

Sussex Wildlife Trust Position Statement on in the Lower Arun Valley

This position statement is set within the context of The Wildlife Trusts' national position on UK Biodiversity management and climate change which is summarised as follows:

Summary of The Wildlife Trusts' View (UK) from the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts Development Plan 2017-2022.

We aim to bring about living landscapes, living seas and a society where nature matters. Living landscapes, where...

- wildlife is abundant and thriving in our towns and cities, and across our rural landscape – from mountain top to seashore;
- whole landscapes and ecosystems have been restored to provide a resilient foundation for the lives of wildlife and people, for generations to come;
- wildlife can move freely across the land and along its watercourse, adapting to a changing climate; and
- natural habitats and soils accumulate and store water and carbon – helping to slow down climate change and to reduce the risk of droughts and floods.

and species. The hydrology of the catchment has a complex legacy of historic infrastructure and land use which is now compounded by climate change and rapidly changing funding mechanisms.

The Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) is a landowner in the Lower Arun Valley and a trusted consultee on a range of issues such as climate change, ecological networks and flooding across the Arun & Western Rother Catchments. We are a partner in the Arun & Western Streams Catchment Partnership, work closely with the South Downs National Park Authority and are a consultee on the Arun to Adur 'cluster farm'. We have been undertaking landowner advice in the catchment for over fifteen years, most recently through the Arun and Rother Connections Project.

SWT owns a total of 646.9 hectares in the wider Arun & Western Rother catchment, and around 122.5 hectares in the internationally protected Lower Arun Valley (Amberley Wildbrooks and Waltham Brooks, Ramsar, SAC, SPA and Ramsar SPA respectively) :-

Amberley Wildbrooks is an extensive area of alluvial grazing marsh which is dissected by drainage ditches supporting nationally recognised rich flora and invertebrate assemblages. There is a rich community of breeding birds with nationally significant numbers overwintering. The biodiversity of the site is supported by varied water source types reflecting the varied geology of the area including an important area of raised bog. The area was partially saved from pump drainage in the 1970's, although it supports a legacy of flood risk and water level management interventions such as embankments and sluices.

Waltham Brooks, just across the river from Amberley Wildbrooks is managed as floodplain grazing marsh and in winters of very heavy rainfall almost the entire reserve becomes a lake. Wildfowl such as teal, shoveler,

wigeon and pintail take advantage of the wintering sanctuary and feeding opportunities offered. This site is also embanked and hydrologically served by a suite of culverts, pumps and sluices.

Link to SWT Strategy

It is the SWT's ambition to have a coherent and resilient ecological network established across Sussex, underpinning good ecological status of species and habitat assemblages.

The Arun Valley is highlighted as a 'Living Landscape' area in the SWT strategy 2017 – 2022. Living Landscape areas are "Where we work across large areas of land or sea that make a significant contribution to the Sussex ecological network through direct delivery and engagement activities that influence nature's recovery in Sussex." Our strategy also highlights the Wealden Heaths and the West Weald landscapes in the wider Arun catchment.

SWT Position – January 2017

- SWT supports the creation of a wider vision for the Arun and Western Rother Catchment which puts into place a strategy to address key issues which will impact both people and wildlife across the catchment in the long term (at least 50 – 100 years).
- SWT wishes for the Arun Valley Vision to cover more than just the Lower tidal reaches, as sedimentation and nutrient enrichment from the Rother and the wider catchment, along with other upstream issues are important to the status of the protected sites and other focal areas downstream.
- SWT wishes to maintain a role as a key consultee in the Arun Valley Vision Process. We have a long history of engagement in the area, as well as being landowners ourselves. We have access to bespoke evidence sets for the catchment; useful tools with which to contextualize the Vision process.
- SWT will honour our responsibilities to our sites whilst being pragmatic about the need for adaptive management in the future. If it wasn't for the need for adaptation to climate change and changes in the funding of flood risk management, SWT would consider Amberley Wildbrooks as an irreplaceable wildlife resource which we would not consider the loss or alteration of. Unfortunately, wider landscape and climate issues mean that we need to carefully plan how we can compensate for the likely changes to these sites in the long term.
- Sussex Wildlife Trust has gained considerable experience of Natural Flood Management on the Ouse Catchment in Sussex. Much of our experience is transferrable to the Arun Catchment.
- The Arun and Rother Connections project leaves a legacy of partnership working bringing people together from across the wider landscape. We would suggest using the momentum from this project to consolidate a wider Arun Vision.

This position statement will be subject to ongoing review as further information comes to light, in particular the results of internal discussions in May 2017.