

NetworkNews

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European Union
European Regional
Development Fund



The Black Country Blue Network 2 (BCBN2) project is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with an investment of £1.6m and a total project value of £3.5m. Following the successful delivery of phase 1, BCBN2 commenced in September 2020 with a 3 year project in place to assist with the priority of preserving and protecting the environment.

The project aims to create a high-quality ecological network with a diverse range of habitats, centred on the area's historically important waterways and associated green spaces. This will be achieved through a programme of infrastructure and habitat improvements along canals and rivers and other key nature greenspaces linked into this blue network. The project will look to improve over 114 hectares of green space and rehabilitate over 4 hectares of land. Improvements will facilitate better visitor management and improved access for local communities.

The project is a partnership between the City of Wolverhampton Council, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, Canal and River Trust and Severn Rivers Trust. Each delivery partner is delivering sub-projects which together make up the Black Country Blue Network.



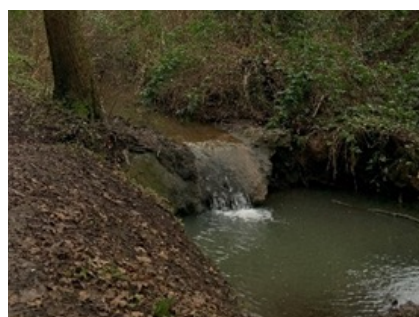
Coseley Canal

Works on Coseley Canal commenced in August and will be substantially complete by the end of September.

The photos show the part completed new ramps which will improve access for local people to the canal. Other works have included tree-thinning, wildflower planting and creation of a new orchards.



Small un-named watercourse that flows through the wooded Hawne Park just outside of Halesowen was the site of an exciting Black Country Blue Networks project. Four artificial weirs made from galvanised steel gabion baskets, filled with stone, lined in plastic, and topped in concrete are causing habitat fragmentation in this hidden gem of a site have now all been removed. The Severn Rivers Trust have worked with the local authority Dudley Council and local friends of group to remove these weirs and enrich the habitat with some large woody debris. The large woody debris added to the river offers a wealth of habitat for macroinvertebrates and shall slow down the flow of water. This has already helped to reduce flooding in a process we call Natural Flood Management (NFM). Now just 4 months after the works we are already recording an increase in biodiversity and abundance within the channel, reduced debris blocking the culvert which passess under the road which in turn will reduce ongoing maintenance costs for the council and lower the risk to localised flooding.

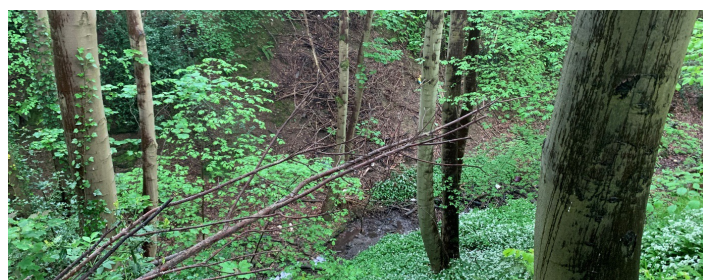


Saltwells NNR

Severn Rivers Trust have now received the full flood modelling report which is going to help support our permitting to create a Zero stage channel within the Saltwells NNR. This will see a once straightened river allowed to top the banks and braid its way through the reach, creating a lovely wet woodland. In the process of doing this, we shall be able to bypass two weirs which are currently acting as barriers to all species within the Black Brook. It will also offer a rewetting of the upper channel helping hold flood waters back in its urban setting.

Ham Dingle

Works have been permitted and agreed with Dudley Council to undertake some woodland management of the Ham Dingle woodland and construction of some inchannel Large Woody debris to help reduce high water flows and increase the biodiversity within the riparian corridor.



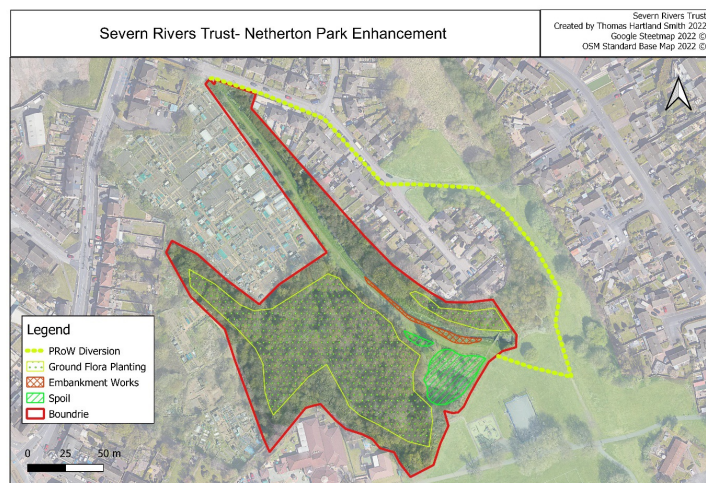
Clancy Way

Severn Rivers Trust have worked with staff at Severn Tent Water to remove a full channel width barrier from the River Stour at Clancy way near Corngreaves nature reserve. This barrier at first appearance seemed small and insignificant. However as it was causing water to cascade over it, it was acting as a full channel width barrier to many species of fish and macroinvertebrates causing significant longitudinal habitat fragmentation. This barrier has now been completely removed and has unlocked another 1.8km of river channel to the next significant barrier located at Furnace Hill. This is huge success for the health of the River Stour.



Netherton Park

Permitting has been granted to undertake a bank reprofiling of the Lynbrook that flows through the park, once tendering is completed we are planning to undertake these works before December 2022.



Other works

Severn Rivers Trust are also in discussions with Dudley council to undertake works on the LudgeBridge Brook which flows through Woollcott and the Dingle upstream of this. These works are looking at barrier removal and large woody debris in channel.

The design and tender to this site has been completed and work is planned to start in late Autumn, early Winter this year. The works should be completed by Spring 2023. As well as felling diseased trees and replanting, there will be footpath improvements and works to secure boundaries to the site.

New metal fencing and gates and anti-motorbike entrances will be constructed to entrances on Gervase Drive, Forest Road and Castle Mill Road, which will allow the site to be used for public enjoyment whilst reducing anti-social behaviour.

Many of the existing paths are historic and date back to quarrying works in previous centuries. In consultation with English Heritage the proposed path works will not damage historic features.

Peggy's Meadow

Works to Peggy's Meadow have been grouped with Castle Hill and are planned to start in late Autumn and completed by Spring 2023.

The land will be returned to its historical use as grazing land. Long grass and scrubby growth will be removed and the area will be fenced off with a traditional agricultural fence.

Peggy's Meadow will be an area of grassland which is a different habitat from nearby woodland and as a result will encourage different plants and wildflowers and increase the biodiversity of the area.



Holloway Street

Although slightly later than planned, work has now started at Holloway Street Open Space, also known as Gornal Field, and will be completed in a couple of months.

The main aim is to divert surface water away from pedestrian routes and nearby houses by clearing ditches with the creation of small new ponds. Furthermore, existing paths will be widened, regraded and stoned-up. There will be a cleared area created, next to Round House Road, to encourage more use of the site. Finally, some additional trees and wildflowers will be planted to assist the diversity of the site.

Sedgley Beacon

The works to this site are well underway. Visitors will notice a new path from Wolverhampton Road which will connect with existing footpaths. Also, grazing land has been re-configured to separate pedestrians from horses, and these fields have been fenced in a traditional agricultural fence. To reduce surface water run-off, some small seasonal ponds have been created to hold water and reduce pressure on the nearby brook.

Planned works to the wider site will follow shortly, including wildflower areas to existing grassland, and thinning of some woodland to allow access and to add the planting of woodland plants and bulbs.



Ward Street Railway Cutting

Work is nearing completion to transform the former railway cutting into an attractive and wildlife friendly green space for local people to enjoy. Grading and levelling works have taken place and a new path network installed. A programme of planting works, which includes a flowing blend of wildflower meadows, mown grass, young trees, wooded areas and seasonal bulbs is set to be completed in the coming months.



Pendeford Park

Work is nearing completion to improve the attractiveness and wildlife value of Pendeford Park. Major pathway improvements have taken place to enable local people to enjoy the site in all weathers, and overgrown vegetation has been cleared to allow more light through, and encourage a greater diversity of plant life to flourish. A programme of native woodland planting, hedge planting, woodland management and the creation of attractive wildflower meadows is set to be completed in the coming months.



Fowlers Park

The programme of improvements in Fowlers Park is nearing completion. The improvements include woodland management, meadow creation, hedgerow planting, access improvements and a complete renovation of the pond. Much of the woodland management has taken place and improvements have been made to the pathway network. Interpretation panels have been installed for the interest and enjoyment of visitors. The pond has been completely renovated and is now a much healthier and more wildlife friendly wetland attraction.





Moorcroft Wood

Work continues this winter to restructure the woodland, it will be thinned with focus of thinning based on tree health; unfortunately ash dieback has got into the majority of the ash trees in Moorcroft Wood and several large trees will be felled this winter, replanting with native trees and sowing an understory of woodland flora will be done post felling operations.



Vandalism of tree stock

Unfortunately some of the trees planted at some project sites have been vandalised, new tree stock will be planted this autumn with extra protection to prevent a reoccurrence of the trees being snapped.

The team have been out cutting the meadows we have created as part of the project, some supplementary seed will be sown to improve some areas that suffered due to the drought this summer.



Before



After

