

River Gipping Trust

Environmental Impact Statement

Introduction

The River Gipping Trust recognises that it operates within an area of great environmental value that provides a green corridor between developed areas within the valley of the River Gipping. The area contains many different landscape types including flowing water, river banks, reed beds, small copses, wet woodland, farmland, abandoned farmland, and working and re-claimed gravel pits that all add variety to the landscape and provide living and resting areas for a wide variety of species of flora and fauna. The valley is a 'connected' wildlife corridor to extensive woodlands to both the south and the north.

Some of these species are nationally rare or at risk.

In pursuing its aims of restoring navigation to the river and of increasing access for the public to the valley the Trust will from time to time undertake operations that could, if not undertaken sensitively and carefully, adversely affect this diversity of habitat.

The Trust has adopted this policy in order to promote best practice in safeguarding the environment whilst still pursuing its stated aims.

In pursuit of this policy the Trust will: -

1.0 Hedge trimming and towpath clearing

No cutting, pruning or trimming of hedgerows and towpath edges will take place between March 01st and July 31st in any year to avoid disturbing any nesting birds. We will avoid any disturbance in any area where birds are nesting during this time. We shall only remove trees that are of a safety risk or those that obstruct or are likely to obstruct the river flow. Whenever we have the opportunity we will plant new trees on land inland of the footpath away from the river bank. Old trees will be left to decay wherever possible.

2.0 Grass cutting along towpaths and adjacent to river banks

The Trust regularly cuts the grass surface of the towpath to ensure access for pedestrians along public footpaths. Generally, cutting will be limited to the towpath itself and no cutting will be undertaken within 0.5m of the riverbank top.

- Occasional “viewpoints” will be established along the river bank to afford closer views of the river by pedestrians and for anglers to gain access to the river for fishing. These will be limited in nature and care will be taken to ensure no cutting disturbs any species especially during the breeding season. Any new viewing point will be created before March. No new viewing points will be created during the bird nesting season.
- The Trust aims to keep the footpath as close to the river as possible, following the original “Towpath route”. Any new path routes will be created prior to March 1st. No new path routes will be made during the bird nesting season.
- The Trust will create a few access paths prior to March where known high density growth of Himalayan Balsam grow. The aim of these paths is to get better access to the Himalayan Balsam during the bird nesting period, without disturbing the birds. The paths will be maintained during the bird nesting periods, but no new ones will be created.

3.0 Use of Machinery and Powered Tools

Wherever practical, handtools will be used to avoid disruption by noise, fumes etc. Where powered tools and plant are required, the following will be observed:-

- a) Any engine or hydraulic oils used will be bio-degradable
- b) Any powered equipment or plant will only be used by trained personnel
- c) All movement of plant and machinery will take place along existing designated footpaths/ tracks. No mechanised plant or disturbance of any kind will be made across areas of open land where ground and shrub nesting birds could be present
- d) No heavy machinery will be used adjacent to banks where there is a risk of compacting tunnels etc
- e) No plant will be used closer than 5m to any known wolverine burrows

4.0 Removal of obstructions from the river

It is recognised that occasionally obstructions to the flow of the river, such as fallen trees, need to be removed. During these operations it is inevitable that a degree of disturbance to the river bed will occur

- A) Whenever removing obstructions from the course of the river, care will be taken to avoid undue disturbance of silt. This is to avoid deposits of silt and

debris downstream that could adversely affect fish spawning, eggs and invertebrates

- B) In general, and unless emergency action is required, no material will be removed from the river between Jan 01st and July 31st to avoid disruption to breeding fish, invertebrates and insects

5.0 Disposal of Materials

- a) Wherever possible construction materials will be re-cycled for further Trust projects
- b) grass cuttings, weed growth and similar items will be left inland of the towpath to compost and encourage invertebrate and reptiles
- c) Branches will be piled to provide log shelters for invertebrates and birds
- d) Consideration will be given to using branches, logs etc for dry hedges, fences etc where needed

6.0 Plastics recovery and use

The Trust will seek to avoid using single-use plastics and will recover from site any plastic material encountered.

No plastic or rubber materials will be burnt on site and all will be disposed at approved tips

7.0 Invasive Species

The Trust is aware that a number of invasive species are present in the valley. Any Such encountered will be removed and destroyed in the recommended manner.

The Trust is especially concerned about the presence of Himalayan Balsam along the river valley and this will be pulled and destroyed wherever located.

8.0 Project Planning

The Trust recognises that whilst some of its members have experience and interest in wildlife issues, we do not have the necessary skills and training to always assess either the presence of vulnerable species or the correct methods for protecting and encouraging them

The Trust will therefore work closely with groups who have this knowledge in planning and undertaking future activities

In particular the Suffolk Wildlife Trust will be consulted before any significant construction or maintenance project is undertaken

River Gipping Trust

January 2020