

# The Cheshire Hub

## Environment Agency



Rostherne Mere, Cheshire (Photo Credit: Natural England)

### Date carried out

September 2019 - September 2021

### Location

Cheshire

### Background

The Environment Agency, United Utilities, Natural England and the Rivers trust have shared objectives to improve the water environment in Cheshire.

### Project

The Cheshire Hub was formed to bring together key organisations and other partners to work collaboratively and develop a joined-up, improved understanding of what was going on in a catchment.

By sharing data on the performance of the catchment and water quality sampling, the Hub aimed to identify operational issues, decide on the likely cause and target interventions at the right locations to deliver the greatest benefit.

Five sub-groups were created to focus on key areas or issues. These included Valley Brook, Bollin Valley, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), and agriculture

### Partners

Mersey Rivers trust, Natural England, United Utilities, and Weaver Goway Catchment Partnership

### Themes



Evidence & tools



Water quality



Rural



Natural rivers

### Outcomes

Valley Brook Catchment Action Plan  
Led by the Environment Agency, this detailed planning work led to the development of the Valley Brook Partnership which engaged local authorities, water NGOs and local action groups to support the delivery of actions.

The group secured £2.9m of central government regeneration funding to restore a section of Valley Brook and provide a green transport route along Valley Brook Corridor.

### Outcomes (continued)

Improving understanding of catchments  
Water quality monitoring of Valley Brook and Englesea Brook was carried out by Mersey Rivers Trust to help understand of pollution sources and target action.

Promoting SuDS as a method of pollution mitigation  
Training sessions for catchment partners promoting the multiple benefits of SuDS were designed and delivered by the Environment Agency, United Utilities and Weaver Goway Catchment Partnership.

### Rostherne Mere Wetlands

Natural England worked with the landowner adjacent to Rostherne Mere to reduce stocking density next to the Mere and restore wetlands. The wetlands are off line from Rostherne Brook, but high flows will divert to the wetlands which will help to reduce nutrients entering Rostherne Mere.



*Stakeholder engagement at Rostherne Mere*

Reactive media trial on Rostherne Brook  
Natural England are running a trial using technology which has been proven in sewage treatment, to understand if it can be used to remove nutrients from river water.

In the trial, a small proportion of the stream is redirected through a reactive media cell where the media adsorb the nutrients.

The trial will help us understand whether reactive media could be used in the natural environment.

### Natural Capital Farm Plans

Three natural capital farm plans were developed by Natural England and the Mersey Forest Partnership.

### Learning

Cheshire Hub members have achieved successful outcomes over the two years of the project. However, the group recognised that the collaborative element of the work could be improved and recommend the following improvements...

#### Role of the group/membership

Decide if the group is strategic or operational – it's unlikely to operate well if trying to be both. Make sure that the right people are on the group.

#### Agree priorities and objectives

Governance needs to be in place so that members are clear about the shared objectives of the group and what their role is in the group.

#### Task and finish groups

Use task and finish groups so that the right people and/or organisations are involved on specific topics.

#### Leadership

Make sure that someone is leading the work, whether that is the Hub or task and finish groups – everyone is busy and without a leader group work is likely to stall.

#### Resources

Be realistic about resources – both technical support and financial to buy in expertise.

### Next Steps

Collaborative working takes time. The Hub is continuing, but changes are being made to how the Hub runs. Working groups will stop, but a steering group will remain in place with representation from Environment Agency, Natural England, United Utilities and Natural Course. The group will meet monthly to steer activity.

Under the steering group will sit a collection of task and finish groups with specific remits such as Valley Brook, Bollin, agriculture, catchment nutrient balancing. Representatives from the individual Task & Finish groups will report into steering group to create a direct two way dialogue.

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