



# Medlock Valley Restoration Project

**Project Closure**

# AGENDA

- Project Highlights
- Project Outputs
- Project Report
- Next Steps



# OLDHAM

**1 weir removed**

**2130m footpaths improved**

**5014 trees planted**

**2.15ha INNS controlled**

**48 events**

**664 attendees**

**205 young people**

**1363 volunteer hours contributed**



# MANCHESTER

**0.26ha wetland managed**

**179 events**

**5.67ha woodland improved**

**2171 attendees**

**232m riverbank managed**

**772 young people**

**2.94ha INNS controlled**

**7453 volunteer hours contributed**



# TAMESIDE

**1 pond created**

**2.42ha woodland improved**

**468m2 scrub managed**

**50 trees planted**

**20 events**

**268 attendees**

**87 young people**

**887 volunteer hours contributed**



# ASHTON & ROCHDALE CANAL

1.68ha grassland managed

2.98ha wetland improved

0.79ha INNS managed

550m hedgerow improved

42 events

605 attendees

61 young people

3600 volunteer hours contributed



# STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

I'm looking forward to seeing the wildflower meadows next year

*The tree veteranisation work has been eye-opening!*

The Spring Festival was great to see how many people will be positively impacted by the work we've done

Chainsaw training

Having the satisfaction of completing so many improvements that will have strong, positive and lasting impacts to the area

Working with schools to plant hedges and teach hedgelaying

I loved that we were able to do lots of different woodland management activities across a site which felt like we really made a difference!

Constructing the footpath at Lees Brook

Seeing the changes since we first started the project and over the seasons

The Green Skills Training cohort has become a core group of people learning together, sharing knowledge and supporting each other

Loved working with all our partners!

I really enjoyed working with Back on Track as a community group

Collaborating TCV and GGM together at Clayton Vale

We had a lovely home schooled family who lived local to Lees Brook and attended all our tree planting events.

*It's been great learning loads of new skills from everyone*

Connecting with local community groups like Safety4Sisters and The Shaw Centre, facilitating sessions for them to connect with nature

Seeing the ranger team grow in skills, knowledge & confidence

*The sense of community and shared learning at GST has been amazing!*

Getting to know the locals at Lees Brook, taking a real ownership of the whole site

*Tree felling at the Manchester sites*

# LAND MANAGED

44%



Grassland  
5.7ha

107%



Woodland  
14.69ha

167%



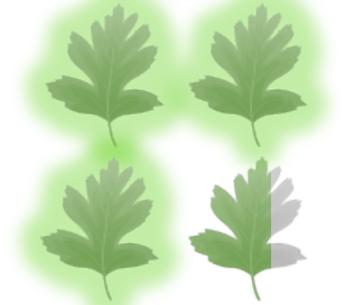
Wetland  
3.35ha

257%



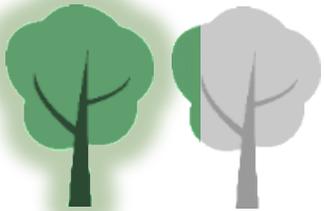
INNS  
7.85ha

362%



Scrub  
1.81ha

115%



Trees Planted  
5992

134%



Hedgerow  
550m

119%



Riverbank  
1187m

146%



Footpaths  
2910m

103%



Total Blue & Green Habitat  
33.16ha

# OUTREACH

859%



Young People  
1717

627%



People with Long Term  
Health Conditions  
188

360%



People of Ethnic  
Minority  
468

428%



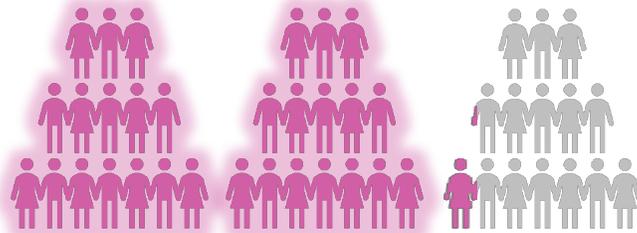
People experiencing  
unemployment  
513

915%



People looking to improve  
their health and wellbeing  
915

218%



Total Outreach  
3937

# PROJECT REPORT



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## WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

Our team have been working with local schools, whose pupils often live within walking distance of the Medlock Valley, hosting activities which create a deeper appreciation and connection with nature.

[Find out more](#)

### Cannon Burrows Primary School

Cannon Burrows's outdoor space had become overgrown and unusable. In November 2024, Groundwork and corporate partner Razor Blue organised a clean-up event. Over 10 volunteers worked with Urban Rangers to clear the area, making it safe and accessible for pupils.



### Laurus Ryecroft Secondary School

We worked with over 100 year 7 geography students at Laurus Ryecroft school. This full day of activity in the Medlock Valley was designed in partnership with teaching staff so that the sessions linked in with the national curriculum, and aimed to create long-term guardians for local nature.



### Propps Hall Primary School

Groundwork's Community Engagement Lead, Fran, began working with Propps Hall after arranging a guided visit to the river, providing students with the chance to take part in water testing and learn more about the species who lived there.

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## CANAL STORIES

### Meet Carole



*Volunteering has increased my confidence, and I've met some great people. Rain or shine, it's great fun!*

After being made redundant, Carole was looking for a way to stay active and engaged, which led her to volunteering with the Canal & River Trust. During her time volunteering, Carole took part in a wide range of hands-on activities that support the maintenance and protection of the canal network.

[Read Carole's Story](#)

### Meet Nick

Nick took early retirement and began volunteering with the Canal & River Trust on the Medlock Valley Project. Through this role he gained practical ecological skills, including training in brushcutter use, identifying invasive species, and understanding habitat management.



*"Working with an ecologist has allowed me to question the why as we undertake tasks and I have learned lots as we work."*

[Read Nick's Story](#)

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# NEXT STEPS

END OF PROJECT REPORT

EVALUATION REPORT – SIMON LEES

LEES BROOK INTERPRETATION BOARD

MEDLOCK VISION BOARD

## Flowing into the future

We have successfully removed the Weir from this section of the river Medlock. This was a necessary step to help the river heal. By taking away this man-made block, we are letting the water flow naturally again.

**1850**  
Wealds were closed and dangerous areas filled to control the wooded riparian and species, allowing to fill the floor to welcome a variety of ground flora, and remove trees that pose a risk to the public.

**2024-2026**  
SRRM saplings have been planted in the banks, planted in rows to increase species diversity, and increase the resilience of the woodland over time.

**2026**  
We hope to see the grey wagtail, Great Crested Newt, Whit-tailed Crayfish, bats and the water vole making an appearance in the area as allowed to thrive again.

**Location of former weir**

**New path installed 2025**

**Older path likely to be reclaimed by the river**

### A Lesson From History

In the past, particularly during the Victorian era, weirs and other structures were built to fundamentally change the flow of rivers and make them work for human needs, such as powering textile factories or carrying away waste.

We can't be exactly sure, but we estimate that the weir was built in the mid to late 19th century to serve the needs of nearby textile mills such as Leesbrook Mill, Bay Lane Mill or Athens Mill.

While the river has seen centuries of human activity—it even runs close to the route of an ancient Roman road from Manchester to Garsington—our heritage survey reassured us that the weir wasn't one of the oldest, most critical pieces of our history, and its removal wouldn't cause any loss of important historic assets.

### What we've learned since the Victorian Era

We used to think that blocking a river was clever engineering. Now, we know that stopping the flow actually stops pollution and stops fish from traveling, making the river sick. Over time, this creates ecological degradation and the variety of life in the river starts to disappear. Today, our priority is making the river a safe, healthy home for wildlife.

### The future is Flowing

We are delighted to watch the river Medlock flourish. You might notice the riverbanks changing shape naturally over time—this creates new hiding places for animals and plants to grow. We've also built a new path which means we can still enjoy our walks in the future when the river changes its course. Our project is our commitment to creating a wider, cleaner, and better-connected river for everyone to enjoy.

**When the river is full of fish and insects, the bigger animals return too. They give their young a chance for the next time they're in the water and the bright blue flash of a Kingfisher stopping over the bank.**

**Below fish like the brown trout and other coarse fish species such as chub, bream, roach, and tench can finally swim upstream to find the perfect spots to lay their eggs.**

**Flowing water cleans the riverbed, removing natural gravel and cobble. This is the perfect nursery for young fish and mayfly larvae. Along these long corridors is a big sign that the water is clean and healthy.**

**Species Survival Fund**  
Oldham Council  
Environment Agency

# THANK YOU!

