

Notes of STC Climate and Nature Working Group

26th March 2026

1. Welcome

Attendance: Gina Adams (Chair), Jamie Bostock, Andy Harrop, Andy Parsons, Hugh Middleton, Mal Rose.

2. Apologies from Jacky Huson, Rob Miller, Karen Roberts and Liz Walker.

3. Notes of the previous meeting (5th February 2026)

Mis-spelling of 'habitat' and repeat of sentence under (4) to be corrected.

4. Matters Arising

Notts Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). AH had previously circulated a Powerpoint summarizing the inclusion of Southwell locations in Notts County Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Southwell Town Council should consider options for putting some of its areas forward, and promoting other land around Southwell, to NSDC for inclusion as a Habitat Bank for BNG funding. NSDC has already identified 4 areas it owns as Habitat Banks. Two of these are close to Southwell, off Corkhill Lane. GA suggested more research into potential costs, liabilities, covenants, etc would be beneficial before taking to STC Planning and Highways Committee (P&H).

GA noted that some recent planning applications for small developments, for example in Normanton, did not appear to have included any on-site BNG and it is important for P&H to re-inforce NSDC's 'hierarchy' approach that prioritises on-site BNG.

Action: GA to discuss with Chair of P&H how the committee might help take these issues forwards

Management of Cludd and Squires Ponds – GA reported that Ivan is supportive and keen for an ecological management plan to be developed. He also supports CAN's proposal to ask NTU if they can advise. Ivan also confirmed that he will not be doing any intensive pond management that could disturb the ecology this season.

AH noted that the outflow from Squires pond is now working, which will help with its ecological health. Perhaps the drain has cleared itself with the high water levels. The Azolla has gone (but it is seasonal so may be back in the summer).

Action: GA ask Adam Bates who runs NTU's BSc Ecology and Conservation course, and has research interests in urban ecology and riparian systems, if he can advise and whether it may be a suitable student project.

5. Briefing from March's Town Environment Committee (TEC).

- Motorbikes and 4 wheel vehicles have been driven over Minster Fields over night on a few occasions, damaging the grass. STC will to put some bollards up at the edge of the WMRG car park . There may be access rights for the Minster to consider.
- Uncertainty regarding the bund has held up other projects.
- Cllr Peter Harris has played a lead role in securing the closure of Park Lane to traffic. NTU and students wanted this as a safe walking route.
- There has been a spate of hot taps being apparently deliberately left on at Council and Minster properties wasting energy and water (OCH and Church Street Car Park).
- There have been significant changes to Council Officers and Groundstaff, including several vacancies and a new Clerk. We are not at full capacity.

6. Updates from others

Southwell Minster Environmental Action Group (SMEAG).

- Committed to working towards gold standard Eco Church.
- August 11th - a special service to celebrate the Feast Day of St Claire of Assisi
- September 12th - Diocesan service hosted by Minster for Nottinghamshire's Eco Churches, with Ruth Valerio who is a leading writer on Christian Stewardship of the Earth as God's creation.
- The Period between Sept-Oct is the season of creation and all are welcome to all of these services.
- The Minster will be making a procession to Brackenhurst on 10th May at 3pm, for Rogation - to bless the crops in the fields. This fits into a wider context of bolstering connections to NTU.
- Sam Ward appointed as new gardener.
- New Dean arrives in a few weeks time - we hope that he is as enthusiastic about ecology as the previous Dean.
- Badger's Field - Minster administration continues to work positively with the Council.
- SMEAG will be visiting to a recycling plant in May, with Viola.
- Minster is considering issues around use of fossil fuel-based candles.

AH:

- Notable that guidance about recycling in the silver bins across NSDC has changed with more varied recycling now catered for. This is part of a national attempt to standardise recycling across Local Authorities but challenges still remain.

PODGAG

- MR – locking gates and limiting public access to protect grasslands needs careful consideration to avoid public perception of change to the general ‘open access’. GA noted that PODGAG has been waiting for decision (and if appropriate wording) from Minster staff about whether signage about hazards is needed before opening. As the Public Liability Policy is with the Minster, it is important that it has ownership of this.

Action: Hugh will follow up with staff.

Green Southwell

- There is a community litter pick on Sat 28th March in the Methodist Church Car Park, organised by Lynn Preece with support from NSDC.

7. Report from Himalayan Balsam (HB) Workshop with Landowners on 24th March

- GA thanked AH for leading a very successful workshop. There were 23 attendees, mainly landowners, including from Maythorne and Kirklington and the Chair of STC also attended.
- Lynn Preece, Liz Walker, and Ivan Venkov from STC played a key role in organising and leading the workshop, with GA supporting.
- The workshop aim was to coordinate and initiate a strategic approach to the Greet catchment that will be necessary to eliminate HB. This requires a 5 year effort, starting upstream. Lynn Preece had valuable data from community projects led by Notts Wildlife Trust that shows that with just a couple of years targetted work, numbers of HB can go from 1000s to 10s. There was strong interest from the landowners.
- AH provided information on methods to control HB. This was followed by an interactive mapping session to identify known hotspots and areas where landowners might take responsibility for surveying and controlling. And also any landowners who would like volunteers from Green Southwell to help.

- The Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board are involved but couldn't attend. Some landowners had expressed concern that work by IDB last year disturbed HB seeds leading to a major increase. Storm Babet also had an impact.
- To deliver the work, coordinating the strategy and starting as far upstream as possible will be crucial. May will focus on surveying and later May and June for the first control. Led by AH, the workshop planning team are now working with STC and landowners on this.
- At the end of the workshop, Gary Cragg from Notts Wildlife Trust gave a presentation on a project to restore water voles that includes coir matting impregnated with wildflowers to stabilise the banks. This is viable where HB is controlled.

Action:

- **HB group to consider leafletting residents and other promotion as west of Nottingham Road a lot of the Potwell bank is in gardens.**
- **GA and AH to explore with Notts WT whether the coir matting might be possible for STC and PODGAG owned banks of Potwell Dyke.**

8. NTU Engagement

HM gave update on the Minster's strengthening engagement with NTU.

Recent rich and helpful discussion regarding collaboration on Fair Trade.

Also identified shared areas of interest around ecological issues in town, with potential for fieldwork. There is an open door to developing further and a commitment from NTU as far as staff time allows.

Mapping areas of overlap between NTU staff's research interests and project needs identified by CAN would be useful.

AP – Lucy Clarke from NTU has agreed to join CAN. She is a senior lecturer with special interest in nature-based approaches to flood mitigation.

GA is in touch with Adam Bates at NTU to discuss PODGAG's needs for an up to date ecological management plan and to measure the status of important plant species populations and other indicators of success.

HM offered to explore whether A Rocha has access to an ecologist who might also help with PODGAG's need for advice.

Action: HM to investigate whether A Rocha may be able to send someone to help survey Potwell Dyke Grasslands and advise us on ongoing management and monitoring.

9. Update on CSO Data

AH provided an overview and the attached paper. The 2025 data for Southwell's Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO's) has been released (as part of the national statutory annual returns that water companies have to make to Government).

It shows that there is still a big sewage pollution problem in Southwell. Southwell's 5 CSOs overflowed 122 times, for 264 hours, potentially releasing sewage into the Potwell and Greet. CSOs are intended as a 'release' valve at times of heavy rainfall, so these numbers are shocking given that 2025 was one of the worst droughts on record. (The numbers were slightly below the wet summers of 2023 and 2024, but higher than 2020, 2021 and 2022).

Severn Trent Water (STW) spent £Ms upgrading the Southwell Sewage plant in 2024, and yet the CSO there still overflowed 58 times for 639 hours in 2025. The upgrade doesn't seem to have fixed preventing sewage pollution.

In 2025 STC agreed to write to STW and to accept an invitation to visit the upgraded sewage works as a basis to start a dialogue. This has not been done.

Consider contacting BBC, advertiser etc. to raise issue. It would be worth looking how widespread the issue is for other towns and villages nearby.

Action: GA to ask the new Clerk to undertake the previous actions to contact STW.

10. ToR for CAN and Implementation Plan

These keep getting deferred to next meeting as we run out of time. CAN members were comfortable with this for the moment as the focus has been on priority actions.

Action: GA to share with TEC the Draft Implementation Plan as it is populated to date.

Meeting closed at 20:30

Next Meeting: 4th June - 7pm.

Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) in Southwell – update March 2026

What are CSOs?

England has a combined sewage system made up of many thousands of kilometres of sewers, often built by the Victorians, in many urban centres. This “combined system” means that rainwater runoff/stormwater and waste water from toilets, bathrooms and kitchens are conveyed in the same pipe to a sewage treatment works.

During heavy rainfall and storm events, the capacity of these pipes can be exceeded, which means possible inundation of sewage works and the potential to back up and flood peoples’ homes, roads and open spaces, unless it is allowed to spill elsewhere. CSOs were developed as overflow valves to reduce the risk of sewage backing up during such heavy rainfall. According to the Environment Agency, overflows of diluted sewage during heavy rainfall are not a sign that the system is faulty. They say that CSOs are a necessary part of the existing sewerage system, preventing sewage from flooding homes and businesses. However, this issue is one of significant topical debate, being discussed regularly, and heatedly, in the news and by NGOs.

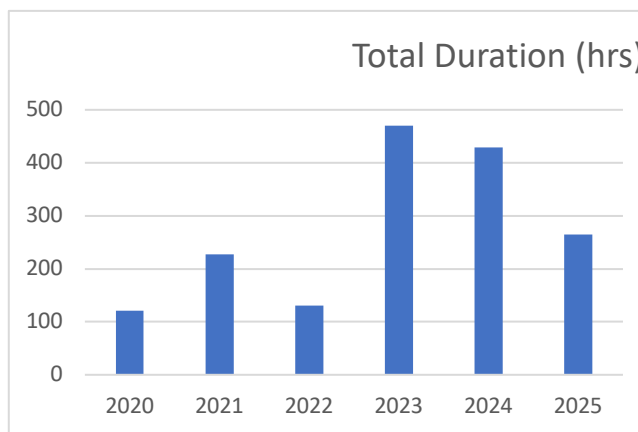
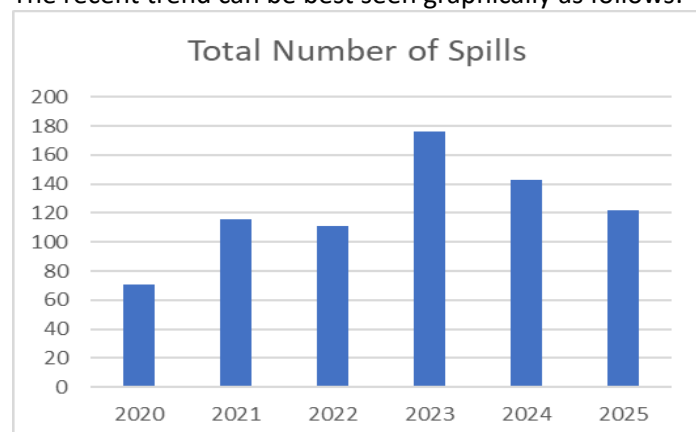
How does this relate to Southwell?

Southwell is defined, historically, by water. In addition to the historic “wells”, there are two main local watercourses, the River Greet and the Potwell Dyke which feeds into the Greet. There are 5 known CSOs which discharge into these watercourses, somewhat surprisingly 3 of which flow into the much smaller Potwell Dyke. These are located near Halloughton Road, Nottingham Road and Church St (to the Potwell Dyke) and from Riverside and Newark Road (directly to the Greet).

Data obtained from the statutory annual returns from water companies (data not readily available pre-2020, see [Event Duration Monitoring - Storm Overflows - Annual Returns - data.gov.uk](#)) shows the following information for Southwell:

Southwell CSOs		2025		2024		2023		2022		2021		2020	
Receiving Body	Name/ Location	# Spills	Duration (hrs)	# Spills	Duration (hrs)	# Spills	Duration (hrs)	# Spills	Duration (hrs)	# Spills	Duration (hrs)	# Spills	Duration (hrs)
River Greet	Newark Rd	27	82.1	22	50.2	44	100.2	29	22.9	30	84.6	17	33.9
River Greet	Riverside	19	45.1	22	63.5	38	121	21	40.1	20	22	15	42.6
Potwell Dyke	Church St	30	15.1	23	34.9	30	33.7	21	13.8	21	14.9	10	11.1
Potwell Dyke	Halloughton Rd Westgate	36	121.2	71	280.1	62	212	39	53.3	43	105.5	27	31.9
Potwell Dyke	Nottingham Rd	10	0.7	5	0.5	2	3.6	1	0.41	2	0.69	2	1.3

The recent trend can be best seen graphically as follows:



Southwell Sewage Treatment Works This is located to the southwest of Southwell racecourse and has been subject to a recent improvement program. Clearly that improvement program was very much needed as the site overflowed to the River Trent for more than 2000 hours in 2023 and 1774 hours in 2024! In 2025 it overflowed 58 times for a total of 639 hours.