

Looking after the land to protect our rivers

Upstream Thinking

What's the problem?



Unwanted soil, silt, pesticides, fertilisers and animal waste in the rivers increase water treatment costs.

They cause discolouration and unpleasant tastes which must be removed through water treatment to meet the high standards we all expect. Building new treatments costs £millions and can be expensive to run, impacting on customers' bills.

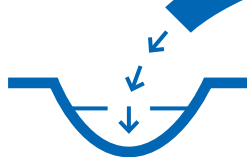
What's the answer?



Working with landowners, we can make changes to how land is managed to keep unwanted things out of rivers.

Starting on the high moorlands and focusing on the land next to rivers, we can make a water management plan that protects streams and rivers while keeping farms productive.

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE ARE MAKING THINGS BETTER



RESTORED PEAT BOGS

When peat is wet the carbon is safely locked up in the bogs, storing water and releasing it slowly back into the rivers, which can also help alleviate flooding downstream.

On the moors of Exmoor and Dartmoor we've restored bogs so water is released more slowly with less peat dissolved organic carbon (peat) in it.



CAPITAL GRANTS

Farms often need investment so we make grants of up to 50% to make improvements such as slurry storage, river fencing and better pesticide management.

Since 2008 we've made 1,700 visits to farms and allocated 180 capital grants totalling £2.2 million, enabling farmers to access funding from other sources.

RESULTING BENEFITS



IMPROVED WATER QUALITY

After taking part in the project, water quality at one farm was even cleaner downstream than it was upstream. Monitoring is showing increases in plant and animal life like dragonfly larvae and mayfly which are indicators of clean water in our rivers.



HEALTHY PEAT BOGS THAT HOLD WATER

Bogs hold a third more water post-restoration, release a third less carbon into the water, and release water more slowly, supporting summer water levels in the rivers.



BETTER HOMES FOR WILDLIFE

Bees, butterflies and birds appreciate nectar-rich buffer strips planted between fields and rivers. Fish and invertebrates are more likely to breed and thrive – providing food for otters and kingfishers.



LOWER COSTS

Upstream Thinking is part of a long-term sustainable approach to managing costs by reducing ongoing maintenance or delaying large capital investments, helping to keep customers' future bills down.