



**Herefordshire**  
Wildlife Trust

# *Wilder* **HEREFORD**

A photograph of a river flowing over rocks, with green foliage on the left bank. The text is overlaid on the image.

AGM 2022 – 2023 December 6, 2023

Chair's Report

[hfdcitybranch@herefordshirewt.co.uk](mailto:hfdcitybranch@herefordshirewt.co.uk)



## A 'Constituted' Branch

We are constituted as an official HWT Branch which allows us to independently apply for grants and funding for events and activities that supported the objectives of the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust.

# Who We Are

- Chair: Anne Cottringer
- Treasurer: Emil Morfett
- Secretary: Mo Burns
- Committee Members: Nicky Geeson, Nic Howes, Maggie Setterfield
- HWT Liaison: Sarah King

# Membership

Membership is you! If you are a member of the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, and live in the City membership area, you are automatically a member of a Hereford City Branch. You don't have to apply to be a City Branch member.

You should receive our newsletter and you can visit our website at:

<https://www.herefordshirewt.org/wilderhereford>

There are 745 HWT members living in the Hereford City Branch area.



# Aims of the City Branch

- Put nature into recovery
- Empower people to act for nature
- Secure our future
- to work in partnership with groups and organisations to create a joined up nature network to ensure nature's recovery work in the City for wildlife and humans alike





Our activities aim to welcome new people to volunteering & provide a safe, friendly environment where people can enjoy making a contribution to Nature Recovery.

# Funding News

The Hereford Yazor Brook Restoration Project received almost £5000 pounds from the Council's Greening of the City Stronger Towns Fund. These funds have been used to buy tools, protective gear, flower bulbs, tree saplings for planting, tree guards and various other sundry articles to facilitate our work on the Brook. This autumn we have planted over 6000 bulbs along the Yazor at Moor Park and in the area just downstream from Yazor Road.

# Challenging Times

The threats to our environment are ever increasing: climate change, threats to biodiversity and the acute threat to our watercourses which has special significance in our county and in Hereford City with the deterioration of the River Wye. Within this context the Hereford City Branch works to improve our blue green infrastructure of the City and through our involvement in campaigns we continue to fight for the future of the Wye catchment and threats to our urban wildlife environments.





# Hereford Yazor Brook Restoration Project

The HYBRP is our major project. Activities during 2022-2023:

- Brook Restoration winter works programme
- Invertebrate Monitoring
- Citizen science work testing brook under aegis of FOUW/WACC
- Reporting of pollution incidents – includes liaising with Environment Agency with regard to various polluting activity.
- Mapping outfalls

## Brook Restoration Winter Works



Our main winter project in 2022 – 2023 was to clear a section and open up a view to the passers by on the public way south of Yazor Road.



This is a channelized stretch near the Heineken factory, called the Pentagon, which we would like to reconnect to its flood to create a meandering course with scrapes and a wildlife friendly habitat.



# Riverfly Monitoring

This March we had our first ever Flat bodied stone clinger at Huntingdon.



This cased caddis has built itself a hefty mobile home



Three times a year we do invertebrate surveys at 15 sites along Yazor Brook. We take a kick sample at each site and examine it for key invertebrate species, tallying up the numbers and sending the data the National Riverfly Database. It helps us to assess the state of the habitat at different sites in different seasons as invertebrate populations are indicators the health of watercourses..



# Wilder Artists and Poets Collaboration

Our collaboration with the Wilder Artists and Poets group, led by Richard Bavin, artist in residence for HWT, culminated in a series of pop up events in 2023: an exhibition in Hereford City, a month long exhibition and open day at Apple Store Gallery, a 'Fun by the Brook' day at Moor Park, and an well attended evening of poetry presented by members of the group. It was great pleasure to work with Richard , Marion Campbell and the group.





Teeming with Life mural - creating the watery background



Duck race – rerun 3x by popular demand

# Pollution...again

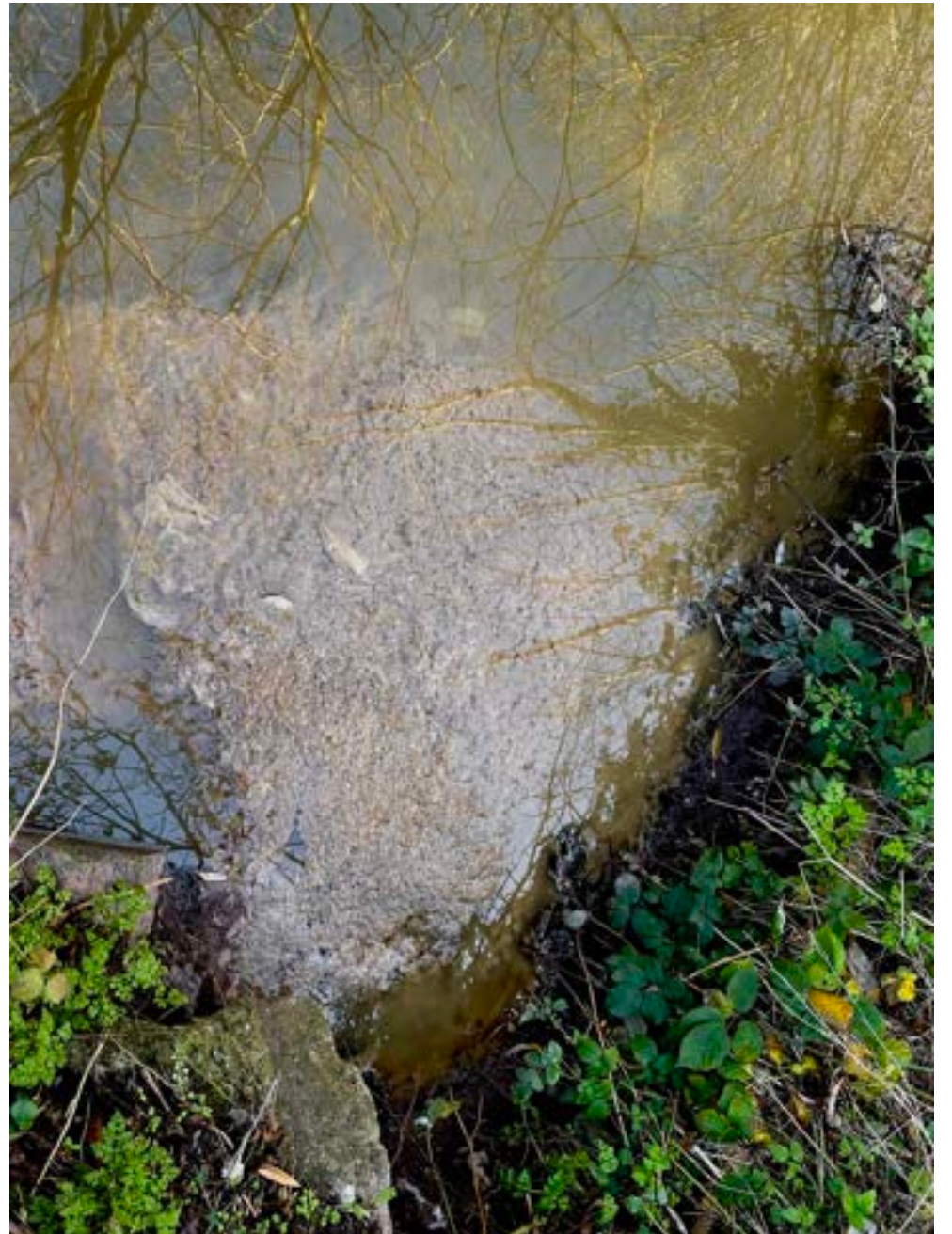


In February this year we discovered, once again thick sewage fungus along the Brook just downstream of Avara and Heineken. Despite an investigation by the Environment Agency, we don't have definitive answer as to the source.

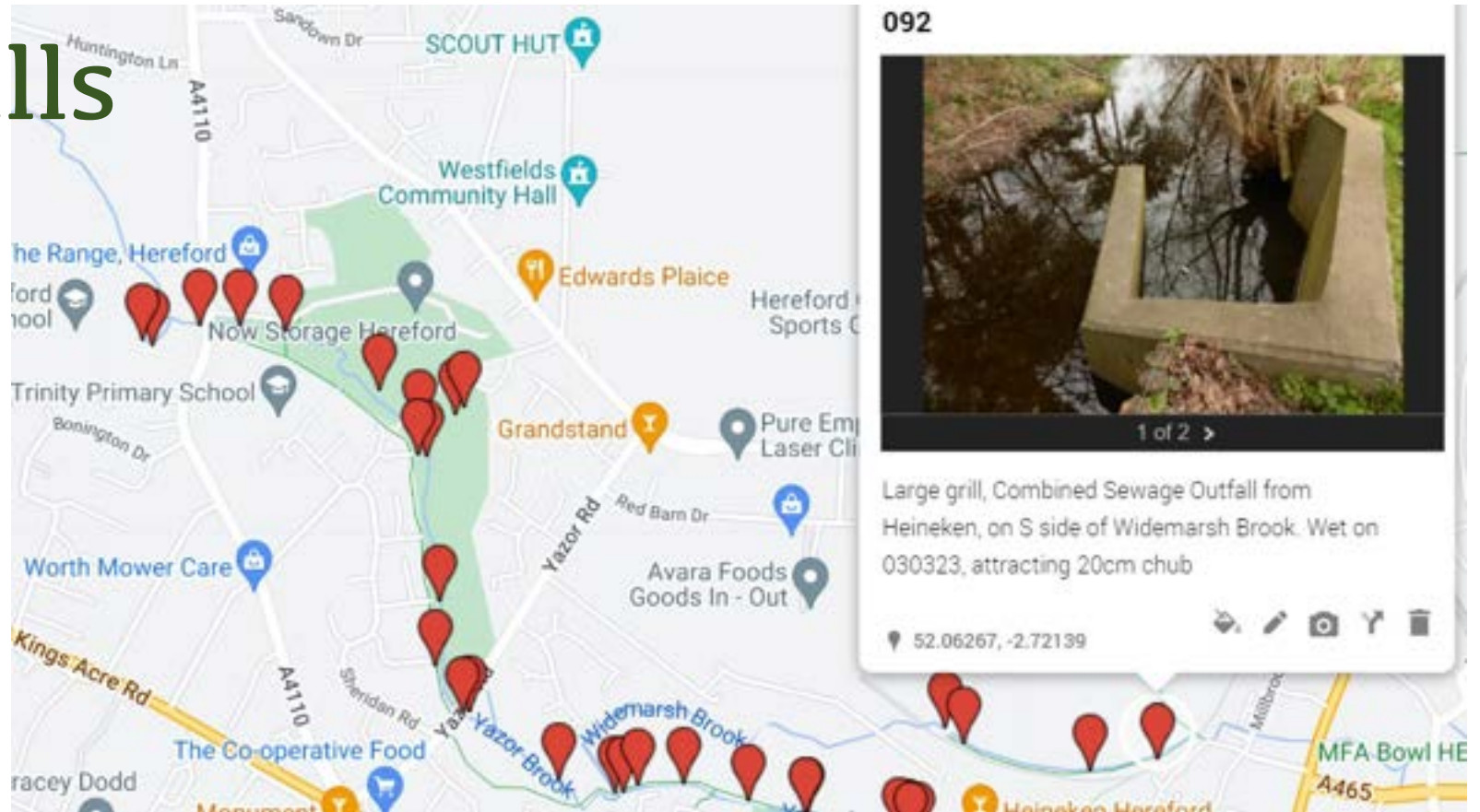


# Stop Press

On Dec 1 we discovered this revolting effluent coming from this outfall just by Yazor Road.



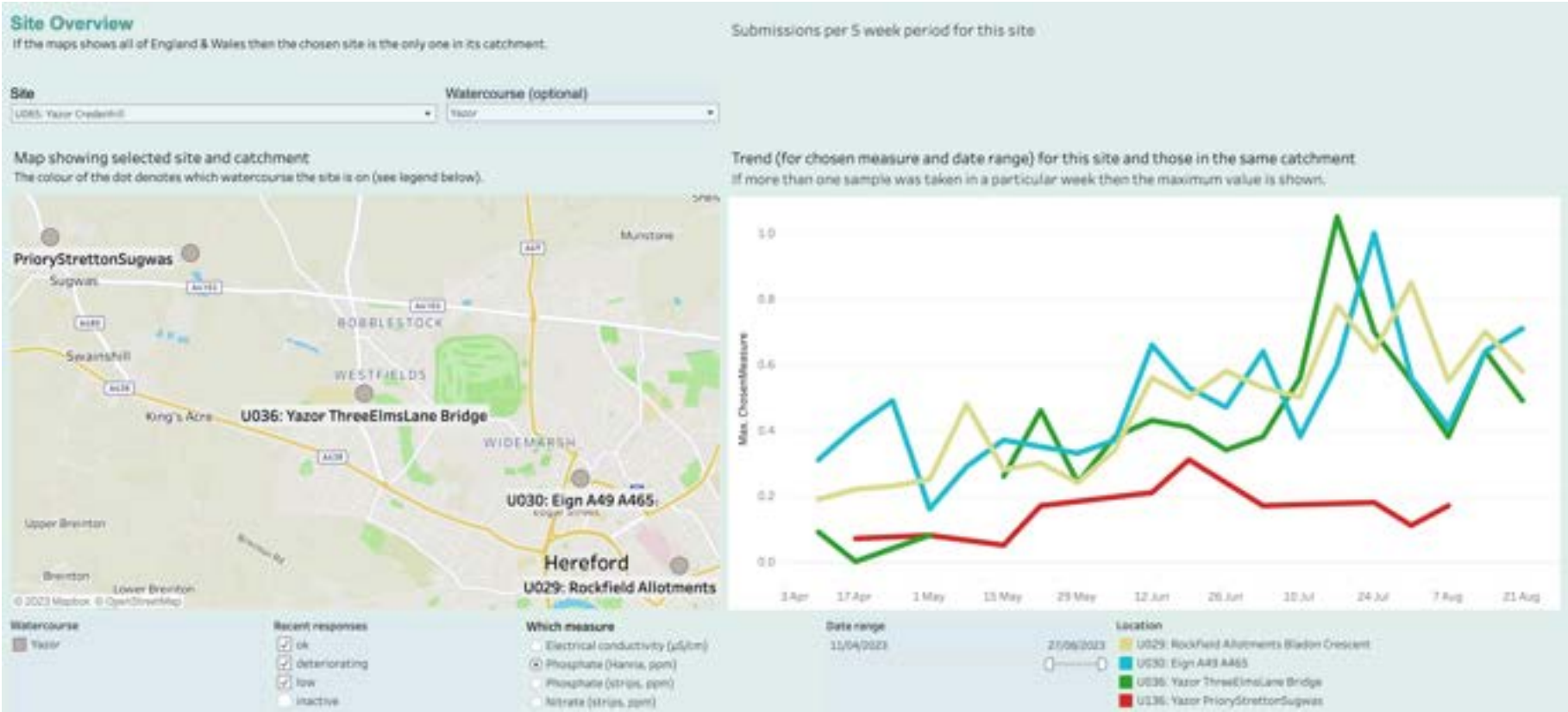
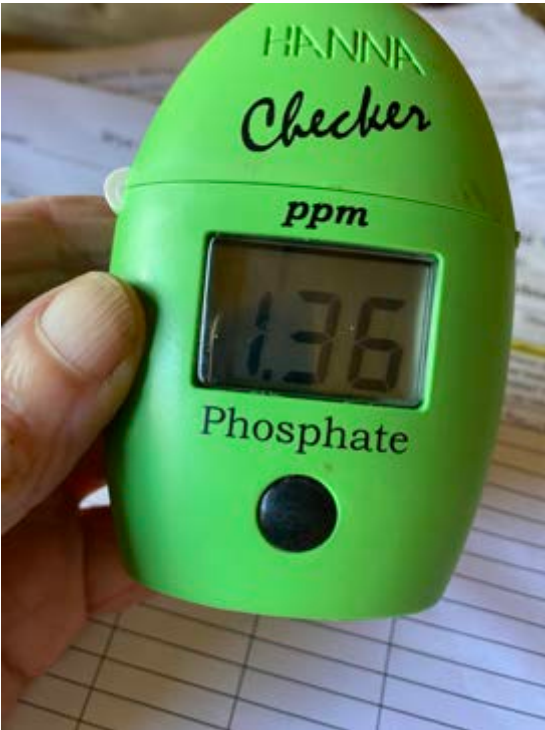
# Mapping Outfalls



Over the winter when the vegetation had died back we mapped outfalls along the Brook, photographing them and giving exact locations. This winter we will finish the mapping, which is an important tool to help us pinpoint the source of pollution. For example, if we have a spike in nitrates or phosphates at a testing site we can check the upstream outfalls for any sign of grey water or visible effluent.

# Citizen Science Water testing – Wye Catchment

City Branch citizen scientists are affiliated with Friends of the Upper Wye, now part of the Wye Alliance of Citizen Scientists. Many of us have been testing since July 2021. This winter we will be undertaking a more forensic investigation of the Yazor between Stretton Sugwas and Three Elms at the request of the FOUW as evidence shows a consistent increase in phosphate difference between those 2 sites.





The regulators were asleep at the wheel because this has unfolded over 30 years  
Gordon Green, Wye Salmon Association



LEFT Gordon Green takes water samples of the river Wye at the Maidenhead bridge near Maidenhead, UK. Adrian Howarth, the Observer



There is an accumulation of evidence. We want it to reach a tipping point so it can't be ignored!  
Anne Cottringer

LEFT Local citizen scientists from the Hereford Tawer Woods Restoration Project - including Anne Cottringer - from water and algae - in action.



Map: Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales



ABOVE The river Wye seen from the Maidenhead Tawer Woods.

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust Tawer Woods Restoration Project, said she started testing about two years ago after an appeal from the group Friends of the Upper Wye. There was growing anger over the decline in the ecological health of the river, and campaigners wanted better evidence for what they considered an outstanding environmental crisis.  
"The fact that so many people are now testing streams there is an accumulation of evidence," said Cottringer. "We want it to reach a tipping point so it just can't be ignored."  
June Thomas, 68, who summits the bank each week in the village of Stratton Turgis, north-west of Hereford, said: "I'm heartbroken at the state of the Wye. It's just awful to see it as it is. I thought it was something I could do which was positive."  
Martin James, managing director of the nonprofit body the River Restoration Centre, said: "Natural England and the Environment Agency did not have sufficient resources to

effectively monitor and protect the nation's rivers, with volunteers now plugging a gap. He said: "Individuals are taking up the banner and saying 'We want a better river system'."  
The scale of the challenge in the nation's most precious rivers systems is formidable. An analysis by the Observer this weekend of 236 freshwater habitats on 38 river systems which are sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) found just 23 (9%) are in "favourable" condition.  
Three years ago, campaigners sounded the alarm over the decline of the river Wye in England and Wales. They warned that phosphate-rich runoff from intensive poultry farms in the supermarket supply chain was softening the Wye's waters and decimating the ecosystem with the spread of thick algal blooms.  
Natural Resources Wales blamed sunny weather for the proliferation of algal blooms. It said there was no evidence of a link between river pollution and intensive poultry units,

Furious campaigners were already counting the steady millions of chickens being housed across the Wye catchment in the supermarket supply chain. The Hereford & Radnor branch of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales mapped more than 500 chicken sheds containing more than 20 million chickens.  
Vast quantities of manure were being spread across farmland and spilling into water courses across the Wye catchment, in the face of a lack of effective action by the regulators, environmentalists and local residents started to test the waters.  
Stuart Smith, chair of the Wye Salmon Association, said a small group of anglers first started testing the river in England and Wales in June 2020 because of concerns over the decline of salmon, the spread of algae and the reported deaths of cyprinids.  
He said: "Algae had been limited to the lower river, but we began to get it across the whole of the catchment."  
The tests found that phosphate lev-

els in the water were regularly breaching guideline targets.  
Gordon Green, 56, an angler and retired industrial physicist from Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, works as an adviser on the association's sampling regime and also tested farmland, showing that higher levels of phosphorus in the soil were (due to poultry units). The research supporting the findings of a 2021 report by Lancaster University which concluded that chicken litter was the main source of manure-causing phosphate pollution on the Wye.  
"The regulators were asleep at the wheel because this has unfolded over 30 years," said Green. "There are catchment systems from the mid-

1990s which say the planning process needs to get a grip on poultry units and manage the spread of manure."  
Monitoring points spread rapidly along the river. Friends of the Upper Wye started its programme in 2021. Volunteers at the CPRE, the conservation charity, and Friends of the Lower Wye also started testing. The real-time data gathered by volunteers is updated by an app, and in the next few weeks will be combined on one platform. It will be called the Wye Alliance Citizen Science dashboard and is likely to be a model for volunteers on other river catchments troubled by pollution.  
Tom Yildirim, chair of Friends of the Upper Wye, said: "I hope the data set will be a resource for pinpointing places where significant action should be taken to curb pollution. Where we look, we tend to find it."  
For testing, citizen science manager of the Friends of the Upper Wye, said the volunteer testing and scrutiny of the planning process highlighted the plight of the Wye and pushed the regulators into action. He said: "We believe the citizen scientists made a difference."  
It is not just volunteer conservationists who test the river but also farmers alarmed at the threat to the river Wye. David Watts, 62, who farms 150 acres near the town of Hereford in Herefordshire, regularly tests the water and land for phosphates.  
He transports chicken litter from his 40,000 laying hens out of the country and has roof beds to help filter any runoff into the Dore, a tributary of the Wye which runs across his farm. "Gives me a headache," said Watts. "Without a healthy river, you don't have a healthy farm. We do everything we can to protect the river."  
Natural England and the Environment Agency are working with Herefordshire council, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, the farming community and other stakeholders to improve water quality in the Wye and reduce phosphates.  
Anna Fowles, the Tawer supplier which has a poultry plant in Hereford and accounts for between 12m and 15m chickens in the Wye catchment, published a manifesto in January to ensure its supply chain no longer contributes to excess phosphate pollution in the Wye. Campaigners want more radical action, with stricter rules on poultry units. A spokesperson said: "Tawer Foods is not a direct polluter of the Wye. However, farmers in our supply chain sell us our poultry litter as fertilizer on other land in the catchment."  
"We recognise the role phosphates play in the river's deterioration and are committed to ensuring our supply chain contributes no excess phosphates in the catchment area by 2025, through our trading."  
Natural Resources Wales (NRW) now acknowledges that poultry litter has caused pollution in the face of overwhelming evidence gathered by the citizen scientists, supported by university research. Gavin Bowen of NRW said: "Our understanding of these issues is improving as we undertake more monitoring and analysis. NRW is committed to play our full part in improving water quality in the River Wye."

In August 2023 we were featured in the Observer in a double page spread about Citizen Science work in the Wye catchment. As a tributary of the Wye, the Yazor is very much a part of the Save the Wye Campaign and we work in collaboration with the other citizen science groups.



# Tree Planting

We continued our tree planting programme along Moor Park and at Meadow Bank. Watering new trees during dry spells is an important part of our work.



# Wetland Park Project

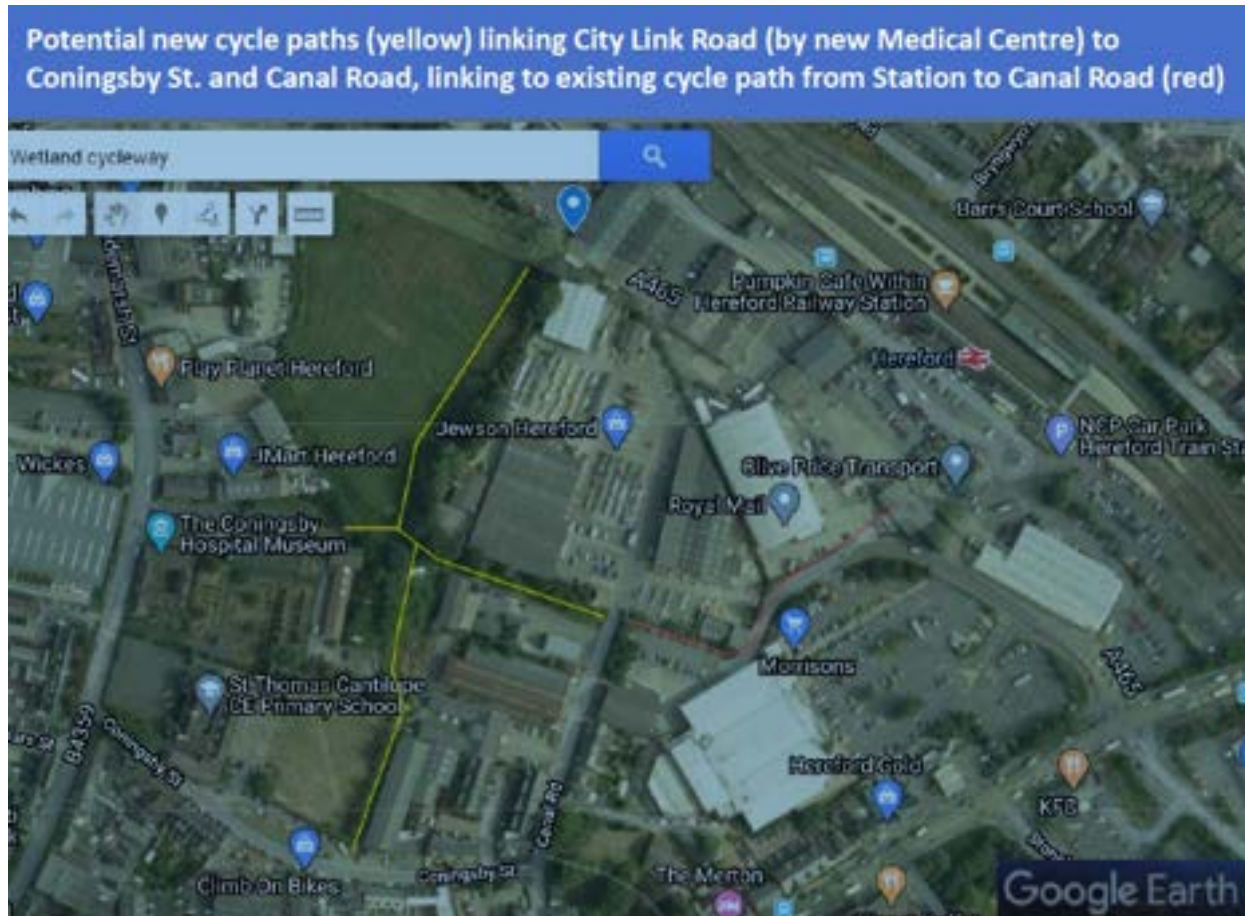
It might look like a patch of scrubby land on the City side of Hereford's link road, but we have our sights set on turning it into a Wetland Park which would act as a giant sponge to mitigate against flooding and provide a haven for wildlife and humans. We have started to audit the flora and fauna of the site, revealing a relatively rich biodiversity which would be enhanced by thoughtful planting. We have had meetings with members of Herefordshire Council this year to continue our campaign to make this a reality.



Chubb grow to a fine size in the pool which forms by the culvert under the Link Road. Gypsywort is just one of the many species of plant that thrive here.



# Wetland Park Project cont'd



For more information about the Wetland Park proposal and for a link to Nicky Geeson's PDF outlining the possibilities of the site and benefits of the creation of this area as a wetland park go to:

<https://www.herefordshirewt.org/news/wetland-reserve-proposal-hereford-city>



# Zoom Talks 2023

Our winter programme continued with talks from January through to April. If you missed any you can watch them on the HWT youtube channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7JvxlsnFo95e9bIZ7UTGyw/videos>



Mike Blackmore of Wessex Rivers Trust on River Restoration

# Live Events

- What's That Bird Walk
- Bio Blitz Bulmer orchard
- Martyn Davies Butterfly walk
- Bub blitz days on Moor Park and along the Brook



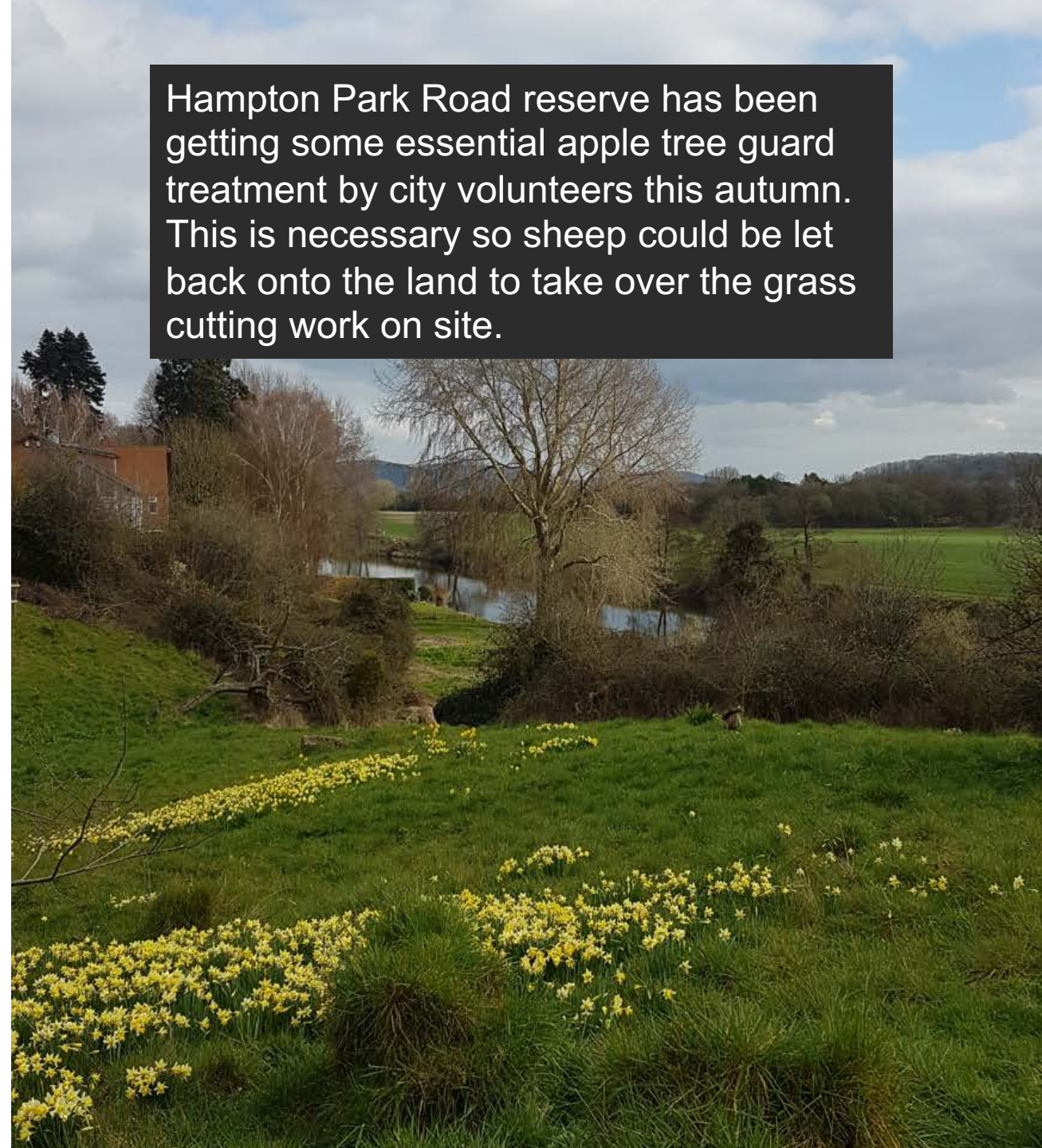
Bio blitz auditing flora & fauna Bulmer Orchard Breinton

Planting bulbs at Moor Park

# City Reserves



Hampton Park Road reserve has been getting some essential apple tree guard treatment by city volunteers this autumn. This is necessary so sheep could be let back onto the land to take over the grass cutting work on site.



# Partnerships & Collaborations

- Friends of Bartonsham Meadows
- Wilder Artists and Poets
- Whitecross Secondary School
- Tree Warden Network
- Hereford Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Society

# Friends of Bartonsham Meadows

Friends of Bartonsham Meadow – success! Herefordshire Wildlife Trust signed a lease to manage the Meadows and they are now an official HWT reserve. FOBM are focussed on creating regenerative land-management practices, returning the land to a flood plain meadow, rich in biodiversity which produces food sustainably.. We share these aims and members of City Branch are active participants in the FOBM project. We look forward to our continued collaboration.



# Whitecross School

Members of the City have been supporting Whitecross in various ways: attending the meetings of the 'Our Planet, Our Future' student group, sitting on the steering group for the project, assisting with hedge and tree planting sessions in the Spring with students and local tree wardens and attending the 'Spring into Action' Community Eco Festival" in April. This year they will be supporting an ambitious new project – 'Belonging'.

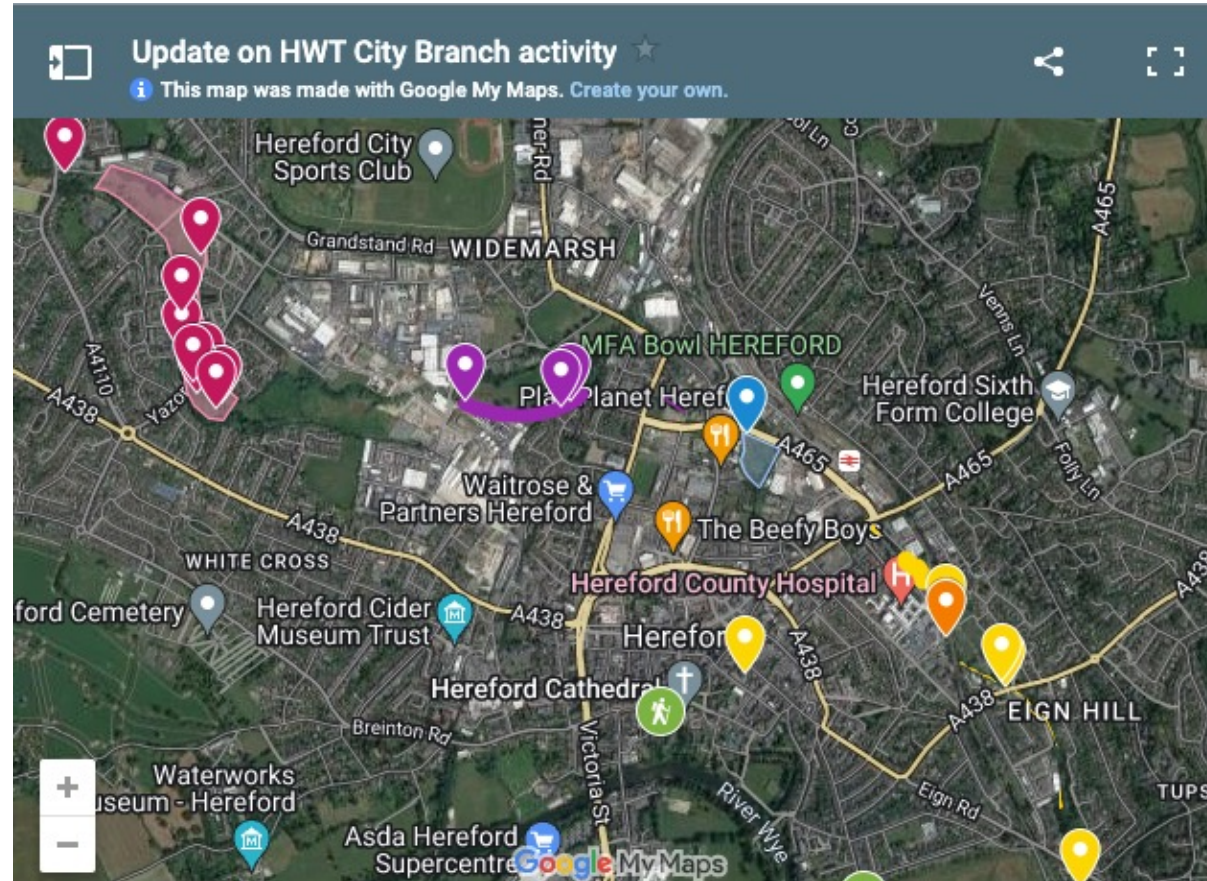


# Campaigning

We participate in the annual Save the Wye events in July and liaise with various Wye campaigning groups. We also participate in the River Carnival, held in August.



# Our Web Pages



<https://www.herefordshirewt.org/wilderhereford>



## Strategic Plan for the Yazor Brook in Hereford City

The Pentagon in Spring...dreams of its future as part of a Strategic Plan for the Yazor Brook in the City

The City Branch and the HYBRP rely on a loyal, enthusiastic group of volunteers. We welcome new volunteers – no experience necessary. There are lots of exciting new Yazor projects coming up. If you are interested in joining us, please email us at:

[hfdcbranch@herefordshirewt.co.uk](mailto:hfdcbranch@herefordshirewt.co.uk)

To find out more about the project:

<https://www.herefordshirewt.org/loveyourriver>



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# **Herefordshire Wildlife Trust Hereford City Branch**

**Grants, donations and expenditures 2023**

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**Interim statement March 2023 to November 2023**

**Grants and donations**

**2023**

Adjusted opening balance

£510

50% advance by HWT to fund HC GOC grant

£2,493

50% grant from HC for GOC expenses

£2,493

Donations received towards branch costs

£276

£5,262

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**Expenses**

Printing costs	£100	
Room and equipment hire, fees	£100	
Tools purchased	£849	
Materials for projects i.e. tree guards	£1,799	
Native bulbs and Acer trees	£1,378	
Orders in hand -display boards	£500	
Orders in hand -survey instrument	£100	
Orders in hand -Special elm trees	£267	
		£5,093
<b>Balance</b>		<b>£169</b>