

East Herts Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Environment
Agency

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Overview

- The Environment Agency's remit
- Government plans to address sewage discharges
- Event Duration Monitoring Data
- Water Framework Directive
- Water Industry National Environment Programme
- Work across the catchment
- Questions

Regulators of the water industry

As the environmental regulator, our job is to ensure water companies meet their statutory obligations and that their activities comply with environmental standards while minimising harm to the environment. We want a sector that meets its basic legal responsibilities without relying on lengthy, costly enforcement action and prosecutions.

A well-defined regulatory framework

We regulate the water industry under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016 and other legislation. The legislation empowers us to set permissions to discharge through permits, monitor, inspect, investigate, and take enforcement action where water companies fail to comply with their environmental obligations.

1. **Environmental Permitting:** Permits and Licenses & Setting Limits
2. **Compliance Monitoring:** Operator Self-Monitoring, Audits and Inspections & Compliance Classification Scheme
3. **Performance Assessment:** Environmental Performance Report & Water Industry National Environment Programme
4. **Enforcement:** Enforcement & Sanctions

Transforming how we regulate

We started our Water Industry Regulation Transformation Programme in June 2023. It has given us more resources to implement the current powers we have and transformed the way we regulate the water industry to uncover more non-compliance and drive better performance.

This means we'll identify more offences and take appropriate enforcement action. There isn't a one size fits all approach when it comes to enforcement. Our response is proportionate.

We have available a range of civil sanctions, including Enforcement Undertakings and Variable Monetary Penalties, which can be used as an alternative to prosecution.

More resources to make a difference

Since the Water Industry Regulation Transformation Programme was set up, we have:

- Significantly increased the number of inspections — jumping from 1,409 in 2023/24 to over 4,650 in 2024/25. And in 2025/26 we completed over 10,000 inspections of water company assets.
- Recruited and trained hundreds of new officers, putting more boots on the ground than ever before.
- Started to use data more effectively to focus on the most serious environmental offences through new digital tools. Our transformation of the IT systems supporting water regulation is well underway.

Government plans to address sewage discharges

The 2022 Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan

The 2025 Water Special Measures Act

The 2025 Cunliffe Review

Monitoring and recording discharges: 100% coverage

The rollout of monitoring using Event Duration Monitors (EDMs) in England began in 2016 as part of work under the Water Industry Natural Environment Programme. It initially focused on more sensitive locations (such as bathing waters).

They are used to monitor storm overflows and record the number of discharges of sewage and the duration of these discharge events ('spills').

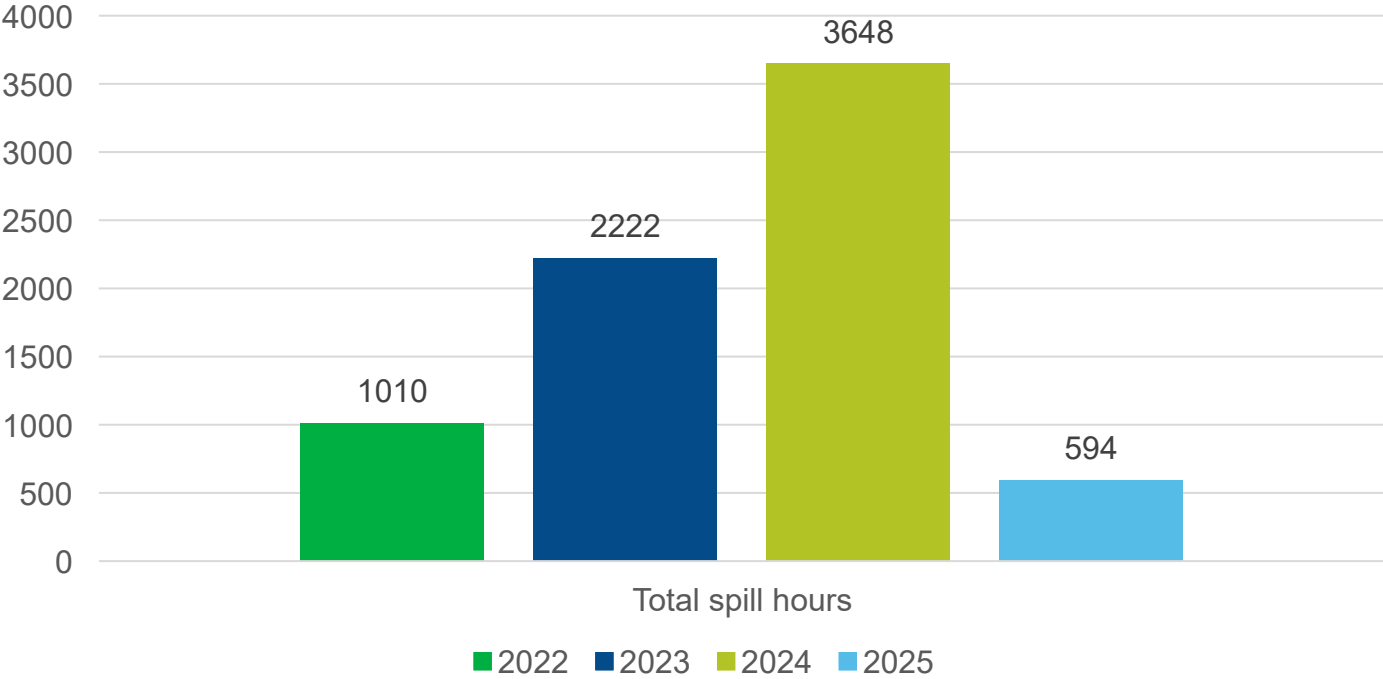
In 2016, there were fewer than 1,000 monitors reporting data. Since then, the number of functioning monitors has increased to more than 14,000. At the end of 2023, 100% of storm overflows in England were fitted with monitoring devices.

Increasing transparency and scrutiny

We publish the official data to give greater transparency as part of our statutory duty under the Environment Act 2021.

The 2025 EDM data was published in March 2026 and showed overall reductions in both the duration and number of storm overflow events across England overall, with many companies seeing total spill hours fall by 40–70% compared to 2024 and experiencing fewer spill events overall.

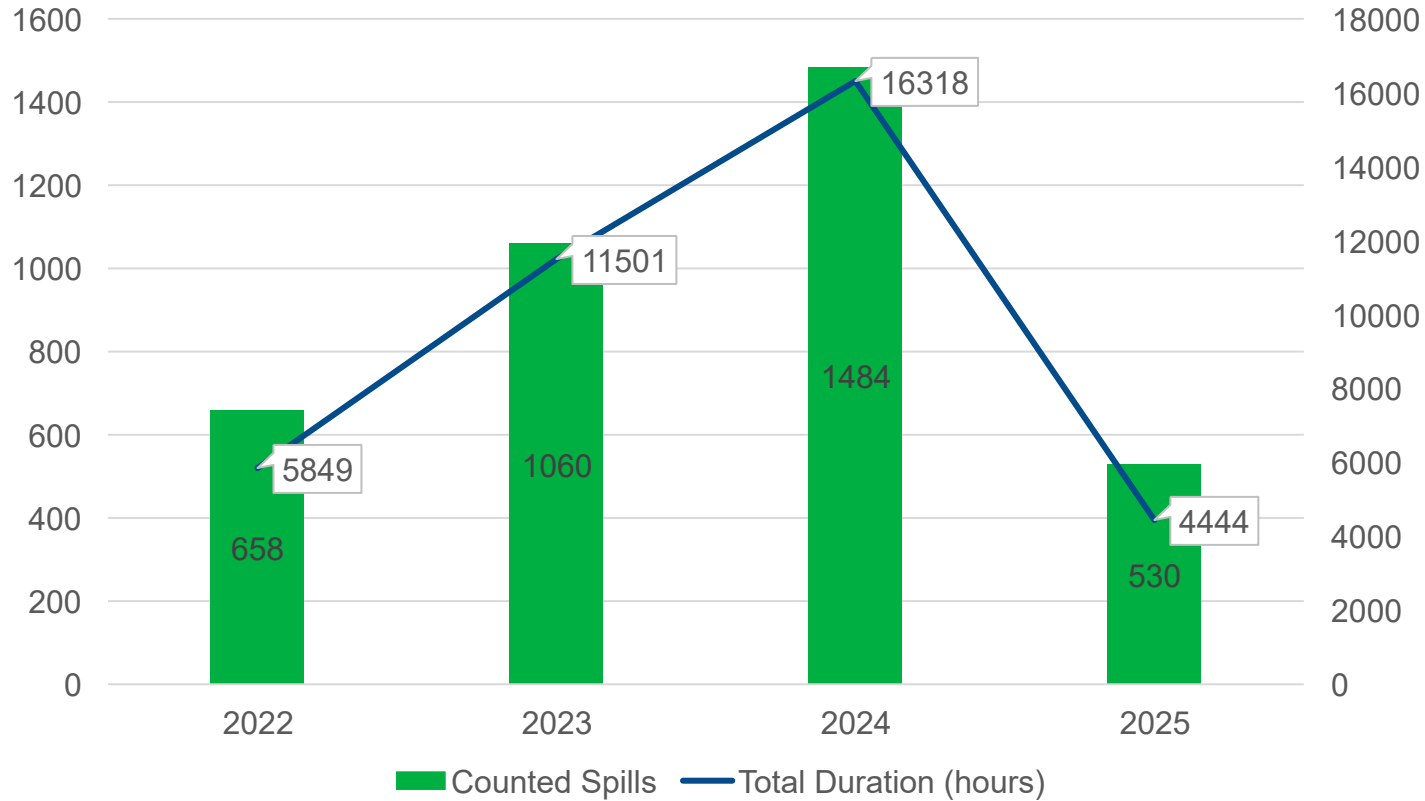
Cottered, Buntingford



EDM Data 2022 - 2025

Cottered, Buntingford

River Lee & Tributaries



EDM Data 2022 - 2025

River Lee & Tributaries

Water Framework Directive – tackling wider challenges

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) is a European Directive which came into effect in 2003. It requires all water bodies - including surface waters and groundwaters - to achieve 'good' status through a catchment-based system of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs).

There are 7 RBMPs in England, and East Herts is located within the Thames RBMP. Each RBMP describes the quality of water bodies, the pressures they face, and the actions needed to meet WFD objectives of 'good' water body status (surface waters must achieve both good ecological and chemical status). River basin management is a continuous process of planning and delivery and the WFD uses a series of 6-year cycles.

A combination of pressures

There are several contributing factors as to why rivers in East Herts do not reach “Good” status:

- Diffuse agricultural pollution
- Physical modification of rivers
- Low flows and abstraction pressures
- Invasive non-native species
- Emerging and legacy pollutants
- Sewage discharges

WINEP - Environmental obligations for water companies

The Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) is a large regulatory framework that outlines the environmental obligations for water companies. The current version covers the period 2025-2030.

It sets out the water industry's contribution to delivering the wider national objectives for the natural environment as set out in the WFD River Basin Management Plans and other statutory plans. It consists of investing £22.1bn of asset improvements, investigations, monitoring, and catchment interventions.

£10.2bn of investment will be used to improve storm overflows in England, including nature-based solutions which reduce the amount of rainfall reaching overflows making usage of storm overflows less necessary.

WINEP in East Herts

In East Hertfordshire Council, this includes:

- improvement schemes to storm overflows at Sewage Treatment works or Sewage Pumping Stations to reduce spills and protect the environment;
- schemes to improve effluent quality with actions to reduce phosphorus loading from the treated wastewater;
- investigations into storm overflows at Sewage Treatment Works or Sewage Pumping Stations to reduce spills and protect the environment; and
- actions to ensure that there are certified flow monitors at Sewage Treatments Works to protect the environment from the effects of wastewater discharges.

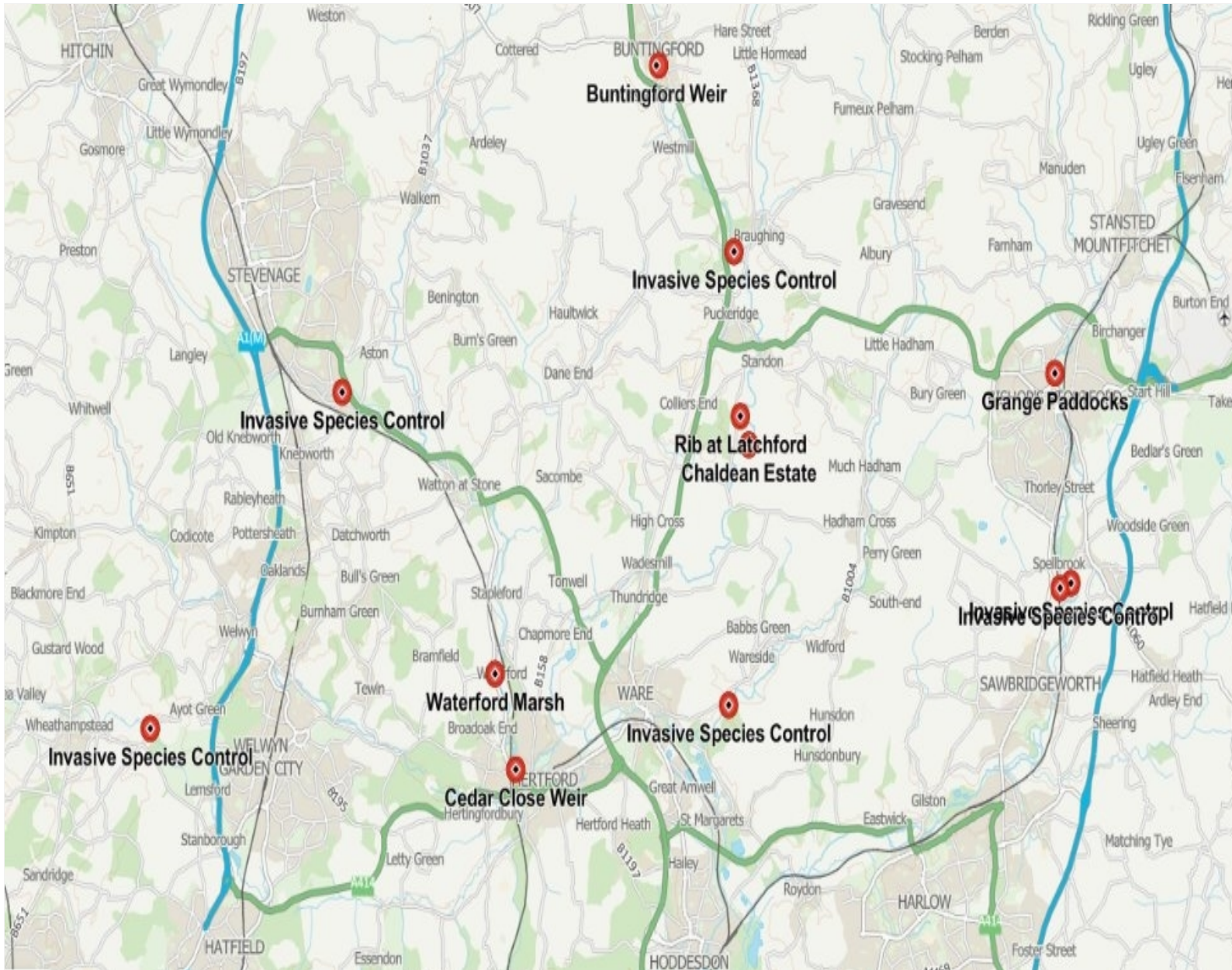
There is an interactive map:

[Price Review 2024 Water Industry National Environment Programme \(WINEP\) App](#)

Building a better place together

As an organisation we work on the planning and development of programmes of projects, to achieve an integrated approach to improve and restore our rivers and chalk streams in Hertfordshire and North London.

The projects vary from catchment wide measures to targeted projects on specific rivers, with specific stakeholders.

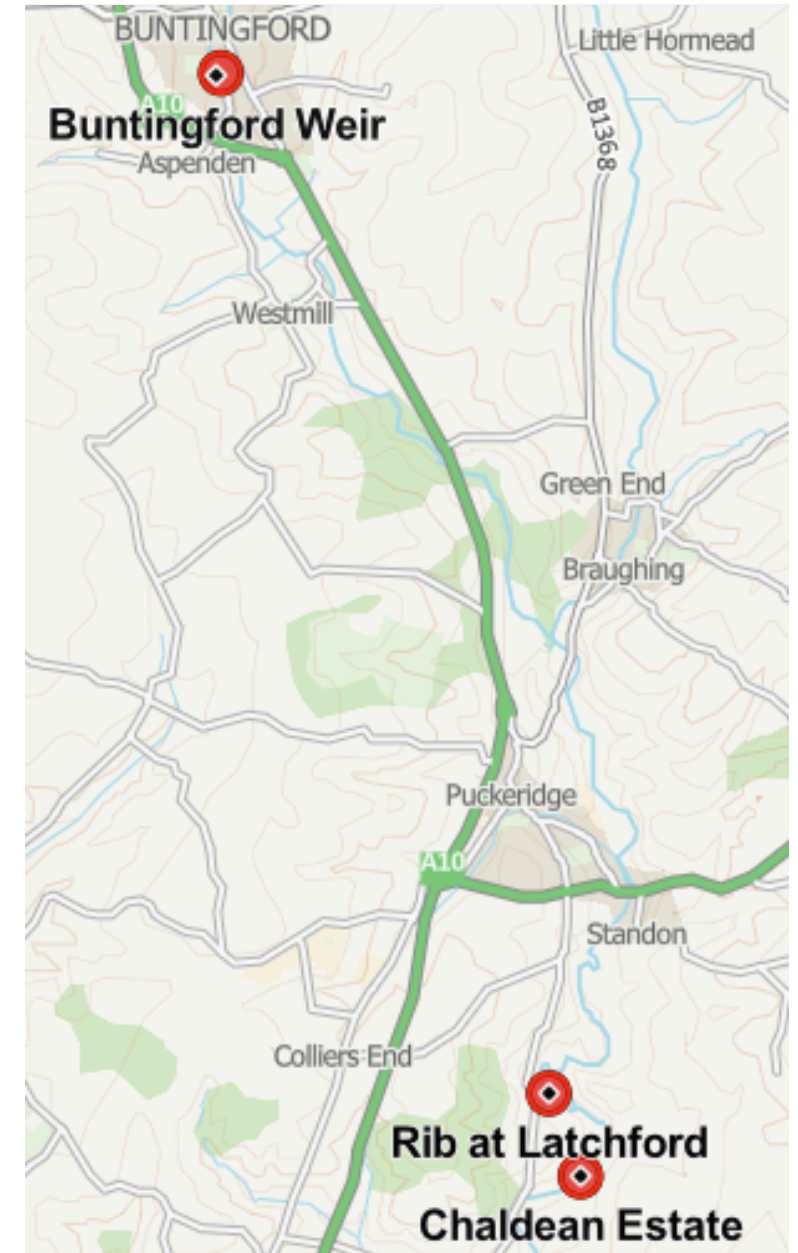


Our work – Wider Catchment Measures

- **Mimram Chalk Rivers and Farm Advisory Officer** – direct engagement with landowners to reduce diffuse pollution and improve riparian management.
- **Small weirs removal programme** across Hertfordshire, including the Rib and Ash.
- **Invasive non-native species control** (e.g. Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam) to improve habitat condition.

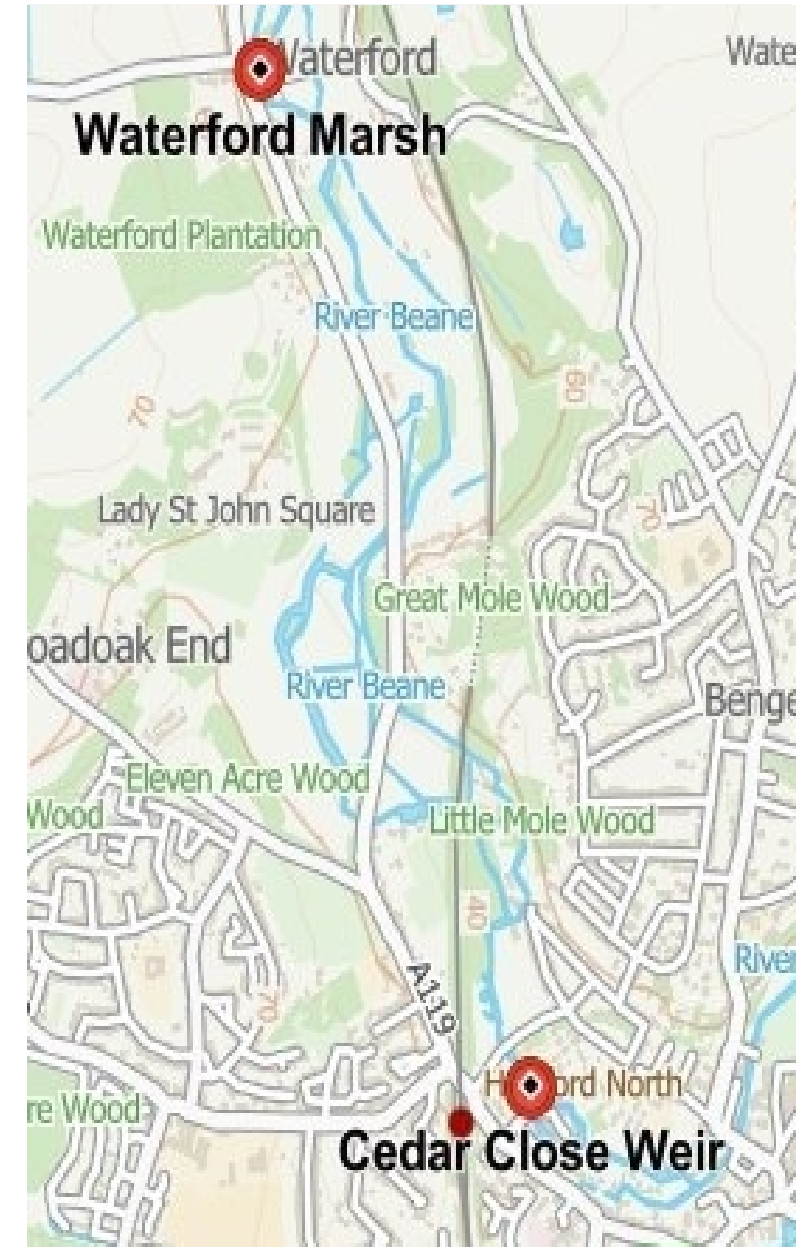
Our work – River Rib

- **Rib at Latchford** - WINEP Morphology project restoring natural processes through re-meandering, gravel reinstatement, bank regrading, backwater creation and tree planting.
- **Chaldean Estate** - development of an estate-wide restoration plan including wetlands, in-channel improvements and riparian buffers (delivery planned later in the decade).
- **Buntingford Weir** - design work underway to improve fish passage, with potential WINEP funding for delivery.



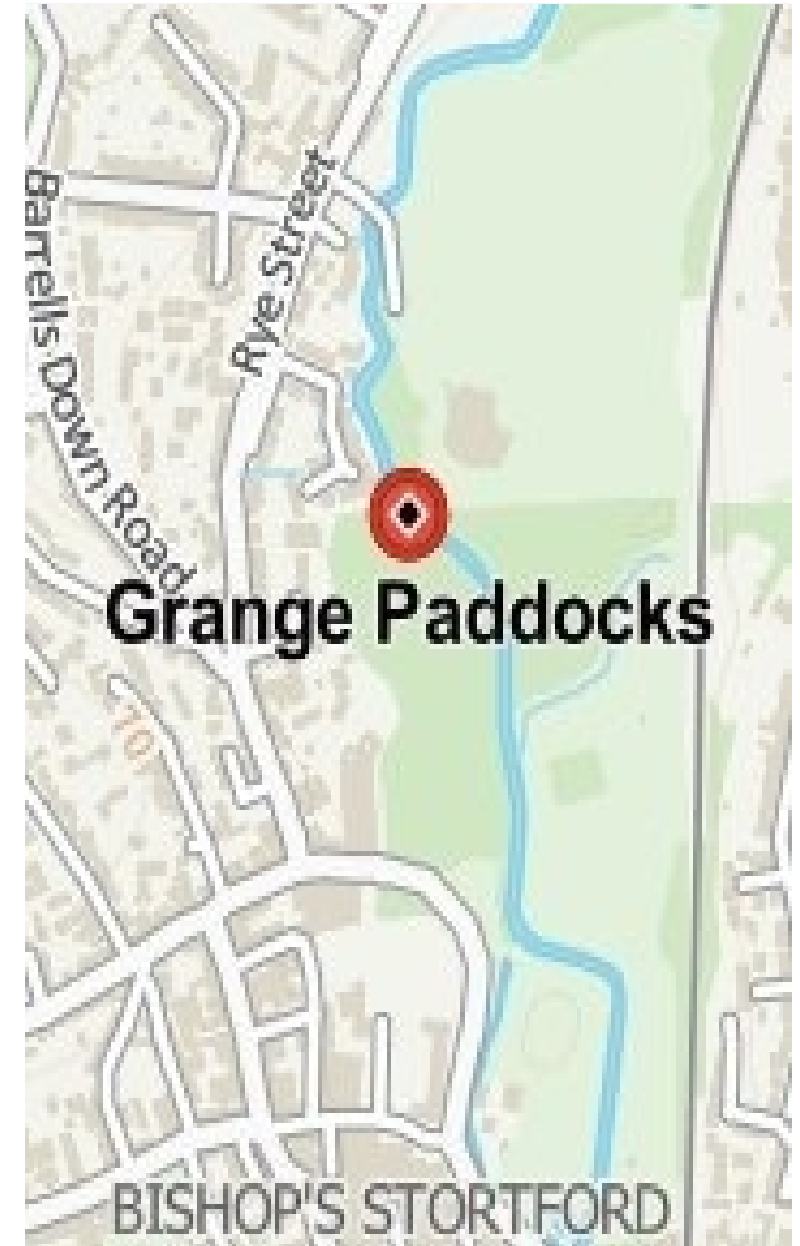
Our work – River Beane

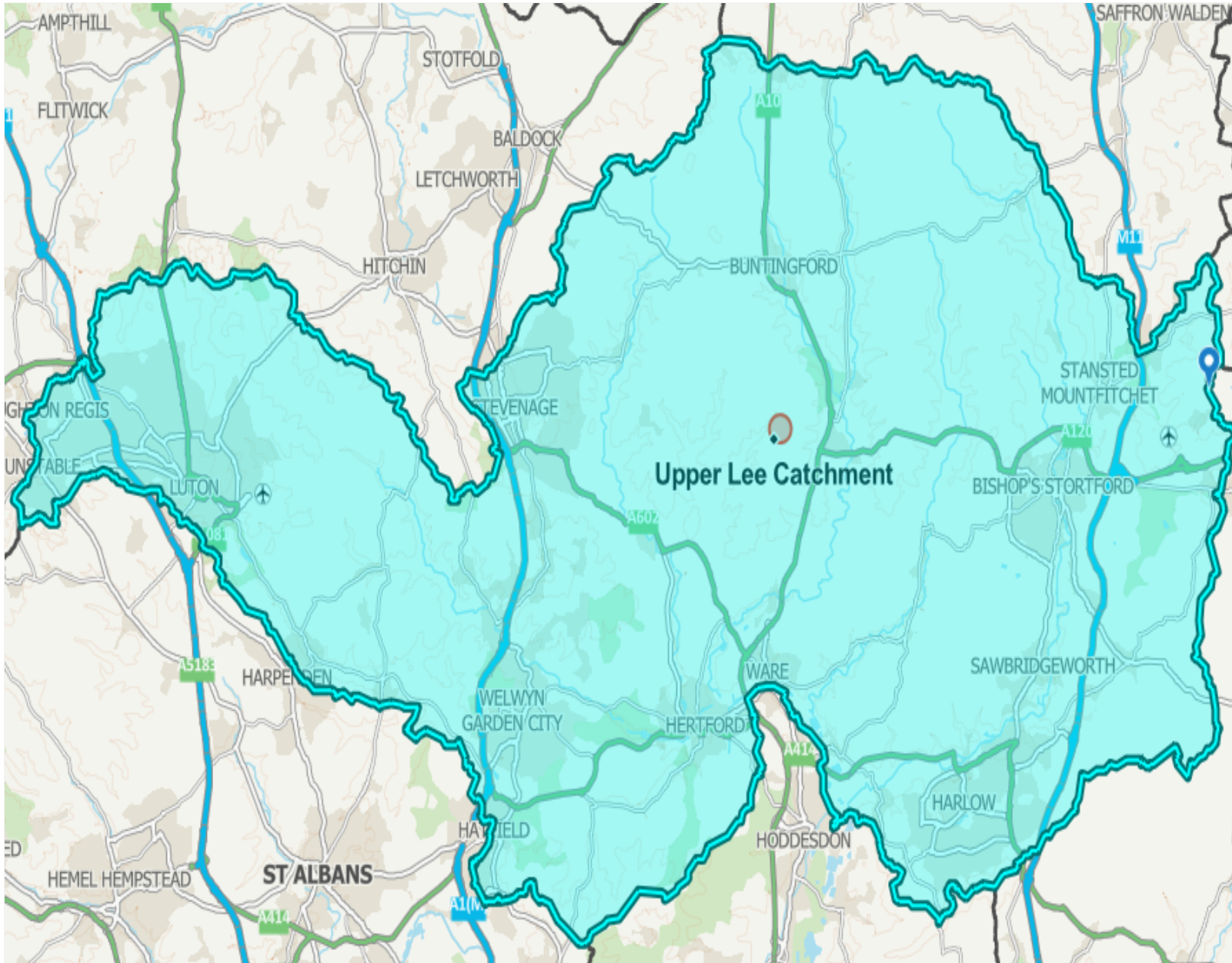
- **Beane Flagship Project** – a catchment-wide partnership (EA, Affinity Water, NGOs) focusing on monitoring, planning and future physical restoration aligned with the Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy.
- **Cedar Close Weir** – proposed bypass channel to restore ecological connectivity.
- **Waterford Marsh** – works to stabilise flow and reduce impacts from historic structures.
- **Beyond the Banks** – catchment-wide, farm-focused interventions (ponds, scrapes, soil and runoff management) to improve water retention and reduce diffuse pollution.



Our work – River Stort

- **Grange Paddocks** – major weir modification and removal project reconnecting approximately 10 km of river habitat, with further works planned.





Upper Lee Catchment Partnership

- The River Lee and its tributaries - the Mimram, Beane, Ash, Rib, Quin, and Stort - drain over 1000 km² of south-east England. These rivers include rare and precious chalk streams, canals and navigations, and urban watercourses.
- The partnership actively engages with 26 farms, estates, fisheries, local authorities, and private landowners across the catchment.



Thank you.