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Re-naturalisation of the Broadwater Brook

Contaminated culverted brook re-naturalised

The Broadwater Brook in Worthing had been historically culverted for over three quarters of its length, significantly impacting on the natural processes of the brook.



The culverted section received additional contaminated inflows from highways runoff and agricultural land, further degrading the value of the brook and causing the brook to fail on reaching its ecological potential.

An opportunity was identified between the landowner, the Sompting Estate, and the Ouse and Adur River Trust to re-naturalise the watercourse. In 2019, Salix were awarded main contractor for constructing a kilometre of new channel for the Broadwater Brook.

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The construction consisted of excavation of a new, sinuous channel through a nearby field which was subsequently hydroseeded and plug planted. Wetland scrapes were created to increase wetland habitat and potential to capture contaminants.

Over 2,400 volunteers assisted with planting the area with wetland plants, wildflowers, hedgerows and trees.

120 species were present prior to works. Since installation, over 507 species have been recorded, significantly improving the ecological habitat and diversity.



In the UK, the total abundance of insect species has declined by over 60% since the 1970s. Renaturalising watercourses such as the Broadwater Brook provide significant opportunities to halt the ecological extinction and increase species resilience to climate change.

The project was made possible by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and is a finalist for the 2021 UK River Prize, run by the River Restoration Centre.

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