Finance for small businesses

News story

Latest blog by GAD in which we look at the issues regarding raising finance to enable UK businesses to run efficiently.

We look at how raising finance is important in allowing businesses to function. Working capital, which enables the daily operations of business, was a focus for all firms during the pandemic, especially for the smaller ones. In this blog we look at sources of external finance which are most relevant to smaller and medium sized businesses. Financial support for smaller businesses

Published 15 October 2021

New strategy launched to protect chalk streams

The report, published 15 October, by the Catchment Based Approach's Chalk Stream Restoration Group sets out recommendations of how to enhance these precious habitats.

Chalk streams are a rare and valuable habitat, often referred to as the equivalent of England's rainforests. It is estimated that 85% of the world's chalk streams are in England and around 29% of these are in East Anglia. Most water we drink in the East comes from rainwater stored deep beneath our feet in natural chalk 'aquifers', which feed our chalk streams. Chalk streams also need good water quality for different species of fish, plants and insects to flourish. However they face significant challenges in the 21st century due to complex problems worsened by climate change and population growth.

The Environment Agency has been involved in a number of local partnership projects to help restore chalk streams, including 2 in Norfolk.

The River Tiffey before the work was carried out.

A £1.6 million restoration project on the Upper Bure's rivers and streams led by National Trust was launched earlier this year. The river has been heavily modified over time, meaning that the fish population has suffered. The 4 year restoration programme will help towards achieving a 'good' status under the water regulations.

Earlier this year the Environment Agency and the Norfolk Rivers Trust completed a joint project to improve fish migration through the upper River Tiffey. A fish pass was installed in the chalk stream, meaning that many different fish species can now navigate through the river system.

The River Tiffey after the work.

Simon Hawkins, Environment Agency area director for East Anglia said:

> Improvements in chalk streams across East Anglia are being made, but more needs to be done.
>
> We are working with water companies, abstractors and catchment partnerships across the East of England to deliver a range of actions. This includes tackling pollution, carrying out river restoration projects and, in some cases, changes to abstraction licences.
>
> We are also liaising with Water Resources East to plan for longer term solutions to address pressures on the water environment in the East of England.

Recommendations in the strategy include enhanced status to drive investment in water resources in order to help reduce pollution and eliminate over abstraction. As well as restoring physical habitat and biodiversity.

The strategy has bought together partners including the Environment Agency, Natural England, Defra, water companies and environmental organisations.

Environment Agency Chair Emma Howard Boyd said:

> England is home to 85% of the world's chalk streams and their future depends on collective action from water companies, farmers, and landowners as well as government and regulators.
>
> No one should undermine the value of chalk streams, and today's

> report adds clarity and certainty about what is expected of all their users.
>
> The National Framework for Water Resources encourages water companies to open up new infrastructure to reduce reliance on chalk aquifers. This is 1 of the many good proposals in today's report that needs collective action.

Natural England Chair Tony Juniper said:

> Chalk streams are a unique natural feature. Most such rivers in the world are found here in England, we have a particular responsibility to ensure that they are in good health.
>
> These habitats are subject to a complex range of pressures. From pollution arising from road run-off, agriculture and sewage, to low flow resulting from abstraction for public water supply and physical damage to the water courses.
>
> We look forward to working with others to ensure this new strategy leads to the kind of joined-up partnership action needed to address these pressures. This includes protecting and restoring chalk streams for future generations to enjoy.

Additional information

- The launch of the new strategy is taking place on the River Mimram and will be attended by Minister Pow, Emma Howard Boyd and Tony Juniper.

- The strategy was published by the Chalk Stream Restoration Group, which is part of the Catchment Based Approach. It will be available from Friday 15 October on the Catchment Based Approach website.

- This strategy is for everyone who has responsibility for, or uses, chalk streams. It sets out actions and recommendations for government, regulators and the water industry on water resources, water quality and habitat restoration and management.

- The Catchment Based Approach is an inclusive, civil society-led initiative. They work in partnership with government, local authorities, water companies, businesses and more, to maximise the natural value of our environment.

- The Catchment Based Approach's Chalk Stream Restoration Group is a subgroup of the National Support Group. It brings together organisations with an interest in chalk stream management, recognising that protection

of chalk streams requires everyone to play their part.

- The aim of the group is to develop a chalk streams management and restoration strategy for England. To also ensure actions are in place to drive improvements in the short, medium and long term. It will consider water quantity, water quality and habitat restoration, but the plan will deliver an integrated catchment approach to chalk stream management.

- The group is made up of representatives from the Environment Agency, Natural England, Ofwat, Water UK, World Wide Fund for Nature, Angling Trust, Salmon and Trout Conservation, The Rivers Trust, Wild Trout Trust and Wildlife Trusts.

- Implementing this strategy takes us a step closer to meeting the government's 25 Year Environment Plan. The plan has a target of 75% of England's chalk streams to get to their natural state as soon as practicable.

Chalk stream strategy launched to protect 'England's rainforests'

The report, published 15 October by the Catchment Based Approach's Chalk Stream Restoration Group, sets out recommendations of how to enhance these precious habitats.

Chalk streams are a rare and valuable habitat, often referred to as England's equivalent of rainforests. It is estimated that 85% of the world's chalk streams are in England and around 10% of these are in Lincolnshire.

Most water we drink in the east comes from rainwater stored deep beneath our feet in natural chalk 'aquifers', which feed our chalk streams. Chalk streams also need good water quality for different species of fish, plants and insects to flourish. However they face significant challenges in the 21st century due to complex problems worsened by climate change and population growth.

The Environment Agency is a key partner in the Lincolnshire Chalk Streams Project, which seeks to protect and restore the county's chalk streams.

One of their projects has been looking at ways to restore the River Rase. As the banks were eroding, this caused sediment to build up in the river, which was having a negative impact on the ecology.

Market Rasen Golf Course before.

Working with the landowner, Market Rasen Golf Club, they restored 1 kilometer of the chalk stream by installing leaky barriers and online ponds, and re-profiling banks. These measures reduced the erosion and allowed more water to flow through the system, leading to a more diverse ecology and improving the water quality. Landowners have also been given land management advice on how to protect the chalk stream, and the team have been exploring opportunities for future habitat projects.

Market Rasen Golf Course after.

Norm Robinson, Environment Agency area director for Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire, said:

> We are very lucky in Lincolnshire to have our wonderful chalk streams. These internationally important habitats are a source of much pride, and through the good work of our partners – the Lincolnshire Chalk Streams Project – we are able to protect and restore them for all to enjoy.
>
> We welcome the Chalk Stream Restoration Group's strategy as it gives us an opportunity to work in a co-ordinated way to achieve the most we can for these globally unique habitats.

Recommendations in the strategy include enhanced status to drive investment in water resources and restoring physical habitat and biodiversity. The strategy has bought together partners including the Environment Agency, Natural England, Defra, water companies and environmental organisations.

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These habitats are subject to a complex range of pressures, however, from pollution arising from road run-off, agriculture and sewage, to low flow resulting from abstraction for public water supply and physical damage to the water courses.

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Trust, Salmon and Trout Conservation, The Rivers Trust, Wild Trout Trust and Wildlife Trusts.

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New chalk streams strategy launched to protect 'England's rain forests'

Recommendations in the strategy include enhanced status to drive investment in water resources – to help reduce pollution and eliminate over-abstraction – and restoring physical habitat and biodiversity.

The strategy has brought together partners including the Environment Agency, Natural England, Defra, water companies and environmental organisations.

Chalk streams are a rare and valuable habitat, often referred to as the equivalent of England's rain forests or Great Barrier Reef. 85% of all chalk streams are found in England, mainly in the south and east of the country, as well as dozens of smaller chalk springs, rills and flushes. They stretch from Yorkshire through East Anglia, the Chilterns, Kent, Hampshire and Dorset, and are important for biodiversity.

Chalk aquifers are also an important source of water for drinking, agriculture and industry, support angling for trout, salmon and coarse fish, are important for recreation and are a valued part of the English landscape. They need good quality water in order for the different species of fish, plants and insects, many unique to them – such as the southern damselfly – to flourish.

More than 40 chalk streams are found in Dorset and Hampshire, covering the Hampshire Avon and parts of the Dorset Stour and Poole Harbour catchments.

More than any other, the Hampshire Avon is England's iconic and quintessential chalk stream. Covering a large area of Wiltshire and Hampshire, the Hampshire Avon has seen major improvement in water quality in the past 20 years. Better land use and management practices, as well as significant improvement to wastewater treatment, have all contributed to reducing nutrient levels and improving fish habitat.

However, there is always more to be done. The Environment Agency and Natural England are currently considering what the next steps are to achieving water quality targets. It is clear that while past work has been critical to get us to this point, augmenting this will be essential and necessary to make a step

change in future improvement.

One focus for the future is likely to be headwater catchments such as the Nadder, Wylye and Pewsey Vale. Floodwater retention and reductions in nutrient inputs and sediment will have a cascading benefit throughout the length of the river. How best to achieve this is a matter of current discussion.

The Dorset Frome is one of the most researched chalk rivers in England and much work has already been done and continues to be done on improving water quality and habitat. Earlier this year a Consent Order was completed for Poole Harbour to facilitate further nutrient reduction from land use and land management practices in its catchment, including the Frome. Other aspects of ongoing nutrient reduction and water quality improvement in the Frome will form part of this.

The River Tarrant – which lies to the east of Blandford Forum – is one of England's most productive brown trout locations. It is the main spawning ground for salmon and trout in the middle reaches of the main River Stour.

Like many chalk streams, the Tarrant is ground fed and is a 'winterbourne' – it naturally dries up in summer. Unnaturally, because of in-stream structures, the Tarrant dries up from the bottom – leaving fish stranded behind the structures.

Most years, the Environment Agency rescues hundreds of stranded fish and moves them to the Stour and for several years the Environment Agency has worked with local landowners and the Tarrant Valley Preservation Society to modify weirs along the river. The idea is to make it easier for fish to migrate down to the Stour and re-colonise the upper reaches of the Tarrant with trout and salmon.

Next year the Environment Agency plan to remove or modify concrete structures that trap fish, reprofile some parts of the river to remove pools where fish aggregate and become trapped, and modify a weir to improve fish passage.

The River Hooke, which rises from a large number of chalk springs near Toller Whelme, near Beaminster in Dorset, has historically been modified by human activity.

Over the years there have been drainage improvements for water meadows; diversion channels made for milling activities; ponds created for landscaping and water supply; embankments (for railway) and water level control. The Hooke is a key tributary of the upper Frome, but man-made barriers potentially stop migratory salmonids, as well as native brown trout, from reaching spawning grounds.

Since 2018 the Environment Agency has been working with the Dorset Wildlife Trust to carry out improvements in the River Hooke catchment. The partnership project – co-funded by the Environment Agency until 2023 – has resulted in multiple benefits, and will continue to do so.

We have engaged with farmers, landowners and the wider community in order to

carry out restoration work and enhancements across the catchment.

Benefits include reduced suspended sediment levels and nutrients in the river; better habitats and biodiversity; a wider number of species of invertebrates and fish; and a reduced risk of low flows during dry weather.

Natural flood management techniques, such as tree planting, have reduced potentially high river flows during heavy rainfall.

Catchment coordinator for Dorset and Hampshire, Keith Calder, said:

> We are fortunate that a significant number of the country's chalk streams are found here in Wessex, including the iconic Hampshire Avon River.
>
> They are a key habitat for many wildlife species, and their underlying aquifers provide a valuable source for drinking water.
>
> We are working with local partners and the local water company, to improve water quality, manage abstractions and ease man-made modifications to the rivers.

This new chalk stream strategy is for everyone who has responsibility for, or uses, chalk streams. It sets out actions and recommendations for government, regulators and the water industry on water resources, water quality and habitat restoration and management.

Environment Agency Chair Emma Howard Boyd said:

> England is home to 85% of the world's chalk streams and their future depends on collective action from water companies, farmers, and landowners as well as government and regulators. No one should undermine the value of chalk streams, and today's report adds clarity and certainty about what is expected of all their users.
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Chair of Natural England Tony Juniper said:

> Chalk streams are unique natural features, and considering that most such rivers in the world are found here in England, we have a particular responsibility to ensure that they are in good health.
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> These habitats are subject to a complex range of pressures, however, from pollution arising from road runoff, agriculture and sewage, to low flow resulting from abstraction for public water

supply and physical damage to the water courses.

We look forward to working with others to ensure this new strategy leads to the kind of joined-up partnership action needed to address these pressures, protecting and restoring chalk streams for future generations to enjoy.

Notes to editors

- The strategy was published by the Chalk Stream Restoration Group (CSRG), which is part of the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA). It is available on the CaBA website.
- The Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) is an inclusive, civil society-led initiative that works in partnership with Government, Local Authorities, Water Companies, businesses and more, to maximise the natural value of our environment.
- CaBA's chalk stream restoration group is a subgroup of the CaBA National Support Group. It brings together organisations with an interest in chalk stream management, including regulators, water industry representatives and eNGOs, recognising that protection of chalk streams requires everyone to play their part.
- The aim of the group is to develop a chalk streams management and restoration strategy for England and to ensure actions are in place to drive improvements in the short, medium and long term. We will consider water quantity, water quality and habitat restoration, but the plan will deliver an integrated catchment approach to chalk stream management.
- The group is made up of representatives from the Environment Agency, Natural England, Ofwat, Water UK, WWF, Angling Trust, Salmon and Trout Conservation, The Rivers Trust, Wild Trout Trust and Wildlife Trusts.
- Implementing this strategy takes us a step closer to meeting the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan target of 75% of England's chalk streams to get to their natural state as soon as practicable.

UK and Scottish governments agree first stage of the Fiscal Framework Review

News story

The UK Government and Scottish Government today (14 October 2021) agreed in principle the scope of the independent report that will inform the subsequent review of the Scottish Government's Fiscal Framework.

During an in-person meeting in Westminster, Chief Secretary to HM Treasury Simon Clarke and the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy Kate Forbes agreed to commission an independent report on the Block Grant Adjustment arrangements, including a call for stakeholder input, prior to a broader review of the Fiscal Framework. The Ministers will confirm these arrangements in writing.

Chief Secretary to the Treasury Simon Clarke said:

> After our first in-person meeting it's great that we've been able to get an agreement and can now get on with the Fiscal Framework Review and ensure fair and sustainable funding for Scotland's future.
>
> We're continuing to work together to tackle the big issues we face as a United Kingdom, including climate change, levelling up opportunities and supporting jobs."

Scottish Finance Minister Kate Forbes said:

> Today's meeting was positive and I am glad that we are finally making some progress on the fiscal framework. I have reached an agreement in principle with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury which enables us to move without further delay towards commissioning the independent report, with the Fiscal Framework review itself beginning as close to the beginning of 2022 as possible.
>
> While the report will look only at the Block Grant Adjustments, we agreed that the review should have a wider scope, and involve input from parliamentary committees and wider stakeholders."

The Chief Secretary also chaired a quadrilateral meeting that included Cabinet Secretary Kate Forbes, and finance ministers from Wales and Northern Ireland where they discussed Net Zero, creating jobs across the UK and recovering from the pandemic.

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