Water Friendly Farming in the Upper Weaver catchment

Mersey Rivers Trust

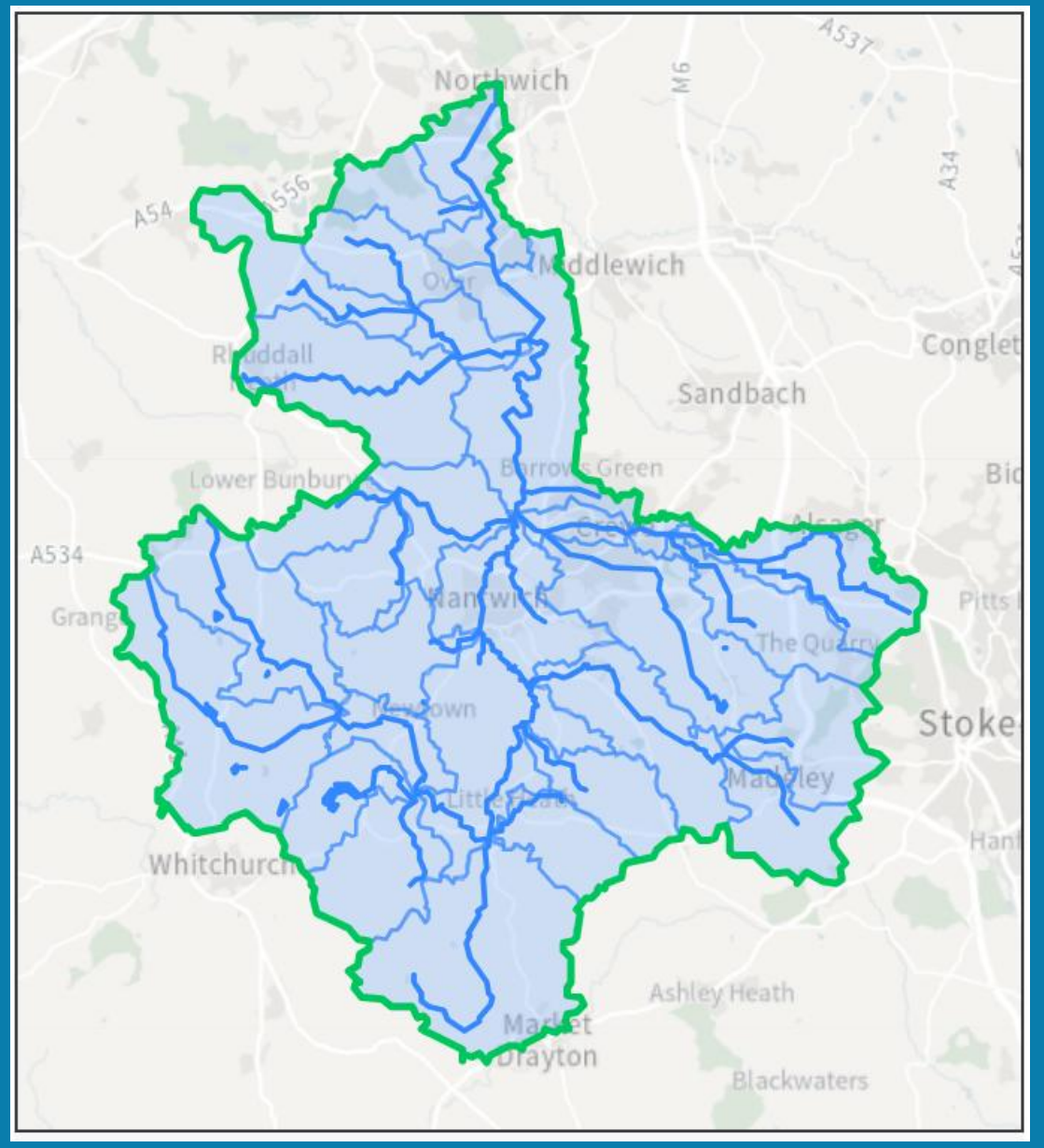
Environment Agency

Who are we?

- Mersey Rivers Trust is a charity working in partnership with all those interested in improving our local rivers and waterways. It is the Rivers Trust for the River Mersey and its catchment.
- Our work covers the whole of the Mersey Basin
- We have three operational catchments, with different teams in each area:
  - Cheshire
  - Liverpool City
  - Greater Manchester

Upper Weaver project 2024-5

- Environment Agency funded
- Engage with farmers to raise awareness of diffuse agricultural pollution
- Water management plans for farms
- Host an event with speakers



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Why here?

- Previous work in Ash Brook and Darley Brook
  - Increase further uptake
- Wistaston Brook – new area
  - Build relationships
  - Raise awareness
  - Identify improvements

- 10 water management plans
- Build the case for future funding

Water quality

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Environment Agency — Catchment Data Explorer

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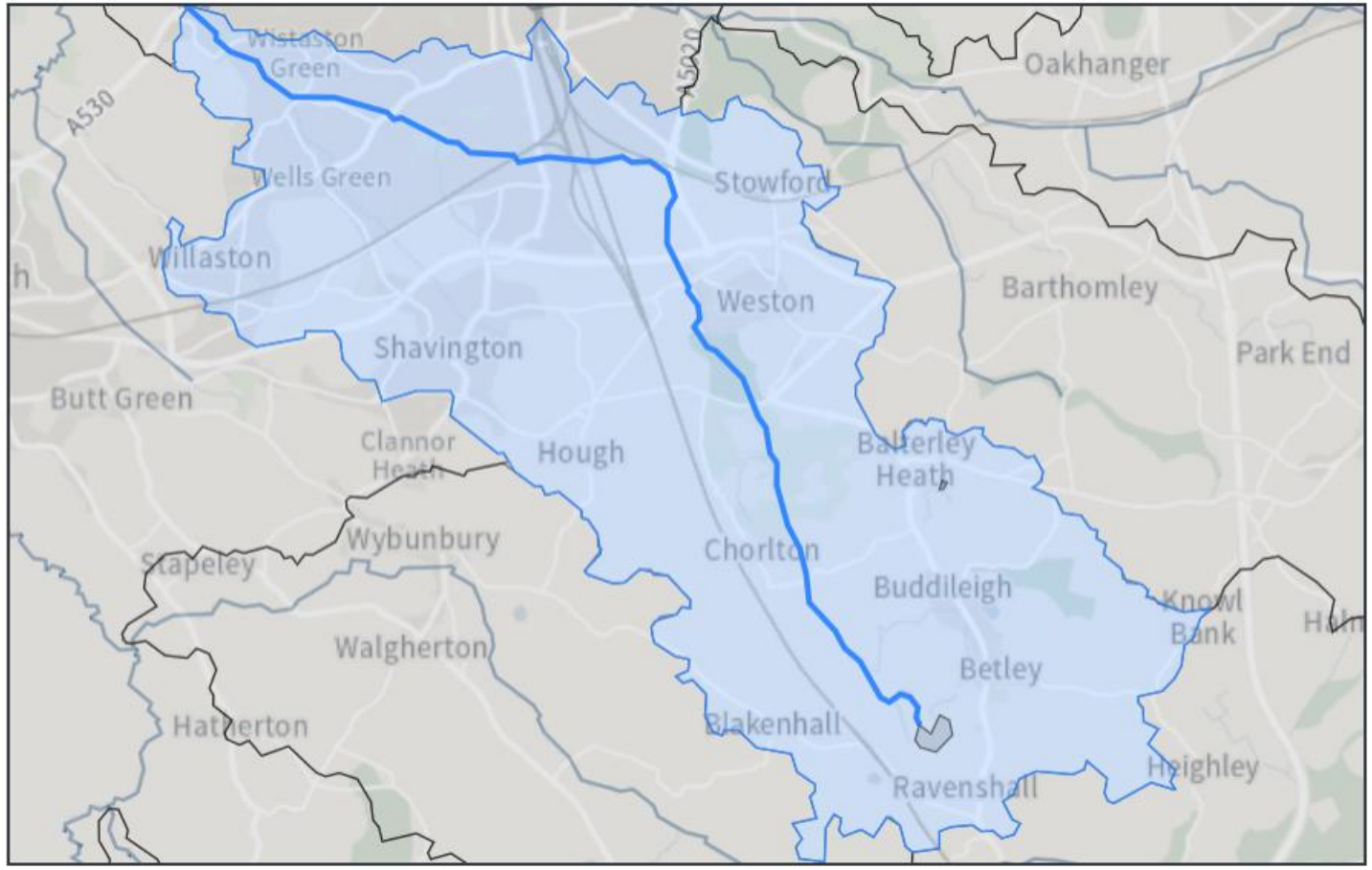
Wistaston Brook Water Body

Bad ecological status

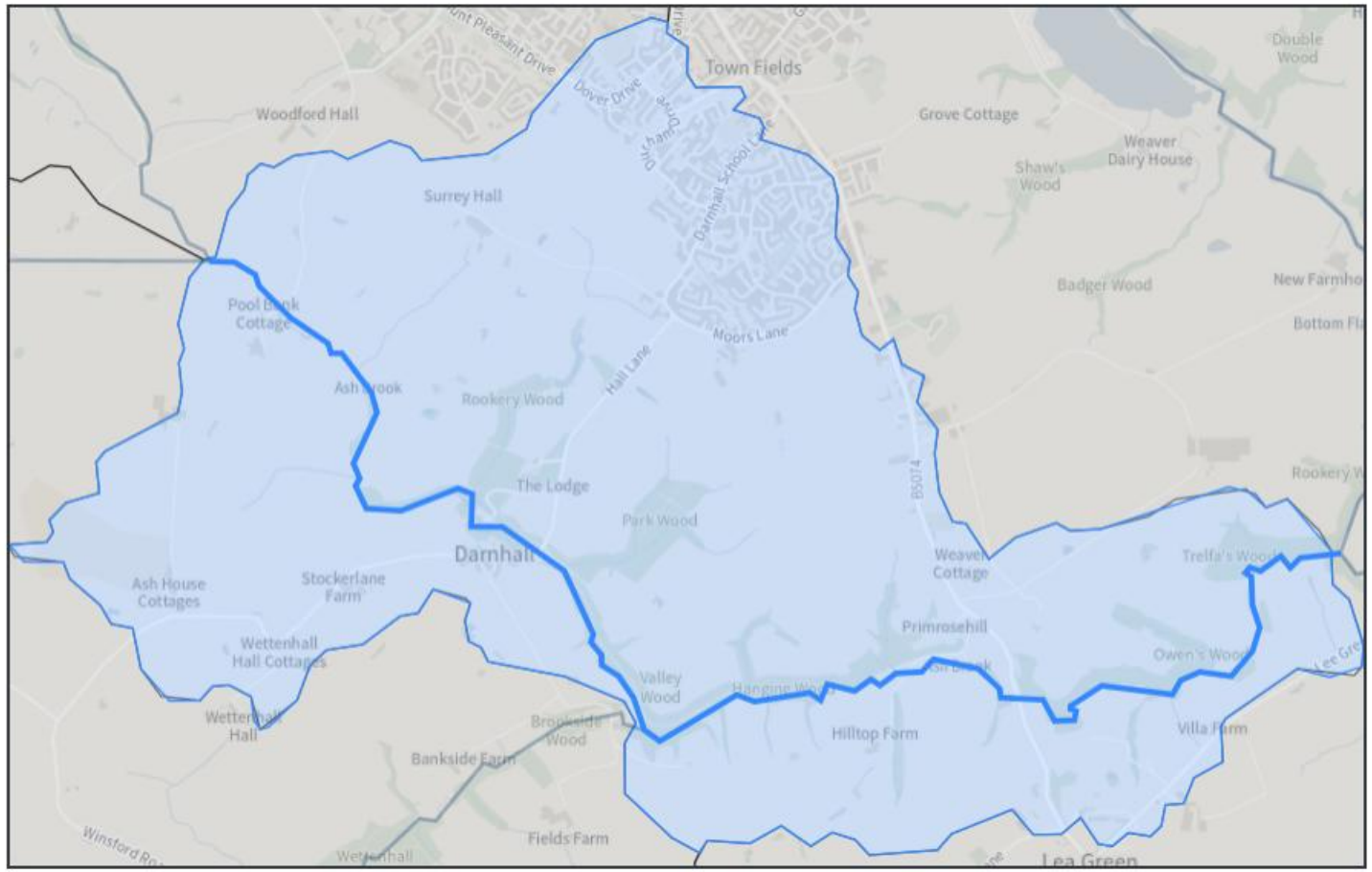


- Livestock management
- Nutrient management
- Combined sewer overflows
- Road run-off
- Industrial pollution
- Pesticides
- Farm infrastructure
- Soil management

Water quality

Ash Brook (Darley Brook to Weaver) Water Body

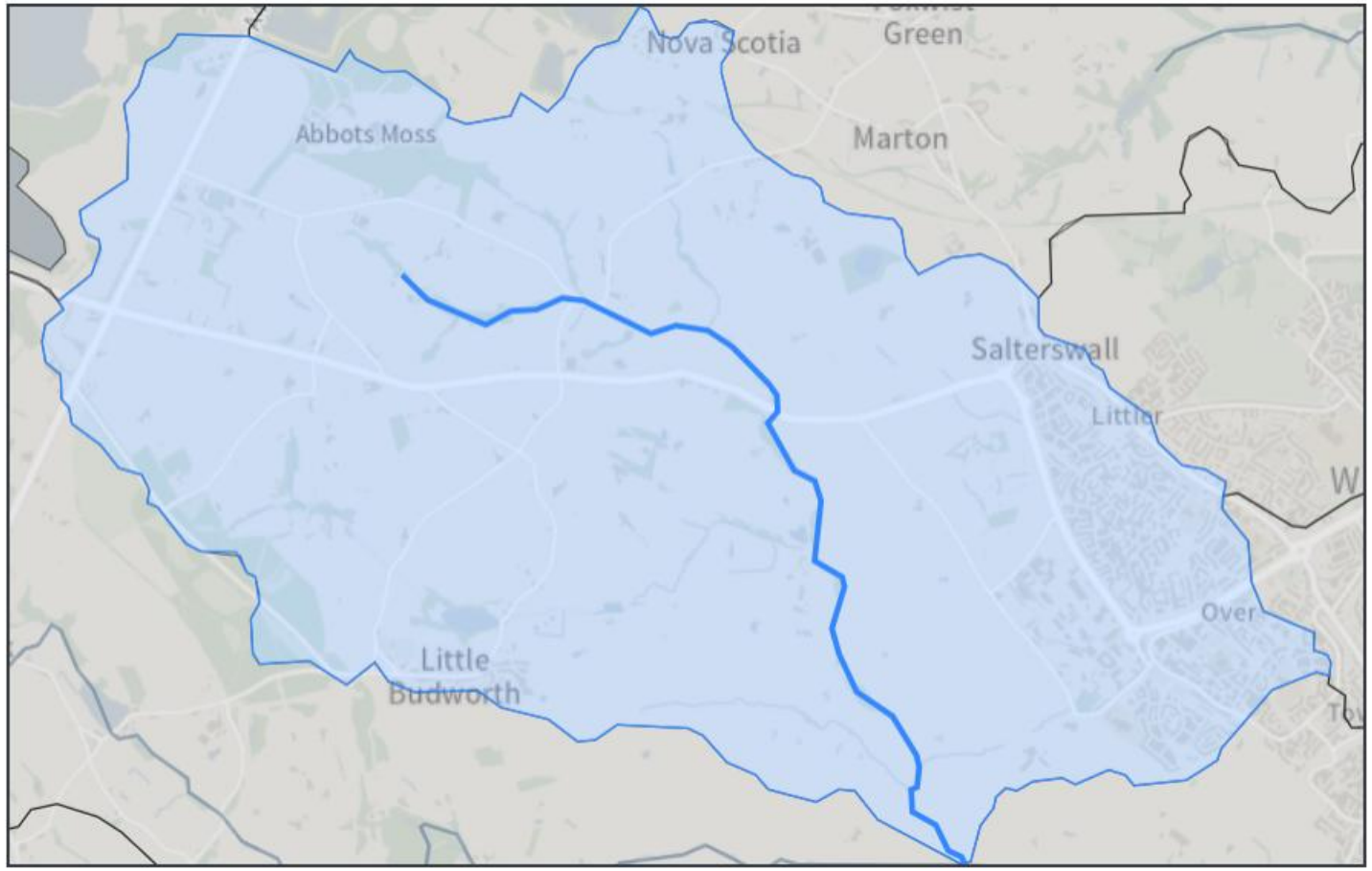
Moderate ecological status



Water quality

Ash Brook (Source to Darley Brook) Water Body

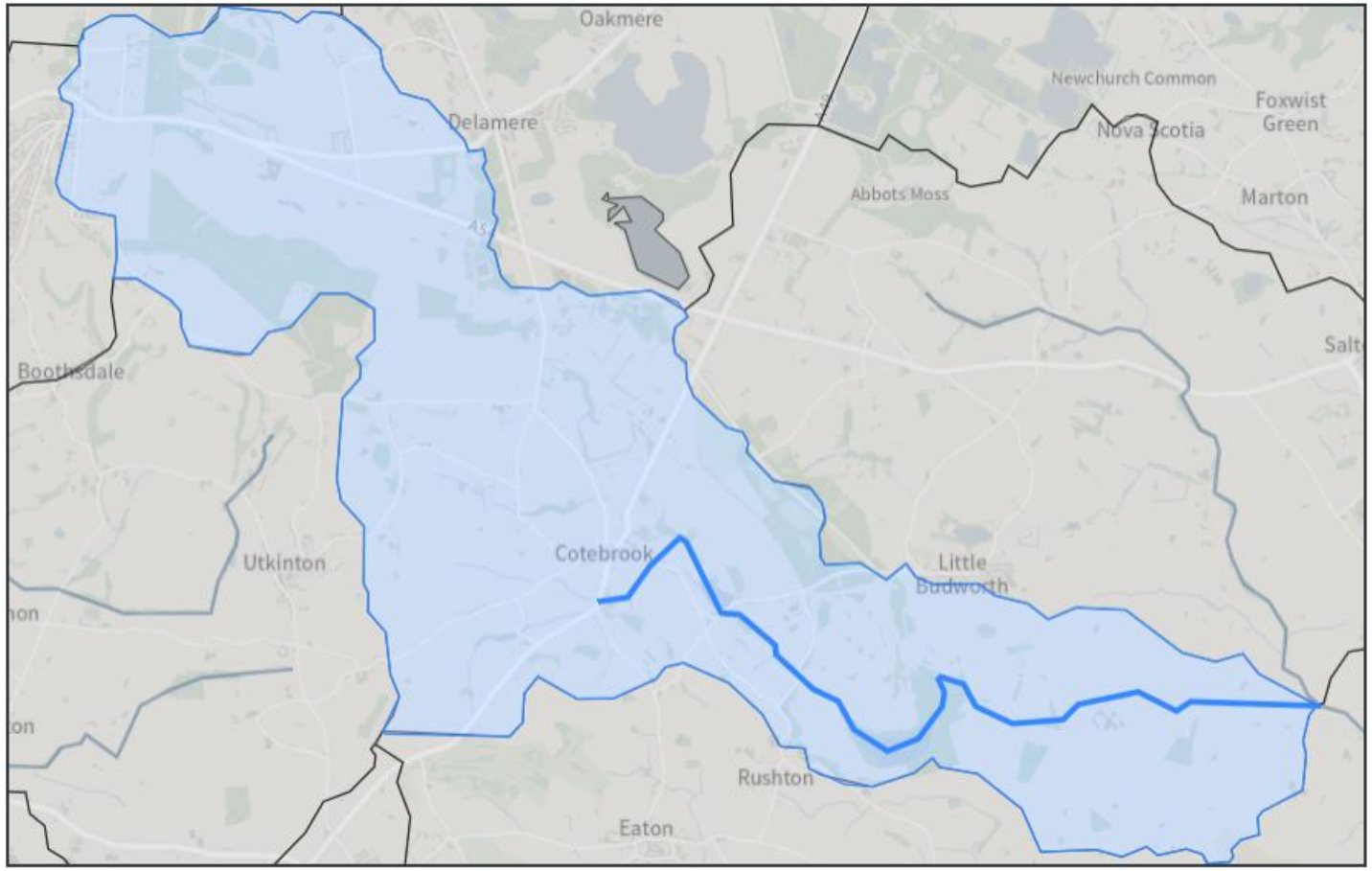
Moderate ecological status



Water quality

Darley Brook Water Body

Moderate ecological status



Water Management Plans

- As part of this we have funding to provide Water Management Plans to farmers in the Darley, Ash and Wistaston Brook catchments.
- We are providing free advice and a farm plan.

Water Friendly Farming

- Since 2019 Mersey Rivers Trust has worked with farms in the Upper Weaver and produced plans and small grants for capital works
- Provided free advice and a farm plan, and a potential small grant to implement measures identified in the plan

Funding?

- We hope that for the financial year 2025/26 we will have funding to be able to provide farms in the Upper Weaver with small amounts of grant funding to carry out recommendations made in the Water Management Plan

- **You must have a Water Management Plan to qualify for funding!**

What is a Water Management Plan?

Farm Advisors visit your farm and in discussion with you walk the yard and fields and look at ways to reduce phosphate in the water such as:

- Separation of clean and dirty water
- Rainwater harvesting
- Fencing
- Water troughs
- Concrete
- Livestock tracks
- Sward lifting
- Buffer strips
- Undersowing

How it works....

Farm visit....

We do not have any regulatory powers

Our visits are confidential

We want to work together to improve water quality

Farm Water Management Plan

Water Management Plan

XXXX Farm

February 2023

This Water Management Plan was created through the Upper Weaver WEIF project by Mersey Rivers Trust and funded through local DEFRA sources. The items highlighted within this plan are those which were observed on the day of the farm walkover, and may not include additional water issues not observable on the day.

Farm overview

XXXX Farm is an arable farm totalling approximately 90ha. This arable enterprise grows predominantly permanent winter wheat, winter barley and spring barley, with a small acreage of grass and cover crops rotated with the barley. In the 2023 season, two fields currently sown with a cover crop, will be grazed and then sown to produce a potato crop. In terms of livestock there are 25 horses on livery at the farm, and approximately 200 sheep on tack at the farm annually between the months of October and March. XXXX Farm has historically farmed pigs, and has retained the infrastructure needed to support this type of farming should they wish to undertake it again. The farm drains to the XXXX catchment, is 2.7km away from XXXX SSSI, and within a Countryside Stewardship Medium Priority Area for water quality. XXXX Farm is taking part in the Sustainable Farm Incentive (SFI) pilot scheme in the advanced tier, and so will be undertaking work to promote soil health as part of this three-year pilot scheme. Some of the land contains complex topography, sandy and clay areas, and moderate slopes. This increases the risk of surface water movement and therefore soil erosion in some places. Whether these risks are realised is dependent upon the management of the farm.

Farm Information

Farm Name: XXXX Farm	Farm type: Predominantly arable cereals with small acreage of potatoes and cover crops
Central Grid Reference: X	
Size: 90 ha	Number of livestock: 25 horses on livery 200 sheep on tack
Rainfall: 140 mm/yr	Waterbodies: XXX River and XXX Brook
Farming systems: Arable cereal growing, and livery yard.	Water source: Mains
Nutrient application (including whether slurry or FYM application): Fertiliser applied to growing crops	Main water uses: Watering troughs in fields and stables
Nutrient Management Plan: Yes	Nutrient Management Plan used? As required
Details of Cropping (including bare soil): No bare soil on this farm. Permanent winter wheat, winter barley and spring barley grown in rotation with grass and cover crops. Small amount of potatoes to be grown.	

Outline of farm business type and farming processes

Farm information on farm type and water uses, rainfall, nutrient use and crop details

Farm Water Management Plan

Summary of interventions

Intervention	Priority	Reason	Cost to the Farmer	Cost to the Project	Regulatory Link	Likely source of Funding	Ecosystem Services
Increase size of pond in Field 6	High	Reduce the quantity of silt and pollutants entering XXX River from field runoff and land drains.	Cost unknown c. £5,000	Landowner intervention therefore project will pay 70% of costs	None	Mersey Rivers Trust Grant	Reduced silt entering main watercourse due to settling out and further filtration of water in pond. Offline water storage helps reduce flooding.
Plant land adjacent to pond in Field 6 with trees	Medium	To improve biodiversity of area adjacent to pond, and reduce flooding		£1.72 per tree £4.00 per tree guard x 25 trees = £118		Mersey Rivers Trust Grant Mersey Forest Farm Trees Grant	Reduced run-off into watercourses which benefits the biodiversity of the river, and increased biodiversity on land.
Sow buffer strips along XXX Brook in Field 11	High	Reduce the quantity of silt and nutrients entering the XXX Brook from field runoff.		£451/ha 0.24ha area = £90	You must take action to prevent erosion Farming Rules for Water	Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier Option Possible Mersey Rivers Trust Grant	Reduced run-off into watercourses which reduces silt entering the waterbody. Less silt in the system can alleviate flooding and benefits the biodiversity of the river, and increased biodiversity on land.
Reinforce riverbank in Field 10	Medium	Reduce in-field flooding and riverbank erosion, which		**Trees** £1.72 per tree	You must take action to prevent erosion Farming Rules for Water	Mersey Rivers Trust Grant	Reduced bank erosion into watercourses which benefits the biodiversity of the river. Reduced silt

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What's in it for me?

- **FREE** farm business advice – it only costs your time
- Water Management Plan captures items that could be submitted into other schemes, support supplier schemes (e.g Tesco, Müller)
- Potential to be considered for future funding – but you need a water management plan

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Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES
INFORMATION FOR LANDOWNERS

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A **non-native species** is a species that has been introduced into the country by human intervention.

Most non-native species do not cause problems. However, a minority (10-15%) become “invasive” and have negative impacts on agriculture, forestry or biodiversity interests.

The cost of invasive non-native species (INNS) to Britain is at least 1.7 billion/year. Agriculture is the most affected industry, with estimated costs for the UK at £1.088 billion.

Managing invasive species is the responsibility of the owner/occupier of the site. By law, you must ensure that any non-native plants growing on your land don’t spread into the wild.

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INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES INFORMATION FOR LANDOWNERS

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Control: Invasive species can be controlled through a range of methods, including containing a species in a limited area, preventing or slowing its spread, and localised population reduction or eradication.

Support available

Countryside stewardship:

- SP4: Control of invasive plant species supplement. Available for Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier. Pays £380 per hectare.
- SB6: Rhododendron control. Available for Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier and Higher Tier Capital Grants. Payments from £3,500 - £5,500 per hectare.

The Government and GB non-native species secretariat websites can also provide more information on invasive plants, their management, and landowners responsibilities.

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Thank You

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