

# Lea catchment project – 'Rooting for Wildlife' environment fund pilot

## Aim

- Develop and pilot a funding/ investment programme to enable NGO's, environmental and local community groups to develop and deliver projects to help meet the objectives and outcomes of the 25 Year Environment Plan, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and create more sustainable catchments.

## Objectives

- Gather insights from biodiversity fund scheme to inform approach for AMP8 including based on existing assessment of the AMP7 'INNS Out scheme' and historic Community Engagement Fund.
- Integrate with wider activities including Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Natural England's pond creation fund.

## Challenge

There are gaps in funding streams that can enable local community and environmental groups to deliver environmental projects. Coordination is needed to deliver projects and schemes that are aligned with the Local Nature Recovery Strategies and can be more impactful for biodiversity and wider environmental improvement in the catchments as a system. In addition, lack of direct funding or awareness to enable interventions on the ground in the local community.

## Outcomes and Benefits

Over 40 applications were made by local community groups in the pilot and funding was provided with support for 17 successful project applications including funding, technical support and volunteer support to improve their local environment. Projects supported in the pilot included a wet meadow revival, pond restoration, creating a wildlife sanctuary at a school, habitat creation on several farms, enhancement projects directly on the River Lea

### Other benefits included:

Summary report of pilot outcomes, lessons learnt that will inform the roll out in AMP8 environment programme to the whole company supply area enabling scalability with a commitment for 5 years. Future improvement areas and local need identified for prioritisation of interventions and projects.

## Solution

- To develop a scheme open to local community, including environmental groups, charities and organisations, landowners and educational facilities. The scheme opened in April and closed in May. Applicants applied digitally through Affinity Water's website or via a physical version.
- Scope aligned in future with Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) and The Environment Agency (EA) requirements to encourage investment in restoration and enhancement of local environment
- Projects intended to prioritise riparian zones, areas within designated sites, and supporting key habitats and species of conservation concern. Multi-stakeholder applications were also encouraged as combining interests, resources and capabilities will improve environmental outcomes, and better catchment-based solutions.
- For engagement utilise multiple platforms including Instagram, Facebook, physical leaflets, existing email contacts and any existing groups
- Partnership delivery including Affinity Water; HMWT; local river and community groups; Hertfordshire County Council; Natural England; Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.

