



# Restoring the River Wharfe SSSI -an invitation

## Development of a River Restoration Plan

Natural England is responsible for overseeing the management of SSSIs, jointly with the Environment Agency we have begun work to look at how the River Wharfe SSSI may be restored to a more favourable condition through drafting a river restoration plan. This is being developed in collaboration with the National Trust, Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority.

Following summer survey work in 2012, it is now possible for us to begin to identify potential actions that can be carried out to restore the river to favourable condition and protect its long term future.

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## Invite

A public event has been arranged so that we can present and discuss the draft River Wharfe restoration plan to land managers, land owners and those with other interests in the river and its floodplain. Your views, comments, concerns or aspirations about the restoration will be welcomed.

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## Public Event: Drop-in Session and Evening Presentation

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2013**

### Drop in session

1-4pm Buckden Village Hall

A chance to view the plan and talk to staff from Natural England and the Environment Agency at any point throughout the afternoon.

### Evening presentation

7-9pm The Buck Inn, Buckden

Public meeting including formal presentation by JBA Consultants on behalf of Environment Agency and Natural England, question and answer session and a pea and pie supper.

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2013**

### Site visit opportunity

9.30am meet outside The Buck Inn, Buckden

A chance to visit & discuss site specific interests with JBA, Natural England and Environment Agency. Please contact Carole Lowther beforehand or discuss with Natural England on 16<sup>th</sup> January.

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## Contact & more information

If you are unable to attend the event and would like to comment on the draft then please send an email to [riverwharfe@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:riverwharfe@naturalengland.org.uk) or contact Carole Lowther at the following address:

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[www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/yorkshire\\_and\\_the\\_humber/ourwork/restoringriverwharfesssi](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/yorkshire_and_the_humber/ourwork/restoringriverwharfesssi)

# Restoring the River Wharfe SSSI

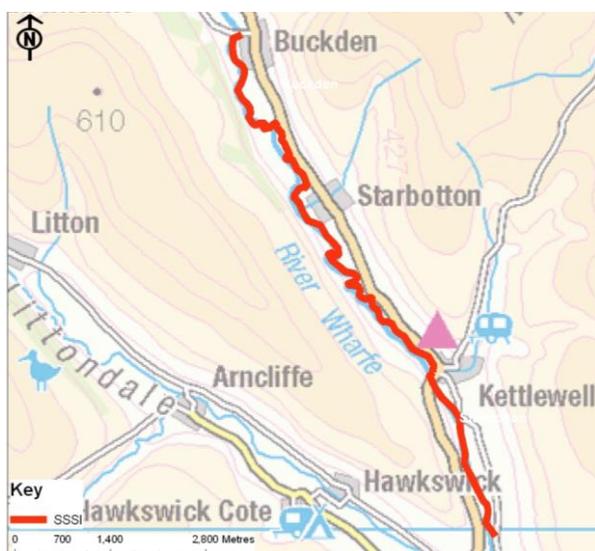
## *An executive summary*

### Current state of the Wharfe SSSI

The River Wharfe is a nationally important river designated as a Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its contrasting upland and lowland character important for its wildlife and habitat. The SSSI status covers the river channel and small areas of adjacent floodplain between Buckden and upstream of the River Skirfare confluence near Kettlewell. The River Wharfe is within the protected countryside of the Yorkshire Dales National Park important for its outstanding scenery, wildlife and cultural heritage.



*View of the River Wharfe downstream of Kettlewell*



#### **The River Wharfe SSSI**

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The River Wharfe SSSI is currently in poor condition as a result of historic management methods which prevent the river from functioning naturally, reducing its ecological health and stopping the SSSI from reaching its potential. The historic management measures include:

- Gravel removal and channel deepening
- Channel realignment
- Construction of flood banks close to the river to protect farmland in the floodplain from periodic inundation
- Construction of walls to reduce natural erosion which restrict natural movement

These alterations prevent the river from functioning naturally, reducing its ecological health and stopping the SSSI from reaching its potential (favourable condition).

**Natural England has responsibility, on behalf of government, to oversee the management of all SSSIs that leads to their favourable condition. This requires Natural England to work with SSSI landowners and other stakeholders to improve the condition of unfavourable SSSIs, including the River Wharfe SSSI.**

### Our aims for the River Wharfe SSSI

- To return the river to a near natural condition and ecological health by restoring the rivers natural form and function over the next 50 years.
- To work with local stakeholders to develop a robust river restoration plan which sets out a means to which the recovery of the SSSI can be achieved in the long term.
- To develop a detailed scientific understanding about the river and the options that can restore it to favourable condition.



*Species rich meadow adjacent to the river*

## Through these aims we hope to achieve the following vision for the River Wharfe SSSI

- A dynamic and diverse river bed which is suitable for fish and invertebrates.
- Variable channel features with a variety of river depths and flow speeds.
- Varied bankside plant structure, including areas of shading and occasional open stretches of floodplain meadow.
- Diverse plant, invertebrate and breeding bird communities that are able to use the river corridor with minimal disturbance.
- Low levels of river engineering allowing natural movement of the channel within a narrow riparian strip.
- Increased connection with the floodplain where wet grassland and meadows, fen, carr and wooded areas may develop.
- Enhance the landscape character's natural beauty, diversity and setting of the river and its floodplain



*Part vegetated gravel bar*

## Achieving the future vision of the River Wharfe SSSI

In order to achieve our vision there is a need to understand in more detail the morphology and ecology of the river and its floodplain and the processes controlling sediment and gravel redistribution along the system.

We have begun this process by producing a [draft River Restoration Plan](#). This plan lays out a number of restoration options for the river. These options will be refined further through a process of public engagement; [we welcome the input of local stakeholders to help inform the plan and how it can be sustainable](#).

Following this a final river restoration plan will be produced which takes into consideration existing constraints and land uses along the river when considering site actions and implementation on the ground. Site action in the river restoration plan will be phased over short, medium and long term timescales, up to 50 years. We will have more detailed discussions about the site specific actions with relevant stakeholders in the future. Further detailed work and feasibility of site specific actions may also be necessary to implement individual actions of the river restoration plan.

## How can we deliver restoration?

- Continue positive management of reaches already in good ecological health
- Support and allow the river to recover where natural processes are already working well
- Assist the natural recovery by changing management or by undertaking river restoration works to improve natural channel shape, river processes and ecological habitat
- Remove manmade features where they damage the function of the river whilst recognising the need to protect people and property
- Eradicate non-native invasive riverside plants and undertake a programme of removing them whenever they re-occur