The Wilder Frome Programme and Progress

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Steering Group:
Severn Rivers Trust; Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust; Environment Agency; Natural England; Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT); FWAG; Forestry England; Gloucestershire County Council

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Building a Flagship Programmes approach in the Severn Vale

- Providing a catchment-based, holistic approach
- Addressing water-related issues in an integrated way
- Co-creating the strategy and action plan across multiple stakeholders
- Creating a narrative to for all to better understand how multiple projects fit together
- Facilitating the opportunity to access bigger and better funding streams
- Improving our water environment

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What does a Flagship Programme look like?

A document – a Strategic Vision and Action Plan containing:

- A Vision – how we would all like a healthy catchment to look
- What makes the catchment special?
- A series of Environmental Priorities with:
    - Background
    - Statement of Ambition
    - Objectives we would like to achieve

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Flagship Programmes in the SV Catchment

- Wilder Frome – Vision and Action Plan completed; in delivery
- Forest to Sea – Vision and Action Plan in draft
- Wilder Leadon – at initial stages
- Cheltenham and Gloucester's Waterscapes – conceptual
- Flourishing Floodplains - conceptual

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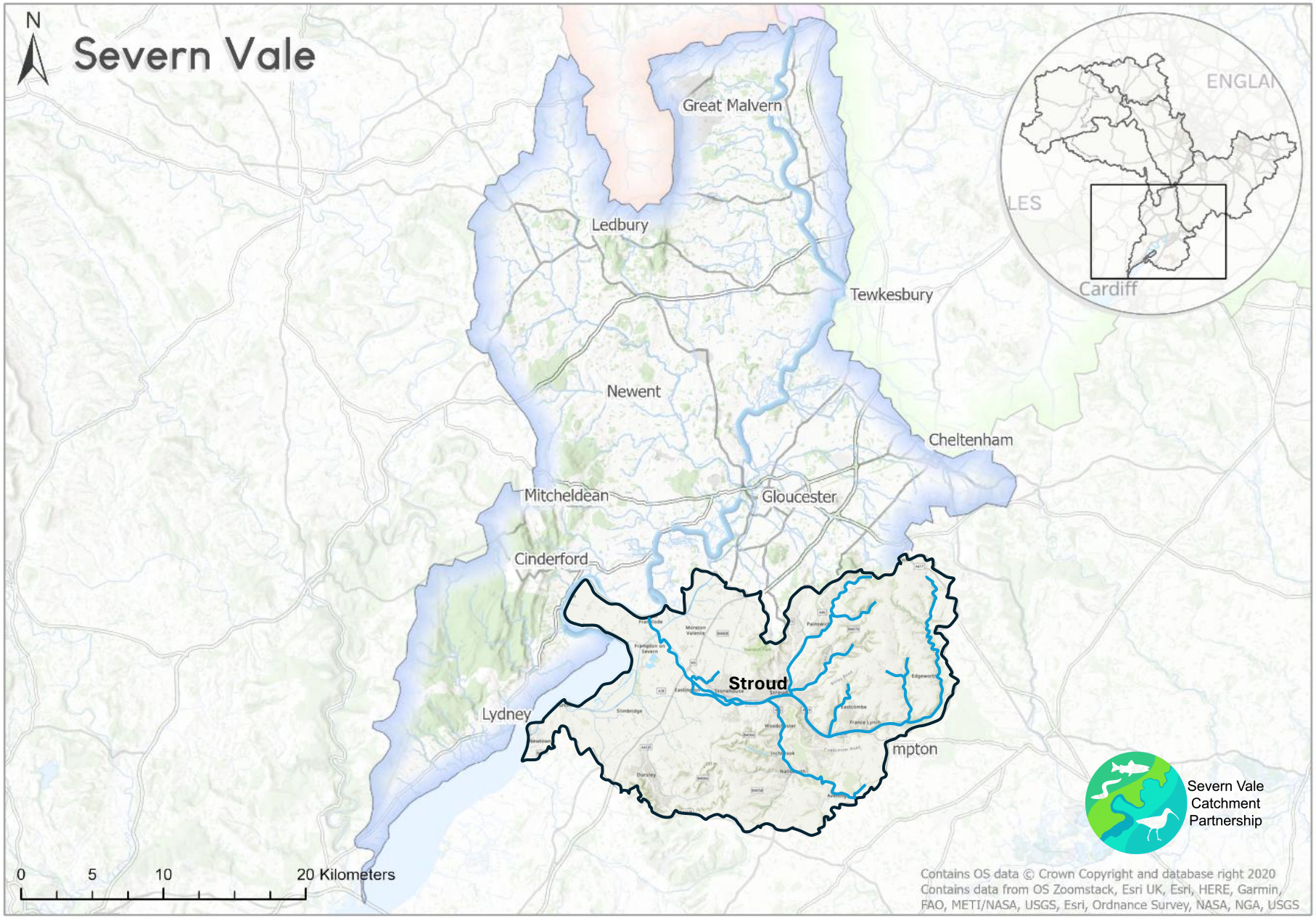

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The Wilder Frome Identity

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Wilder Frome - The Vision

Our Vision for the River Frome

A crystal clear, limestone river bursting with life, teeming with fish as they make their way up the Frome from the Severn Estuary. Eels living out their lives before returning to the Sargasso Sea to breed. Salmon migrating upstream to healthy, gravelly spawning grounds. Wetlands, floodplains and woodlands full of plants and trees, removing carbon from the air and storing it. Thriving populations of insects, birds and mammals on wildlife-rich farmland and in towns and villages. A river in which flooding causes minimal human suffering, and droughts rarely make the river run dry. A place where you want to live, work, and play.

What makes the Frome catchment special?

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Wilder Frome Environmental Priorities

- Removing barriers to fish movement
- Making space for wildlife
- Working in the wider landscape
- Cleaning up our rivers
- Restoring healthy flows
- Taking action on Invasive Non-Native Species
- Monitoring and data
- Community engagement and partnership

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Wilder Frome objectives by 2030(35)

An example:

- Implement fish passage solutions at the Frome tidal flap, Whitminster Weir, Fromebridge Mill Weir, Ryeford Mill, and Ebley Mill Weir
- Scope further fish passage or barrier removal opportunities, working upstream towards Chalford, including the Nailsworth stream weir at Sainsburys (Kimmins Mill)
- Seek funding for at least 5 additional barrier removals or easements across the catchment
- Seek funding for suitable instream habitat works to support barrier removals or easements
- Retain and expand existing, white-clawed crayfish habitats and populations

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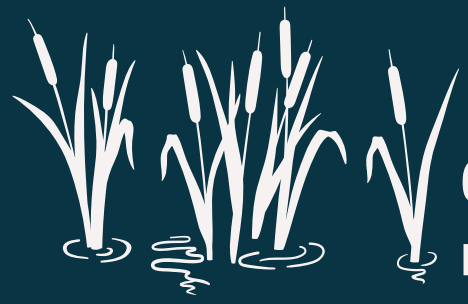
WILDER FROME ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE



6.16HA OF WETLAND mosaic restored

1 FISH PASS delivered

4 FISH PASSES designed

WHITE-CLAWED CRAYFISH translocated in 2 waterbodies

21 PEOPLE TRAINED in Riverfly monitoring

4 COMMUNITY EVENTS hosted

2.69KM FLOODPLAIN reconnected

14.73HA GRASSLAND created

2.9HA WET WOODLAND established

Wilder Frome – Progress so far

Removing barriers to fish movement

Implementing fish passage solutions at Whitminster, Fromebridge and Ryeford weirs – Fromebridge achieved, Ryeford has design, Whitminster has design which needs some tweaks - 30%

Scope further fish passage removal opportunities

Fish Passage Working Group established (SRT)
Barriers appraisal completed (SRT)
Stroud Cricket Club splitter weir – concept design (GWT)
Ebley Mill – options appraisal and outline design achieved (SRT)
Kingfisher Business Park – concept design
Tidal Flap options explored (EA)

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Wilder Frome – Progress so far

Making space for wildlife

Restore 50ha wetland mosaic in the lower Frome catchment at Whitminster – 6.16ha so far (12.3% of target) – by GWT

Establish/restore 100ha of new botanically rich grassland – 14.73ha so far (14.73%) (through Cotswold Canals Connected and Cotswolds National Landscape)

Establish/restore 20ha wet woodland – 2.9ha established to date far (14.5%) (through Stroud DC and Cotswolds Canals Connected)

Reconnect 5km of headwater river with the floodplain by removing embankments and re-meandering straight sections of river – SDC – 2.69km achieved to date (53.8%)

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Wilder Frome – Progress so far

Cleaning up our Rivers

- *Run annual misconnection campaigns, engaging 10 schools, residential and business communities* – 3 delivered of a target of 10 – 30%
- *Work with SvT, Highways, Local Authorities and communities to deliver a programme of blue-green infrastructure through the creation of a minimum of 20 SuDs features* – none delivered. Depave of car park planned for this year with GWT/RSA

Working in the wider landscape of the River Frome

- *Work with 30 landowners to help them select appropriate ELMs options to improve the water environment* – 0% although GWT have been active in advising farmers in the catchment

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Wilder Frome – Progress so far

Restoring healthy flows in Stroud's rivers

- No direct progress recorded although woody debris will have helped

Taking action on INNS

- *Seek funding to eradicate Giant Hogweed from catchment* – no funding received or areas treated. Potential plan to remove GH along one reach of Painswick Stream (GWT)
- *Run a biosecurity campaign focused on improving understanding of the spread of INNS between watercourses and impacts on native wildlife* – some clean, check, dry messaging given during school engagement (GWT)

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Wilder Frome – Progress so far

Monitoring and Data

- *Improve water environment and invasive species monitoring including citizen science initiatives* - Riverfly training (21 people) – GWT, WWT, Cotswold Canals, water quality SS and fish eDNA data collected at 9 sites. WaterWatch Collective developing data portal to access data
- *White clawed crayfish monitoring* – ongoing at re-introduction/translocation sites (GWT)
- *Ongoing riverfly surveys* – 4 sites listed (GWT)

Community engagement and partnership

Run an annual community event for stakeholders – this is the 4th of a plan of 7 – on target

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Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Wilder Frome 2024-25 Key Achievements

- 3.73 km of habitat enhanced through the project
- 250 trees planted
- 4 sites where in channel features have been created/restored
- 57 volunteer days
- 2 community events held
- 490m of in-channel features created/restored
- 3 riverbank sites that have had interventions implemented to prevent/reduce diffuse pollution
- 2 agricultural businesses that have been given advice/and or changed their way of working

Riverfly training
March 2025

Revetment work in Cranham
February 2025

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Project Outcomes:

1. Fish habitat enhancement programme: installation of further faggoting at Stroud Cricket Club (River Frome) – September 2025

2. River litter pick with Stroud Valleys Project (River Frome) – September 2025

3. Riparian tree planting (with match funding) on the lower Painswick Stream – February 2025

1.

2.

3.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Project Outcomes:

4. Volunteer work party sessions – installing faggots at Trillis (Holy Brook) – March 2025

4.

5. Large woody debris and felling of bankside trees for riparian habitat enhancement – September 2024

5.

6. Hardstanding for solar trough, in support of riparian livestock fencing schemes (delivered though match) to reduce poaching & manures/silts entering the Slad Brook, Ruscombe Brook & Randwick Stream – March 2025

6.

Wilder Frome – What's next?

2025/26

- WEIF funding (from EA) secured to deliver:
- Next steps in design of at least one fish passage option (SRT)
- In-channel habitat enhancements (GWT)
- Farm advice sheets for upper, middle and lower catchment (FWAG)

2026 onwards

- Seek further WEIF funding
- Seek to work together to apply for bigger funding pots to deliver at scale – very challenging
- Fish passage at tidal flap and Whitminster a priority
- Plus start work on citizen science, biosecurity campaign, SuDs, large-scale habitat creation

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How can you help/be involved/other ideas?

- Please complete the survey – you can be anonymous if you'd like to be
- Can you help to monitor the river?
- Do you know any potential funding routes?
- Are there other individuals/organisations you think we should involve?
- How could we scale up the approach?

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Fish in the Frome this week

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Thank you

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