



Great Ouse Rivers Trust

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New Great Ouse Rivers Trust Launched to Protect and Enhance Vital Waterway

The Great Ouse Rivers Trust has joined the UK and Ireland-wide Rivers Trust movement to advocate for healthy rivers at the heart of communities.

Issues in water quality such as sewage, agriculture, road runoff and chemicals, alongside flooding, climate change, and invasive species have left Britain's rivers in crisis.

The new Trust is backed by the British naturalist, explorer, presenter and writer, Steve Backshall MBE.

Steve Backshall said: "Water is our planet's lifeblood and we all have a role to play in protecting it. The Great Ouse Rivers Trust launch is a vital step towards safeguarding the health and biodiversity of this precious ecosystem for generations to come."

The fifth longest river in the UK, the Great Ouse flows through Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Norfolk, draining into the North Sea.

In 2022, a House of Commons Committee report on the state of UK rivers concluded that no river in England was free from chemical contamination. Only 14% of UK rivers had a "good" ecological status. Pollution from waste water, agriculture, and rural land management all contributed to the failure to achieve good ecological status.

The Great Ouse – the longest of British rivers called Ouse – stretches 160 miles. The new Trust aims to protect its water quality and wildlife, as well as identifying safe areas for wild swimming, canoeing and paddle boarding, and conserving its rare chalk streams.

Phil Rothwell, Chair of the Great Ouse Rivers Trust, said: "We are the only organisation with the objective to focus on the entire River, from source to sea, at this crucial and critical time for the UK's rivers. Rivers are vitally important for biodiversity, as fish passages. They're also invaluable as our climate becomes more unpredictable, as natural flood passages. As well as these fundamental environmental issues, rivers bring a host of benefits for outdoor activities. They offer respite and joy as places to enjoy nature, and as a leisure destination for swimmers, anglers, boaters, and paddlers."

The Trust will be leading on core projects that include river restoration, improving water quality, and natural flood defences, as well as improving fish and wildlife habitat. Its trustees include environmentalists, ecologists, and water sports enthusiasts.

Great Ouse Rivers Trust plans to work with a number of stakeholders from water companies to landowners and farmers, to support healthy river management. It aims to strengthen key water sector plans, such as flood risk management and waste water management.

The Trust will also identify nature-based solutions to flood management, such as tree-planting and wetland restoration for carbon capture to mitigate climate change. Other priorities include ensuring key biodiversity measures, such as Local Nature Recovery Strategies, benefit the Great Ouse catchment.

The charity hopes to secure funding to deliver innovative projects to improve river health to benefit recreation, local business, and tourism. It also aims to educate and engage people, including schools, youth groups and local communities.

Phil added: “Our ambition is to be a powerful voice for the river, its communities, river users and wildlife.”

Mark Lloyd, CEO of The Rivers Trust umbrella charity, added: “I’m really delighted that this truly iconic river catchment will have its own Rivers Trust, meaning that our movement will have full coverage across England and Wales, and is a growing force across Britain, Northern Ireland, and Ireland. Great Ouse Rivers Trust will champion healthy rivers at the heart of the environment and the wider community, and I can’t wait to see their achievements in future.”

The Great Ouse and its tributaries sustain people and nature across a catchment of 8,500 km².

Mainly a rural catchment, it is also one of the fastest growing areas in the country, with most of the 1.7 million people living in the large population centres of Milton Keynes, Cambridge, Bedford and King’s Lynn, and smaller market towns such as St Neots, St Ives, and Ely – all of which sit alongside the Great Ouse or one of its rivers.

Its significant tributaries include the rivers Tove, Ouzel, Cam, Ivel, Lark, Little Ouse, Wissey, and Nar.

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EDITORS NOTES

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For images for press use:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1TyxS3IPoVDoXK1jcupAg3vVWHkplCQMI?usp=sharing>

About The Great Ouse Rivers Trust

The Great Ouse Rivers Trust is a Charity number: 1201688, an environmental body dedicated to protecting the Great Ouse and its tributaries, lakes, wetlands, and wider catchment for the benefit of people and nature.

Proud to be a part of the [Rivers Trust](#) movement, we are one of over 65 local river trusts across the UK and Ireland that are at the forefront of the campaign for healthy rivers and sustainable catchment management.

Like most UK rivers, the Great Ouse currently suffers from past environmental impacts and new threats from escalating development and climate change, including

1. Pollution, including nutrient run-off from agriculture, effluent from water treatment works, and plastic waste.
2. Water scarcity and low flows caused by the water-demand pressures of development and agriculture.
3. Loss of wildlife habitats through the modification of rivers and their floodplains for drainage, development, and flood defence.

The Great Ouse Rivers Trust work with communities, landowners, businesses, and environmental organisations to achieve our vision for the Great Ouse: **A natural and healthy river enjoyed and valued by all.**

[Home \(greatouserivertrust.org\)](http://greatouserivertrust.org)

