APRIL 24

RECLAIM THE RAIN

Reforming Policy

Central to Reclaim the Rain is the belief that flood water can be valuable if managed sustainably. The reality of putting this into practice, however, is negotiating complex rules and regulations which often aren't suited to treating flood water as a resource. Therefore, we are exploring which of the current policies are outdated and working with regulators to propose a better, more sustainable alternative. In the long run we hope that this work gives Reclaim the Rain a far reaching and impactful legacy long into the future by allowing others to build on our work more easily.

Drone Footage

The team have been working with a local production company to launch drones in our communities to capture the main surface water flow paths in the catchments. This aerial footage will provide valuable documentation of the catchments prior to any project delivery, and this process will be repeated at the end of the project in 2027 too; providing a comparison before and after delivery. This footage also showcases the beautiful landscapes across our Norfolk and Suffolk communities. Drone videos can be found on our website or social media pages.

Weather Patterns and Water Management

Since Reclaim the Rain commenced, we have experienced the two extremes of weather, with water shortage issues in the summer of 2022 and major surface water flooding through the 2023 winter period. Visit ReclaimtheRain.org to find information on the water cycle and the variety of ways that water can be managed sustainably on both small- and large-scales to increase the water resilience throughout our environment.

Rainfall in 2022 saw the driest January to August period since 1976, with substantive portions of East Anglia experiencing only ~70% of their annual average rainfall. In contrast, eight months of the year in 2023 were the warmest on record with portions of East Anglia enduring 125% to 135% of their annual average rainfall.

In our region especially, these data highlight the nature of our changing climate and therefore the value of sustainable water management.

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NORFOLK

In Norfolk, the shortlist options are now complete and some exciting ideas have developed with the co-operation of our Community Working Groups. In Thompson, we have had in-depth talks with Suffolk based 'J.S. Wright & Sons' Cricket Bat Company, who plant willow trees to then be harvested and turned into cricket bats on a rolling cycle and have plans to plant approximately 50 trees within Thompson. Willow trees are strong absorbers of water, and so are an innovative way of reducing surface water flood risk whilst adding environmental benefit and supporting local business.

In Watton, we have had talks with GreenBlue Urban, a company that deals with sustainable drainage systems in urban areas. In collaboration with residents of Watton and GreenBlue Urban, we plan to install tree pits with underground storage tanks that would absorb run-off water and support the trees' growth.

In Woodton, we are working closely with a local landowner to explore the opportunity of adding gypsum to a section of land. Gypsum aerates the soil, allowing more water to go through it, which in turns allows excess water to go into the ground.

SUFFOLK

Reclaim the Rain's broken ground in Boxford. Willow trees have been planted on one of the significant surface water flow paths which contributes to the village's risk of flooding. Beyond flood mitigation, the willow trees support infiltration, prevent soil erosion, and enhance the water quality. The scheme was only made possible with the input and support of our Community Working Group, as well the landowner, residents, and Cricket Bat Company 'J.S. Wright & Sons'. These willow trees are only the beginning for this catchment, the team has much more planned in the coming months.

In Little Blakenham and Friston, the team have submitted pre-applications to the Environment Agency for abstraction licenses to reuse flood water for the local landowners whose businesses rely on water for irrigation demand. We're also working closely with both the village's Churches, with plans to deliver small-scale sustainable water management to be used and enjoyed by residents and visitors.

Credit - Ian Cook