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Chalking up a victory for the Hogsmill

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The **South East Rivers Trust** (SERT) has completed the construction of a 2,000m 2 pollution filter which will bring major benefits to Epsom and Ewell's **Hogsmill** chalk stream.

When planting takes place in the spring, the newly constructed Chamber Mead wetland will protect and improve 5km of river downstream, filtering pollutants and becoming a haven for wildlife.

The project has been carried out in partnership with **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council**, which owns and manages the **Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve**, a popular greenspace which will now benefit from this new community asset.

The wetland is a crucial project for the Hogsmill, which suffers adversely from pollution such as urban road runoff, raw sewage discharges and misconnected plumbing that sends drain water directly into the river. Water from the Green Lanes Stream has been diverted through a sediment trap and two wetlands, with filtered, cleaner water reconnected to the Hogsmill downstream of the famous Stepping Stones.

News about the wetland's completion comes in the week of **World Wetlands Day**, on Friday 2nd February. Dr **Bella Davies**, Co-CEO of SERT, said: "We are delighted that the construction phase of this important wetlands project has now been completed. It is destined to become a jewel in the crown of the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve. The public has shown great enthusiasm for this project, and we will soon be calling on volunteers and community groups to add the plants that will really make the wetlands flourish as a magnet for wildlife. The water quality improvements that will result from the wetlands are designed to help the river become a healthier place for all, especially wildlife that thrive in a chalk stream, such as brown trout."

Councillor **John Beckett**, (RA Auriol) Chair of the Environment Committee at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, said: "The council is committed to protecting and enhancing biodiversity in our borough, as per our Biodiversity Action Plan 2020-30. This partnership project with the South East Rivers Trust will help to ensure that the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve is a place where nature can thrive; from woodpeckers, hedgehogs and bats – to species whose numbers have dwindled such as water voles, fish and eels. We know our residents cherish this Local Nature Reserve and I hope that many can join the community planting days, which are a unique opportunity to be part of this fantastic project."

SERT is now preparing a series of community planting days, to take place in the Spring. These will give residents the chance to plant the vegetation to help the wetlands counter pollutants.

Schools, community groups and residents will be given opportunities to install plants that have been specifically selected to filter pollution, trap sediments and attract a variety of wildlife. Plants selected include yellow flag iris, ragged robin, purple loosestrife and brooklime.

In time, SERT will also offer guided walks and outdoor education sessions for school children. A nature trail is planned for families to interact with the wetlands as they develop, alongside information boards which will detail the reasons why the wetlands were needed and the types of wildlife that should be attracted.

Supported by the Hogsmill Catchment Partnership, the project has received funding from The Coca-Cola Foundation, Natural England (through the Species Recovery Programme), the Environment Agency, Surrey County Council, the Rivers Trust, the Zoological Society of London, Garfield Weston Foundation and Thames Water, with in-kind support from the landowner Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. The new wetlands are part of the wider Replenish programme in partnership with the Coca-Cola Foundation and the Rivers Trust. The aim of Replenish is to restore millions of litres of water in this and other local catchments, in turn improving biodiversity.

The construction of the wetland is expected to cost £1 million. We are proud to have a good mix of funding for this project, including private funding from Coca Cola, Thames Water and charitable grants, as well as public funding from the Environment Agency, Natural England and Surrey County Council.

It is estimated there are 200 chalk streams across the world, with about 160 of them in England, mostly in the south.

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