

# NEW FOREST WETLAND RESTORATION

## *A FORESTRY ENGLAND UPDATE*

As part of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme, Forestry England has been working with partners to restore New Forest wetlands to improve the conditions of these internationally important habitats.

Since 2010, the HLS scheme has delivered dozens of projects across the New Forest, totalling 20 miles of restoration to watercourses and approximately 5,000 hectares (more than 7,000 football pitches) of SSSI wetland habitats being improved and protected.

After restoration work has been completed, we continue to monitor the sites to ensure they are functioning as expected. Some of the more sensitive sites may require further intervention to make minor adjustments to short stretches to prevent any issues from reoccurring. We visited over 40 freshwater and wetland sites this winter where previous restoration work was carried out to reverse the damaging effects of historical artificial modification and straightening. Over 73km of watercourse were surveyed to check for any damages to ford crossings, signs of eroding nick points, exposed clay, and any evidence of gravels being washed out, which are potential indicators that further enhancements may be required to stabilise the watercourse.



*Three of the sites where work will be carried out in the summer. Each picture shows evidence of erosion, the above photo a nick point that is due to be infilled with rocky material.*



In total, we found a shortlist of 8 sites where short stretches of watercourse needed further intervention this year. A number of additional sites require ongoing monitoring in the coming years, to review if repairs or modifications to the original restoration is required. Past experience has taught us that with time, some areas are able to naturally stabilise and recover without intervention, so we will keep a watchful eye on these.

Enhancement work on these 8 sites were due to be carried out over the summer, when water flows are at their lowest and conditions are dry in order to protect ground conditions. Any sensitive areas that might still be wet will be avoided, or preserved using ground protection, such as bog mats. As these works are minor repairs and enhancements to safeguard the restoration work previously carried out, practical work is only expected to take a limited time on each site. Once work has been completed vegetation regrowth will help consolidation and recovery of the watercourse.

The New Forest is a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and is one of the most important areas for freshwater wildlife in Britain. When carrying out wetland restoration work, we factor in constraints such as ground nesting birds, fish, reptiles, other protected species, and archaeology features, working with partnership organisations to build in the necessary mitigation to ensure wildlife is protected and no impact is caused to any of the sensitive heritage areas.

This summer's programme of enhancement work will help continue our commitment to care for the [wetland habitats of the New Forest](#).