

# Wilder for Water and Blue Horizons

A Programme of works to protect and expand the  
New Forest Freshwater Network



Gemma Stride, Freshwater Habitats Trust

# Water quality plays an important role in freshwater and coastal biodiversity

The New Forest supports exceptional freshwater biodiversity...

...because unlike elsewhere the New Forest (at its core) still has clean water habitats free from pollution

...And many species are completely reliant upon traditional grazing and the depressions left by free roaming livestock

These in combination, provide the perfect conditions for thriving biodiversity bursting with rare species.



# Water quality plays an important role in freshwater and coastal biodiversity

In recent years, declines in water quality have been detected.

These changes are due to:

- Discharge from wastewater treatment works (water company and private sources)
- Intensive agriculture
- Urban area and road run off
- Heavy recreation pressures

Most of England's rivers and lakes are highly polluted – too many nutrients, heavy metals, pathogens, pesticides, and sediment.



Extinction rates for freshwater species are 4 to 6 times higher than terrestrial counterparts (Collen et al 2014)

# New Forest Catchment Partnership Vision:

Our role is to protect, improve and expand the unique freshwater landscape.



‘In the New Forest there is an opportunity to protect and restore freshwater and coastal habitats to the very highest standards.

The Catchment Group’s vision is to go further than the Water Framework Directive by including ponds, small lakes, headwater streams and mires.’

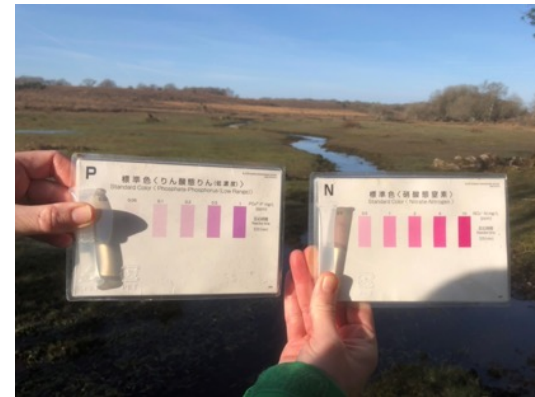
New Forest effect:

create the right conditions + proximity of a functioning ecosystem =  
natural expansion and colonisation.

# The Catchment Partnership: driven by data and discussion

Through the Catchment Partnership our work involves engaging with others to identify risks and ways of reducing pressures from the environment:

- Undertaking regular catchment walkover surveys.
- Using statutory WFD and protected sites monitoring data.
- Engaging with landowners, businesses and communities to identify opportunities to minimise impacts on the water environment.



Using data and discussion too to target work where it is most effective.

# Blue Horizons and Wilder for Water

A Programme of strategically targeted works to expand the New Forest Freshwater Network and engaging people in nature's recovery.

Blue Horizon has a focus on:

1. **Habitat creation and restoration** - extend the SSSI network around the core of the Forest.
2. **Sustainable water usage** - find practical solutions to the management of water (Including wastewater) to benefit wildlife and business.
3. **Connecting with nature** - volunteering opportunities such a practical habitat management, survey and monitoring.
4. **Raising awareness** – increasing knowledge and understanding of the importance of the New Forest freshwater and coastal habitats through positive engagement.



# Pond creation

## Creating high quality ponds that are characteristic of the Open Forest

- Two thirds of the ponds in England and Wales have been lost since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Creation and restoration is essential to halt and reverse the decline.
- Ponds can significantly increase the biodiversity of a catchment in a cost-effective way.
- FHT are using evidence and research to create ponds in a New Forest context.
- Several small ponds are better than just one large one.
- Its ok if ponds dry out seasonally.
- Conservation grazing will support the long-term management of the ponds.



# Woodland management

## Woodlands are more than just trees!

- Small pockets of woodland are commonplace around the edge of the SAC.
- They are often remnant ancient semi-natural woodlands with opportunities for specialist species.
- Fragmentation and lack of management means specialist species are less likely to be present.
- There is an opportunity to enhance, but small woodlands don't qualify for grant aid.
- Blue Horizons has helped landowners to enhance their woodlands with a focus on wet woodland features.



Restoring and enhancing wetland features in woodlands can give a huge boost to local biodiversity.



# Rainwater harvesting

## Finding innovative solutions to the sustainable use and management of water for the benefit of business and the environment

- Working with rural business has grown our local knowledge in how we can utilize rainwater for a variety of uses.
- Our funding has supported rural land management businesses to install rainwater tanks and connect to irrigation systems or cattle drinking supply.
- This helps business adapt to climate changes, decreases the reliance on mains water supply and reduces yard run off.
- Looking at the data for one horticulture business, the installation of rainwater tanks has saved them nearly £3000 per year. This installation cost 12K.



# Nutrient management

## Installing effective infrastructure and adapting management practices

- There is a high proportion of landowners across the Forest who own small landholdings.
- Working with our partnership, Blue Horizons has focused on variety of nutrient management activities.
- The partnership continue to work within the farming and small holding community and raise awareness of water quality issues and opportunities to better protect the water environment.

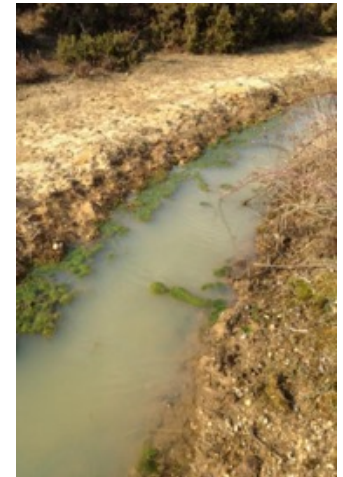


# Wilder for Water

## Developing a clean water standard for camping and recreation

Over the years a pattern has begun to emerge:

- Campsite operators seeking advice.
- Water quality tests detect nutrient pollution downstream of campsites and ditches around car parks.
- Visitors make a beeline for water.
- Rangers have requested information to target messaging.
- Through our investigation we have found that the discharge of grey wastewater is left unregulated and unmanaged.
- FHT have been working closely with several campsites – installation of Elson points, feasibility of a closed willow bed system, prioritizing location of greywater capture, treatment and discharge.



# Wilder for Water: raising awareness

A project to raise awareness of the special qualities of the New Forest waterscape

Engaging visitors in positive behaviors to help change people's attitudes towards how they access the Forest by:

1. development of a Water Code.
2. delivering events in and around the Forest.
3. leading walks, talks and community litter picks
4. coordinating citizen science programmes and practical conservation days.

All to support community leaning and knowledge.



The poster is titled "New Forest Water Code" and features the Freshwater Habitats Trust logo at the top. It includes a central image of a bird in a wetland and a circular inset with text about the importance of the wetlands. Below this, there are two main sections: "Clean Water for Wildlife" and "Space for Nature". Each section contains three numbered points with icons: "LEAVE NO TRACE", "USE SUITABLE FACILITIES", "CHECK CLEAN AND DRY" for the first section, and "RIGHT ACTIVITY, RIGHT PLACE", "STICK TO THE PATHS", "ON THE RIGHT TRACK" for the second. At the bottom, it provides the website [www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk](http://www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk).

**Freshwater Habitats Trust**

## New Forest Water Code

The New Forest is one of the best and most important Freshwater Areas and coastal landscapes in the UK

From source to sea the New Forest wetlands are ancient fragile pristine and bursting with rare wildlife. Follow the Water Code to help protect the special wildlife that lives here.

### Clean Water for Wildlife

New Forest wetland wildlife relies on clean unpolluted water. Follow the simple code to help keep waters clear:

- 1. LEAVE NO TRACE**  
Use local toilet facilities, take pet waste home or find the nearest suitable bin for all your waste needs.
- 2. USE SUITABLE FACILITIES**  
Use suitable facilities for the disposal of waste water - never tip on to vegetation, or into ditches or other water bodies.
- 3. CHECK CLEAN AND DRY**  
Tents, fishing kit, SUPs, canoes and footwear can carry invasive species, pests and diseases. Clean kit is essential to prevent the spread.

### Space for Nature

New Forest wetland wildlife relies on space to breed, nest and feed. Follow the simple code to give wildlife a chance to thrive:

- 1. RIGHT ACTIVITY, RIGHT PLACE**  
Paddle sports and swimming are not allowed everywhere - enjoy these activities at designated locations and outdoor activity centres. Please follow instructions on signs and posters.
- 2. STICK TO THE PATHS**  
Wild camping and overnight parking are not permitted in the New Forest. Use permitted sites with suitable facilities to meet your needs.
- 3. ON THE RIGHT TRACK**  
Access the Forest and coast in a responsible way - keep your dog under effective control - if necessary use a lead. Stick to the tracks and designated routes whether you're on foot, bike or horse.

To find out more visit [www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk](http://www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk).

# In conclusion

Communities across the Forest are committed to change,  
working together to reduce their environmental footprint

Reducing and removing nutrients in line with environmental policies and targets for the water environment is a part of our work.

However, there is uncertainty around biological impact this is having.

It requires much more monitoring to track changes in biology and other benefits.

Reducing pressures on the environment is only part of the solution.

Creating abundant clean water habitats is a critical part of the toolkit in expanding the freshwater network.



The New Forest being a high-quality landscape  
at the core - is a major factor in helping any  
intervention maximise its potential.

# Thank you

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