



RIVER HOLME
CONNECTIONS



Annual Report 2025

www.riverholmeconnections.org





Chair and CEO's Reports



Lynva Russell, Chair

In 2025 the Charity celebrated its tenth year and we were joined by friends, volunteers and staff new and old to celebrate. It was a special evening with many precious memories shared.

The past twelve months have been a period of change with the end of the Landscape Recovery work and the staff directly involved in that (Michelle and Luke) moving on. We also said goodbye to Ffion as she left for her new life in the Cairngorms.

Rosslyn joined us as CEO in January to help steer the Charity through that transition period and drive it forward. Through all this the volunteers including Trustees have been a constant.

We were established to help look after the rivers throughout the catchment, that's 55km in total. We do this in so many ways including regular

testing for water quality, education, tree planting, litter picking, invasive plant removal, pathway improvements and more recently meadow and wetland creation. All this stops rubbish including soil getting into the waterways, slows the impact of heavy rain and helps hold water in times of drought to improve the habitats for those that wish to make the rivers and riverbanks home.

We work across the 100 sq km of catchment including with all the schools.

In ten years our volunteers have given over 38,000 hours of their time, planted over 140,000 trees, and removed over 1,900 bags of litter from the river and we have spent over £250,000 on footpath improvements and seating. Now that's worth celebrating.

Lynva Russell, Chair

Our Future

As we look to the future, our ambition is to shape a river catchment where nature and people flourish side by side. We are entering a decisive decade for nature recovery, climate resilience and community wellbeing, and our charity is committed to helping create a healthier, more inclusive and sustainable future for everyone who lives, works and plays along the valley.

Our vision is of a river system alive with biodiversity – where restored habitats, cleaner water and connected landscapes support thriving wildlife. Protecting native and endangered species and continuing the careful removal and control of invasive species, will remain core to our work.

Clean water underpins this vision, and we will continue striving for a river that is safe, clean and valued. Alongside this, we will progress efforts to remove or adapt barriers to fish migration and restore natural river function.

We are equally dedicated to strengthening the

resilience of our landscapes. In the years ahead, we will increase the planting of trees, hedgerows and wood pastures, expand species rich meadows, support natural flood management schemes, and work closely with landowners on woodland management and hedge laying.

We will also enhance access by adapting the Riverside Way to bring people closer to the river, enabling more residents and visitors to enjoy nature in a relaxed and meaningful way.

At the heart of our vision are people. Through expanded volunteering, youth programmes, school engagement, citizen science, guided walks and creative outreach, we will nurture a diverse and growing community of river champions.

Above all, our partnerships are vital. Thank you to everyone who has supported us over the past decade. Together, we can create a river landscape that is wilder, more resilient and cared for by generations to come.

Rosslyn Colderley, CEO



Rosslyn Colderley, CEO



Accessible Riversides



Meltham Pleasure Grounds path tidy volunteers

A core aim for River Holme Connections is to connect people with the green and blue spaces within the catchment and the wildlife that lives, feeds and breeds there. So work that enables people to access these spaces is key.

Riverside Way

During 2025, we worked to maintain access along the Riverside Way, focused particularly on Spa Wood, Sands recreation ground and the riverside at Crown Bottom. We also partnered with Meltham Pleasure Grounds to carry out pathway clearance work at their site.

- Over seven tasks, volunteers gave 140 hours of their time to cut back and clear over 2km of footpath and bridleway. This is an increase of nearly 100 additional volunteer hours compared to 2024!
- In total, 54 bags of rubbish were collected

Looking forward

- In 2026 we'll continue cutting back and clearing along the Riverside Way, working with local community groups where appropriate. We will also be improving the waymarking along the Riverside Way



Meltham Pleasure Grounds path tidy volunteers



Spa Wood litter pick volunteers

“A shining example of what happens when we all take little steps to change the world. Small actions, from many, make a real positive difference on our local environment and are paramount for protecting diversity for future generations. Well done RHC!”

Helen Robinson

“I love the work done by the rivers to ensure the continuity of the path from Holmfirth to Huddersfield.”

Georgina Haigh



Spa Wood litter pick volunteers



Improving Biodiversity



Barn Owl box at Helme

We are working with multiple landowners throughout the River Holme catchment to deliver a wide range of projects that will improve biodiversity and habitat connectivity.

Achievements in 2025

- Created 8.3 kilometres of new hedgerow
- Created 7.8 hectares of new native woodland and wood pasture
- Control of Japanese knotweed along 21 kilometres of river
- Control of Himalayan balsam along 6.7 kilometres of river
- Created 3 hectares of species rich wildflower meadows

Looking forward to 2026

- Enhance water vole habitat in the upper catchment
- Continue to create and connect habitat networks across the Holme Valley
- Enhance habitat for white-clawed crayfish in the River Holme catchment



Thurstonland Bank Road meadow management



Thongsbridge meadow management



Seed cleaning at Stirley



Seed tray sowing at Stirley



Tawny Owl box at Fourways

“Yorkshire is important for British biodiversity. Yorkshire is a stronghold for around 3,000 species, making us important custodians”

The State of Yorkshire's Nature Report 2024
(Yorkshire Wildlife Trust)



Improving Water Quality



Volunteer with American skunk cabbage

A key goal of our work remains monitoring and improving the water quality across the catchment. Through our education sessions, river cleanups and citizen science projects such as Riverfly and water quality monitoring, the charity tackles key water quality issues whilst also spreading knowledge and understanding of what healthy river systems should look like. Our projects tackle invasive species such as Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and American skunk cabbage. This encourages natural biodiversity of native species and prevents monocultures of these fast-growing invasive species. These riverside projects are vital as they support healthy rivers, benefit wildlife and provide an outdoor space for everyone to enjoy.

Main activities

- 106 bags of rubbish were removed from the river during clean ups
- 21km of river treated for Japanese knotweed
- 6.7km of river cleared of Himalayan balsam
- Monthly Riverfly monitoring of 14 sites along the River Holme, Meltham Dike and New Mill Dike between March and October
- Monthly chemical water quality testing collected and analysed alongside Riverfly samples, using new, more accurate HANNA testing equipment provided by Yorkshire Water



Future activities

- Locate, approve and assign new Riverfly monitoring sites to volunteers in partnership with Calder Rivers Trust
- Three new Riverfly volunteers signed up for training in the new year
- Continue to supply volunteering pairs with water quality chemical analysis test kits and equipment when needed

Please call the Environment Agency incident hotline to report environmental incidents such as pollution events and fish kills.

Telephone: 0800 80 70 60
(24-hour service)

"I enjoy contributing to the health of the local environment and learning new skills about new organisms and the social benefits of being with like-minded people."

"It has been really motivating to see the growth in monitoring data gathered across the Holme catchment in recent years."

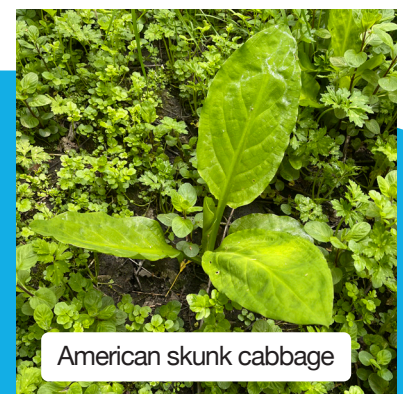
Quotes from some of our dedicated Riverfly volunteers



Himalayan balsam volunteers at Meltham Dike



Japanese knotweed treatment



American skunk cabbage



Our Community



Meltham Moor River Explorer Session

Educating and engaging people about nature in the River Holme catchment is at the heart of our work. As a charity powered by volunteers, our community does not just support us, it defines who we are. We are building a growing network of custodians who care for and protect the natural environment. Through education, action, creativity and connection, we are proud to be reaching more people than ever and inspiring a stronger relationship with nature for generations to come.

Achievements in 2025

- Delivered 23 primary school sessions across 18 schools. Engaged 1128 young people from age 5-18 through a variety of school workshops. In addition, we worked with young people aged 16-18 through 7 college events, reaching 107 students and introducing them to environmental careers and conservation
- Supported 7 Beaver and Cub group sessions, enabling 163 young children to learn about a variety of topics from trees, bats, invasive species and river habitats
- Expanded community engagement by attending 13 local events, hosting seven nature themed guided walks and 4 landowner events
- Supported Thornton Lodge Action group with guided walks for women and nature themed events for children
- Celebrated our 10th Birthday with a party for everyone who has supported our work over the past decade!

Future activities

- Offer River Explorer education sessions free of charge to all primary schools in the Holme Valley, increasing access and participation
- Deliver a new “Future Water Experts” project with five schools and colleges, teaching young people about climate change, rainfall management and sustainable drainage

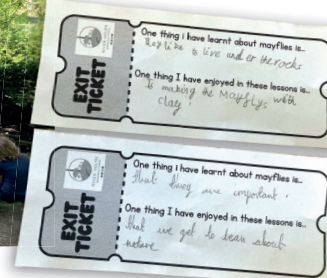
“The sessions were informative and engaging and delivered practical parts of the curriculum it’s extremely hard to replicate whilst on site at school.”
Martin Saville, Beaumont Primary Academy

“You’ve shown what’s possible when a community comes together with care, determination and vision.”
Sophie Seddon

“I loved being outside next to the river.”
Student from Hepworth Junior and Infant School



Hepworth River Explorer Session



Ten Year Anniversary Celebration



Beaumont Park National Play Day



Thornton Lodge Rail and Rivers Day

“We are grateful for all the planning, delivery, and engagement with our children this summer. Your team has been fantastic.”
Ibrar Hussain, Thornton Lodge Action Group



Our Volunteers



Balsam bashing at Bank Dike (Meltham Golf Course)

Support from our volunteers has made it possible for us to deliver multiple projects across the Holme Valley, from conservation work to education and outreach, volunteers are at the heart of everything we do.



Holmfirth river clean

Main activities

In 2025 we achieved:

- Volunteers contributed 6,123 hours of their time
- 12 businesses joined us on 19 sessions throughout the year to help with conservation tasks
- We continued to upskill our volunteers in brushcutting, eco plugs, Riverfly, hedge laying and first aid
- Volunteers joined us for a variety of tasks including guard removal, balsam bashing, meadow creation, path cutbacks, river surveying, tree planting, and much more



Balsam bashing at Barnside (Hepworth)

Future activities

In 2026 we aim to:

- Keep delivering a variety of practical conservation work tasks for people to get involved in, including invasive species removal, habitat creation, and habitat management
- Keep on improving grasslands across the Holme Valley
- Continue to look after our woodland and hedgerow projects through guard removal, gapping up, and vegetation management
- Continue to upskill our volunteers
- Continue to work with community groups to help improve local greenspaces



New Mill Community Garden meadow management

"I've heard several volunteers say that volunteering for 'River' is like joining a family, a sentiment I agree with. Over the years I've made lasting friendships with both staff and volunteers."

- Helen S



Our 100,000th tree celebrations!



Our Partners



Cummins volunteers at Spa Wood balsam bashing & litter picking

We have continued to strengthen our strategic partnerships with organisations and communities that are vital to our work. This joined up and co-ordinated approach makes a real difference to the rivers in our catchment and beyond.



Central Co-op volunteers balsam bashing at Honley Old Woods



ACCU volunteers balsam bashing at Honley Old Woods

Looking forward to 2026

- Continue to work with landowners and businesses in the River Holme Catchment to achieve shared aims
- Continue to work with White Rose Forest and the Woodland Trust to plant trees and hedges across our catchment
- Continue to work with the Yorkshire Water Biodiversity team and the YW River Health Improvement team to benefit the River Holme catchment

“What River Holme Connections do for the Holme valley is so extensive that it’s probably easier to make a list of what they don’t do! We’ve been honoured to work alongside the team this year supporting their citizen scientists and being able to act on their investigations... We are looking forward to many more years shuffling in our waders alongside the River Holme Connections crew.”

- Clare Beasant, River Health Improvement Manager at Yorkshire Water

Achievements in 2025

- Active member of the Calder Catchment Partnership, which is a community-led approach that engages people and groups from across society to help improve our precious water environments
- Worked collaboratively with over 30 local community organisations and schools. Working together towards common goals
- Worked with more than 100 landowners and over 20 local businesses



EA volunteers balsam bashing at Upper House Dike



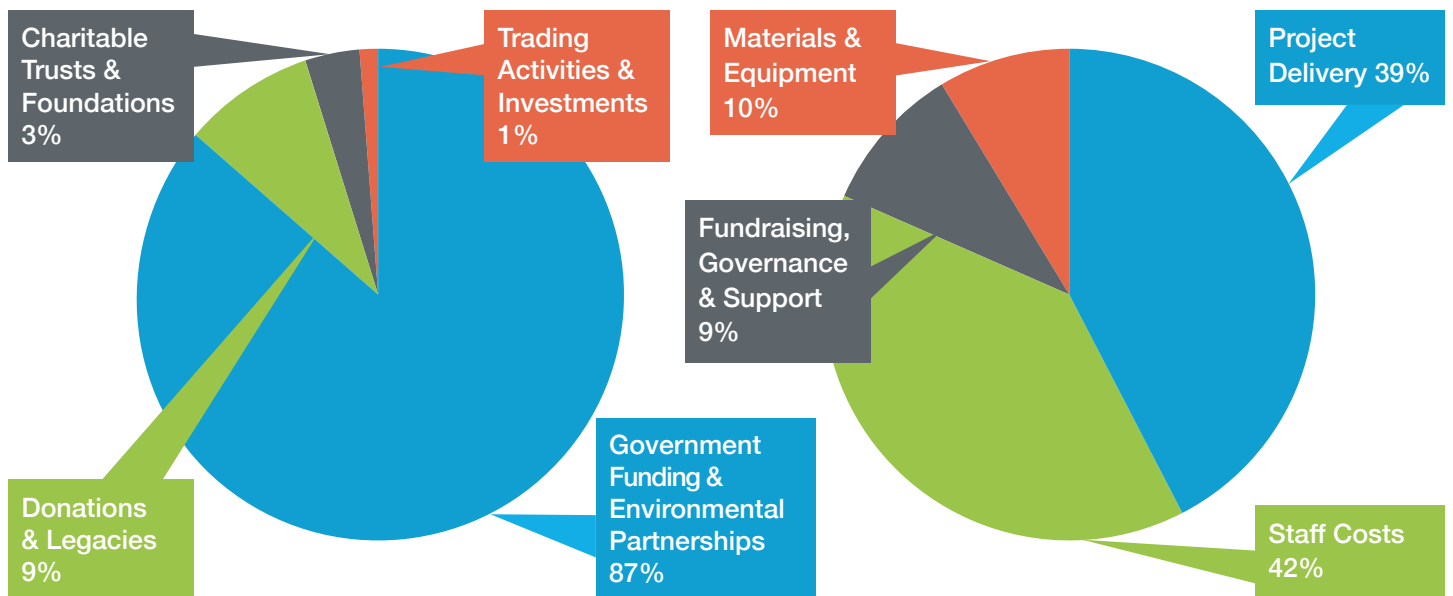
Brewfitt volunteers tree planting at Netherfields

Finances



In 2025, the charity's principal sources of income included Defra funding for the Landscape Recovery project, support from the White Rose Forest (WRF) for the creation of new woodland and hedgerows, Yorkshire Water for river stewardship activities, and generous contributions from charitable trusts, corporate donors, and individual supporters. The charity ended the year with total funds of £265,559 (2024: £207,798), of which £189,531 (2024: £151,108) are unrestricted. The trustees are pleased with this financial position, which provides a resilient platform for delivery in the

year ahead. Following Defra's decision not to progress the Landscape Recovery project to the implementation stage, the charity has adapted well, identifying alternative ways to advance key priorities across the River Holme catchment. Project delivery is being phased to ensure long-term sustainability, while new funding opportunities continue to be pursued and secured. Our Strategic Plan and 2026 Business Plan build on the progress and partnerships developed in recent years, providing a clear and focused framework for our core activities for the benefit of people and wildlife.



Income	
Government Funding & Environmental Partnerships	£555,624
Donations and Legacies	£54,828
Charitable Trusts & Foundations	£21,721
Trading Activities & Investments	£7,601
Total Income	£626,034

Expenditure	
Staff Costs	£246,749
Project Delivery	£228,039
Materials & Equipment	£56,727
Fundraising, Governance & Support	£50,498
Total Expenditure	£582,013

A full set of accounts is available to view at the River Holme Connections office.
Please call 01484 661756 to arrange an appointment.



RIVER HOLME
CONNECTIONS



River Holme Connections

Unit 4 Honley Business Hub
13/15 Westgate

Honley

West Yorkshire


HD9 6AA

Tel: 01484 661756

Email: info@riverholmeconnections.org

www.riverholmeconnections.org

 @riverholmeconnections

 @riverholmeconnect

Charity registration number 1163873