

# Latest phase of work on major Norfolk chalk stream completed

The latest phase of a 19-year project to restore part of the River Wensum has just finished, and it is hoped this will enhance the habitat and improve fish populations.

The River Wensum Restoration Strategy began in 2008, in partnership with the [Environment Agency](#), [Natural England](#) and the [Water Management Alliance](#), to restore the river and return it to a favourable ecological condition.

In 2009 the river was classified as 'poor' and one of the reasons for this was the physical modifications made to the river as a result of past drainage schemes.

The project, which is due to be completed by 2027, is looking to address these modifications and create a more naturally functioning river.

The latest phase of the project, which ran from July to October, restored a 1.4km stretch of the river downstream of Lenwade Mill through to where the river runs passed Great Witchingham Hall.

Specialist tree surgeons made broken branches safe and allowed daylight into the channel.

Improvements included stabilising the steep cliff-like river banks, installing woody material and refuge areas so that there is more diverse habitat to help fish and other wildlife thrive, and hinging willow trees.

Hinging is a known tree management technique, which bends the tree down into the channel so that it can provide habitat within the water.

Amy Butcher, project manager at the Environment Agency, said:

The River Wensum is a rare and internationally important chalk river habitat and is highly regarded by the local population, tourists, anglers and naturalists alike.

We are pleased that this project is progressing well and would like to thank all the teams who have been involved with the planning and construction of this restoration work.

We would also like to thank the landowners for their enthusiasm and understanding of the restoration strategy and allowing us access to this beautiful section of river.

Ezra Lucas, SSSI responsible officer at Natural England, said:

The River Wensum has incredible potential to be a thriving habitat for the benefit of both wildlife and people.

We are delighted to be working with landowners and the Environment Agency to reinvigorate the river in order to leave it in a better condition for generations to come.

So far the project has delivered some excellent restoration, and we look forward to even more of this going forward.

The next phase of the scheme is planned for summer 2020 and will provide improvements to 1.3km of the river channel at Attlebridge. The work will include installing gravel glides and woody material and carrying out tree planting to shade the exposed channel.

Alongside this scheme, the Environment Agency is working on an ambitious project to provide a fish passage around the historic mill pool sluice structures at Lyng along with channel improvements along a 2km length upstream.