 the Environment Agency commissioned the Water Management Alliance to build on the work of JBA and develop detailed design in preparation for project implementation in 2025. Four separate landowners have been involved in the design development and are in support of the project.

Right: Project works area (between the two red diamonds) and weir locations (green dots)



The project objectives are to:

- Remove or bypass barriers in the river channel to improve connections between upstream and downstream river habitats to benefit fish and invertebrate populations. This will also enable the downstream movement of sediment and gravels, part of healthy river processes.
- Improve in-channel habitat diversity.
- Improve access to the river for visitors to Glebe Meadow.
- Provide erosion protection to Low Road.
- Improve water quality in the beck by trapping sediment from one of its tributaries in an on-line pond.

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The Glebe Meadow works will include:

- Removal of the concrete bag-work around the old sluice and re-profiling this section of riverbank.
- Adding cobbles and gravels to raise the level of the riverbed around the old weir to create a more natural bed gradient.
- Installation of gravel berms (low level shelves created in the margins of a river channel) to increase river flow velocity during periods of low flows and to protect Low Road from bank erosion.
- Reprofilng of the riverbank to create additional river channel capacity to convey more water during high flows.
- Creation of a shallow access bay to allow safe easy access to the water's edge.

Benefits of the project

- Habitat improvements will lead to a measured improvement in river ecology.
- Survey work in the project area has revealed the presence of water vole (protected species) and fish species such as Stone loach, Eel, Dace, Chub and 3-spined stickleback.
- Invertebrate samples have been taken and we are awaiting the results.
- A River Morphological Survey has been carried out.
- Riverbank and bed re-profiling, and the restoration of a section of the original course will create more natural habitats for the plants and animals to thrive.
- The narrowing of some areas of channel bed will allow for improved flows during the summer months maintaining oxygen levels in the river for aquatic life.
- Bank re-profiling and weir removal work will create additional river channel capacity to convey more water at high flows.
- Removal of one weir, reprofiling the bed on a second weir and the bypassing of a third weir will enable downstream sediment movement and allow free passage for fish.



Flood risk

Whilst this project was not designed specifically with flood risk objectives in mind, it incorporates elements that will locally increase channel and floodplain storage capacity and connectivity, which will help manage flood risk for this watercourse.

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Project implementation

Work on the project is planned to start in February 2025 on the sites upstream and downstream of Glebe Meadow. Works should take approximately 4 weeks for each site.

The Glebe Meadow works are expected to start in March/April 2025 (depending on ground conditions) and will take approximately 4 weeks.