

# THE RIVER ANNAN ADVENTURE

RESTORING AN ICONIC RIVER FROM SOURCE TO SEA



## THE RIVER ANNAN: PLACE AND PEOPLE

The Annan rises in the mighty Devil's Beef Tub, a hill burn which becomes a river where it is joined by the Moffat Water and Evan Water at Three Waters Meet, flowing into the Solway Firth at the red sandstone coastal town of Annan.

Comprising 800 miles of waterways, the Annan is the lifeblood of the landscape of Annandale.

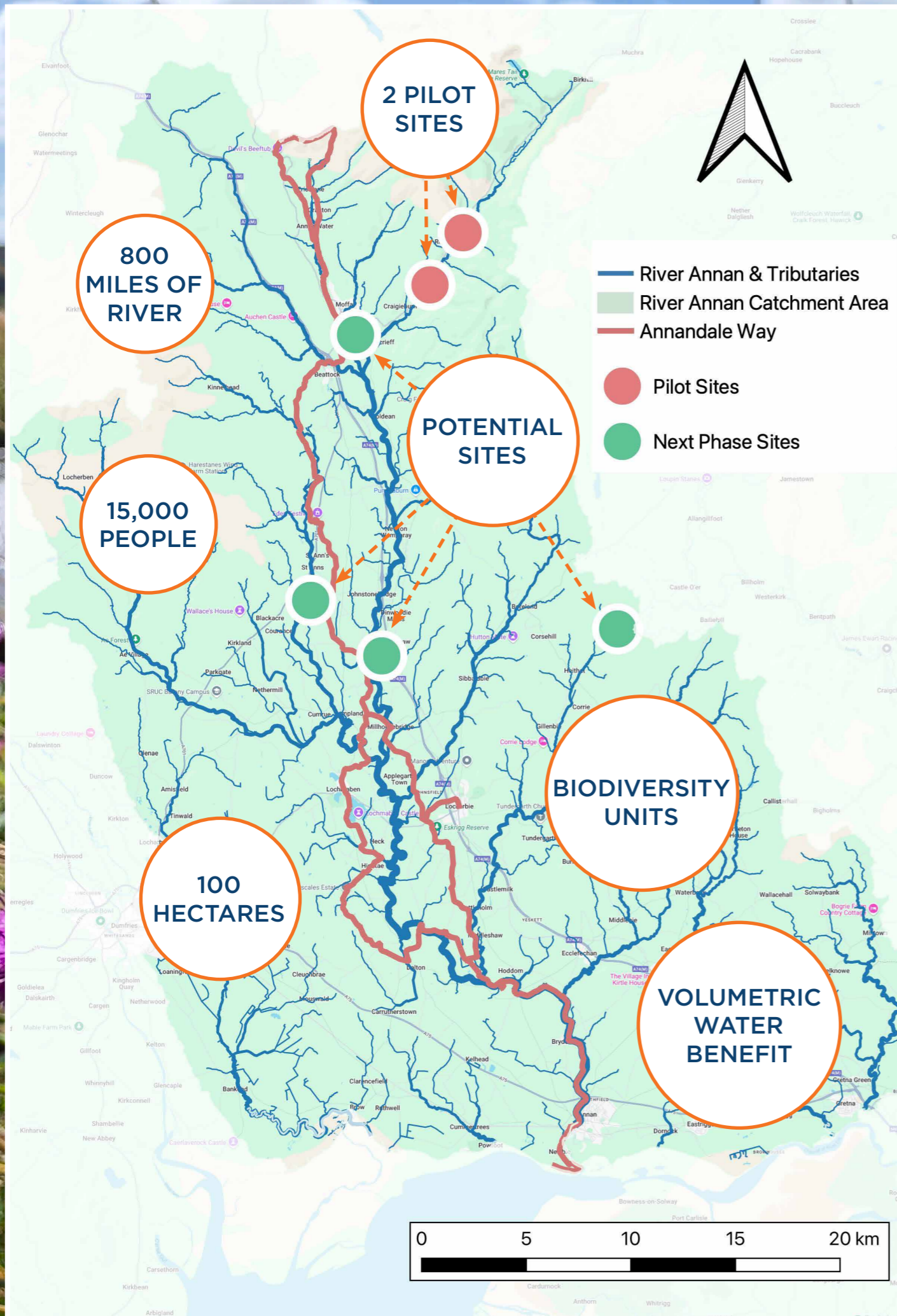
Over 15,000 people live in Annandale, once the lordship of Robert the Bruce. Its rich history includes violent bloodshed from invading rivers and warring lords, construction of mighty tea clippers, runaway marriages, tragedies of lives lost on treacherous sands, and ancient hill forts – one of which is said to have been built by William Wallace.

Today the industries of Annandale include forestry and sawmilling, farming, whisky production, renewable energy, and its newest enterprise: nature restoration.

From work to protect golden eagles, the establishment of Moffat as Europe's first dark sky town, the creation of the 56-mile Annandale Way, and the Wild Heart land project reforesting the Devil's Beef Tub, nature restoration is growing in interest, employment, and funding.

The River Annan Adventure project is the first to focus on the restoration of the River Annan at scale. Like many rivers, the Annan has been modified from its natural state over centuries through straightening, channelling, construction of hard banks and weirs, removal of trees, colonisation from invasive species, and diffuse pollution. Major effects of these disruptions include more frequent and extreme flooding in the town of Annan, and more severe droughts. With rivers supporting a huge proportion of a landscape's wildlife, they have also driven significant biodiversity loss, threatening many iconic species including the Atlantic salmon.

Since 2010 the River Annan Trust has been working to reverse ecological decline on the river, building knowledge and networks, engaging landowners and communities, and taking action on the ground. The one ingredient missing to date, however, is scale. The River Annan Adventure project seeks to restore the freshwater ecosystem at the heart of this landscape through an ambitious programme of site-by-site restoration.



## THE PROJECT

The River Annan Adventure project seeks to accelerate the restoration of the River Annan by developing sponsoring partnerships with businesses which can benefit from the quantified biodiversity uplift, water benefit, and carbon capture associated with nature restoration, as well as the opportunities for social benefit and enhancing the natural beauty of a spectacular landscape.

The project will begin with three pilot sites, two on the Moffat Water and one on the Annan, covering 100 hectares of land. Each site is a unique opportunity to move towards sustainability and each has its own story.

Interventions will include freeing the river from its channelled course, and creating and reconnecting the river with a wetter and more diverse matrix of rare habitats. These would range from floodplain woodlands to wet meadows and wetlands. Side channels, pools, gravel islands and more will provide refuge to fish, nesting sites for birds and homes for invertebrates, supporting an array of wildlife.

With water flowing more slowly through these habitats, water will be retained in times of flooding and drought, benefiting people and wildlife.

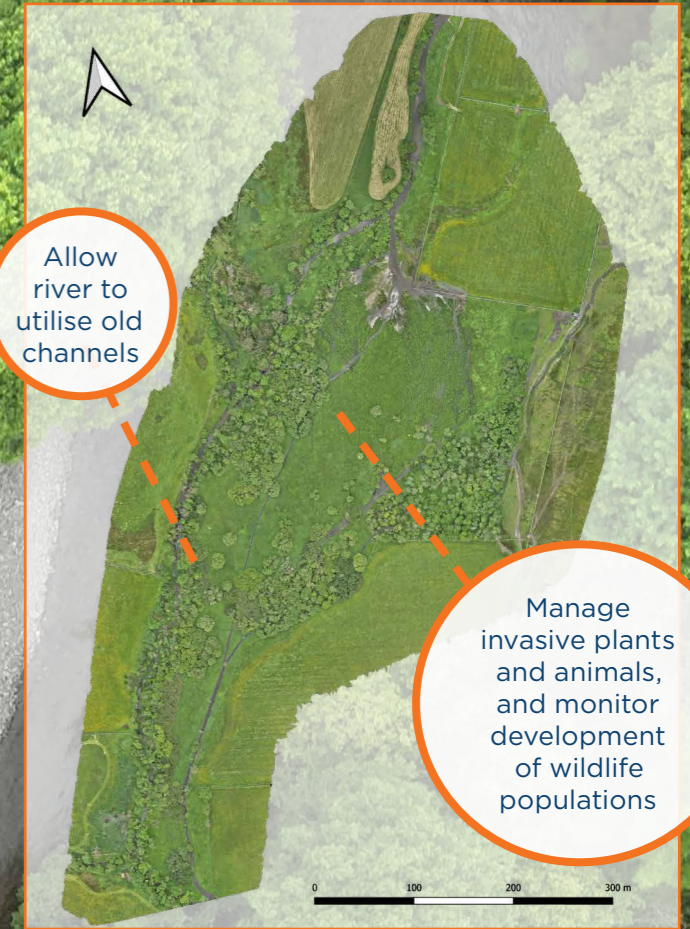
The project has worked with landowners, local volunteers and experts to take baseline measurements and develop effective restoration and management plans. A pipeline is being identified of future sites for further phases of restoration, stitching together a rich, living web of freshwater habitat throughout the catchment.

## PILOT SITES

Proposals for two pilot sites have been developed to test the market for a scaleable programme of restoration. These have been subject to a detailed survey and restoration design process, and are ready to implement on the ground when funds are available.

There is potential for dozens more such interventions to create a more resilient, natural, biodiverse, and beautiful river along the catchment.

A pipeline of potential sites is already developing, even before the pilot has been successfully demonstrated.



## MONITORING, REPORTING AND VERIFICATION

The project will demonstrate impact through a comprehensive and transparent Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification framework (MRV). This will meet a sponsor's reporting needs, capture the range of benefits delivered, and be flexible to develop in response to future natural capital markets.

The proposed MRV framework is summarised in the table below.

Benefit	Metric	Rationale	Implementation
Biodiversity increase	Statutory Biodiversity Metric	Measure habitat enhancement in a widely reportable form	Baseline being undertaken September 2024
	Bird audiomonitoring / fish surveys/ invertebrate surveys	Wildlife monitoring can provide a regular and sensitive measure of the effect of habitat management on biodiversity.	As required by sponsor
Water management	Replenish framework	Measure Volumetric Water Benefit, reportable against Courtauld 2030 commitments	Baseline being undertaken September 2024
Social benefit	Business update	Measure social and economic renewal through job creation and food and energy production	As required by sponsor
Carbon management	Remote sensing	The small numbers of trees and scrub regeneration associated with riparian restoration are difficult to measure using the Woodland Carbon Code, but can be captured by innovative methodology	As required by sponsor

The MRV framework will form the basis of annual reports for the sponsor including data, news, photographs and graphics.



## COMMUNITY BENEFIT

Galloway Fisheries Trust has been able to develop this project thanks to funding by the Facility for Investment Ready Nature in Scotland (FIRNS) grant scheme. A partnership between NatureScot and National Lottery Heritage Fund, FIRNS promotes development of natural capital projects which 'bake in' community benefit. FIRNS enabled The Southern Uplands Partnership to partner in the Annan project to help ensure community benefit is integral to the work. The desired outcomes are shown in the graphic below.

- Expanding access to and knowledge of riparian habitats
- Enabling reconnection to nature, with physical and mental health benefits
- Increased local involvement in decision making regarding nature restoration
- Helping local farmers lower carbon emissions
- Stimulating activity of local wildlife groups
- Sharing knowledge and skills

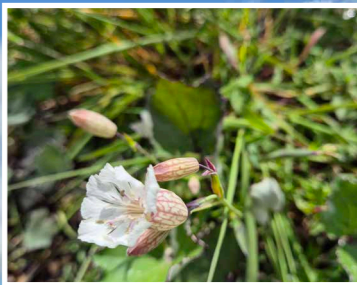
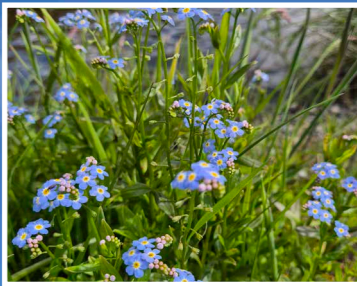
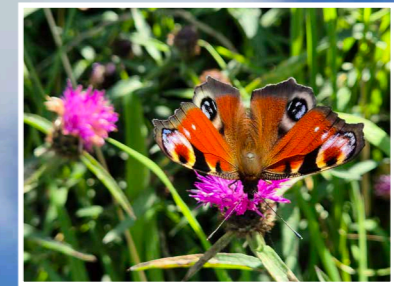
These outcomes will be delivered through a strong governance framework. The River Annan Trust charity (RAT) has been revived with a board representing different sectors of the community, to provide a locally-owned project developer. Membership of RAT is being opened to local people.

RAT will work closely with Galloway Fisheries Trust to ensure professional advice and delivery on nature restoration. Natural capital, land agency, and community engagement will be supported by a range of delivery partners.

RAT will contract with sponsors to deliver nature restoration at scale, and with local landowners to ensure its delivery on the ground. Annual updates and opportunity to visit will provide the basis of transparent reporting.

### TO FIND OUT MORE

**Contact:**  
 Eleanor Harris, Galbraith  
 Eleanor.Harris@galbraithgroup.com  
 07585 900 870





Managed by:



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# Galbraith



southern uplands partnership  
*living land, living community*



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