

# BRUE HEADWATERS MULTI-BENEFIT PROJECT

The "Brue Priority Catchment" refers to the River Brue catchment area in Somerset, England, which is considered a priority area due to potential low water levels and the need for careful water management, particularly in The Somerset Levels and Moors (SSSIs). The SSSIs were downgraded to "unfavourable declining" by Natural England in 2021 due to poor water quality. Issues of high phosphate levels were exacerbated by low summer water levels and flooding events.

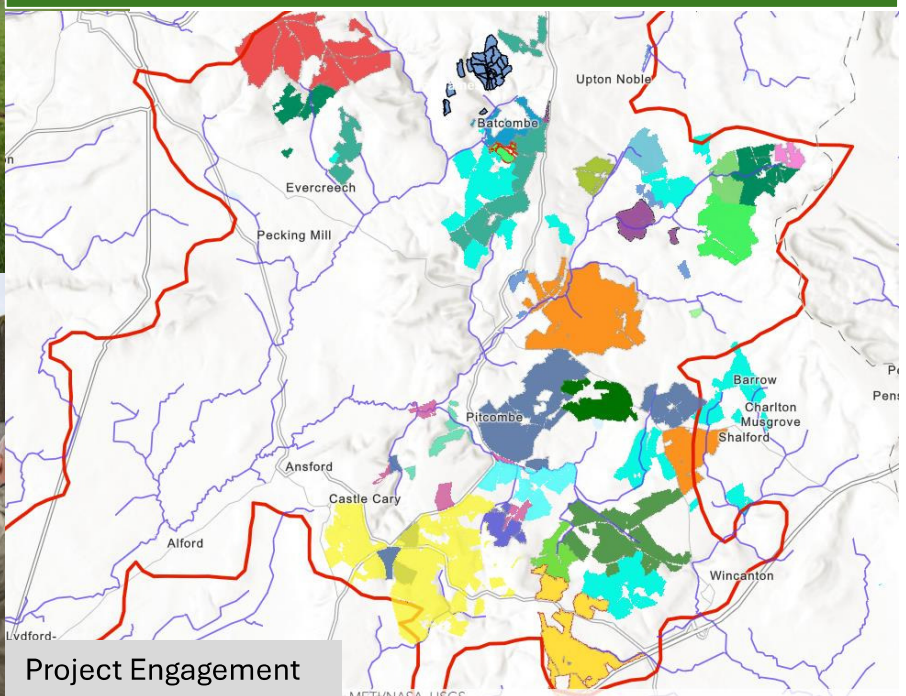
In response, the Brue Headwaters Multi-benefit Project was set up by FWAGSW which received funding from the Environment Agency Local Levy and WEIF projects and Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA). The project sought to work with farmers and landowners to deliver nature-based solutions in the Brue Headwaters to address some of the issues faced within the catchment as a whole.

## Goals:

- Conduct detailed mapping assessments to identify areas to target nature-based solutions
- Work with farmers to promote and deliver good soil health practices to increase infiltration and hold water on land for longer.
- Work with farmers and landowners to identify and deliver nature-based solutions

## Achievements:

- Soil assessments carried out at 11 farms.
- Subsoil trial conducted to promote techniques to tackle grassland compaction. [Subsoil Trial Report](#)
- Delivery of 4 workshops to facilitate farmer-farmer and community learning.
- Meeting with local flood groups and building connections within between local communities to deliver NFM.
- Planting 1900 m riparian and cross slope wooded buffer strips and associated fencing and 200m2 wetland trees.
- 30 leaky woody dams
- 33 Attenuation features
- Engagement with farmers and landowners across the catchment as shown below.



# Case Studies



## **Godminster Farm, Bruton-Sediment and attenuation features.**

Godminster Farm is home to a herd of 320 organic dairy cows supplying milk for Godminster Cheese and Bruton Dairy. The farm's owner and management team are passionate about soil health and carefully monitor nutrient inputs and organic matter across the farm. Mixed whole crops are farmed instead of maize and herbal leys form an integral part of the min till-7-year rotation of arable fields. In 2023/2024 FWAG and Godminster hosted farmer focussed and led workshops covering the regenerative farming practices used in the area. Project funding was used to identify infrastructure improvements that could be made to increase water quality and to identify opportunities to intercept flows before entering the River Pitt. In March 2024, a series of attenuation features designed to collect sediment, slow flows and create habitat for wildlife and wetland tree planting was funded and delivered by the project.

## **Horsehill Farm, Batcombe**

- Located in the headwaters of the Alham tributary the farmyard and local village are subject to regular flooding due to flashy nature of the catchment.
- Farm comprised pasture and arable land grazed by cattle, sheep and horses. Soil structure assessments were carried out on high-risk fields to identify management to increase infiltration rates.
- A series of large attenuation features were completed in Autumn 2024 to be followed by woodland management to infill gullies and tree planting to intercept overland flows.

