

# TEES INVASIVE SPECIES PROJECT (TISP)

End of Development Phase Evaluation Report

March 2026

Grant Expiry Date: 31<sup>st</sup> December 2026

HZ-24-00031

Chloe Lawrence  
Invasive Species Project Manager



# Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Acknowledgements .....                                  | 2  |
| Funders .....   | 2  |
| Stakeholder Involvement, Expertise and Assistance ..... | 2  |
| 1. Introduction .....                                   | 3  |
| Overview of the Tees Invasive Species Project .....     | 3  |
| 2. Project Background .....                             | 4  |
| Why the Project Was Initiated .....                     | 4  |
| Key Development Phase Aims and Activities .....         | 6  |
| Partners and Stakeholders Involved .....                | 7  |
| 3. Evaluation Methodology .....                         | 7  |
| 4. Protecting the Environment .....                     | 9  |
| 5. Saving Tees Heritage .....                           | 12 |
| 6. Inclusion, Access & Participation .....              | 14 |
| 7. Organisational Sustainability .....                  | 21 |
| 8. Key Achievements & Lessons Learned .....             | 23 |
| Key Achievements .....                                  | 23 |
| Challenges and How They Were Addressed .....            | 27 |
| Lessons Learned .....                                   | 28 |
| Readiness for Delivery .....                            | 29 |
| 9. Legacy & Future Development .....                    | 29 |
| Long-Term Benefits .....                                | 29 |
| Strengthened Partnerships .....                         | 30 |
| Delivery Phase Ambition .....                           | 31 |
| Vision Beyond the Funded Project .....                  | 31 |
| 10. Publicity, Promotion and Acknowledgement .....      | 32 |
| 11. Conclusions & Recommendations .....                 | 38 |
| Conclusions .....                                       | 38 |
| Recommendations for the Delivery Phase .....            | 39 |
| Gaps & Areas for Further Development .....              | 39 |
| 12. Additional Resources .....                          | 40 |
| 13. Appendices .....                                    | 41 |

## Acknowledgements

### Funders

The Tees Invasive Species Project (TISP) development phase has been generously supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, alongside contributions from the Environment Agency and Hurworth Parish Council. Their support has been vital in enabling the planning, preparation, and groundwork that has set the project up for successful delivery.



### Stakeholder Involvement, Expertise and Assistance

We are extremely grateful to the wide range of stakeholders who have contributed their time, knowledge, and expertise throughout the development phase, helping shape the project and ensuring it is both strategic and locally relevant. This includes:

- **CABI (Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International)** – for expertise and collaboration on invasive species research and biological control.
- **Nature Based Solutions Ltd** – providing technical guidance and innovative approaches to site management through the Heritage Condition Assessment.
- **Jemma Cox** – for support and guidance on both the Management and Maintenance Plan and the Activity Plan.
- **Droneflight UK** – for aerial survey expertise that informed the Heritage Condition Assessment and strategic planning.
- **Landowners** – whose cooperation has allowed project access, site management, and long-term catchment planning.
- **Sara Cox and Jackie Schmidt** – for the development of cross-curricular education materials, as well as the trial of these within schools to gauge feedback for delivery.

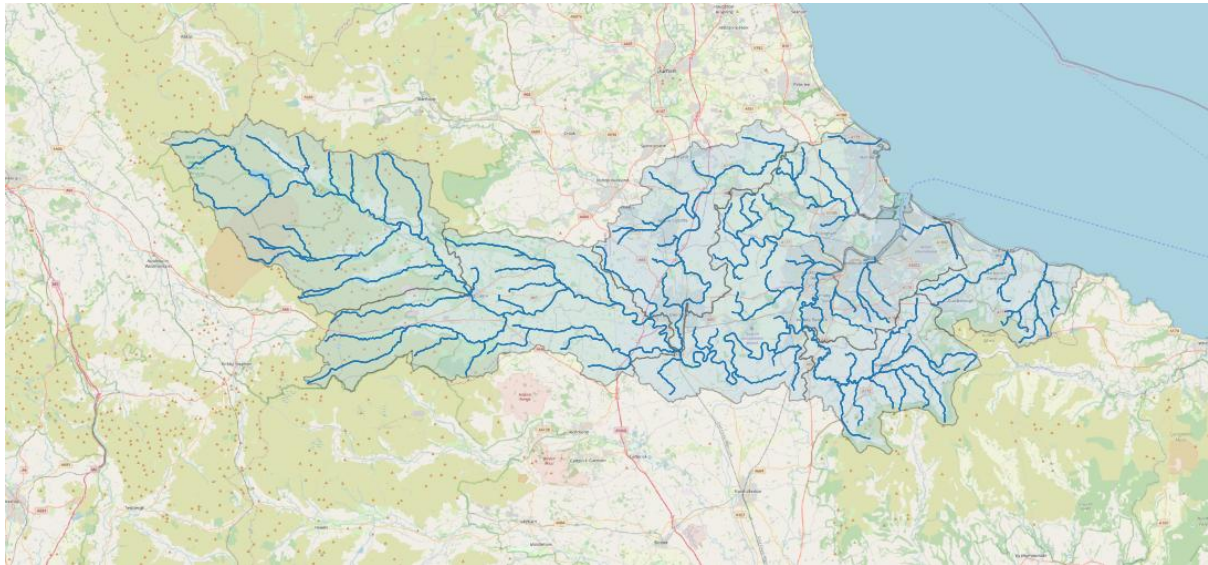
### Volunteers and Community Partners

A special thanks to the volunteers, community groups, and educational partners who have been central to the success of the development phase. Their enthusiasm, commitment, and willingness to learn and engage have been instrumental in shaping both the project's delivery and its long-term legacy.

# 1. Introduction

## Overview of the Tees Invasive Species Project

The Tees Invasive Species Project (TISP) is a strategic, catchment-wide initiative designed to address the impact of invasive non-native species (INNS) across the River Tees and its tributaries. The development phase was delivered between February 2025 and February 2026 with support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, alongside contributions from the Environment Agency and Hurworth Parish Council.



*Figure 1: OS Map of Tees Catchment Boundaries*

## Purpose of this Evaluation Report

This evaluation report reflects on the delivery of the development phase and assesses progress against the project's agreed objectives. It captures key learning, evidences achievements, and identifies areas for refinement to inform the successful planning and delivery of the next phase of TISP.

The report also demonstrates how the development phase aligns with The National Lottery Heritage Fund's four Investment Principles: Saving Heritage; Protecting the Environment; Inclusion, Access and Participation and Organisational Sustainability.

## Summary of Development Phase Objectives

The development phase focused on establishing the foundations for a robust, evidence-led and inclusive delivery programme to manage INNS across the Tees catchment. Key objectives were to:

- Undertake a heritage condition assessment to better understand the current impact of INNS
- Strengthen local and regional partnerships and stakeholder engagement
- Explore opportunities for education, volunteering and community participation

- Develop core delivery documents, including an Activity Plan, Management & Maintenance Plan, and Business Plan
- Identify costed, feasible and impactful conservation interventions for future delivery

This phase was designed to test assumptions, gather baseline data, strengthen local support, and ensure that the proposed delivery phase is strategically sound, environmentally beneficial and operationally viable.

### Structure of the Report

The evaluation is structured around The National Lottery Heritage Fund’s four Investment Principles. Each section outlines relevant activities, achievements and learning from the development phase, and references the 12 Approved Purposes where applicable.

The report concludes with key lessons and recommendations for the delivery phase, alongside consideration of the project’s longer-term legacy and intended impact beyond the funded period.

## 2. Project Background

### Why the Project Was Initiated

The Tees Invasive Species Project (TISP) was developed in response to the increasing ecological, social and economic impacts of invasive non-native species (INNS) across the Tees catchment. These species continue to threaten biodiversity, affect natural and cultural heritage assets, and limit access to valued green and blue spaces.



*Figure 2: Himalayan balsam rust fungus biocontrol (left), Japanese knotweed psyllid biocontrol (middle) and herbicide treatment of giant hogweed (right)*

Tees Rivers Trust has been actively managing invasive species since 2012. Over that time, it has become clear that isolated or short-term interventions are rarely sufficient. Long-term, coordinated and catchment-scale approaches are essential if meaningful reduction and, where possible, eradication is to be achieved and sustained.

The Trust has contributed to several significant initiatives that have shaped this understanding. In 2018, it acted as the northern contractor for CABI during early biological control trials. This work informed subsequent projects exploring biocontrol methods for Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed, including activity supported through the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (2021-2022). Alongside this, the Tees Operation Giant Hogweed (TopHog) programme (National Lottery Heritage Fund, 2018–2023) delivered a dedicated catchment-scale management effort.

Learning from these projects demonstrated that effective INNS management depends not only on technical control methods, but also on strong partnerships, shared strategy and community engagement. *Evaluations of this earlier work are included within the Appendix.*

TISP sits within the wider framework of the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat strategy and supports national priorities relating to biosecurity, early detection and coordinated control. By embedding these principles locally, the project contributes to a broader landscape-scale response while remaining rooted in the specific needs of the Tees catchment.

The project was also shaped by growing demand from communities, landowners and partner organisations for a more joined-up and proactive approach. In recent years, interest in tackling INNS has increased significantly, with residents, volunteers and schools keen to play a more active role. The development phase has therefore focused on creating a structure that enables participation while ensuring activity is strategic, evidence-led and aligned with existing statutory responsibilities.

Close working relationships with local authorities, the Environment Agency and regional INNS partners are central to this approach. Coordinated action helps to maximise limited resources, reduce duplication of effort and strengthen long-term impact across administrative boundaries.



*Figure 3: Friends of Rockwell Park Himalayan balsam 'bash' trial event, Darlington*

## Key Development Phase Aims and Activities

The development phase had three core aims:

1. **Assess the condition of natural heritage affected by INNS** across the Tees catchment through surveys and mapping.
2. **Build and strengthen partnerships**, extending beyond existing networks to reach new sectors, communities, and areas.
3. **Create a deliverable, inclusive, and evidence-based plan** for long-term INNS management.

The approved purposes for the development phase of TISP included:

1. Appointing a project manager, volunteer coordinator, and consultants to support the development phase.
2. Identifying and working with community and amenity groups, with particular focus on engaging new audiences from underserved areas.
3. Producing a Heritage Condition Assessment to inform the selection of priority sites.
4. Preparing and producing an Activity Plan/area action plan.
5. Identifying biological control sites for project delivery, including 25 Himalayan balsam, 5 Japanese knotweed, and 2 for floating pennywort.
6. Identify and work with all landowners and stakeholders for priority sites. Landowner agreements to be developed.
7. Updating the Tees Rivers Trust Business Plan.
8. Producing a Management and Maintenance Plan
9. Evaluate the development phase.
10. Developing volunteering opportunities and a training programme.
11. Obtaining relevant consents and permissions for the development phase and progress those required for delivery.
12. Identifying schools, colleges, and universities interested in the project and agreeing a delivery timetable. Undertake development work for educational resources.

This phase set the foundations for a well-structured, evidence-led, and community-focused delivery phase, ensuring that subsequent activity would be strategic, inclusive, and sustainable.

## Partners and Stakeholders Involved

TISP has engaged a wide and diverse network of partners at local, regional, and national levels. Throughout the development phase, the project sought broad input through community outreach, attending events, hosting stalls, and presenting at local and national conferences. This approach generated in-depth feedback and ensured that all key stakeholders could contribute meaningfully to project design and planning.

The key partners and stakeholders involved are summarised in the table below:

| Partner Category                                    | Key Stakeholders   |
|---|--|
| <b>Local authorities &amp; parish councils</b>      | Darlington, Great Aycliffe, Stockton, Hartlepool, Redcar & Cleveland, Middlesbrough, Durham County<br><br>Parish Councils: Hurworth, Neasham, Middleton & Newbiggin                |
| <b>Landowners &amp; farmers</b>                     | Private landowners across the catchment affected by INNS   |
| <b>Community &amp; volunteer groups</b>             | Refugee Futures, Catalyst Stockton, local “Friends of” groups; <i>see Volunteer Training &amp; Development Programme for full list of community partners.</i>                      |
| <b>Schools &amp; youth organisations</b>            | Teesdale School, Durham University, Teesside University, Newcastle University, local schools ( <i>full list available in Education Contacts &amp; Engagement Plan</i> )            |
| <b>Angling clubs &amp; recreational river users</b> | Darlington AC, Darlington Brown Trout, Thornaby, Stockton, North Ormesby Institute AC, ATDAC, Yarm, Hartlepool, Hutton Ruby Fly Fishers, Paddle UK, Stockton & Thornaby Canoe Club |
| <b>Regional collaborators</b>                       | Neighbouring Rivers Trusts (Tyne, Wear, Tweed), Environmental Record Information Centre NE, Newcastle University   |
| <b>National networks</b>                            | GB Non-Native Species Secretariat, Environment Agency, Northumbrian Water, other sectoral working groups   |

## 3. Evaluation Methodology

The development phase was evaluated using a combination of desk-based review, stakeholder feedback, and direct input from project staff and partners. This mixed-method approach allowed both quantitative outputs and qualitative learning to be captured, providing a well-rounded picture of progress and impact.

Key elements of the evaluation included reviewing project documentation such as plans, reports, tender outputs and meeting notes; gathering feedback from volunteers and community members through informal conversations, emails, and feedback forms; holding reflective discussions with delivery partners and contractors; analysing outputs from commissioned work,

including draft educational materials and condition assessments; and internal reflection on delivery processes, challenges encountered, and changes in scope.

### **Key Data Sources**

| <b>Data Source</b>  | <b>Purpose / What it Provided</b>   |
|---|---|
| Heritage Condition Assessment                               | Spatial and thematic understanding of INNS impact across the Tees catchment including areas ‘at risk’ and management recommendations. |
| Volunteer feedback  | Insights on motivation, satisfaction, and inclusion from those involved   |
| Draft educational materials & feedback from delivery trials | Reviewed for quality, relevance, and alignment with Heritage Fund outcomes  |
| Tendering & procurement records                             | Scoring matrix, contractor proposals, and decision-making transparency  |
| Project documentation                                       | Activity Plan, Management & Maintenance Plan, Business Plan, Communications Plan, Heritage Condition Assessment, Interpretation Plan  |
| Meeting records & emails                                    | Captured stakeholder engagement, partner discussions, and landowner outreach  |
| Photographic & GIS data                                     | Visual evidence of INNS presence, survey activity, and site conditions  |
| Event & engagement metrics                                  | Numbers of participants, number of events attended, partner organisations contacted, and social media reach                           |

### **Limitations of the Evaluation**

A few constraints should be noted:

- The 12-month development phase limited opportunities for in-depth, formal interviews with all partners and stakeholders.
- Some materials and assessments were still in draft form at the time of writing, meaning final outputs will be assessed during the delivery phase.
- Volunteer feedback was informal and not fully standardised, which may affect consistency across responses.

- Weather, seasonal constraints, and staffing capacity affected the volume of fieldwork and engagement in some areas.

Despite these limitations, the evaluation provides a robust and representative overview of the development phase, highlighting key achievements, learning, and areas for refinement in preparation for the delivery phase.

#### 4. Protecting the Environment

During the development phase, conservation work focused on laying the foundations for delivery while embedding community stewardship and long-term impact. Activities were designed to expand volunteer involvement, strengthen landowner relationships, trial innovative management approaches, and gather baseline data to guide strategic, cost-effective interventions.



Figure 4: Aislaby Trial Balsam Bash with Stockton MP, Matt Vickers and members of the village

Volunteer activities were central to this work and included spraying giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam hand-pulling trials with new community groups such as Friends of Rockwell Park and Aislaby Community Group.

Seed collection for CABI testing directly inform upcoming delivery phase biocontrol activities. Habitat management through brush cutting and access clearance, bulb planting (>3,000 bulbs), and traditional hedge laying helping to preserve local skills and build relationships with local landowners. Contingency funding also allowed

seven volunteers to be trained on PA1 Safe Use of Pesticides (Foundation Module), PA6AW Handheld Applicator Near Water, ensuring practical capability within the team.

The Heritage Condition Assessment was a cornerstone of the development phase. It provided a detailed overview of INNS distribution, density, high-risk areas, flood zones, and the potential impact on heritage assets such as the Teesdale Way.

While some sites had constraints for biological control (e.g., minimum density requirements or flood restrictions), the assessment captured a comprehensive catchment-wide picture. This work



Figure 5: Himalayan balsam site selection and collection of seeds for drying and testing

informed the conservation plan, highlighting priority species (giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam,

Japanese knotweed, and floating pennywort) and enabling the development of strategic, cost-effective management interventions, including innovative approaches such as drone spraying.

Drone surveys, funded from underspend, confirmed topographical high points, allowed practical trials of drone management, and supported landowner engagement. Other surveys, including species monitoring and habitat assessments, provided a baseline for native and invasive species across the catchment informing future restoration and reintroduction opportunities. By mapping INNS impact on heritage assets, the project protects historic landscapes and ensures that culturally significant sites remain accessible and valued. *Drone report is available within the appendix.*

The development phase also delivered the Management and Maintenance Plan and secured agreements and consents with landowners, ensuring the foundations are in place for the delivery phase. These activities collectively strengthened the project’s capacity to achieve long-term environmental impact.

| Activity  | Purpose / Outcome   | Approved Purpose | Notes / Links  |
|---|---|------------------|--|
| <b>Giant hogweed spraying &amp; Himalayan balsam hand-pulling</b>   | Volunteer-led management trials, site monitoring, skill development   | AP3, AP10        | Friends of Rockwell Park, Aislaby Community Group                  |
| <b>Seed collection &amp; preparation for CABI</b>                   | Testing seed viability to inform future biological control sites  | AP3, AP5         | Baseline for delivery planning                                     |
| <b>Brush cutting, access clearance, bulb planting, hedge laying</b> | Habitat management, community engagement, preservation of traditional skills                                | AP2, AP10        | >3,000 bulbs planted, 4 hedge laying sessions with Refugee Futures |
| <b>Heritage Condition Assessment</b>                                | Baseline INNS distribution, heritage risk, and flood zone mapping; informed strategic conservation planning | AP3              | <i>Full report in Appendix</i>                                     |
| <b>Biocontrol site identification</b>                               | Planning for biological control interventions   | AP5              | Linked to INNS Management Plan & Map                               |
| <b>Drone surveys</b>  | Topographical mapping, practical trials, stakeholder engagement   | AP3              | Droneflight report; informed delivery planning                     |

|  |   |           |  |
|--|---|-----------|--|
| <b>Species &amp; habitat surveys</b>       | Baseline biodiversity monitoring; informs restoration opportunities | AP3       | Bio-blitz approach                           |
| <b>Management &amp; Maintenance Plan</b>   | Long-term conservation strategy                                     | AP8       | Ensures continuity beyond project delivery   |
| <b>Landowner agreements &amp; consents</b> | Permissions secured for delivery phase                              | AP6, AP11 | Table optional if many individual agreements |

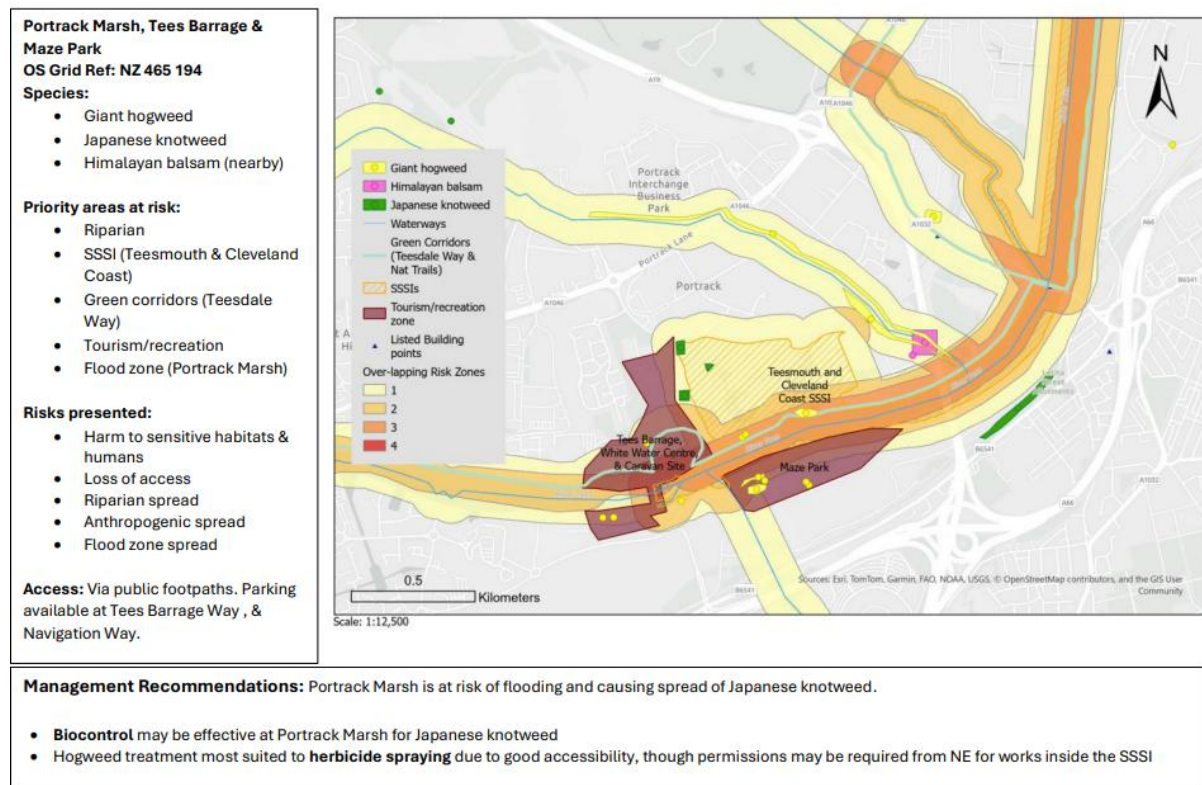
The combination of baseline assessments, volunteer-led activities, drone trials, landowner engagement, and the development of strategic plans means the project is well-prepared for delivery. These efforts provide a clear picture of priority sites, feasible interventions, and opportunities for innovative management, ensuring conservation actions in the next phase will be targeted, efficient, and impactful.



*Figure 6: Hedge Laying activities at Newsham Grange, Stockton on Tees*

## 5. Saving Tees Heritage

Natural heritage in the Tees catchment encompasses both ecological assets: rivers, wetlands, native species habitats; and culturally significant landscapes, trails, and recreational areas, including the Teesdale Way and designated SSSI sites. Invasive non-native species (INNS) threaten these assets by impacting biodiversity, altering habitats, and restricting access to valued natural spaces.



During the development phase, TISP focused on identifying heritage assets at risk, gathering baseline data, and planning targeted interventions to protect them. Activities were designed to prioritise sites of highest ecological and cultural value, inform delivery-phase conservation, and build community awareness and stewardship, ensuring that heritage is not only protected now, but respected and valued by future generations.

| Activity / Output                          | Heritage Outcome  | Approved Purpose | Notes / Links  |
|--|---|------------------|--|
| <b>Heritage Condition Assessment (HCA)</b> | Identifies heritage sites at risk from INNS (Teesdale Way, SSSIs, recreational areas) | AP3              | Provides baseline for prioritisation, informs targeted management and eradication efforts; full report in Appendix |
| <b>Drone confirmation surveys</b>          | Validates condition of key heritage areas and accessibility                           | AP3              | Supports delivery-phase planning and innovative  |

|  |  |             |  |
|--|--|-------------|--|
|  |  |             | interventions such as drone spraying   |
| <b>Activity Plan</b>   | Strategic overview of development phase achievements and delivery priorities             | AP4         | Highlights high-risk heritage sites, sets targets for future conservation and eradication, informs delivery strategy |
| <b>Volunteer &amp; community engagement</b>                        | Raises awareness, builds stewardship, encourages long-term protection of heritage assets | AP10 / AP12 | Activities in schools, community groups, and Friends of groups embed understanding of heritage value                 |
| <b>Site prioritisation for eradication &amp; biocontrol trials</b> | Targets management where heritage value is high or risk is greatest                      | AP5 / AP3   | Ensures interventions maximise heritage protection and environmental benefit   |
| <b>Learning from development phase</b>                             | Lessons inform delivery-phase interventions to safeguard heritage                        | N/A         | Adaptive management, monitoring, and stakeholder collaboration ensure informed, effective delivery-phase action      |

The development phase has created a detailed understanding of heritage assets at risk and prioritised sites for protection and intervention. Combining baseline data, volunteer engagement, strategic planning, and innovative trial approaches, TISP has established a strong foundation for the delivery phase. This ensures that natural heritage across the



Figure 7: Drone surveys using multi-spectral and RGB cameras. CC: Andrew Griffiths

Tees catchment will be protected and enhanced, while also fostering community stewardship and knowledge-sharing to secure long-term impact and respect for the environment.

## 6. Inclusion, Access & Participation

The development phase of TISP focused on widening access, building capacity, and embedding community stewardship in the management of invasive non-native species. Efforts concentrated on volunteer recruitment, training, and engagement, as well as establishing partnerships with schools, colleges, universities, and community groups, including underserved areas, to ensure broad participation.

The role of the Volunteer Coordinator was pivotal, enabling structured, inclusive opportunities and supporting participants to gain skills, experience, and confidence in environmental management. Activities during the development phase were designed to provide practical experience, raise awareness of INNS, and encourage long-term stewardship of the Tees catchment.

| Activity / Output                             | Outcome / Impact  | Approved Purpose | Notes / Links  |
|---|---|------------------|--|
| <b>Recruitment of a volunteer coordinator</b> | A designated resource for volunteer led activities rather than a reliance on a project by project basis   | AP1              | Hired in May 2025.   |
| <b>Volunteer recruitment &amp; engagement</b> | 75 expressed interest, 54 new volunteers attended at least 1 session, 10 became core volunteers   | AP1 / AP2        | Core volunteers grew to 30; 2,480 hours contributed in 2025, 305 hours in Jan 2026 alone |
| <b>Volunteer training programme</b>           | Skills development in pesticide use (7), balsam removal (55), knapsack servicing (10), GH identification (50+)  | AP10             | Supports capacity building and long-term project delivery<br><br><i>See appendix</i>     |
| <b>Volunteer sessions</b>                     | 72 sessions in 2025 (hogweed management, balsam bashes, brush cutting, bulb planting, hedge laying, litter picking, bio-blitz, equipment servicing, training); 14 sessions Jan–Feb 2026 | AP10             | Expanded evening/weekend sessions increased participation of younger volunteers (<50)    |
| <b>Community group collaboration</b>          | Worked with Refugee Futures, Rockwell Nature Reserve, corporate partners (Northumbrian Water, Tees Active, Johnson Matthey, EE/BT)  | AP2              | Strengthened local partnerships and extended volunteer reach                             |

|   |  |      |   |
|---|--|------|---|
| <b>Schools, colleges &amp; universities</b> | Teesside University, Durham University, Newcastle University, Teesdale School  | AP12 | Delivery timetable agreed; increased educational engagement, trial education session completed within a school. <i>See appendix</i> |
| <b>Awareness &amp; outreach</b>             | Big River Watch, Hurworth Fair, Tees Barrage, Tees Active centres, presentations to 500+ people, Catalyst Stockton Volunteer Forum, Stokesley Climate Action Group | AP2  | Recruitment of new volunteers, raising awareness of heritage & environmental protection   |
| <b>Volunteer feedback &amp; evaluation</b>  | Testimonials highlight learning, skills development, community building, and personal satisfaction   | N/A  | Demonstrates value to participants, motivation for continued engagement and legacy  |

The development phase demonstrated that adapting volunteer opportunities to evenings and weekends significantly increased participation, particularly among younger volunteers, and helped build a strong core team. This core group, now 30 individuals, has already contributed substantial time, equivalent to nearly two full-time staff members for one month in January 2026 alone, highlighting the scale and commitment of volunteer input.

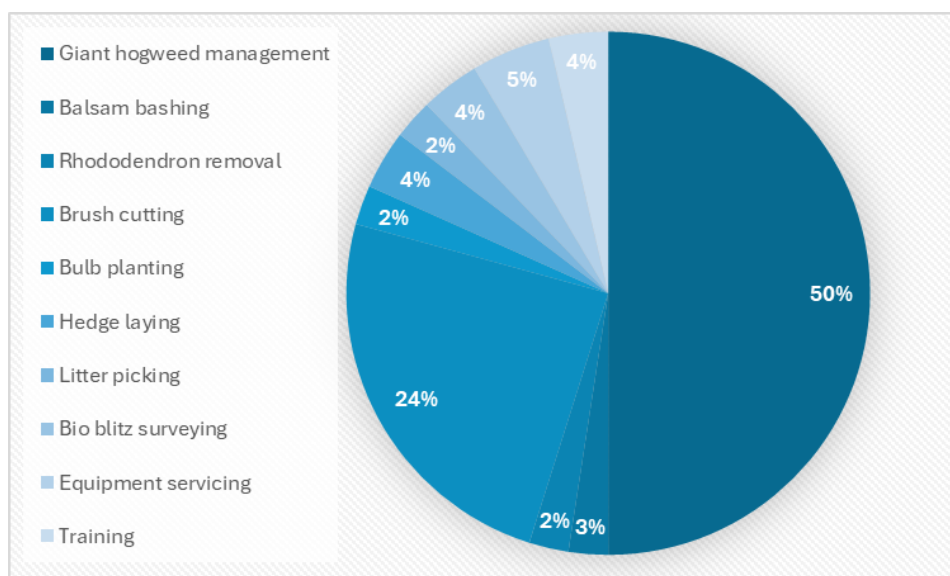


Figure 8: Pie Chart demonstrating the variety of volunteer activities that have been offered in the TISP development phase.

Volunteers reported diverse motivations for joining, including gaining practical skills, meeting like-minded people, contributing to environmental protection, career development, and

improving mental and physical wellbeing. Training and hands-on activities not only enhanced individual confidence and capacity but also strengthened sustainable stewardship of the Tees catchment, ensuring that knowledge and skills are embedded for long-term benefit.

Engagement with corporate and community groups further broadened participation, reinforced partnerships, and created networks to support ongoing activity. Feedback from participants consistently highlighted high satisfaction, recognition of the project's value, and enthusiasm for continued involvement.

These insights will inform the delivery phase by guiding how sessions are scheduled, how training is structured, and how partnerships are maintained, ensuring inclusion, accessibility, and meaningful participation remain at the heart of TISP.



*Figure 9: Group of volunteers brush cutting and litter picking along river Tees, Darlington*

The Development Phase has established strong foundations for the Delivery Phase, including a dedicated core volunteer team with growing participation across age groups, and inclusive, flexible opportunities that address barriers such as ability, timing, and transport. Clear processes for skills training, monitoring, and evaluating participation have been put in place, alongside strong partnerships with community groups, schools, universities, and corporate supporters. These foundations ensure that the Delivery Phase can expand participation, foster lasting environmental stewardship, and provide sustainable benefits for both the community and the Tees catchment.



Figure 10: First Hedge Laying event with Refugee Futures at Newsham Grange

🎬 "For all year round entertainment!!" - Geoff

🌅 "Escape into the crisp, fresh air, appreciate the changing seasons, autumn colours and winter sparkle and make your world a better place" - Sarah

💪 "Social contact, fresh air and exercise! Good for your mental health and a good use of spare time" - John

😊 "A chance to get out rather than go stir crazy. Enjoying the changing colours and the sunlight on your face. Good for the mood. Getting to meet new people, have a cuppa and a biscuit - whats not to like? Its a definite feel good factor too, doing something worthwhile with likeminded people feels good." - Bruce

☕ "Free coffee, biscuits, friendships and fresh air!" - Brian

❄️ "It's a great winter motivator for getting outdoors when you could so easily stay inside. The tasks we perform not only help us better control the invasive species, but improve wildlife habitats creating a better environment, sense of achievement and satisfaction." - John 2

🐦 "There's no such thing as bad weather! You get to appreciate nature as it changes and see the migrating birds." - Shane

🍂 "Autumn and Winter draw a natural conclusion to the year and to your work in previous seasons. If you haven't volunteered before it helps you to feel more aligned with nature, a part of it and more prepared for what's ahead." - Michael

Figure 11: Volunteer feedback from core group on why they volunteer with Tees Rivers Trust

During the development phase of TISP, a key focus was creating educational resources and engagement opportunities that raise awareness of invasive non-native species (INNS) and embed long-term stewardship across schools, colleges, and universities. Activities were designed to support a broad range of ages, cross-curricular learning, and inclusive access. Resources were trialled and reviewed by teachers to ensure relevance, usability, and alignment with national curriculum objectives. Feedback from these trials will inform refinements during the delivery phase to maximise impact.

| Activity / Output                 | Outcome / Impact  | Approved Purpose | Notes / Links   |
|-----------------------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Creation of educational materials | Cross-curricular resources covering KS2–KS4; adaptable for different learning abilities                             | AP12             | Includes teacher guides, pupil booklets, curriculum-linked packs, and PowerPoint presentations such as <i>The Big 4 INNS and the River Tees</i> |
| Testing materials in schools      | Trial sessions gathered feedback from pupils and teachers to assess usability, engagement, and curriculum relevance | AP12             | Session trialled in a school; feedback captured and documented. <a href="#">See appendix</a>  |
| Teacher review & consultation     | Ensured materials are relevant, engaging, and practical for classroom use   | AP12             | Feedback from primary and secondary teachers incorporated into materials; iterative process continues through delivery phase                    |
| Educational resources produced    | High-quality, accessible materials ready for delivery phase   | AP12             | Includes pupil booklets, curriculum guides, reading lists, and interactive PowerPoint content   |

The development phase demonstrated that cross-curricular educational materials are highly effective in engaging pupils across KS2–KS4, allowing teachers to integrate INNS and river ecology topics into science, English, history, and art lessons. Trialling these resources in schools highlighted strong engagement among pupils and provided valuable insights for refinement, including adaptations for SEND and age-appropriate examples. Teacher feedback confirmed that the materials are practical, relevant, and ready to support both classroom learning and extracurricular environmental education. Early engagement with schools has also established relationships that will facilitate ongoing participation and help embed stewardship behaviours in

the next generation. These insights will guide the delivery phase, ensuring that resources remain adaptable, inclusive, and impactful.

| <b>KS2</b>  | <b>SESSION A<br/>YOUR RIVER CATCHMENT IS AN ECOSYSTEM!</b>   | <b>SESSION B<br/>INTRODUCING THE INNS</b>   | <b>SESSION C CONSERVATION,<br/>BIODIVERSITY AND LOCAL ACTION</b>   |
|-------------|--|---|--|
| Science     | <b>Habitats in the river Ecosystem</b><br>GAME <a href="#">SOUNDS OF OUR RIVER SLIDESHOW</a><br>In small groups - brainstorm the different types of river habitat within the catchment, what plant and animals might you find in each habitat.   | <b>THE BIG 4 INNS SLIDESHOW</b><br>Quiz (in pairs) N, N OR INNS???<br>Take home 'Stop the Spread' CHECK-CLEAN-DRY leaflet + INNS leaflets<br><b>Recording data</b> Look at the leaf shapes & patterns - describe the differences. | <b>Biodiversity Field work</b><br>GAME Webbing<br><b>Gathering data</b><br>Individuals: The microhike + sound map<br>Riverbank transect (group work)   |
| English     | <b>Enriching vocabulary</b><br>'Words of Water' 10 mins small groups brainstorm and record words you associate with water/river..<br>Imagine a walk along the riverside, what kind of habitat do you walk through? Describe the sounds, colours, earth and wildlife.   | <b>The plant hunters letters...</b><br>Imagine the correspondence ...from the plant hunter, the gardener, the landowners back home, the Nursery business, Kew gardens ...<br>Who will you be?                                     | <b>'My river'</b><br>Which 2 rivers do you belong to? Write down how you feel about them?<br>Claim belonging as a 'River Guardian - Standing up for our River' campaign  |
| Geography   | <b>Geographical skills Mapwork</b><br><b>Trace the course of the River Tees, how many tributaries, springs and waterfalls can you find in your map?</b><br><b>+ Human geography</b> - Look for villages along the river. How many are right next to the river? How many springs can you see and where? Where are the sewage plants (water works)? Reservoirs? Pools? | <b>Locational knowledge</b><br>Comparing maps! Using the OS map of the Tees Valley along with ESRI map of the Tees can you work out where the INNS are?   | <b>Human connections... 'Source to Sea'</b><br>Group work - apart from walking the 100 mile Teesdale way, how do people enjoy accessing the Tees and tributaries?<br>Create a class poster of river activities.                  |
| Art         | <b>Create a sketch book/record &amp; design</b><br>Mini River book of Words- Practice brush control then paint your own meandering river Tees on watercolour paper* once dry cut and fold, then using the words you gathered earlier let them flow over each page in turn, recording your river reflections.<br>*see template options below                          | <b>Inspired by leaves</b><br>Use the NNSS ID sheets to draw or sculpt the leaf shapes for each of the BIG 4 INNS.<br>Describe the plants in a Haiku on each leaf  | <b>The Tees River Corridor...</b> create your own imaginative river catchment display in the school corridor using whatever materials suit, raising awareness of the INNS, and motivating others to become River Guardians, too. |
| History     | <b>Local History Detectives...</b> Harnessing the natural power of the racing Tees using Watermills . Find out how many were built, and where.. What they were used for and which is the closest one to you?   | <b>Ecological imperialism THE PLANT HUNTERS</b> Who discovered the Rubber tree and what did they do with it?  | <b>Women in History</b> Both Maria Sybilla Merian & Marianne North contributed to our knowledge of plant biodiversity. Who is your present day botanist hero & why?  |
| Citizenship | The water of the mighty Tees is a life giving source to all, including us! What can <b>you</b> do to protect the right of our river to flow free from threats?   | Use the NNSS Identification sheets to help your family recognise the BIG 4 INNS   | <b>RIVER GUARDIANS</b> - Raise awareness of INNS in school - include them in your 'river corridor'.  |

Figure 12: Sample of teachers curriculum guide produced for KS2 showing how the project fits into variety of subjects

The Development Phase has established strong foundations for educational engagement in the Delivery Phase, including resources that are fully adaptable, inclusive, and aligned with national curriculum requirements. Clear processes for trialling, gathering feedback, and making adaptations have been put in place to ensure continuous improvement during delivery. Established relationships with schools, colleges, and universities create a network for ongoing educational engagement, while feedback mechanisms and teacher consultations will continue to guide resource development and delivery strategies. These foundations ensure that the Delivery Phase can expand educational reach, enhance pupil engagement with environmental stewardship, and support the long-term development of knowledge and skills across the Tees catchment.



My class found the session engaging and were so enthusiastic! They loved using the ink and creating their own images. They used previous knowledge of life cycles and enjoyed learning about hogweed! Thank you!

What I liked about today is everything and learning about the giant hogweed.

Figure 13: Education material trial session with KS2 at Whitehouse Primary School, Stockton on Tees

## 7. Organisational Sustainability

The development phase has significantly strengthened the organisational capacity of the Tees Rivers Trust to deliver long-term invasive non-native species management across the Tees catchment.

Through targeted staff and volunteer training, strengthened governance and planning, landowner agreements, updated business planning, and the appointment of key roles, the project is now positioned for confident and sustainable delivery.

This phase has ensured that systems, skills, partnerships, and strategic clarity are firmly in place, enabling the transition from development to delivery with resilience and long-term impact.

| Activity / Output  | Organisational Impact   | Approved Purpose | Notes  |
|--|---|------------------|--|
| <b>Appointment of Project Manager and Volunteer Coordinator</b>  | Dedicated leadership and consistent volunteer development                     | AP1              | Volunteer Coordinator role introduced for first time at the Trust, improving consistency, communication and growth |
| <b>Staff training (First Aid, Open Water Safety, PA1/PA6AW, Stem Injection, ATV, Boom Spraying, ArcGIS Mapping, INNS &amp; biosecurity training)</b> | Builds in-house technical capacity for safe and effective delivery            | N/A              | Reduces reliance on external contractors and strengthens resilience. <a href="#">See appendix</a>                  |
| <b>Volunteer training (PA1/PA6AW x7, hedge laying, brush cutting, tool servicing, knapsack repair)</b>   | Develops skilled volunteer workforce able to take ownership of river sections | AP10             | Supports long-term sustainability of INNS management   |
| <b>Activity Plan/Area Action Plan</b>  | Clear roadmap for delivery phase outputs and outcomes                         | AP4              | Provides structured framework for implementation. <a href="#">See appendix</a>                                     |
| <b>Landowner &amp; stakeholder agreements</b>  | 7 local authorities, 70 private landowners, 8 angling clubs signed agreements | AP6              | Enables coordinated catchment-wide action and avoids duplication   |

|   |  |      |   |
|---|--|------|---|
| <b>Updated Business Plan</b>            | Strategic clarity on future direction and funding      | AP7  | Strengthens long-term financial and operational planning. <i>See appendix</i> |
| <b>Consents and permissions secured</b> | Legal and operational readiness for delivery phase     | AP11 | Supports compliance and heritage protection. <i>See appendix</i>              |
| <b>Development Phase Evaluation</b>     | Lessons identified and embedded into delivery planning | AP9  | Creation of Development to Delivery Key Changes document. <i>See appendix</i> |

The development phase has embedded sustainability at multiple levels. The appointment of a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator has been transformative. Previously, volunteer management was delivered project-by-project, limiting continuity and growth. The new role has enabled structured communication through newsletters, pre-session video briefings, improved site updates, and expanded evening and weekend opportunities, significantly increasing participation and consistency.



### Welcome to our Tees Rivers Trust Volunteer Site!

We want to make volunteering with us as easy and enjoyable as possible. This site should hopefully provide you with all of the information you need to start and continue volunteering with us.

We have a range of activities for you to get involved in, working all the way from source to sea! You can find out more information about what we do on our website linked below.

[Our Website](#)

#### Documents

[See all](#)

[+ New](#) [Upload](#) [Edit in grid view](#) [Export to Excel](#) [Sync](#)

[All Documents](#)

Name

- Application Forms
- Health and Safety
- INNS
- Newsletters
- Oyster Monitoring Details
- Photos
- Training
- Virtual Christmas Cards

Figure 14: Volunteer site that has been developed further with useful information about activities, photos, bi-monthly newsletters and training.

Investment in staff training has built substantial in-house expertise across safety, pesticide application, mapping, and operational delivery. This reduces dependency on external contractors and ensures that the Trust retains critical skills beyond the lifetime of the project.



Figure 15: Open water safety training (left) and ATV Quad Bike Training (right)

Volunteer training has created a skilled and confident core team, including seven newly qualified PA1/PA6AW volunteers who are keen to take ownership of their own river sections. This shift from participation to stewardship is key to long-term sustainability.

Formalised landowner agreements, including seven local authorities, 70 private landowners, and eight angling clubs, provide a coordinated catchment-wide framework for action. These relationships extend beyond invasive species management and strengthen the Trust's wider ambitions around farm advice, habitat management, and river restoration.

The updated Business Plan, alongside secured consents and permissions, ensures that the project is not only operationally ready but strategically aligned for long-term delivery and future funding resilience.

## 8. Key Achievements & Lessons Learned

The Development Phase has not only achieved its approved purposes but has strengthened the project's clarity, partnerships, and operational readiness. Through practical testing, stakeholder feedback, and reflective review, the project has evolved into a more inclusive, strategically aligned, and deliverable programme.

The following section summarises key achievements, challenges encountered, and the lessons that will inform the Delivery Phase.

### Key Achievements

1. Environmental Impact and Delivery Beyond Target

Although the Development Phase focused primarily on planning and preparation, it delivered significant tangible environmental outcomes across the Tees catchment.

Volunteer efforts resulted in 3,285 hours of recorded activity equating to over **£65,700** in volunteer time, significantly exceeding the original **£15,000 target**. This contribution is equivalent to approximately one and a half full-time staff members for a year, demonstrating exceptional community commitment and capacity building during the Development Phase.

Operationally, the project delivered 72 volunteer sessions in 2025 and 14 additional sessions in early 2026, covering 110 miles of ground in giant hogweed management, planting 3,000 bulbs along the Tees in Darlington, supporting rhododendron removal, brush cutting, hedge laying, bio-blitz surveying and litter removal.

In addition, drone surveys were undertaken across priority areas, strengthening the evidence base for Delivery Phase targeting and identifying high-risk and previously inaccessible sites. Trialling of educational materials within schools further ensured that environmental awareness and stewardship are embedded alongside practical management.

Collectively, these outcomes demonstrate that the Development Phase not only achieved its intended preparatory objectives but also delivered measurable environmental benefit and exceeded expectations in volunteer contribution and community engagement.



*Figure 16: Saturday volunteer day! Showing growth in volunteer numbers and a variety of ages and backgrounds.*

## 2. Strong Public and Stakeholder Support

The Development Phase secured substantial support across the Tees catchment, demonstrating widespread confidence in both the project's objectives and the Trust's ability to deliver.

Over 80 landowner agreements were secured in priority areas, alongside formal agreements with seven local authorities and eight angling clubs. In addition, 30 letters of support were submitted as part of the Delivery Phase application, representing a broad cross-section of stakeholders.

Securing this level of commitment across a large and varied catchment required sustained engagement, relationship-building and clear communication of the project's long-term benefits. The resulting agreements establish a coordinated, catchment-scale framework for delivery and significantly reduce implementation risk in the next phase.

|    | Stakeholder  | From  | Role                                     | Date Received |   |
|----|--|---|--|---------------|---|
| 1  | Volunteer  | Joint letter from 16 Tees Rivers Trust Volunteers | Volunteer                                | 26.07.2024    | * |
| 2  | Volunteer  | Ian Towers  | Volunteer                                | 07.2024       |   |
| 3  | Volunteer  | Jon Sykes   | Volunteer                                | 08.2024       |   |
| 4  | Landowner – Sockburn                                       | Andrew Cracknell                                  | Landowner and Farmer                     | 08.2024       |   |
| 5  | Landowner – Newsham/Aislaby                                | Andrew Dale                                       | Landowner and Farmer                     | 07.2024       |   |
| 6  | Landowner – Ingleby Barwick                                | Christine Mundy                                   | Landowner, Angling Bailiff and Volunteer | 06.2024       |   |
| 7  | Landowner – Wycliffe                                       | Edward Peat                                       | Landowner                                | 05.2024       |   |
| 8  | Landowner – Eryholme                                       | Barney Wrightson                                  | Landowner                                | 15.08.2024    |   |
| 9  | Tees Valley Combined Authority                             | Ben Houchen                                       | Tees Valley Mayor                        | 30.07.2024    |   |
| 10 | Hurworth Parish Council                                    | Peter Allan                                       | Parish Clerk RFO                         | 27.07.2024    |   |
| 11 | Darlington Borough Council                                 | Pippa Smaling                                     | Parks, Allotments & Countryside Ranger   | 02.08.2024    |   |
| 12 | Stockton Borough Council                                   | David Askey                                       | Countryside Programmes Officer           | 24.07.2024    |   |
| 13 | Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI) | Dr Richard Shaw                                   | Centre Director                          | 11.06.2025    |   |
| 14 | GB Non Native Species Secretariat (GB NNSS)                | Dr Niall Moore                                    | CEO GB NNSS                              | 25.06.2024    | * |

|    |   |                               |  |                   |   |
|----|---|-------------------------------|--|-------------------|---|
| 15 | Environment Agency                          | Graeme Hull                   | Tees Catchment Coordinator                               | 07.08.2024        |   |
| 16 | Canal and Rivers Trust                      | Sean McGinley                 | Regional Director, Yorkshire & North East                | 08.08.2024        |   |
| 17 | Paddle UK                                   | Richard Atkinson              | Access and Environmental Lead                            | 07.08.2024        |   |
| 18 | <b>Refugee Futures</b>                      | <b>Rachael Smith</b>          | <b>Volunteer Projects Lead</b>                           | <b>07.10.2025</b> | * |
| 19 | <b>Durham University</b>                    | <b>Prof Catherine Reading</b> | <b>Director of Professional Development and Outreach</b> | <b>10.2025</b>    | * |
| 20 | <b>Blackwell Hill Community Association</b> | <b>David Youldon</b>          | <b>Chairman</b>  | <b>08.06.2024</b> | * |
| 21 | Your Tees Catchment Partnership             | Ian Proudler                  | Catchment Manager  | 07.2024           |   |
| 22 | Newcastle University                        | Prof Aileen Mill              | Professor of Modelling Evidence and Policy               | 15.09.2025        |   |
| 23 | Drone Flight                                | Andrew Griffiths              | CEO  | 07.2024           |   |
| 24 | Barnard Castle Community Group              | Geoff King                    | Volunteer  | 07.2024           |   |
| 25 | <b>Middlesbrough Angling Club</b>           | <b>Phil Dunne</b>             | <b>MAC Welfare Officer</b>                               | <b>07.08.2024</b> | * |
| 26 | North Ormesby Institute Angling Section     | Barry Todd                    | President/Treasurer/Secretary                            | 06.2024           |   |
| 27 | Yarm Angling Club                           | Paul Richmond                 | Member of YAL  | 05.07.2024        |   |
| 28 | Tyne Rivers Trust                           | Jack Bloomer                  | Chief Scientist and Technical Director                   | 12.06.2025        |   |
| 29 | Wear Rivers Trust                           | Kirstie Hutchinson            | Chief Executive Officer                                  | 16.06.2025        |   |
| 30 | Environmental Records Information Centre NE | Paul Stevens                  | ERIC NE Coordinator                                      | 28.08.2025        |   |

***\*Those in bold are being used as supporting letter evidence for the TISP delivery phase application.***

### 3. Strengthened Operational Readiness and Long-Term Capacity

The Development Phase significantly strengthened the Trust's ability to deliver invasive species management at catchment scale.

Rather than simply preparing for delivery, the project invested in the systems, infrastructure and skills required to sustain long-term impact. This included establishing a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator role, securing necessary consents and permissions, refining mapping and survey data, and integrating drone technology to improve site assessment and prioritisation.

Operational learning during the Development Phase highlighted the scale and logistical complexity of working across a large river catchment. In response, the project highlighted the need for a dedicated 4WD vehicle to improve safe access to remote sites and increase efficiency of equipment transport for delivery.

Collectively, these investments have reduced delivery risk, improved safety and strengthened internal resilience. The Trust is now better positioned not only to implement the Delivery Phase effectively, but to sustain invasive species management beyond the lifetime of the project.

## **Challenges and How They Were Addressed**

### **1. Landowner Agreements and Catchment-Scale Coordination**

**Challenge:** Securing permissions across a large and diverse catchment was initially complex. Variations in ownership structures and seasonal factors, such as early harvests, created delays in some areas.

**Response & Outcome:** The team implemented a structured engagement approach, prioritising high-risk sites and leveraging farm advisory resources to provide flexible scheduling. Contingency planning ensured momentum was maintained, ultimately resulting in over 80 landowner agreements across the Tees catchment.

This not only resolved initial delays but also established a strong, coordinated framework for catchment-scale delivery, setting a benchmark for long-term collaboration.

### **2. Accessibility Barriers to Participation**

**Challenge:** Transport limitations and session timing initially restricted volunteer participation, particularly among underrepresented groups.

**Response & Outcome:** Evening and weekend sessions were introduced, alongside contingency funding for minibus transport and diversification of volunteer roles. These measures significantly increased inclusion, improved retention, and strengthened volunteer capacity.

As a result, the project now enjoys a growing and diverse volunteer base, with a core team contributing over **3,285 hours** in the Development Phase, a level of engagement that far exceeded expectations. Over 60 individuals from Refugee Futures have attended volunteer activities across 3 sessions, many returning in upcoming activities.

## Lessons Learned

The Development Phase reinforced the importance of dedicated volunteer coordination as a core component of inclusive and sustainable delivery. Having a designated Volunteer Coordinator provided consistency in communication, structured activities more effectively, and significantly improved volunteer retention and growth. This role has proven essential in building a cohesive volunteer community rather than relying on ad hoc engagement.

Early investment in technical skills and equipment also strengthened the project's long-term resilience. Developing internal capacity in areas such as mapping, pesticide application, and species identification has reduced reliance on external support and will lower long-term operational costs. This proactive approach has ensured that the project enters the Delivery Phase with strengthened in-house expertise and greater confidence in managing complex sites.

Structured and strategic landowner engagement was identified as critical to achieving genuine catchment-scale impact. Utilising existing relationships, alongside a more formalised approach to agreements and communication, improved access and enabled the expansion of activities such as hedge laying, bulb planting, and partnership-led work. This approach demonstrated that sustained relationship-building is essential for landscape-scale environmental management.

The Development Phase also highlighted the value of testing approaches before large-scale implementation. Trialling drone mapping, for example, enabled the team to understand operational restrictions, refine methodologies, and assess cost-effectiveness prior to full rollout. This iterative approach reduced risk and improved planning accuracy for the Delivery Phase.



*Figure 17: Volunteer group working with landowner and local angling club to support with clearance along river Leven.*

Finally, adaptive management supported by contingency flexibility proved fundamental. The ability to respond to seasonal pressures, landowner availability, and logistical constraints strengthened overall project design. Rather than causing setbacks, these challenges led to more resilient systems and improved strategic planning.

These lessons are formally captured in the *Development to Delivery Key Changes* document, ensuring that learning has been embedded into final delivery plans rather than remaining theoretical.

### **Readiness for Delivery**

The Development Phase has transformed TISP from an initial concept into a fully structured, evidence-led, and partnership-backed programme with clear operational systems in place. What began as a strategic ambition for catchment-scale INNS management is now underpinned by secured landowner agreements, formalised partnerships, tested methodologies, and an engaged and growing volunteer base.

Stakeholder confidence is demonstrated through over 80 landowner agreements, active collaboration with local authorities, angling clubs, community groups, and educational institutions, and widespread letters of support. These commitments provide both the physical access and the collective mandate required for landscape-scale delivery.

Operational readiness has been strengthened through investment in mapping capacity, drone surveys, equipment, and vehicle access, alongside the development of internal technical expertise. Approaches to volunteer coordination, landowner engagement, and educational outreach have been trialled, refined, and embedded into structured processes. Lessons learned during the Development Phase have not only addressed early challenges but have strengthened resilience, improved efficiency, and reduced delivery risk.

Importantly, governance and adaptive management frameworks are now in place, supported by contingency planning and evidence-based prioritisation. This ensures that the Delivery Phase will be implemented with clarity, flexibility, and strategic focus.

TISP enters the Delivery Phase not as a pilot initiative, but as a coordinated, scalable programme with the partnerships, skills, and systems required to achieve long-term catchment impact.

## **9. Legacy & Future Development**

### **Long-Term Benefits**

The Development Phase has established the foundations for lasting environmental, educational, and community impact across the Tees catchment. Educational engagement ensures that awareness of invasive non-native species (INNS), river health, and biodiversity begins at an early age. By embedding cross-curricular learning across KS2–KS4, the project supports long-term cultural change, fostering a generation that understands and values river stewardship beyond the lifespan of the funded programme.

Volunteer development similarly contributes to long-term legacy. Structured training in pesticide use, species identification, mapping, and habitat management builds local expertise and confidence. As volunteers gain skills and ownership, stewardship shifts from project-led activity to community-led care, embedding environmental responsibility within the catchment itself.

Strategic surveying and drone mapping ensure that management is evidence-led, efficient, and targeted. High-quality data collection, combined with aerial feasibility assessments, allows interventions to be prioritised effectively. This approach not only maximises current impact but establishes a robust dataset to guide ongoing monitoring and maintenance.

Secured landowner agreements extending beyond the funded period, up to 15 years in total, provide long-term continuity. These commitments ensure that management, maintenance, and monitoring can continue well beyond the project's core funding window, significantly strengthening the likelihood of sustained control and potential eradication of priority species such as giant hogweed. Financial resilience has also been strengthened through income generated via the Nature Based Solutions business arm, creating an additional revenue stream to support continued works. Regional collaboration further reinforces legacy impact, ensuring that management is coordinated across boundaries and aligned with wider strategic priorities.

### **Strengthened Partnerships**

Although a single large-scale consultation was not undertaken, the Development Phase instead prioritised direct, meaningful engagement with stakeholders. Individual and small-group discussions with landowners, community groups, schools, statutory agencies, and regional partners allowed for more productive dialogue and mutual understanding.

This approach strengthened trust, clarified shared objectives, and identified opportunities for collaboration. As a result, a multidisciplinary steering group has been established, bringing



*Figure 18: New volunteer collaboration with Stockton and Thornaby Canoe Club to initiate mapping of INNS along the river*

together representatives from universities, the Environment Agency, angling clubs, farming communities, and ecological specialists. This diversity of expertise ensures that delivery is informed, balanced, and strategically robust, embedding shared ownership of the project's success.

### **Delivery Phase Ambition**

The Delivery Phase will build upon this strong foundation through innovation, strategic targeting, and community-led participation. Drone technology will continue to support high-risk site identification and feasibility assessment, while strategic prioritisation based on Heritage Condition Assessment findings will ensure resources are directed where impact is greatest. A designated Education Officer will expand structured engagement with schools and youth groups, strengthening the pipeline from classroom learning to practical conservation involvement. Whilst the employment of a further 2 project officers will ensure that delivery runs smoothly, especially with the biological control management sites.

Operational capacity will be enhanced through the use of specialist contractors for difficult-to-access sites, alongside boats, quad bikes, and strengthened biosecurity protocols. Exploration of biocontrol options for Himalayan balsam and floating pennywort will further diversify management approaches. Volunteer growth will continue through initiatives such as a proposed “River Restorer” model, encouraging individuals and groups to take ownership of defined river sections, embedding hyper-local stewardship within the wider catchment framework.



Figure 19: Example of previous recruitment post for the volunteer coordinator role

### **Vision Beyond the Funded Project**

The long-term vision extends beyond the funded period and is set out within the Management & Maintenance Plan and Financial Strategy. The ultimate ambition is sustained catchment-wide management, progressing towards eradication of giant hogweed and long-term suppression of other priority INNS.

Future delivery will increasingly be community-led, supported by trained volunteers, engaged landowners, and established partnerships with the Environment Agency and regional stakeholders. Continued income generation and diversified funding streams will support expansion downstream and ensure that progress achieved during the funded period is not only maintained but strengthened.

The Development Phase has therefore not only prepared TISP for delivery, but positioned it as a durable, collaborative, and evolving programme capable of achieving lasting ecological impact across the Tees catchment.

## 10. Publicity, Promotion and Acknowledgement

### Social Media & Digital Engagement

Tees Rivers Trust has maintained a strong and consistent social media presence throughout the TISP Development Phase, significantly increasing awareness of invasive species management and river stewardship across the Tees catchment. Content is shared regularly (2+ posts per week), highlighting volunteer activity, site transformations, biodiversity, and community involvement.

Current platform reach includes:

- **Facebook:** 5,100 followers, with 30% of content reaching non-followers
- **Instagram:** 1,600 followers

Audience demographics via Meta analytics show balanced engagement across genders and age groups.

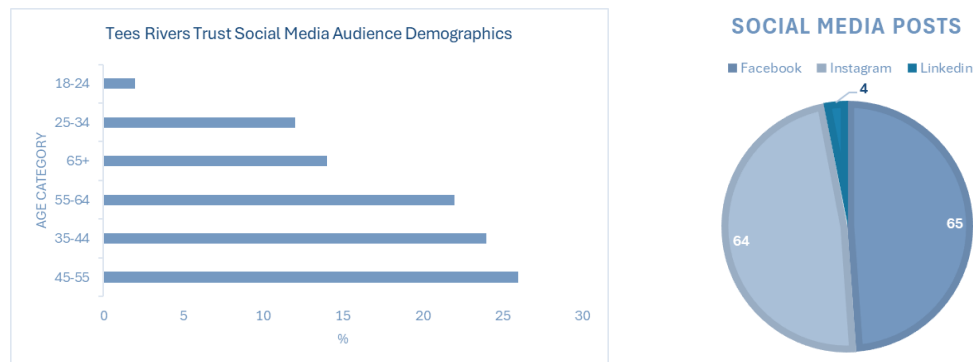


Figure 20: % age demographic on TeRT social media (left) and number of TISP social media posts created on various platforms (right)

While Facebook remains the primary engagement platform, continued investment in Instagram aims to increase participation from younger audiences during the Delivery Phase. Although we are aware of other platforms such as TikTok and Bluesky, content creation for these can be time consuming and therefore seen as a secondary focus depending on resources.

Seasonal engagement campaigns such as *Wildflower Wednesday* (Spring/Summer) and *Fungi Friday* (Autumn) have successfully encouraged interaction, user-generated content, and wider sharing in local community groups.

Over the past year, the most engaged content includes:

- INNS awareness work in Ingleby Barwick (9,199 views)
- Promotion of a River Tees beauty spot at Aislaby (3,277 views)
- Balsam Bash results at Rockwell Nature Reserve (2,559 views)

- Flexible volunteering opportunities (2,526 views)
- Before-and-after site transformations (2,121 views)

This demonstrates strong public interest in visible impact, local relevance, and community-driven conservation. Collaborations with local landscape and wildlife photographers have further strengthened visual storytelling and broadened audience appeal.

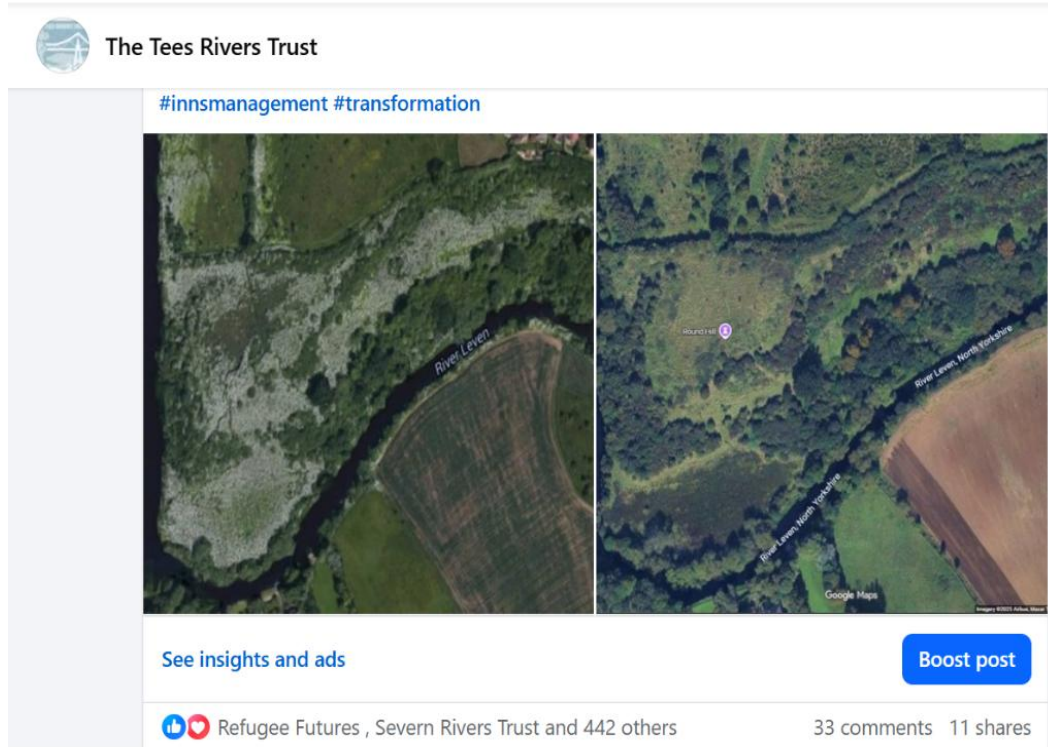
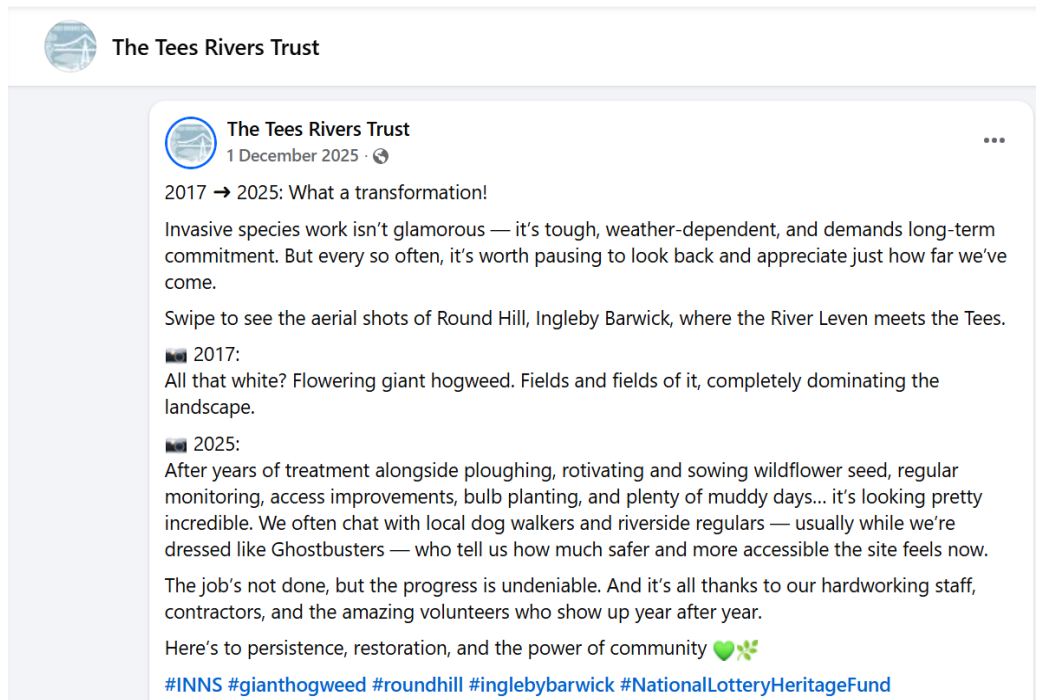


Figure 21: Example social media post on Facebook

## Press & Media Coverage

Nine press releases were published during the Development Phase, including coverage in local media such as the *Teesdale Mercury* and national platforms including the BBC. Two hardcopy articles and seven online features have contributed to raising the profile of the project and the wider issue of invasive species management. This coverage has extended reach beyond social media audiences and strengthened public credibility.

### Couple praised for battling river's giant hogweed



David Butler got his spraying qualification to battle giant hogweed in 2015

Tom Burgess  
North East and Cumbria

12 September 2025

A couple have been praised for spending the last 13 years battling giant hogweed along the banks of a river.

David and Ros Butler, 78 and 76, started volunteering with the Tees Rivers Trust in 2012 as part of the clean up.

They regularly head to the banks of the Lower Tees, wearing protective gear, to remove swathes of the invasive species and their efforts have been described as 'nothing short of extraordinary'.

Mrs Butler said giant hogweed was a 'vile plant' which more people need to be careful of when walking near to the River Tees.

She said re-visiting areas the team had cleared and seeing the flora flourishing was 'beautiful'.

### £216k lottery funding for River Tees improvement project

15TH JANUARY 2025 ENVIRONMENT NATURE DARLINGTON MIDDLESBROUGH



The Tees Invasive Species Project (TISP) has received £216,262 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (Image: Tees Rivers Trust)

Figure 22: Example press articles released about the project during the development phase

| Date       | Article Title   | Published By   |
|------------|---|--|
| 15/01/2025 | £216k lottery funding for River Tees improvement project                        | <a href="#"><i>Northern Echo</i></a>                   |
| 15/01/2025 | £216k lottery funding for River Tees improvement project                        | <a href="#"><i>Darlington &amp; Stockton Times</i></a> |
| 15/01/2025 | Project to tackle invasive species in Tees catchment gets major lottery funding | <a href="#"><i>Yahoo News</i></a>                      |
| 17/01/2025 | £2.6 million project to eradicate alien invaders along Tees                     | <i>Teesdale Mercury (Hardcopy)</i>                     |
| 23/02/2025 | Otter footprints found on River Tees bank near Darlington                       | <a href="#"><i>Northern Echo</i></a>                   |
| 04/08/2025 | Invasive leathery sea squirt found in oyster pot                                | <a href="#"><i>BBC</i></a>                             |
| 12/09/2025 | Couple praised for battling river's giant hogweed                               | <a href="#"><i>BBC</i></a>                             |
| 14/12/2025 | Volunteering provides benefits for the community and yourself                   | <a href="#"><i>Darlington &amp; Stockton Times</i></a> |
| 01/2026    | Protecting wildlife is wonderful  | <i>Yours Magazine (Hardcopy)</i>                       |

## Events, Outreach & Public Engagement

In the last year, TISP has attended over 20 community events, local fairs, and delivered talks across the catchment, including engagement with regional INNS groups, partner organisations and online to international companies. These sessions provided opportunities to raise

awareness of the project, promote volunteer activities, strengthen regional collaboration and also share learning throughout the development phase.

| Event   | Date           | Outreach & Benefit   |
|---|----------------|--|
| <b>GB NNSS LAG Workshop</b>   | February 2025  | Presented about the TISP project to other Local Action Groups across the UK delivering similar work.   |
| <b>DOVES Meeting</b>  | March 2025     | Initial discussion to work with other community groups within the area such as Friends of Snipe Pond, Friends of Rockwell Park specifically around stewardship and Himalayan balsam management.  |
| <b>Tees Catchment Partnership</b>   | March 2025     | Presenting to Your Tees Catchment Partnership about the TISP project and plans going forward. Great opportunity to network with key stakeholders within the catchment area.  |
| <b>Aislaby Community Group</b>  | April 2025     | Initial talk to group (ahead of trial management) for Himalayan balsam and to express interest in spray training.  |
| <b>INNS on the Tees (Online)</b>  | May 2025       | Delivered online as part of INNS Week<br><b><u>Event Link</u></b>  |
| <b>River Leven Sub Catchment Group &amp; Stokesley School's 'Green Group'</b> | June 2025      | Project overview of plans for TISP going forward and educational elements with the school <b>*Opportunity created to do a talk at CASAV meeting through this presentation.</b>   |
| <b>GB NNSS – Stakeholder Forum (Edinburgh)</b>                                | June 2025      | Attended event and networked with other organisations and individuals who work with invasive species management for joint learning and sharing resources.  |
| <b>Regional INNS Workshop</b>   | July 2025      | Collaborative workshop with partners in regional group (Tyne, Wear, Tweed, Newcastle University and ERIC NE) alongside the regional stakeholders to give update on strategy, TISP work as part of the wider partnership and also a site visit for less known species – crassula and importance of biosecurity. |
| <b>Big River Watch – Barnard Castle</b>                                       | July 2025      | Event stall, pop up along the river in Barnard Castle to raise awareness for the Big River Watch and get people involved in their local river environment. 30+ people engaged with.  |
| <b>Pop Up Stall – Tees Barrage</b>  | August 2026    | Pop up stall in partnership with San Seb Coffee along Tees Barrage to raise awareness/engagement and potential volunteers.   |
| <b>Hurworth Grange Community Fair</b>   | September 2025 | Event at local community fair, stall to raise awareness of project, wider works and for potential volunteer engagement. <b>1 new core volunteer joined through this event.</b>   |

|  |                |   |
|--|----------------|---|
| <b>Stokesley Show</b>  | September 2025 | Event at local community fair, stall to raise awareness of project, wider works and for potential volunteer engagement.   |
| <b>Tees Valley Nature Partnership</b>                              | September 2025 | CEO presented, Volunteer Coordinator attended to network with stakeholders and raise profile of Tees Rivers Trust and TISP project.   |
| <b>Pop Up Stall - Tees Active (Ingleby Barwick and Billingham)</b> | October 2025   | Pop up stall at a few 'Tees Active' leisure centres to raise awareness of our work within the Stockton Area (in partnership with Stockton Borough Council).   |
| <b>Environment Agency Flood Wardens Event</b>                      | October 2025   | Presentation to Environment Agency Flood Wardens at their 'Thank You' event to their volunteers about the work we do, and how they can get involved whilst already out on the river.  |
| <b>Climate Action Stokesley and Villages</b>                       | November 2025  | Presentation about TISP project, with a specific focus on the river Leven and wider areas around Stokesley. Volunteer groups keen on mapping, and starting management at highest points such as Great Broughton Beck.   |
| <b>Alfa Systems International Presentation</b>                     | December 2025  | New volunteer who attended balsam bashing event in August, asked for presentation to her organisation (£500 contribution) about the River Tees and our works including INNS. Delivered to over 500 team members.  |
| <b>Middlesbrough Green Spaces Forum</b>                            | January 2026   | A presentation about our current work and how we can work with local groups around Middlesbrough including Middlesbrough Council, Friends of Bluebell Beck and Friends of Linthorpe. <b><i>*Opportunity created with the Community Development Officer who is keen on collaborative working along Ormesby and Marton West Beck.</i></b> |
| <b>Teesdale Nature Club</b>  | January 2026   | Initial chat about work, and potential for collaboration with Teesdale School during delivery phase. Feedback given from teachers here on Education Materials   |
| <b>Stockton Volunteer Forum (Catalyst)</b>                         | January 2026   | Attendance at this event networking with other organisations who also utilise volunteers within the Stockton area. <b><i>*Attending this meeting reignited a partnership between Tees Rivers Trust and Canal and Rivers Trust in terms of joint volunteer opportunities and improved access of riverbanks for delivery.</i></b>         |
| <b>Hutton Rudby Fly Fishers AGM</b>                                | February 2026  | Updated INNS talk on invasive species along the angling clubs stretch, as well as gauge interest for monitoring and shared data specifically for Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed work during delivery.   |

|                  |               |  |
|------------------|---------------|--|
| <b>DOVES AGM</b> | February 2026 | An update on the project since the last AGM, used as a thank you to the groups, and touching base with the Friends of Rockwell following successful balsam bashes in partnerships the previous season. |
|------------------|---------------|--|

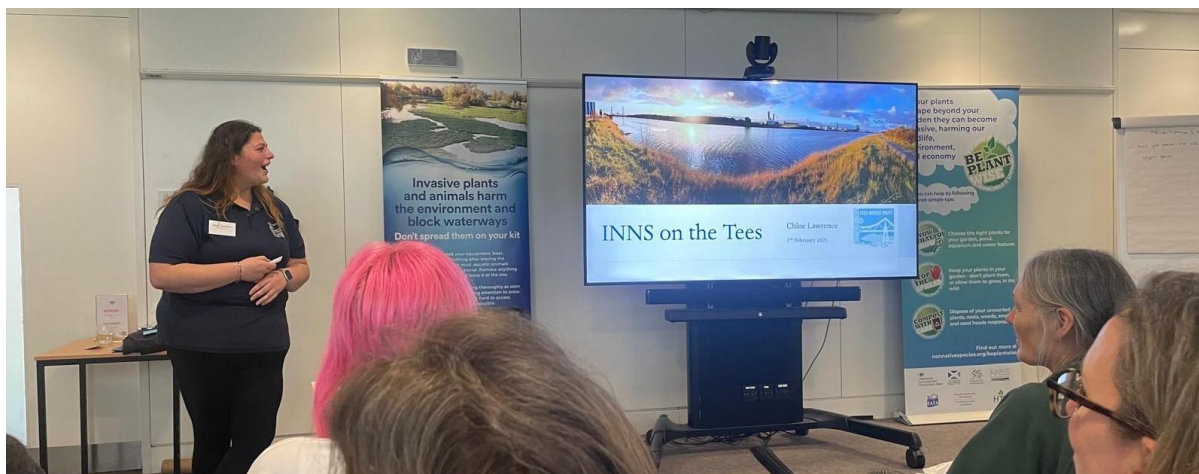


Figure 23: INNS on the Tees presentation at GB NNSL Local Action Group Workshop in February 2025

### **Acknowledgement of Lottery Support**

During the Development Phase, the project has evolved from a relatively niche environmental initiative into a recognised and community-supported programme across the Tees catchment. Engagement metrics demonstrate increasing public interest, wider geographic reach across priority management areas, and growing recognition of the Trust’s work. This increased visibility is further reflected in rising volunteer recruitment and participation levels, indicating that awareness is translating into active involvement.

Public engagement through digital platforms, media coverage, community events, and on-site presence has significantly raised awareness of invasive non-native species management. Importantly, all publicity materials, press releases, social media content, and on-site signage have included acknowledgement of National Lottery Heritage Fund support in line with funding requirements. Printed materials, including leaflets and promotional resources, were submitted for Lottery approval prior to publication to ensure compliance with branding guidance. Lottery branding has been consistently and clearly displayed across both digital and physical communications, ensuring transparency and recognition of the role of National Lottery players in enabling the Development Phase.

The need for greater on-site visibility was identified early in the project. In response, pop-up signage incorporating QR codes was introduced at volunteer sessions and management sites. While permanent signage across the full river network is not always feasible due to the scale of the catchment, this flexible approach has increased public awareness, provided opportunities for real-time engagement, and enabled members of the public to access further information or contact the Trust directly. Informal place-based conversations during volunteer sessions and

events have further broadened engagement beyond traditional environmental audiences, strengthening community understanding of the project’s aims and impact.



Figure 24: Pop up banner to be taken onto sites during volunteer activities.

## 11. Conclusions & Recommendations

### Conclusions

The Development Phase has successfully transitioned TISP from a strategic concept into an operationally prepared, evidence-led, and partnership-supported programme. Strong landowner engagement, volunteer growth, educational resource development, enhanced technical capacity, and effective public outreach have collectively established a robust foundation for Delivery Phase implementation.

Key findings demonstrate that structured volunteer coordination significantly improves retention and inclusivity; early investment in technical training and mapping strengthens long-term resilience; and strategic landowner engagement is essential for achieving catchment-scale impact. Testing methodologies during development, including drone surveys, engagement approaches, and education materials, has reduced risk and increased confidence in delivery systems.

The project now benefits from strengthened partnerships, secured long-term agreements, established governance structures, and growing community recognition. Importantly, learning from the Development Phase has been embedded into delivery planning rather than remaining theoretical, ensuring that progress is cumulative and strategic.

## Recommendations for the Delivery Phase

1. **Maintain dedicated coordination roles** to ensure continued volunteer growth, structured community engagement, and inclusive participation.
2. **Continue evidence-led prioritisation**, using drone mapping and Heritage Condition Assessment data to direct resources where impact will be greatest.
3. **Expand educational engagement** through the appointment of an Education Officer to strengthen links between schools, youth groups, and practical conservation activity.
4. **Formalise the “River Restorer” model** to encourage community ownership of defined river sections and embed long-term stewardship.
5. **Sustain adaptive management approaches**, ensuring contingency flexibility remains central to project delivery.
6. **Continue regional collaboration**, maintaining alignment across catchment boundaries to maximise landscape-scale impact.

## Areas for Further Development

The Development Phase of the Tees Invasive Species Project has successfully established strong foundations for delivery, demonstrating significant achievements in volunteer engagement, education, stakeholder collaboration, and operational readiness. Key successes include the creation of a highly skilled and committed volunteer core, the development and trialling of adaptable educational resources, the securing of over 80 landowner agreements across the catchment, and the implementation of drone surveys to inform evidence-led management. Public engagement, both in-person and through digital platforms, has raised awareness of invasive species issues while building recognition of the Trust’s work and Lottery support.

While these foundations are robust, several areas will require continued refinement during the Delivery Phase. Expanding engagement with younger demographics, particularly through digital platforms and youth-focused initiatives, will help broaden participation and build future stewardship. Strengthening long-term monitoring frameworks is essential to track ecological outcomes and ensure interventions remain effective.

Further embedding biosecurity awareness among all volunteers and partners will minimise the risk of re-infestation, while exploring innovative management techniques, including biocontrol opportunities, will diversify approaches and improve overall project resilience. By addressing these areas, the project can maximise its long-term ecological impact, sustain community engagement, and ensure that the benefits of TISP extend far beyond the funded period.

Ultimately, the Development Phase has transformed TISP into a strategic, evidence-led, and community-anchored programme, laying the groundwork for a sustainable, catchment-wide approach to invasive species management that will continue to protect and enhance the Tees environment for years to come.

## 12. Additional Resources

CABI (n.d.) *Floating pennywort*. Available at: <https://www.cabi.org/invasivespecies/species/floating-pennywort/> (Accessed: 20 February 2026).

CABI (n.d.) *Himalayan balsam*. Available at: <https://www.cabi.org/invasivespecies/species/himalayan-balsam/> (Accessed: 20 February 2026).

CABI (n.d.) *Japanese knotweed*. Available at: <https://www.cabi.org/invasivespecies/species/japanese-knotweed/> (Accessed: 20 February 2026).

Droneflight UK (n.d.) *Droneflight UK*. Available at: <https://www.droneflight.co.uk/> (Accessed: 20 February 2026).

GB NNESS (n.d.) *GB NNESS Strategy*. Available at: <https://www.nonnativespecies.org/about/gb-strategy> (Accessed: 20 February 2026).

Heritage Fund (n.d.) *References to Lottery investment principles*. Available at: <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/investment-principles> (Accessed: 20 February 2026).

Nature Based Solutions Ltd (n.d.) *Nature based solutions*. Available at: <https://www.teesriverstrust.org/nature-based-solutions> (Accessed: 20 February 2026).

NE Regional Strategy (n.d.) *Northern England INNS Strategy*. Available at: <https://www.teesriverstrust.org/neinns> (Accessed: 20 February 2026).

Tees Rivers Trust (n.d.) *Volunteer SharePoint*. Available at: <https://teesriverstrust.sharepoint.com/sites/TeesRiversTrustVolunteers> (Accessed: 20 February 2026).

Tees Rivers Trust (n.d.) *Case Study – Floating Pennywort*. Available at: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/8aff524ade314c28aabf8fb76646a2b0> (Accessed: 20 February 2026).

Tees Rivers Trust (n.d.) *Case Study – Round Hill, Ingleby Barwick*. Available at: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/34b0719ea8d4493b82f9fe5e704f8c37> (Accessed: 20 February 2026).

### 13. Appendices

| Document / Resource                                 | Description   | Access                                       |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Heritage Condition Assessment</b>                | Assessment of Tees Heritage current condition and management recommendations in relation to INNS management for project delivery and long term management | Available as additional document*            |
| <b>Management and Maintenance Plan</b>              | Outlines long-term care and maintenance responsibilities  | Available on Request                         |
| <b>TOPHOG</b>                                       | Previous project evaluation demonstrating relevance and learning  | <a href="#">Evaluation</a>                   |
| <b>BINNS</b>  | Previous project evaluation demonstrating relevance and learning  | <a href="#">Evaluation</a>                   |
| <b>TISP</b>   | Designated TISP project site on Tees Rivers Trust website.  | <a href="#">TISP Webpage</a>                 |
| <b>Droneflight Report</b>                           | Report summarising drone surveys conducted during project development and links to multispectral camera   | Available as additional document*            |
| <b>Volunteer Development and Training Programme</b> | Programme structure for volunteer recruitment, onboarding, and upskilling   | Available as additional document*            |
| <b>Activity Plan</b>                                | Breakdown of activities within the project, cost and resources.   | Available on Request                         |
| <b>Staff Handbook</b>                               | Internal policies and procedures for project staff  | Internal Document                            |
| <b>Regional INNS Strategy (2020–2024)</b>           | Strategic plan for tackling INNS regionally   | <a href="#">View strategy (under review)</a> |
| <b>Communications Plan</b>                          | Strategy for internal and external project communications   | Available on Request                         |
| <b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>                   | Analysis of project accessibility and equity impacts  | Internal Document                            |

|   |   |                                      |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Education Contacts and Engagement Plan</b> | Records of schools engaged in outreach activities   | Available as additional document*    |
| <b>Action Plan</b>                            | Breakdown of activities within the project, cost and resources. Full breakdown document available.  | Available on Request                 |
| <b>Supporting Letters</b>                     | All supporting letters show discussions with stakeholders all impacted by the project and demonstrate support   | Available on Request                 |
| <b>Development-to-Delivery Key Changes</b>    | A document to summary key changes that have been made/highlighted during development phase which will affect how the project currently or will be delivered including volunteers, training, education, outreach and drone survey work | Available on Request                 |
| <b>Procurement Policy</b>                     | Tees Rivers Trust policy on procurement of contracted works.  | Internal Document                    |
| <b>Business Plan</b>                          | Updated business plan for Tees Rivers Trust   | Internal Document                    |
| <b>INNS Management Plan</b>                   | Breakdown of planned management for TISP priority invasive species including type of management, frequency of treatment and plans for delivery.   | Available on Request                 |
| <b>Education Material Feedback Report</b>     | Report on the trials of the education materials with schools within the catchment giving feedback following lesson with KS2.  | <a href="#">View Feedback Report</a> |
| <b>Staff and Volunteer Training Document</b>  | A breakdown of the training that staff and volunteers have done during TISP development phase.  | Available on Request                 |

# Angling Club Agreement



AC Agreement



## Angling Club Agreement for Tees Invasive Species Project

### Project Background:

The Tees Invasive Species Project (TISP) aims to tackle the spread of invasive non-native plant species throughout the Tees catchment. The project will focus on targeted control methods, habitat restoration, and long-term biodiversity improvements. As part of this work, we are seeking Angling Club agreements to allow us to carry out invasive species management on private land where required. This is part of Tees Rivers Trust's long term ambition and management of invasive plant species within the catchment area.

### Management Activities:

With your permission, Tees Rivers Trust may carry out some or all of the following, depending on site conditions, priorities, and funding:

- Giant hogweed control – herbicide treatment to reduce and prevent regrowth
- Japanese knotweed control – biocontrol or herbicide treatment where necessary
- Himalayan balsam control – biocontrol or hand pulling where biocontrol is not viable
- Floating pennywort control – biocontrol or herbicide treatment if required
- Habitat restoration – introduction of native flora where possible
- Maintenance – return to sites for up to fifteen years for follow-up management, monitoring, and rapid response

### Training & Support:

As part of the project, Tees Rivers Trust will support your club by providing:

- PA1 and PA6 AW training for members involved in herbicide application
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) and equipment needed for invasive species management
- Guidance on maintaining stretches under your responsibility
- Activities including further control measures, monitoring, and rapid response.

### Who Will Carry Out This Work?

All invasive species management work will be carried out by trained professionals, staff, or volunteers. Volunteers involved in management of INNS will receive full training and be supervised where necessary to ensure best practice is followed. We will ensure those

doing herbicide applications are suitably qualified (e.g., PA1/PA6AW) and using herbicide approved by the Environment Agency for use near water.

### Responsibilities & Legal Considerations:

- Tees Rivers Trust is insured for £10 million public liability (documentation available upon request).
- This agreement does not transfer legal responsibility to the club.
- Clubs and members are encouraged to continue managing their stretches to maintain project impact and legacy.
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 makes it an offence to cause or allow invasive species to spread; this agreement helps all parties manage species responsibly.

### Agreement:

By signing this agreement, you confirm that:

- ✓ You grant permission for Tees Rivers Trust to carry out the activities listed above on your land or rented stretch as required
- ✓ You understand that management will be prioritised based on site conditions and project scope
- ✓ You wish to work in partnership with Tees Rivers Trust to reduce the spread of invasive species and support project legacy

If you are happy for this work to take place on your club stretch, please sign below. Thank you for your ongoing support.

### Signed:

Club Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Club Member Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Agreement for Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) Management on Private Land

### Project Background:

The Tees Invasive Species Project (TISP) aims to tackle the spread of invasive non-native plant species throughout the Tees catchment. The project will focus on targeted control methods, habitat restoration, and long-term biodiversity improvements. As part of this work, we are seeking landowner agreements to allow us to carry out invasive species management on private land where required. This is part of Tees Rivers Trust's long term ambition and management of invasive plant species within the catchment area.

### Management Activities:

With your permission, we may carry out some or all of the following activities, depending on site conditions, project priorities, and funding availability:

- **Giant hogweed control** – Herbicide treatment to reduce and prevent regrowth.
- **Japanese knotweed control** – Biocontrol release of psyllid or herbicide treatment if biocontrol is not viable.
- **Himalayan balsam control** – Biocontrol through the release of a rust fungus to weaken and suppress the plant or hand pulling where biocontrol is not viable.
- **Floating pennywort control** – Biocontrol using a natural weevil (where applicable) or herbicide application if biocontrol is not viable.
- **Habitat restoration** – Introduction of native flora where possible to support biodiversity recovery.
- **Maintenance** – Return to sites for up to fifteen years to carry out maintenance activities including further control measures, monitoring, and rapid response.

### Who Will Carry Out This Work?

All invasive species management work will be carried out by trained professionals, staff, or volunteers. Volunteers involved in management of INNS will receive full training and be supervised where necessary to ensure best practice is followed. We will ensure those doing herbicide applications are suitably qualified (e.g., PA1/PAG-AW) and using herbicide approved by the Environment Agency for use near water.

### Landowner Responsibilities & Legal Considerations:

Tees Rivers Trust are insured up to £10 million public liability, documents can be provided upon request. Whilst landowners are not legally required to remove invasive species from their land, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 states that it is an offence to cause or allow invasive species to spread into the wild. This agreement aims to work



collaboratively with landowners to manage these species responsibly, helping to protect both the environment and local communities.

### Agreement:

By signing this agreement, you confirm that:

- ✓ You grant permission for the Tees Rivers Trust to carry out the above activities on your land, as required.
- ✓ You understand that control methods will be prioritised based on site conditions and project scope.
- ✓ You would like to work in collaboration with Tees Rivers Trust to minimise the spread of invasive species where possible.

This agreement does not transfer any legal responsibility to the landowner, nor does it guarantee treatment in all cases due to project constraints such as weather.

If you are happy for this work to take place on your land, please sign below. Thank you for your ongoing support.

### Signed:

Landowner Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Landowner Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_