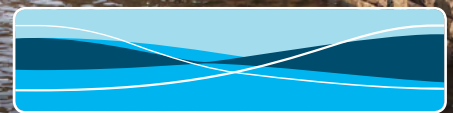


Yorkshire Water Estate Management Plan 2026

Member of National Estate for Nature



YorkshireWater

Published May 2026

How to view this document

Contents page

Our contents page links to every section within this document. Clicking on a specific section will instantly take you to it.

- 1 Click on the contents button to return to the contents page.
- 2 This button takes you to the previous page.
- 3 This button takes you to the next page.

There are also many other clickable links within this document which we've made easy to spot by underlining and **highlighting** them in blue.

Accessibility matters. It's really important that everyone can navigate our Estate Management plan.

To help with this, we've taken steps to make sure this document supports accessibility needs:

- Screen readers will recite content in a logical order, as well as spotting headers and using different text for images.
- Compatible with text-to-speech programmes and Braille displays.
- Easy navigation with contents table and bookmarked links.
- Simple text structure with clear headings, paragraphs and tables.
- Comfortable colour contrasts.



Contents

We've created colour-coded sections to help you to navigate this report easily. Just click on the section you are interested in on the contents page, and it will navigate you to that section.

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Overview

At Yorkshire Water, our vision is 'A thriving Yorkshire. Right for our customers, right for the environment'. It's our job to make sure everyone in Yorkshire has the water they need. And once it's been used we're in charge of taking it away, treating it and returning it safely back to Yorkshire's environment.

The natural environment underpins the health, resilience and prosperity of Yorkshire. It supports biodiversity, strengthens community resilience and helps reduce the impacts of climate change. As a water company, we depend on healthy natural systems for water storage, purification, flood management and drought resilience, and we have a clear responsibility to protect and enhance nature across the region.

Our Environmental Policy sets out how we'll meet statutory and regulatory requirements, deliver biodiversity net gain across our assets, improve the ecological resilience of Yorkshire's catchments and rivers, and prevent the spread of invasive non-native species.

We're committed to improving environmental performance and delivering better outcomes for rivers, seas and nature. Between 2025 and 2030, we'll deliver our largest ever environmental investment programme, including £1.5bn to significantly reduce the operation of 477 storm overflows across Yorkshire and £415m to improve the quality of treated wastewater returned to the environment. This will reduce phosphorus entering rivers and seas by 75%, helping to protect aquatic habitats and species.

We're also taking targeted action to restore habitats, strengthen ecological resilience and improve outcomes for nature across Yorkshire both on and off our land holding.

Working with Natural England and other partners, we're delivering our largest peatland restoration programme across 29 reservoir catchments, supporting more than 250 farmers through our Sustainable Landscapes programme across almost 100,000ha, and improving river resilience, addressing barriers to fish passage through Great Yorkshire Rivers in partnership with the Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency.

We're also tackling the spread of invasive species and introducing biosecurity facilities for recreational users at our reservoirs. We've joined forces with others across Yorkshire to safeguard rare species, including projects focused on white-clawed crayfish, water voles, and freshwater pearl mussels, endangered wetland plants and a variety of bat species.

Through our Nature First commitment, we're increasingly working with nature as our preferred approach where appropriate. This includes using wetlands to store and treat wastewater, restoring native woodland, and implementing natural flood management measures to reduce flood risk and deliver wider environmental benefits.

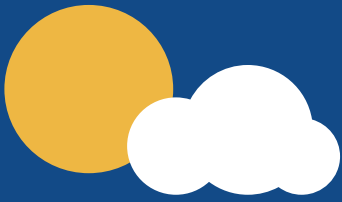
We've also adopted the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures framework to strengthen how we assess, manage and report our impacts and dependencies on nature.

Partnership working is central to delivering our environmental obligations and achieving greater impact across the region. This includes our Common Cause partnership with the National Trust, whose five-year Landscapes for Water programme will plant more than 300,000 trees and install 3,500 leaky dams to strengthen climate resilience for people and wildlife in the South Pennines.

This is the first version of our Estate Management Plan. It's been developed to provide transparency on our landholdings, summarise work undertaken to date, and explain how we're working with nature now and in the future while continuing to meet our responsibilities as a landowner, landlord and tenant.



The Yorkshire Water Estate



The Yorkshire Water Estate

We currently own around 27,500Ha of land. Of this, 2,000Ha is covered by the water in our reservoirs and about 3,800Ha is operational land consisting of a mixture of Water Treatment Works, Sewage Treatment Works, Depots, Offices, Pumping Stations and other land.

The remaining 21,700Ha is considered catchment land and is made up of the land that feeds water into our reservoirs. We own just over 30% of our reservoir catchments, with 17,200Ha being let out to (mainly) agricultural tenants with the other 4,500Ha being a mix of woodland, nature reserves, common land and land with water collection rights only. We therefore need to work and influence land management on and off our landholdings in order to protect the water and biodiversity of these drinking water catchments.

The table below shows the breakdown of the Company's land holdings:

Yorkshire Water Estate

Land Ownership	Area (ha)	% of YW Ownership
Yorkshire Water Land Ownership	27,581	
Tenanted Land	17,260	63
Owned Impounding Reservoirs	1,981	7
Non-let registered common land	2,060	7
Freehold - water collection only rights	762	3
Woodland	1,619	6
Tophill Low Reserve	104	-
Operational land	3,795	14



Statutory Designations

Statutory designations help guide how land is cared for and places responsibilities onto landowners to protect land. Water companies are S28G bodies, meaning we have enhanced requirements around conservation and a duty to consider how we can conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Our land includes nationally and internationally important sites including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which account for over 40% of our Estate. These largely comprise of upland habitats and there is a large crossover between these areas and the Special Protection Areas (SPA) and the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). A significant part of the Estate carries other designations such as National Parks and National Landscapes.

Designation	Area (ha)	% of YW Ownership
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	11,279	41
Special Protection Area (SPA)	11,008	40
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	11,022	40
National Landscape	7,294	26
National Park	5,150	19
<i>Total area of land with at least one of the above designations</i>	19,973	72
Registered Common Land	3,503	13
Local Nature Reserve	63	-
National Nature Reserve	<1	-
Land listed on Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI)	16,213	59



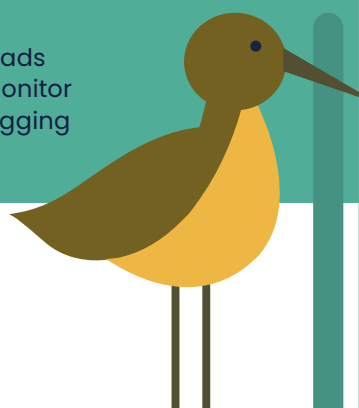
Case study:
Tophill Low Nature Reserve

Our award winning **Tophill Low Nature Reserve** near Driffield, East Yorkshire showcases some of the very best of Yorkshire Water’s habitats, wildlife and community engagement. The operational reservoirs next to the site are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). We have made significant investment in the habitats, facilities and accessibility of the site and have a great team of volunteers who assist in running the reserve for the enjoyment of over 25,000 visitors each year.

Careful habitat management has produced reed beds used by marsh harriers and breeding bitterns - both “firsts” for the River Hull valley in the last century. Water voles are thriving and we seek to protect all the wildlife through a recent installation of biosecurity measures.

Our Reserve colleagues are regional leads on **Motus** bird tracking systems that monitor migratory passerines with blackcap tagging already taking place.

Our most recent venture is two polytunnels that will allow the managed propagation of wetland plants for many uses, including sphagnum moss to support the upland peat bog & SSSI restoration of our land along the Pennine chain.



Recreation & Amenity on the Estate

With over 1,100km of public rights of way, 13,000ha of open access land and 1,800ha of woodlands and nature reserves, our land holdings provide many opportunities to support the health and wellbeing of our customers across the region.

Our public recreation sites are visited by millions of people each year for exercise, watching birds and other wildlife, beautiful natural views and access to open spaces and fresh air.

Under the Water Industry Act 1991, water companies have a duty to manage land and water for recreational purposes that includes a requirement to ensure access, to conserve natural beauty, and to provide recreational facilities (e.g., walking, water sports) where it is reasonably practicable to do so.

We're proud to provide the following recreation and amenity to our customers around Yorkshire:

- Around **100km of permissive footpaths** and **33km of permissive bridleway/cycle routes** that we've created alongside the estimated **1,100km of statutory rights of way** that includes footpaths, bridleways and county roads.
- Over **18,000Ha of Company land** designated as Open Access (Right to Roam) land granting the public a legal right to access such land for open-air recreation.
- On or near our reservoirs, we've **110 leases** that let people do activities such as water sports (canoeing, windsurfing, sailing, rowing), angling, outdoor activity centres, bird watching and even a hill climb.
- Over **100 events each year** many of which are one-off separate activities ranging from orienteering, charity events, organised walks, fell races, hacks, cycle races, challenge events, through to scout activities.
- Whilst provision varies from operational sites to open land, the Company also has some **30 car parks, 3 public toilets, 15 picnic sites; 4 nature reserves; 1 fishery, 59 Grade II listed structures (2 Grade II*) and 38 Scheduled Monuments** (plus other features of historic interest).
- Our land also has sporting rights – at the present time, one third of the rights are owned by third parties, One third are owned by us and are let out to tenants and one third are owned by us but are not let.

To help prioritise investment and guide land management decisions, recreational sites are categorised into four types:

Gateway Site

Highly accessible destinations with extensive visitor facilities, attracting visitors from across the region.

Recreational Site

Locally focused sites offering easy countryside access with engineered facilities.

Explorer Site

Less developed sites requiring visitor confidence and self-competence, with limited facilities.

Adventure Site

Remote sites requiring high levels of self-reliance, navigation skills and minimal infrastructure.

Case study:
Inclusive Access and Partnership Working

Over the past 20 years, we've invested in improving access across a range of sites to encourage greater use of the countryside while promoting inclusivity. Improvements have included wider paths, smoother surfaces and accessible gates to support visitors with differing mobility needs.

To make sure these improvements are accessible and meet the needs of all visitors, we work in partnership with Experience Community CIC – an organisation led by wheelchair users. Experience Community provides independent grading of access routes and practical feedback, allowing us to target further improvements such as gate adaptations, surface repairs and route information.

This partnership helps make sure our sites, where feasible and practical, support a diverse range of visitors while empowering people to make informed choices about access opportunities.



Our Tenanted Estate

We're a significant landlord with almost 700 tenancies that bring with them a broad range of responsibilities around maintaining the condition of our properties and supporting our tenants.

We're committed to managing our tenant relationships effectively, making sure the estate is well cared for and fostering positive, long-term partnerships with those who live and work on our land.

Over 90% of our land holdings were historically classified as Less Favoured Areas (LFA) or Severely Disadvantaged Areas (SDA) within the farm classification system. This reflects the predominantly upland and agricultural nature of our Estate and highlights the challenges associated with sustaining viable farm businesses in these areas. As a result, many of our tenants operate in environments where natural constraints can make farming more demanding.

Tenancy Type	Number of tenancies
Agricultural (AHA, FBT, Grazing)	234
Commercial (Miscellaneous, renewables, sub-stations & Telecom)	275
Easements & Wayleaves	13
Recreational (Fishing, Sailing, Shooting)	83
Residential (including Garden Ground)	85
Total	690

Beyond Nature

With so many tenants running farm businesses, Yorkshire Water's Beyond Nature® programme integrates research and practical approaches to maximise the benefits of sustainable land management, biodiversity, and water stewardship.

By supporting our tenant farmers in adopting holistic, innovative practices, the programme balances environmental, social, and economic needs, with a focus on improving catchment management to enhance water retention while supporting food production and biodiversity.

Beyond Nature® has delivered estate-wide impact by supporting over 11,000 hectares through collaborative, regenerative land management—improving biodiversity, water quality, soil health and farm resilience via tailored advice, practical habitat creation and innovation partnerships.

Biodiversity

The environment and biodiversity will be conserved and enhanced beyond compliance

Water quality

Water quality and quantity will be enhanced and safeguarded

Carbon

Carbon storage and sequestration will be optimised

Recreation

Recreational opportunities will be embraced where impacts do not adversely affect the environment and other land users

Farming Enterprise

An ecological approach to farming will be taken to support sustainable agriculture and farming

Social

Land will be managed to generate significant value to society, our communities customers and stakeholders

Sporting Enterprise

Management of sporting interests will be integrated with farming and environmental management

Flood attenuation

Flow attenuation and natural flood management will be improved by land management

Climate change

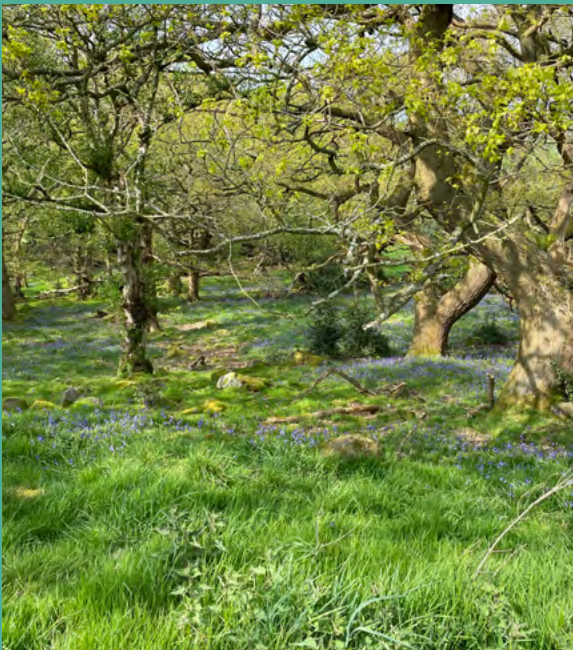
Climate change effects will be mitigated by land management



Case study:
Beyond Nature®: Scow Hall Farm

The Beyond Nature® Next Generation Farming Programme was created to help young farmers, enter an industry where the average age of farmers in England was around 60. We launched our programme at Scow Hall Farm in North Yorkshire, by offering a five-year Farm Business Tenancy (FBT), with mentorship and support, to build a sustainable farming business using Beyond Nature® principles.

After a tough selection process involving 45 candidates, Robert McAneney was chosen for his strong vision and commitment to sustainability allied to his entrepreneurial mindset and recognition of the challenges we face on our land. Robert began his FBT on 1st February 2021.



Achievements to Date

Farm and Environmental Management:

- Sheep and beef enterprises established and achieved Red Tractor assurance.
- Soil deficiencies have been addressed.
- Farm infrastructure was improved with building drainage, water supply, fencing, walling and gateways.
- Only organic fertilisers used with enhanced soil health through rotational grazing and creation of buffer strips to protect water quality.
- Wildflower seeds harvested to allow creation of more species-rich hay meadows.
- Hosting of farm visits and open days to share sustainable practices.

Diversification:

- A campsite is open for 28 days annually.

Conservation and Funding:

- Took part in the Government Pilot scheme for the Sustainable Farming Incentive Scheme, and later expanded this.
- Secured further funding for soil health projects and new woodland creation, as well as fencing off all main watercourses to prevent livestock access.

Media Profile:

- Increased social media following and featured in various media outlets with national and regional TV coverage.
- Finalist for the Northern Farmer Young Farmer of the Year Award.

Extended Tenancy:

- Following the successful start, we awarded Robert a new Farm Business Tenancy for a further term of 11 years from February 2025.

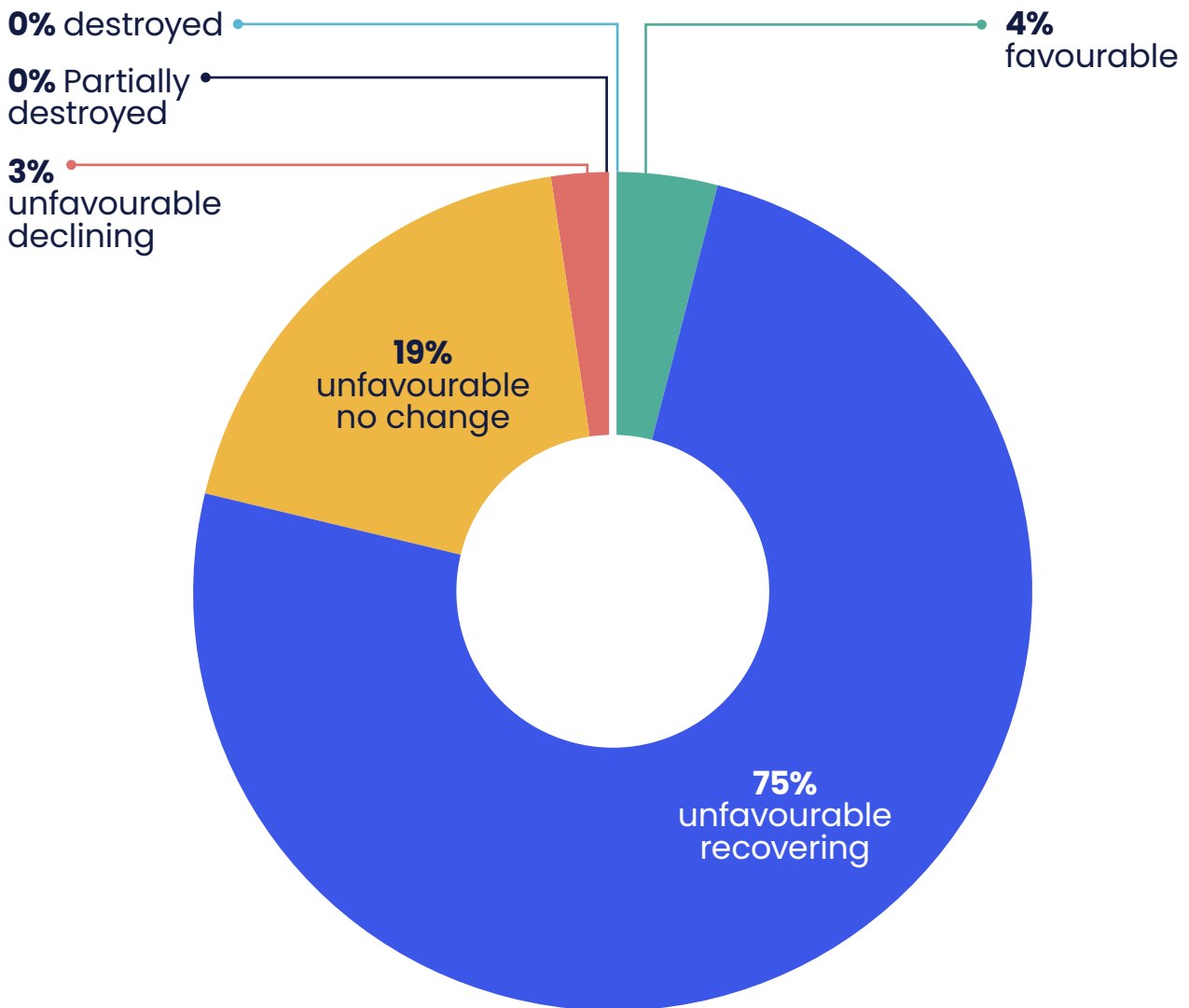
Our Sites of Special Scientific Interest

A significant part of the Estate is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and we've worked on the recovery and improvement of these sites for many years.

The table below sets out those SSSIs where the Company owns some or all the designated land and below that, the types of habitats that make up these SSSIs:

Name	Units	Ha within SSSI in YW ownership	Percentage of SSSI in YW ownership
Bingley South Bog	2	2.44	55%
Dark Peak	40	2427.64	8%
East Nidderdale Moors (Flamstone Pin - High Ruckles)	9	282.7	3%
Eastern Peak District Moors	13	23.42	< 1%
Eccup Reservoir	2	113.14	97%
Gouthwaite Reservoir	1	149.56	99%
Low Gill Moor Wetlands	1	0.48	< 1%
North York Moors	6	2.63	< 1%
Rake Dike	1	8.46	85%
South Pennine Moors	96	7368.17	35%
Tophill Low	1	34.62	100%
Upper Nidderdale	1	1.33	< 1%
West Nidderdale, Barden and Blubberhouses Moors	20	857.78	6%
Withens Clough	1	3	100%
Others	34	3.35	< 1%
Total	228	11278.72	

The Condition of Yorkshire Water's Sites of Special Scientific Interest by habitat



We've been actively managing our Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) since 2004, achieving significant progress, including meeting a previous Government target of bringing 100% of sites into recovering condition by 2010.

More recent assessment of the SSSI sites have highlighted continued progress in areas where investment has been made including restoration of blanket bog. But, in line with the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan target to bring 75% of SSSIs into favourable condition (rising to 80% within National Parks and National Landscapes) by 2042, we now need to focus on other habitats such as dry and wet heath, molinia domination, fuel load over the moorlands and a lack of biodiversity. Our approach to tackling these problems includes piloting Molinia control approaches whilst continuing with peatland restoration work. Together this will help build resilience into the moors, increase carbon capture and make significant progress in moving from our current figure of only 3.48% of SSSIs in favourable condition.

These sensitive blanket bog and dwarf shrub heath habitats will take a long time to recover following restoration. Restoring such habitats will require significant changes in land management to overcome the dominance of the Molinia grass species and build in protection against fires. The scale and complexity of these sites mean that partnership working is essential, requiring coordinated action with other landowners, to deliver meaningful landscape-scale improvements. Even where we have full ownership, such as at our reservoir sites, achieving favourable condition can be challenging due to the multiple pressures that apply.



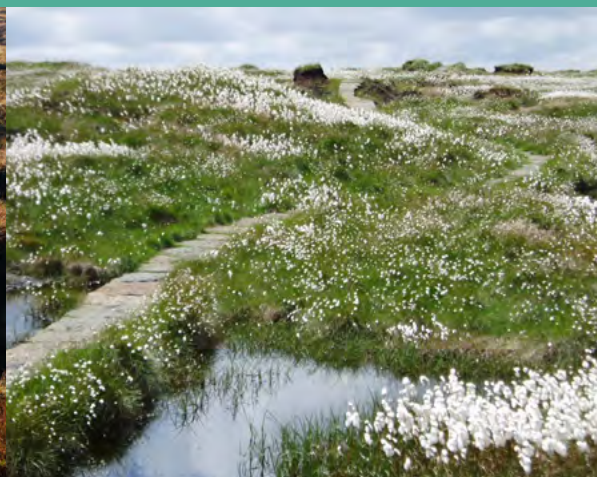
Case study:
Molinia Grass

Molinia Caerulea (purple moor grass) is a native British species found on a wide variety of habitats including moorlands. It can become dominant on blanket bog leading to a lack of species diversity and an increased risk of uncontrolled fire.

We'll be taking on a pilot study based on a review of previously trialled methods. The aim of the pilot will be to assess different rates of reduction in Molinia achieved by different treatment types and to examine the practicalities and cost effectiveness of these treatments.

The pilot will use five treatments consisting of a mix of scraping, bunding, dense planting of sphagnum and vascular plug planting, and cutting and glyphosate application on plots measuring 20m x 20m. These will be compared to a control site and a seventh site where the removed turves will be flailed and left in situ.

The pilot will be monitored until at least the end of 2030 and even beyond this if approved by Regulators. The results and learning will be shared with partners and other stakeholders.



Black Hill – 1996 and 2011 showing restoration work alongside Pennine Way

Working in Partnership

As a major landowner, we recognise the importance of working in partnership to deliver meaningful outcomes at a larger scale than is possible alone.

Collaboration allows us to align efforts, share expertise and achieve greater benefits for nature, communities and the wider landscape.

The Biohub is a flagship Beyond Nature® demonstrator site that functions as a transformative circular and regenerative agriculture research and development “living laboratory,” showcasing the development of an ecosystem approach underpinned by natural capital assets. It brings together farmers, researchers, and supply chains to test and scale innovative practices and nature-based solutions—combining food production with ecological resilience, intelligent water stewardship, carbon storage, and habitat creation.



Case study: Woodland Creation

The Landscapes for Water programme is the flagship project of our partnership with the National Trust, delivering woodland creation and natural flood management at a landscape scale across both our adjoining land holdings in the South Pennines.

The project will see 3,500 leaky dams installed and up to 300,000 trees planted over five years. This is to build resilience to climate change through carbon storage and flood resilience, whilst reducing the impact of drought and moorland fires.

In the 2025/2026 winter season, over 61,000 native broadleaf trees were planted across 75ha of our land above Withens Clough reservoir.

These trees will eventually sequester carbon, increase biodiversity and wildlife, improve water quality and deliver natural flood management benefits. Planting trees in upland areas is challenging so careful planning is needed to select suitable sites and safeguard precious upland habitat. These constraints resulted in a carefully considered reduction from an initial planting proposal of 139ha. The Withens Clough project involved complex helicopter lifting operations to move trees, guards and stakes to remote locations on protected land. This project was undertaken with grant funding provided by the White Rose Forest and has continued to run community planting sessions to engage with local volunteers.

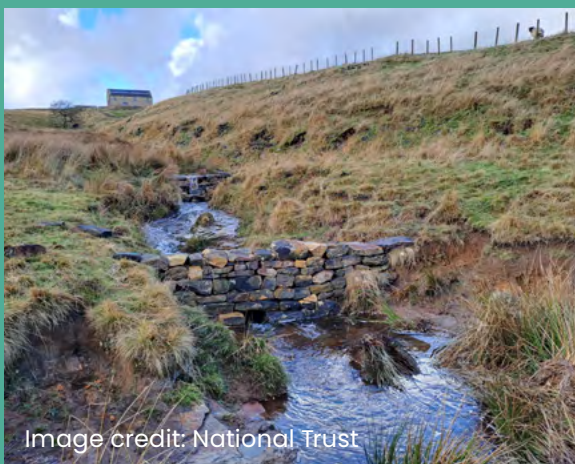


Image credit: National Trust



Image credit: Nick Singleton

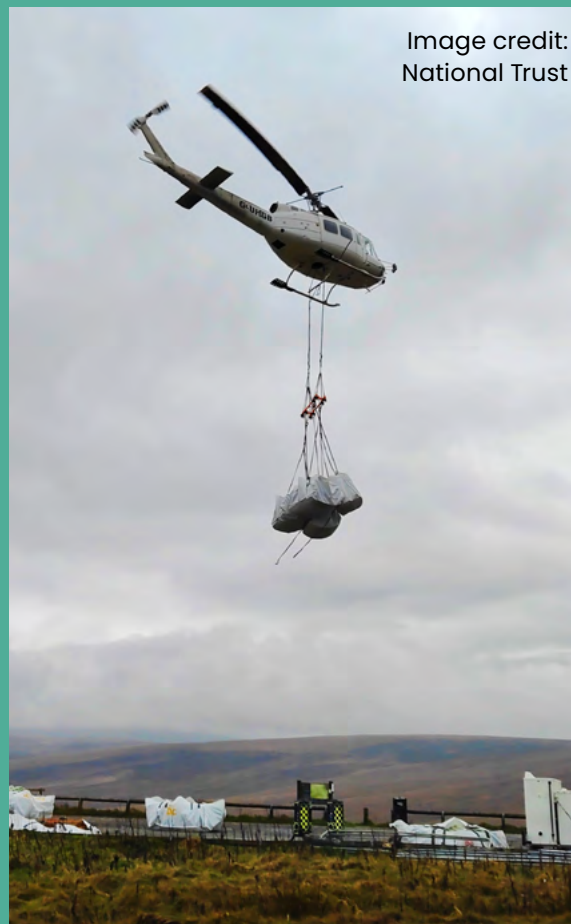


Image credit:
National Trust

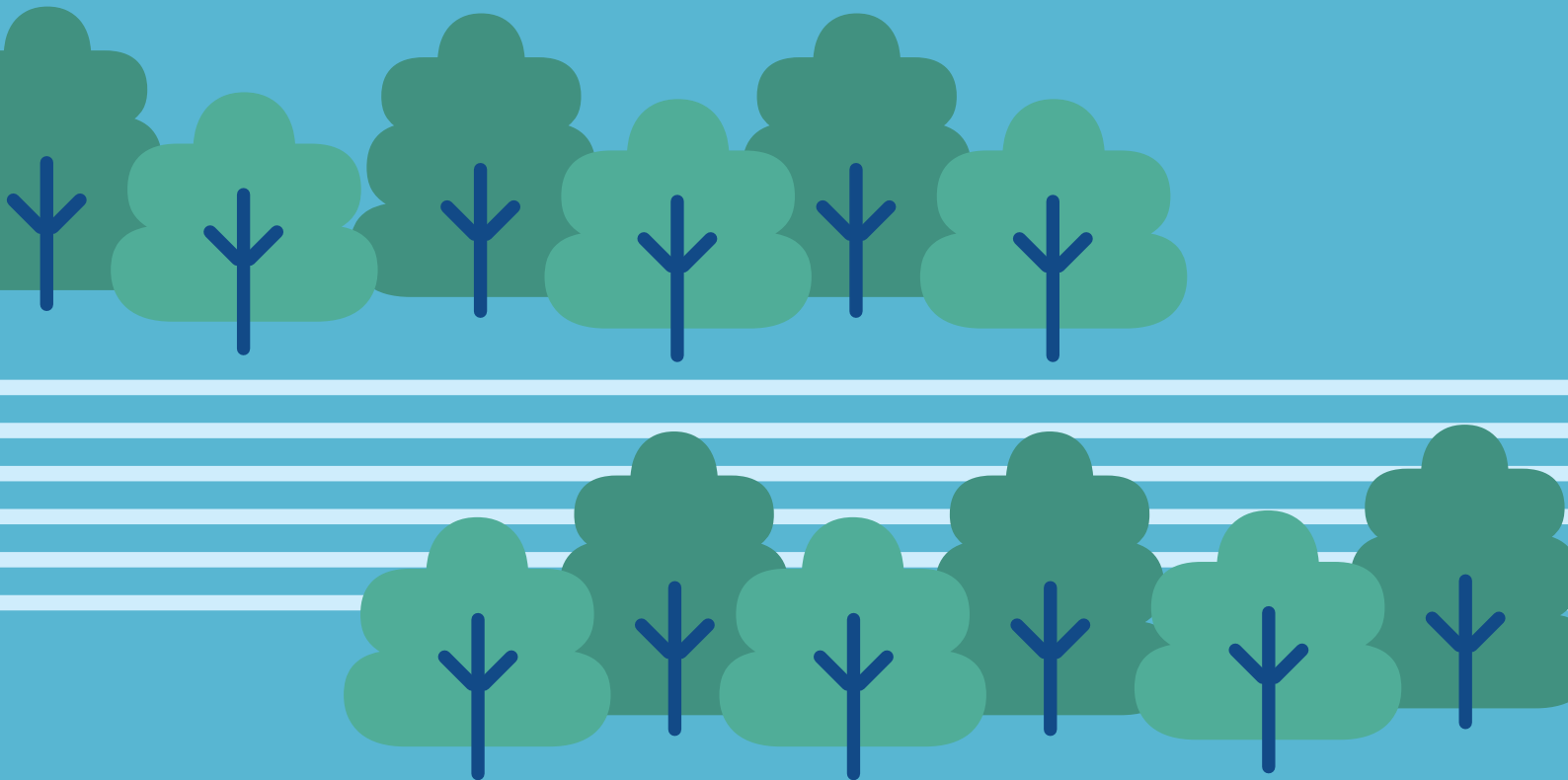
Value from Land

As part of the property cycle (acquire – manage – dispose), we continually review how our land is managed. To maximise its value and deliver the greatest overall benefit, balancing the wide range of demands made on our Estate.

This process includes assessing opportunities on a case-by-case basis to make sure our land is used effectively and sustainably. Where sites are no longer needed for their original purpose, we review whether the land can be reused, recycled or repurposed by part of our business and if not, we'll seek to dispose of the land externally. A significant proportion of our Estate is dedicated to nature recovery from our nationally important sites and our nature reserves to our Beyond Nature® tenancies or woodlands.


Our Value from Land process explores wider initiatives including:

- **Climate commitments:**
 - Expanding our biogas production to meet emerging requirements and opportunities.
 - Increasing solar PV to supply energy needed to run operational sites.
 - Opportunities to support the Government drive to boost renewable energy, including onshore wind, floating solar arrays, battery storage and hydrogen.
 - Restoring peatlands and creating woodlands to improve carbon storage on our land whilst working with nature to improve resilience to emerging hazards such as drought, flood risk and wildfire.
- **Responsible land disposal:**
 - We responsibly dispose of land that is no longer needed, ensuring all land use changes remain compliant with Environment Agency permit requirements and other regulatory conditions.



Our Nature Objectives and Actions

Nature recovery, our objectives and proposed actions

Area of interest	High Level Objective	Key Delivery Actions
Wildlife-rich habitat 	<p>Improve protected sites & develop conservation strategy</p> <hr/> <p>Support goals set by relevant regulators and organisations</p> <hr/> <p>Work to increase responsible public interaction with conservation sites</p> <hr/> <p>Improve water quality, reduce flood risk and sequester carbon</p>	<p>Site of Special Scientific Interest restoration and Beyond Nature® Programme Biodiversity enhancement programme</p> <hr/> <p>Local Nature Recovery Strategy projects</p> <hr/> <p>Biodiversity Net Gain</p> <hr/> <p>Species recovery & reintroduction projects</p> <hr/> <p>Continue to develop Tophill Low as an exemplar nature conservation site</p>
Farmed Land 	<p>Seek to improve nature whilst maintaining viable farm businesses</p> <hr/> <p>Upland Peat restoration & Lowland regenerative agriculture support</p>	<p>Site of Special Scientific Interest restoration and Beyond Nature® Programme</p> <hr/> <p>Support tenants into environmental schemes</p>
Woodland Estate 	<p>Maintain exemplar woodland estate</p> <hr/> <p>Woodland creation</p> <hr/> <p>Increase resilience of woodland estate to pests and disease</p>	<p>Maintain Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification and deliver Long Term Forest Plan</p> <hr/> <p>Working in partnership to develop and fund new woodland creation opportunities</p> <hr/> <p>Successful establishment and maintenance of newly created woodland</p> <hr/> <p>Registration of major projects on Woodland Carbon Code</p> <hr/> <p>Biosecurity measures</p> <hr/> <p>Invasive species control</p> <hr/> <p>Increased diversification and targeting of vulnerable species through forestry plan.</p>
Water 	<p>Ensure land supports water supply and quality requirements</p> <hr/> <p>Seek wetland creation opportunities</p> <hr/> <p>Implement natural flood management opportunities</p>	<p>Site of Special Scientific Interest restoration and Beyond Nature® Programme Biodiversity enhancement programme</p> <hr/> <p>Local Nature Recovery Strategy projects</p> <hr/> <p>Biodiversity Net Gain</p> <hr/> <p>Species recovery & reintroduction projects</p>
Urban 	<p>YW urban land mostly operational</p> <hr/> <p>Nature First solutions</p> <hr/> <p>Identify conservation site opportunities</p>	<p>Management plans and actions for relevant sites like Rodley, Blackburn Meadows, Gosforth Valley, Tadcaster</p> <hr/> <p>Partnership working in urban areas to improve access to green space alongside rainwater management</p>

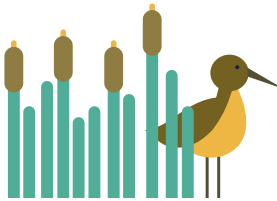
Delivering for Yorkshire



Delivering for Yorkshire

Through our Biodiversity Strategy by 2030 we will have delivered:

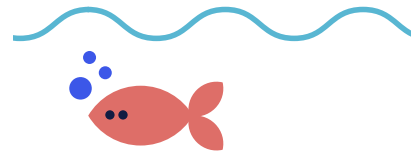
£5 million
investment in
habitat conservation



£2.2 million
investment in
species conservation



£4.7 million
investment in
river restoration



Beyond this, Yorkshire Water is committing to:

£7 million
investment through the
Great Yorkshire Rivers Partnership, working with partners to remove barriers to fish passage across Yorkshire by 2043

200 biodiversity units
investment in
species conservation

£6.5 million
investment in
moorland Site of Special Scientific Interest restoration

£5 million
investment in **non-native species management and biosecurity improvements**

Nature First commitment
Considering nature-based solutions first when delivering Yorkshire Water's £2 billion investment programme

Thank you for reading



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