



1. Fresh water for nature

Through the [WWF and Carlsberg partnership](#), with funding and support from the [National Trust's Riverlands project](#), [Norfolk Rivers Trust \(NRT\)](#) worked with a landowner in Ingworth to improve water quality and create new habitat for wildlife.

Ingworth is located in the river Bure catchment. The river Bure is a globally-rare chalk river, one of approximately 25 that flow through Norfolk's landscape. These vital habitats, which support a diverse range of wildlife, should possess pristine water that is free from impurities and pollutants, as they are fed by underlying chalk aquifers.

However, the Bure is currently classed as having 'moderate ecological health' (according to Water Framework Directive data, 2022). With pollution from agriculture stated as a reason for not achieving good status, NRT farm advisers have been working locally to address this challenge.

As part of this collaborative project, over 1,800 meters of native hedging have been successfully planted. This not only restores historic hedgerows, but also helps mitigate the effects of climate change on biodiversity and food production.



Figure 1. NRT Engagement Officer, Tim Fisher, showing the volunteers the importance of sapling planting and care.



Figure 2. NRT staff help volunteers re-plant a historic hedge line.

The WWF and Carlsberg partnership funded 600m of hedging (3000 plants), along with biodegradable tree guards, to interrupt flow pathways from arable land to the river Bure. The National Trust's Riverlands project funded an additional 1,200m of hedging (6,267 plants) to enhance the remaining field boundaries and create further farmland habitat, linking the initial planting to the wider landscape.

2. The importance of hedge restoration and establishment

Water naturally follows the pull of gravity, and in areas without interventions such as hedgerows, surface water can flow freely along its natural path, disregarding structures such as roads, houses, or villages. When large volumes of water move across the land, the area becomes more susceptible to flooding and increased soil erosion, which can introduce pollutants and sediment into the river Bure.



Planting these historic field boundaries and establishing new hedgerows will help mitigate these negative effects by slowing – or in some cases halting – the flow of water across the landscape.

In addition to protecting the river Bure and its catchment, reintroducing native trees and shrubs to carefully selected areas will create new farmland habitats. These mixed hedgerows will naturally connect existing and perhaps isolated habitats, creating wildlife corridors for birds, mammals and invertebrates. Such pathways are essential for sustaining and increasing biodiversity in our fragmented countryside.

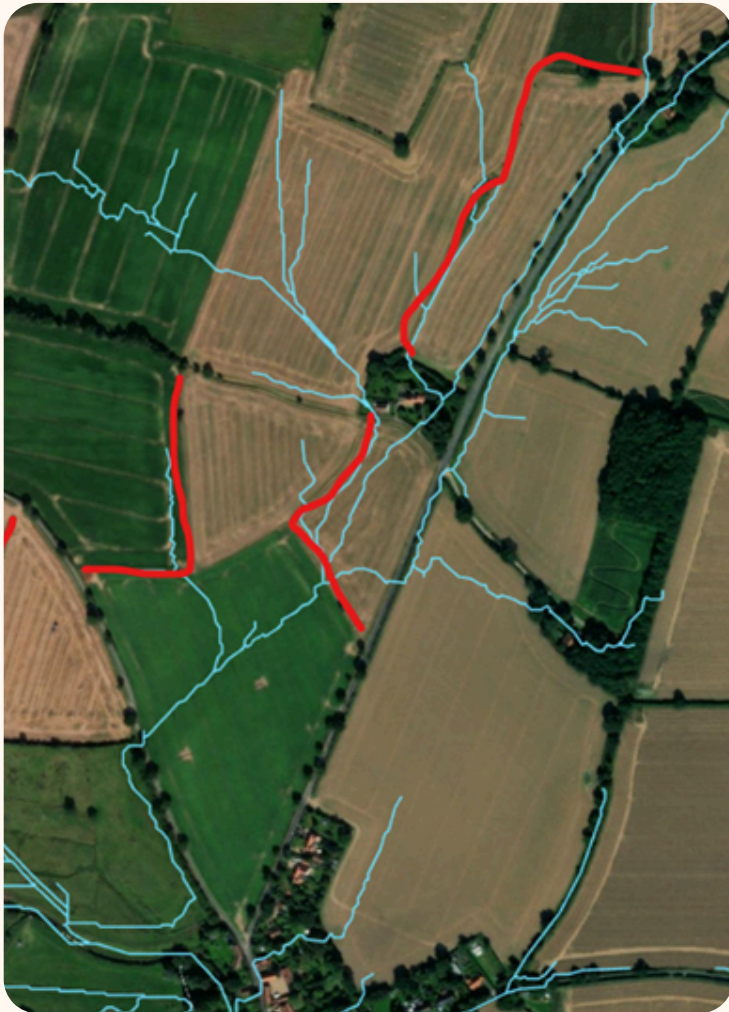


Figure 3. Red line represent the newly planted hedge lines, these will intercept surface water pathways (represented by the blue lines).



Figure 4. Volunteers are an essential part of the team.

According to [Hedgelink](#), the UK's most threatened species rely on hedgerow habitats, including 12 species of birds such as the song thrush, tree sparrows, turtle doves, and yellowhammers. Moreover, the hedgehog – our only spined mammal – needs the safety of hedgerows to travel greater distances in search of food.

3. Collaborative working

Staff from the local National Trust site [Blickling Estate](#), along with a team from Barratt Homes, joined NRT staff and volunteers to demonstrate the power of collaborative working. Over three days, 20 attendees planted 2,620 saplings along 480 meters of arable field boundaries.

4. Next steps

NRT is committed to restoring, protecting and enhancing the water environments of Norfolk while fostering connections between nature and communities. As such, the Trust will continue to closely collaborate with local landowners, organisations and people to deliver projects like this across entire river catchments.

To ensure the saplings remain healthy, landowners sign agreements to maintain the hedgerows. This includes weeding, mulching and replacing any saplings that do not thrive. NRT also supports the use of biodegradable tree guards; if any guards have not degraded by the time the tree has outgrown them, they will be removed by hand to ensure correct growth.



Funding statement

This work was made possible through the generous support of the WWF and Carlsberg partnership. The funding provides essential interventions, restorations and opportunities for landowners, communities and conservation efforts.