



**North Wales  
Rivers Trust  
Strategic  
Business Plan**

**2022-2027**

## Introduction

The North Wales Rivers Trust was established in 2007 from an amalgamation of the existing Clwyd and Elwy Conservation Trust and the Conservation bodies representing the Conwy. The Trust was awarded Charitable Status in January 2009. Afonydd Cymru was formed in 2008 as the umbrella organisation to represent member river trusts across Wales with Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government. On the 30th January 2012 they received charitable status.

This is our first strategic business plan, and it will cover the period from 2022 to 2027. Since 2007, NWRT has led much of the on-the ground improvements to North Wales' rivers, in June 2022 Alan Winstone stepped down from his 7 year role as a successful chairman for NWRT, leading the organisation to achieve a record number of projects and funding opportunities. Alan has been replaced by long term trustee Dr Robin Parry who took on the role of chairman on June 9th, 2022. Following a board meeting on June 25th, 2002, trustees agreed on the following aims and objectives outlined in this document.



- **Net Zero by 2050:** the government has set a target of net zero by 2050. There is opportunity here for the Trust to deliver further mitigation solutions.
- **Leaving the EU** – the NGO sector in Wales has been previously reliant on EU funding, so we will need to identify new funding opportunities. NWRT hopes to continue as a trusted deliverer for Natural Resources Wales (NRW) projects but will also look to the corporate sector and charitable trusts to expand its funding.
- **Addressing the Biodiversity Crisis and aiding Green Recovery** – post pandemic, we will support the practical delivery of resilient, sustainable and nature friendly solutions to improve river habitats, enhance biodiversity and safeguard water quality and quantity. This has the potential to create new jobs and much needed employment in rural areas and promote health and wellbeing. In 2021 Welsh government declared a nature emergency with 17% of species in Wales at danger of extinction.
- **Recent Welsh legislation** – Wales has introduced new environmental legislation: The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, The Environment (Wales) Act (2016), The Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021. NWRT will play its part in ensuring that these laws are implemented in a way that benefits the Welsh freshwater environment.
- **Climate Change** – 2020 recorded the wettest February, fifth warmest spring, hottest summer and the wettest October. July 2022 recorded the hottest day on record with the temperature reaching 37.1C in Hawarden in Flintshire. In 2019 Welsh Government declared a Climate Emergency in Wales and has committed to achieving a carbon neutral public sector by 2030 and coordinating action to help other areas of the economy to make a decisive shift away from fossil fuels, involving academia, industry and the third sector.
- Never has it been a more important time to protect our freshwaters and their biodiversity from the increasing threats of climate change. Our rivers are at increasing risk of both severe floods and droughts and iconic species such as the Charr, Atlantic salmon and Sewin are being increasingly impacted.
- **Nature Connection** - a beneficial product of the pandemic has been peoples increased awareness of the intrinsic value of nature and its beneficial impacts on their wellbeing. NWRT, in line with its charitable duties, will aim to increase public awareness of, and education about, the value of Welsh rivers and still waters. It will also create opportunities for direct involvement in the management and monitoring of rivers through volunteering and citizen science.

# OUR VISION

**Our vision is for clean and healthy rivers across North Wales.**

- To promote the conservation, protection, rehabilitation and improvement of the rivers, streams, watercourses and water impoundments in the catchments of the rivers Clwyd, Conwy and the rivers of Gwynedd as well as adjacent areas of their banks.
- To tackle the increase in water pollution largely due to the intensification of agriculture which is exacerbated by poor land use management, sewage overflows, septic tank management, chemical spills through poor storage and 'silent contaminants' such as herbicides, pesticides, pharmaceuticals and microplastics which are not routinely monitored and whose impacts we have little knowledge
- To promote the conservation, rehabilitation and protection of the indigenous species of animal and plant life of the rivers, streams, watercourses, water impoundments in the catchments of the rivers Clwyd, Conwy and the rivers of Gwynedd as well as adjacent areas of their banks and thereby enhance the diversity of these areas.
- To advance the education of the public in the understanding of animal and aquatic habitats, their related catchment areas and their plant life and public's awareness about the need for conservation, protection, rehabilitation and improvement of such environments.



## Public Benefit

The benefits that arise from the Trust's objectives are as follows:

- The rivers, streams, watercourses and water impoundments in the North Wales river catchments will be protected so as to preserve and improve the natural habitats. There will also be improved access to the area for the general public, as the Trust aims to assist in opening up some of these areas by means of nature pathways.
- The general public will have a better understanding of aquatic habitats and the need for and methods of protection and improvement of such habitats.

Whilst public awareness of the issues facing freshwater is increasing, we would like to encourage much greater ownership by local communities of their river as it is only with their support and involvement that the vision for cleaner and healthier rivers will be fully realised.



# 1. Improve water quality across our river catchment.

Without good water quality we have no biodiversity, species or life to conserve or protect. Therefore this aim is key and underpins all of our work. Our aim is to collect evidence about the nature, severity, and extent of the problem within our catchment and to call to account those responsible as well as those organisations which should set the standards, monitor, regulate and enforce. We will focus on all areas of water pollution that we deem most damaging within our catchment.

	Objective	Target/ Measure
1.1	Strengthen our knowledge of water pollution	<p>Complete a desk study of existing recent data to give us a picture of the scale of the problem within our catchment.</p> <p>Support monitoring of North Wales rivers including establishing targeted citizen science projects .</p>
1.2	Reduce the number of water pollutions by working with the industry, community, planners, and regulators to identify sustainable practices. Put in place mitigation such as riparian wetlands.	<p>A significant reduction from the current level of pollution incidents recorded by NRW by 2027.</p> <p>Employ a specialist 'Water Quality Advisor' Project Officer.</p> <p>Plant riparian wetland strips to purify and filter water.</p>
1.3	Produce informative materials and communications to raise awareness of water pollution and how to reduce/ stop and mitigate pollution.	Share with business, industry, government and the public about water pollution and its affects within our catchment and how they can reduce their individual and collective impact.
1.4	Ensure enforcement of current and new regulations.	<p>Campaign for effective enforcement of legislation in North Wales, by WG and NRW. When necessary, ask Afonydd Cymru to apply legal review and action.</p> <p>Support citizen scientists to lobby their local MP and Senedd members with their findings ,supporting with online resources/templates.</p>

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## 2. Improve the wildlife and biodiversity of our rivers.

Restore all Welsh rivers to good ecological status. We will achieve this through continuing to identify and deliver improvements to Welsh rivers. Vital to this is the strategic partnership we have with NRW, funded through the Welsh Government, to identify and rectify issues such as habitat damage or obstructions in our catchment rivers. We will also be proactive in raising the profile of our endangered wildlife and biodiversity in our rivers. We will be working on conservation of these areas to protect and conserve species under threat.

	Objective	Target/ Measure
1.1	Safeguard endangered species.	<p>Protect/ conserve / raise awareness of the following species within our catchment at serious threat from climate change &amp; water pollution:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arctic Charr – Specialist Dr Antony Smith to develop a programme to restore and protect existing populations of native Charr in Snowdonia. Raise awareness of this rare species through education, egg hatching, working with Dwr Cymru on water quality and putting pressure on the first Hydro in Llanberis to address the mistakes made to the new spawning gravels. Raising awareness.</li> <li>• European eel – Through awareness and targeting elver and silver eel migration obstacles.</li> <li>• Red List- Salmon &amp; Sea Trout - Look at funding to revisit and update current and historical spawning grounds. Where can we put in mitigation within the catchment and what are the barriers?</li> <li>• Freshwater pearl mussel – centred on the Eden ( SAC) looking to build on previous work. Working with the NRW Freshwater pearl specialist.</li> </ul>



	Objective	Target/ Measure
1.2	Restored and connected fish habitat.	Restore natural processes and habitat for the benefit of wildlife and biodiversity. This will include in river work to improve spawning grounds, habitat and riparian strips along our rivers. In river work such as boulders, woody debris, gravel traps.
1.3	Keep Rivers Cool project	<p>Plant trees alongside rivers to increase shading to build resilience against climate change and keep invasive species down..</p> <p>Program successful: Average river temperatures do not increase.</p>
1.4	Habitat connectivity	Using river corridors and river channels to link orphaned habitats through hedgerow and tree planting.
1.5	Sustainable river flows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural Flood Management: Improving bank erosion.</li> <li>• Open Rivers- Remove man-made barriers to migration to allow fish to migrate freely.</li> </ul> <p>Identify weirs that are no longer in use and causing a barrier to fish migration.</p> <p>Removing barriers such as weirs to increase spawning grounds.</p>
1.6	Restored river channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easements - restore natural processes and habitat for the benefit of fish.boulders, trees, gravel traps etc</li> <li>• Rewigglng rivers</li> </ul>

### 3. Build community engagement through education & awareness.

There is much that could be done to raise public awareness of the value and issues facing our rivers. Key to this is the need to connect communities to their local river. North Wales Rivers Trusts could play a major role in bringing this about through information, education and by facilitating citizen science to monitor the state of our rivers.

	Objective	Target/ Measure
1.1	Increase public involvement on the protection and conservation of rivers within our catchment,	Secure funding for river guardian schemes across our catchment  Promote Citizen Science schemes Connect the public with their rivers and the river trust
1.2	Support the education of students about the management and ecology of our rivers.	Build on the egg hatchery programme- writing a relevant scheme of work.  Write a scheme of work for KS2/3/4  Promote work experience opportunities for KS5/further education linking with Welsh bacc volunteer opportunities and Bangor University.
1.3	Produce informative materials and communications to raise awareness of water pollution, endangered species and how individuals and business can take action.	Share with business, industry, government and the public about water pollution and its affects within our catchment using press, social media and video.
1.4	Strengthen relationships with academia across our catchment and Wales.	Identify gaps in knowledge and support research into new and emerging issues on rivers

## 4. Greater public awareness of rivers and the work of the NWRT.

NWRT recognises that it must improve its communications and visibility to raise our profile locally and nationally. We will communicate with the general public through greater use of media. We will continue to liaise with all those carrying out research into Wales' rivers, their ecology and the factors that affect them. Explore opportunities to develop out advisory and consultancy services to be regarded as the trusted and authoritative organisation on river restoration and ecology.

	Objective	Target/ Measure
1.1	Strengthen our online presence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved website Increase media interviews year on year</li> <li>• Increase followers and interactions via social media</li> <li>• Increase use of youtube and podcasts.</li> <li>• Working with other NGOS</li> </ul>
1.2	To be recognized by the local communities and public for river restoration and protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure funding for 'river guardian' schemes across Wales.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to develop out advisory and consultancy services to be regarded as the trusted and authoritative organisation on river restoration and ecology in our catchment.</li> <li>• Provide sustainable, local training and employment.</li> <li>• Promote Citizen Science schemes Connecting the public with their rivers.</li> </ul>
1.3	Support the education of students about the management and ecology of our rivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop educational material to support the National Curriculum of Wales by 2023 (for related environmental and water topics)</li> </ul>
1.4	Strengthen relationships with academia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify gaps in knowledge and support research into new and emerging issues on rivers</li> </ul>



Ymddiriedolaeth Afonydd  
**Gogledd Cymru**  
**Rivers Trust**  
North Wales