



**Staffordshire**  
Wildlife Trust

Part of  
Transforming the

**Trent Valley**



# Transforming the Trent Headwaters

A new landscape vision





# Contents

- 3 What are the Trent Headwaters?
- 4 Where are we working?
- 5 What are we trying to do?
- 6 What have you told us?
- 7 Making changes for nature
- 8 Our local heritage
- 9 Our principles
- 10 What happens next?



COVER PICTURE CREDITS. MAIN: CROMER ROAD SITE (SWT). INSET (FROM LEFT): HILTON BOARDWALK (DERBYSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST), RIVER TRENT COMPLETED SCHEME (AQUAUOS), WILDLIFE GARDENING (TOM MARSHALL), RIVER TRENT CROMER ROAD (SWT), PICNIC (SURRY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY), RESTORED RIVER CHANNEL VICTORIA GROUND (SWT)



# What are the Trent Headwaters?

The Trent headwaters are the start of the River Trent in Staffordshire. This area includes places like Biddulph Moor, Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and Trentham. The headwaters are made from where rain, melted snow, and water from the ground all flow into the River Trent. This is called a watershed and is important because it helps shape the river and the land around it.



PENNY DIXIE



SWT AL MORRIS



PETER CAIRNS 2020 VISION



SWT

## Communities

People in this area feel a strong connection to the land. Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme are named after the rivers they sit on. The area has a proud history, especially in pottery and coal mining, which has shaped its character. Today, the city is home to many different cultures. This mix brings new chances to share stories, memories, and traditions that help us understand our past and who we are now.

We want to work with our communities to celebrate our shared heritage and shape a future that belongs to everyone.

## Heritage

This landscape has a long history, from ancient times to today. The River Trent was once very important for local people and businesses. Old kilns, mines, canals, and tracks still show signs of this past. The towns have grown from early settlements to important centres of industry. Now, the area faces problems like building on green land, changes in how land is used, and climate change. These things put our heritage at risk.

We want to protect both the places and the stories that matter. Once they are gone, we can't get them back.

## Wildlife

The land in this area includes different types of habitats. In our towns and cities, these include gardens and parks, which provide greenspace for people. But there are also some wilder areas, like grasslands and ancient woodlands, which are more important for wildlife. Watery places like ponds, streams, and wetlands help manage floods and deal with dry weather. Old industrial sites can be reclaimed and help bring nature into the city.

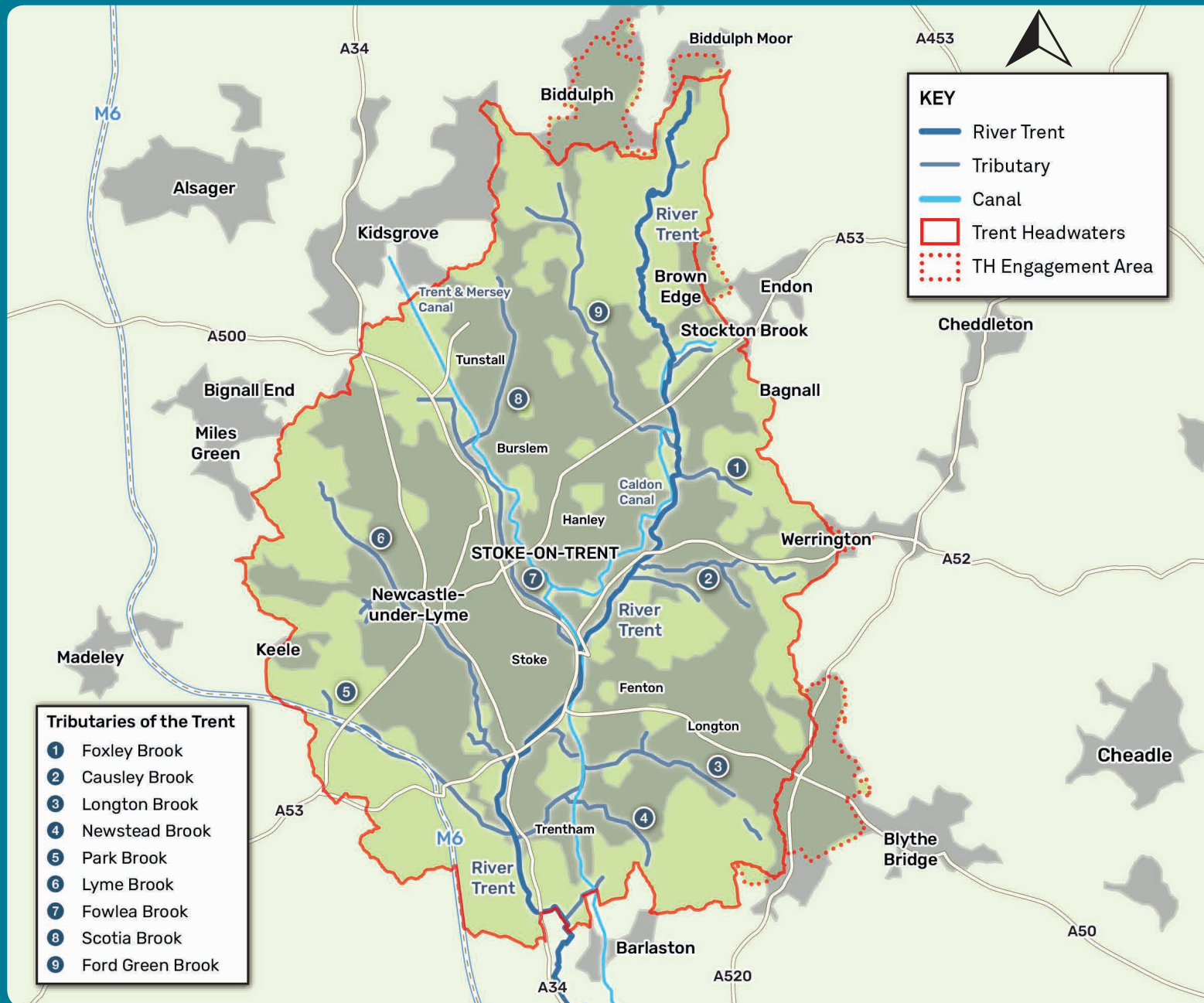
There is a big chance to improve habitats, bring back lost species, and control harmful plants and animals.

## Rivers

The River Trent starts in the countryside, flowing through fields and woods, but later moves into towns and cities, where it is often straightened and put in concrete channels. Over 260 km of streams and rivers feed into it, giving lots of chances to improve water and wildlife areas. These rivers face problems like pollution, man-made barriers, and changes to how water flows.

There are good opportunities to fix these issues by removing barriers, letting the river flow naturally again, and bringing back nearby wildlife habitats.

# Where are we working?



0 2 4 km

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# What are we trying to do?

We are working with experts and local people to plan a new programme that will help make big, positive changes across the River Trent's headwaters.

The new programme plan includes several projects in different areas. Together, these projects will help us achieve our vision for a better, healthier future in the Trent Headwaters.

We've already done a lot of research and talked to many people in the community, but there is still more to do. By working together, we can bring in money to support exciting projects that care for nature, protect our local history, support volunteering, and help local people get more involved and feel proud of their area. Together, we can achieve our vision for a better, healthier future.

# About the Partnership

## Our Vision

To bring the rivers, wildlife, and history of the Trent Headwaters back to life. We want to work together with local people and groups to care for the land and make sure it stays healthy for the future of Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and Staffordshire Moorlands.

## Who are we?

We are a new group made up of local organisations who have joined forces with one shared goal – to help transform the Trent Headwaters.

By working together, we can do more for nature, history, and local communities. Our partnership includes the following types of organisations:

- Local charities and community groups – such as nature and wildlife groups, health, wellbeing and sporting bodies, heritage groups, and arts organisations.
- Local councils.
- Government organisations.
- Colleges and universities.
- Local businesses and business groups.

# What do we want to achieve?

- 1 We want to protect and improve the land, nature, and history of the Trent Headwaters area.
- 2 We will support local people to get involved, share ideas, and help shape the future of their landscape.
- 3 We aim to make it easier for everyone to explore and enjoy the area, whether by walking, learning online, or discovering its stories.
- 4 We want to leave a healthy, strong landscape that will last into the future, for both people and wildlife.

KATHRYN KAVANAGH



SWT



J WHEELER & R LEE





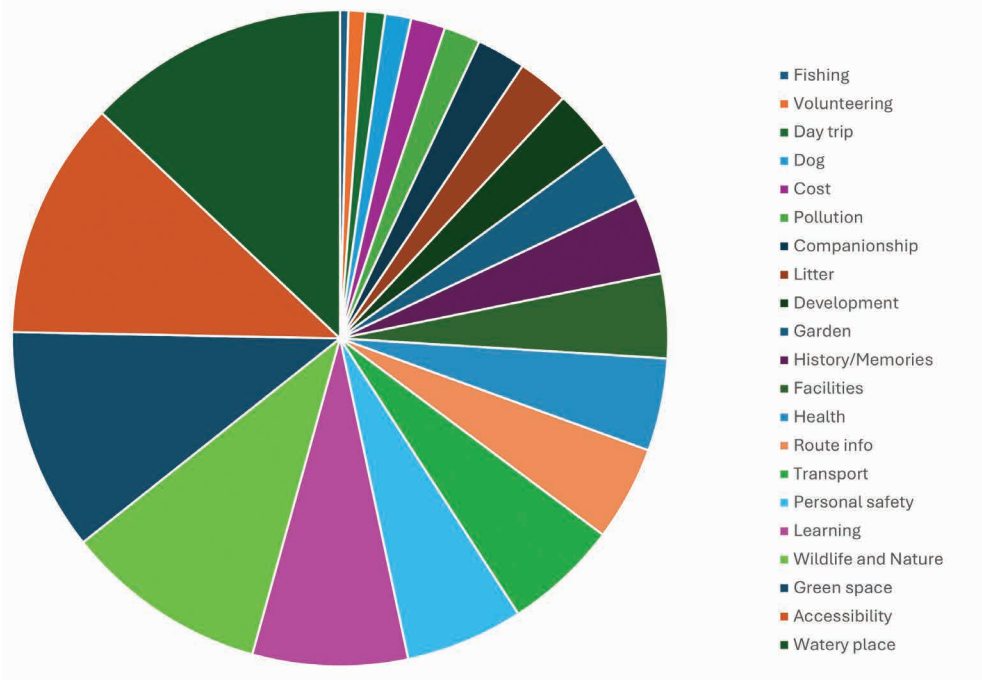
# What have you told us?

Many people we spoke to said they enjoy being outdoors in nature. They like walking, cycling, spotting wildlife, and being with family. Nature helps people feel calm, happy, and healthy. Watery places like rivers, canals and lakes were mentioned the most. People enjoy these spaces for the peace and wildlife. Many were curious about the River Trent – its route, its history, and the wildlife that lives there. Some people also felt they had lost a connection with the river and wanted to know more.

Green spaces like parks were also very popular. People said they like the fresh air, beauty, and time with others. Some comments were about gardens and allotments too. Many people value these places for health and well-being, feeling connected, and having somewhere safe to walk or cycle. Wildlife was also a big topic. People enjoy seeing birds, mammals and insects.

“I’m not sure about wildlife, but I’d like to learn”

## What matters most to people about this place?



The second biggest topic was accessibility – how easy or hard it is to get to and enjoy these places. This includes walking and cycling, using public transport, signage, knowing where to go, and comfort. Some people also talked about how cost, poor health, and not having someone to go with made access hard.

Accessibility means more than just getting somewhere. It also includes understanding information, feeling safe, and being welcome and able to join in. Even if we can’t fix everything, giving people clear and honest information helps them decide if and how they want to join in.

People also expressed an interest to learn more about the area. They asked questions, shared tips, and gave ideas for helping others learn about nature. Many wanted to pass this knowledge on to younger people. This shows people care deeply about where they live and want to enjoy and protect it for the future.

“Where is the Trent? I’ve lived here all my life, and I don’t know. I have seen it at Trentham but where does it come from and where does it go afterwards?”

← We grouped people’s comments into main topics to see what matters most to people about this place. The chart starts at the top and goes around clockwise. Many people said they enjoy being in green spaces with family, walking or cycling. Watery places like rivers and lakes also felt calm and peaceful. Watery spaces were mentioned by 252 people, 229 people talked about accessibility, and greenspaces were liked by 214 people.



# Making changes for nature

The water in our local rivers has been checked for health and quality. None of the rivers or streams are in a 'good' condition. Seven are rated as 'moderate', three are considered 'poor', and one part of the River Trent is in a 'bad' condition. These ratings are based on plants and animals, water quality, and the shape of the river.

We are looking at ways to improve our rivers and streams and protect and improve nature across the Trent headwaters area. We want to join up important habitats so wildlife can move more easily between them. The focus is on choosing the right place for each type of habitat so that nature can thrive. The actions are designed to work across many sites, saving time and money.

- **Grasslands and heathlands** can be improved by planting wildflowers, clearing scrub and cutting the grass in helpful ways. Creating bare patches helps support insects.
- **Woodlands** can be improved by planting or thinning trees and creating open spaces (glades) to let light in. Spare wood can help wildlife or improve rivers. Tree planting also helps with flood control.
- **Ponds and wetlands** hold water, support more life, and help in very dry or very wet weather.
- **Rivers and streams** can be made more natural by adding tree roots, stones, and by removing barriers to help fish and other water creatures, while culverts and weirs, which block fish movement, may be removed or adapted.
- **Buffer strips**, which are areas of land left with trees, grass or other plants beside rivers, protect water from pollution and provide shade and shelter.
- **Invasive non-native species** (INNS) like Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, and rhododendron spread fast and can harm local plants. Total removal may not be possible, but site-by-site control and volunteer help can manage these species.
- **Communities** are important in this work. Many sites are local green spaces or alongside public paths. People should keep access to nature, but we must also protect fragile habitats. We want to work with the groups who are already doing great work for nature. We want to help support the work you already do, and we also want your ideas and involvement in our projects to help them be as good as possible.
- We will work with **volunteers** to learn more about our habitats – what condition are they in now and how does their condition improve following our work? We also need volunteers to help us create some of these changes for nature.

## Species reintroductions

There are several ideas to help bring back and support native wildlife in the area. All reintroductions must be carefully planned and approved.



JOSEF HIASEK

**Swan Mussels** are freshwater shellfish that live at the bottom of ponds, lakes and rivers. They can be added to these places as they live a long time and help keep the water clean and clear.



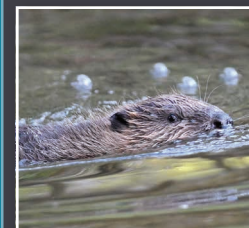
NICK MOTT SWT

**White-clawed Crayfish** are small, freshwater animals that look like tiny lobsters and could be brought back into small streams where they are safe from invasive crayfish, which have caused their numbers to fall.



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**Ospreys** are large birds of prey that live near big lakes and rivers, away from busy areas. Ospreys like to nest near water where there are plenty of fish. Putting up platforms on tall poles near water will encourage them to nest.



D PARKYN CWT

**Beavers** are large, shy animals that live near rivers and streams and use their teeth to cut wood and trees. Beavers build dams and help create healthy wetlands, which also help with flood control.



# Our local heritage

We've been exploring the history of the Trent Headwaters. This area has a long story to tell, shaped by nature, people, industry, and belief. With help from the community, we've grouped this story into seven main themes to start creating ideas for local projects.

## Changing Landscapes

Ice, rivers, and people have shaped the land over thousands of years, from hunter-gatherers to farms, roads, and towns. How the area looked in the past is very different to how it looks today.

## Designed Places

People created special landscapes, from moated homes and parks to grand gardens and public spaces which have helped to keep the city green.

## Industry and Work

This area became known for pottery, coal mining, canals, and railways. Many places have changed or disappeared, but so much still remains and tells an interesting story.

## Faith and Ritual

From ancient burial mounds to abbeys, churches, and mosques, belief has shaped our land and communities for thousands of years.

## Conflict and War

From Roman forts to wartime shelters, conflict has left its mark. War and protests have changed the area and shaped local life.

## Roads, Rivers and Routes

Rivers, roads, canals and railways helped people move, trade, and grow towns. Some are lost, but they all tell an important story.

## Heritage at Risk

Some old buildings and important places are now at risk. To understand why they are important and what needs to be done will help people work towards saving them.



SWT/DAVE CADMAN





DR MARK KNIGHT

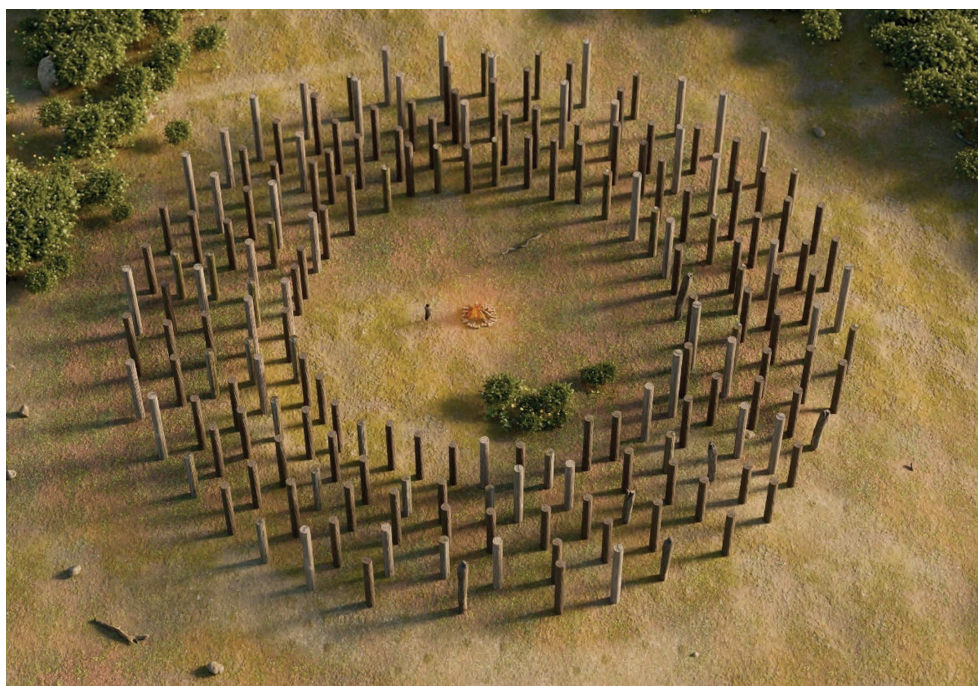
## What we plan to do

There are many ideas for how we can share our local history and help to protect it for the future.

- Creating heritage trails, installing information and signs, and providing guided or digital walks through our local history to bring it to life.
- Providing a place for local experts to explain the past through talks and events.
- Collecting local stories (oral histories) to share this information online.
- Work with local people to understand more about the history of the area; its pottery and mining traditions, its canals and railways, the history of the people who have lived here over thousands of years, and its different faiths. We can use this information to create displays and local art and to help protect our shared heritage.
- Try out creative activities like art or traditional crafts to pass on knowledge.
- Using digital tools to recreate old buildings and landscapes so people can see what they used to look like.
- Working with local people and volunteers to learn more about the state of our heritage and find ways to look after it for the future.

Some projects could focus on places like Hulton Abbey, Trentham, or local Roman roads. Others might use AI and new tech to bring the past to life.

We're not fixing old buildings – there are other people who are already doing that – but we are helping people see, learn about, and connect with their heritage.



TRANSFORMING THE TRENT VALLEY

← **Top:** Archaeological excavations at Catholme revealed a Neolithic 'Woodhenge' monument.

**Bottom:** A digital reconstruction of the Woodhenge showing five concentric rings of wooden posts.





SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

# Our principles

## How we will work together for people, nature and places

### Nature and heritage is for everyone

We want everyone to enjoy and benefit from nature and heritage - no matter where they live or who they are. Our projects will reach out to people in ways that are fair and local, helping more communities connect with their local heritage and nature near their homes and enjoy better health and wellbeing.

### Leaving a lasting legacy

Our work will leave behind something that lasts. This includes better green and watery spaces, stronger local communities, and the protection of our local history and heritage, stories, and traditions before they are lost. By working with local groups and using local materials, we aim to make a positive impact on both people and the economy.

### Working together, making it easy for all

Our projects will be joined-up and work well with others. We'll make sure they are easy to understand, open to all, and welcoming. That means using clear language, thinking about different needs, and making sure everyone can get involved.

DERBYSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST



TOM MARSHALL





# What happens next?


Before we can move forward, we need to get funding to pay for all the projects we want to do. This won't happen quickly, as we have big plans and want to make sure we do things properly. We will keep working with you along the way to make sure we're heading in the right direction.

Here are the steps:

1. We agree on the final list of projects.
2. We apply for funding.
3. If we get the funding, we plan the details of each project.
4. We set up the team who will carry out the work.
5. We begin the projects and start making things happen.

To explore our full masterplan, visit us online. Stay updated on our journey by signing up to our newsletter here:

**[www.thetrentvalley.org.uk](http://www.thetrentvalley.org.uk)**



Connecting an old river channel and creating a new river island on the River Trent





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