

# Our River Wellbeing: Nature Based Solutions in the Dee Catchment

**Lead organisation:**  
North Wales Wildlife Trust

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**Grant Award:** £700,000

**Location:** River Dee catchment in North Wales

As part of North Wales Wildlife Trusts Living Landscape strategy, the Our River Wellbeing Project was created to embody the NWWT's approach to the movement of people working together for wildlife with the project focusing on the health and wellbeing of Volunteer River Guardians while tackling invasive non-native species (INNS) for the sustainable management of the Dee Catchment.



The project focuses on the control, removal, and the prevention of the spread of INNS within this large catchment. The River Dee catchment is 110km long containing the Rivers Dee, Alyn, Alwen, Clywedog, Ceiriog, Wych and Tryweryn and Lakes Bala, Brenig, Celyn and the Alwen Reservoir. There is a significant amount of designated areas throughout the catchment, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a RAMSAR site, three National Nature Reserves, three Special

Areas of Conservation and thirty three Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The area is also renowned for its landmarks, as well as its excellent fishing and canoeing hotspots, all of which bring in visitors from all over the world.

INNS have been recognised as one of the top threats to biodiversity they can:

- Compete with native species for space, light, water, and food
- Increase our environments vulnerability to further invasions
- Reduce our ability to access and enjoy water bodies for sport and recreation
- Negatively impact tourism & the local economy
- Slow down the flow of rivers and increase flood risk and damage infrastructure.





The project collaborate with several action groups and have developed a River Guardian Network; a group of dedicated volunteers who meet regularly carrying out a wide variety of activities, including vital survey work along the River Dee and its tributaries collecting data to allow for strategic interventions to be most effective. Large scale INNS removal is implemented by the project clearing significant areas of invasive species such as Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed.

Volunteers through the project funding are given the opportunity to access accredited and unaccredited training. The project regularly runs volunteer sessions in traditional skills such as coppicing, scything, tool use and health and safety alongside surveying monitoring and data capture skills to improve career prospects and helping to build capability and skills in the community.



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Alongside this large scale INNS management there are opportunities for members of the local communities as part of the volunteer network to take part in sessions in mindfulness, bush craft and outdoor activities to boost their wellbeing through nature connection.



**Volunteer Programmes:** the Volunteer River Guardians initiative brings over 50 individuals together to carry out INNS removal and surveys, with sessions run weekly around health and wellbeing, traditional skills such as coppicing, hazel hurdle making, tool use and care, and fire lighting

**Building Collaborations & Partnerships:** Meetings with more than 15 other organisations to share knowledge of the work NWWT are doing in the project, to collaborate and work together/deliver joint sessions and events, to recruit volunteers and share ideas/ways of working

**Knowledge Transfer & Innovation (KT&I):** over 300 stakeholders engaged with the project, sharing best practice and success

**Training & Job Creation:** 238 training days have been delivered by the project with more scheduled

**Educational Programmes:** 30 individuals gaining a qualification through the project

**Increased Access to Outdoor Spaces:** 200 days of activities and enabling people to enjoy nature and to utilise natural resources for health

**Protection from Invasive Species:** largescale interventions across the catchment, river guardians carry out surveys for INNS along the River Dee and its tributaries this data allows for strategic effective targeted INNS removal & prevention in over 30 sites

**Woodland Management & Planting:** Approximately 100 trees have been planted

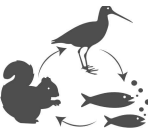
**Protection from Invasive Species:** 5 Biosecurity Panels introduced to inform the public on INNS and how to protect our ecosystems from them

**Habitat Restoration:** where INNS has been controlled monitoring has shown species recovery, native species such as Meadowsweet, Buttercup, Daisy, Dandelion, are all now able to colonise those areas creating a more resilient ecosystem





**Climate Change Adaptation:** supported through Protection from Invasive Species, largescale interventions across the catchment, strategic effective targeted INNS removal and prevention in over 30 sites



**Enhanced Biodiversity:** supported by Habitat Restoration where INNS has been controlled monitoring has shown native species recovery, such as Meadowsweet, Buttercup, Daisy, Dandelion, are all now able to colonise those areas creating a more resilient ecosystem



**Ecosystem Resilience:** supported by Habitat Restoration where INNS has been controlled monitoring has shown native species recovery, Approximately 100 trees have been planted and strategic effective targeted INNS removal and prevention in over 30 sites



**Health & Wellbeing:** supported through Volunteer Programmes bringing over 50 individuals together to carry out INNS removal and surveys, and sessions run weekly around health and wellbeing, traditional skills such as coppicing, hazel hurdle making, tool use and care, and fire lighting



**Community Cohesion:** supported by Building Collaborations and Partnerships with more than 15 organisations to share knowledge of the work NWWT are doing in the project, to collaborate and work together, delivering joint sessions and events, to recruit volunteers and share ideas/ ways of working throughout the wider community



**Development of Skills Capacity & Expertise:** supported through Knowledge Transfer & Innovation (KT&I) over 300 stakeholders engaged with the project, sharing best practice and success. 238 training days delivered by the project with more to come. Educational Programmes with 30 individuals gaining a work place qualification through the project



**Health & Wellbeing:** supported through Increased Access to Outdoor Spaces, 200 days of activities and enabling people to enjoy nature and to utilise natural resources for health

**Get Involved** – If you would like to learn more or get involved in the work being done by the River Wellbeing, you can find more information at:

[www.northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/our-projects/our-river-wellbeing](http://www.northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/our-projects/our-river-wellbeing)