



# Working together to protect and enhance our water environment

What our partnership in the River Evenlode catchment has achieved this year

Smarter Water Catchment Plan  
Update Document  
March 2025

Working in partnership





# Welcome to this update

In March 2021, we collectively set out a 10-year plan to protect and enhance the River Evenlode catchment. Throughout 2024/25, we continue to deliver the actions outlined in this plan and have started to collect data to demonstrate the additional benefits of this programme.

It should be noted that in October 2023, a decision was made on behalf of the Evenlode Catchment Partnership (ECP), not to continue working on this programme beyond March 2025 citing disappointment in Thames Water's Draft Business Plan. This decision may be revisited following the publication of the Final Business Plan, but until such a time, this update only includes milestones taking place this Asset Management Plan period (2020 - 2025).

We've been able to measure how working in partnership can leverage additional match funding, support and create new jobs, enhance and create habitat and biodiversity and increase engagement and public awareness across a river catchment. All of the insight gathered is being used to inform our long-term strategy for partnership working across the Thames region.

## Working in partnership

We've been working with many different partners across the River Evenlode catchment, bringing together expertise from many specialisms to make sure our future plans are robust and right for the local environment and communities.

Our partners include water companies, regulators, non-government organisations, academia and local interest groups – all have given either finances or in-kind support to help make this project a success.

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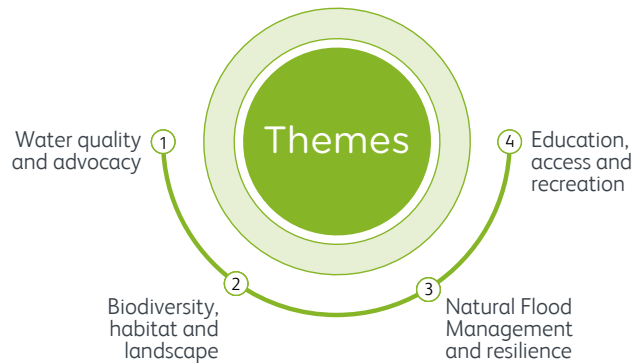
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# What we're aiming to achieve

Throughout 2024/25, we've focused on delivering the actions set out under each of our key themes. The main focus has been on analysing data to shape our strategies and delivering interventions across the catchment.



## River Evenlode strategy



### Aim for 2025

Our aim is to collate the benefits and lessons learnt from all three Smarter Water Catchments trial projects and disseminate this information in 2025.

On the next page is a case study on some of our collaborative work within the River Evenlode catchment and the benefits it's delivered so far.

## Putting the right governance in place

A steering group with representatives from across the different sectors has guided the development and delivery of this catchment plan. We also have technical working groups for each key theme, bringing in additional stakeholders who are responsible for ensuring the best

plan is in place to achieve our objectives. It's also critical that Catchment Partnerships have the resources to partner with us, so we're funding multiple positions to support with facilitation, community engagement and data collection & analysis.

## What's our collective vision for the River Evenlode catchment?

Our aim is to achieve a good ecological status across the whole catchment. To achieve this, we must ensure Thames Water has sufficient capacity and infrastructure to process all effluent and remove excess phosphorus. We must also reverse the degradation and fragmentation of our habitats and species, historic landscapes and freshwater bodies. The combined pressures of climate change, the rapid growth of rural settlements and lack of investment, makes reaching this goal harder. More extreme weather events also increase the risk of flooding or untreated sewage spills.

We need to work closely together to tackle these new challenges. We'll engage with local communities, landowners and stakeholders to improve connectivity throughout the catchment and share experiences, solutions, expertise and culture. We'll also expand our monitoring and data collection for water quality and biodiversity using evidence to drive change, deliver restoration projects, enhance ecosystem services and reset attitudes.

## Steering group members

- Cotswolds National Landscape
- Earthwatch
- Environment Agency
- Local resident representative
- Natural England
- Thames Water
- Wild Oxfordshire
- Windrush AEC



# A project case study

## Cornwell River Restoration and Wetland Creation

**Start date:** Feb 2021 **End date:** Sept 2024

### Project description

The landowner, Alex Ward, approached the ECP to enhance the wetland habitat on three fields in the Cornwell Estate and address the poor water quality in the Chipping Norton Brook. The fields were of low agricultural value typically used for seasonal cattle grazing. The Chipping Norton Brook receives treated and untreated effluent from Chipping Norton sewage treatment works (STW). In times of low flow during the summer, most of the brook's water comes from the STW.

### Objectives

To create natural river channels, provide room for the river to move and slow the flow to create wetland habitats.

### Restoration and creation work

Three different designs of wetland were constructed in Autumn 2023 by diverting the Chipping Norton Brook.

**Upper Wetland:** Excavating new channels and backwaters into the field exposed the natural river gravels. The action of the water moving freely in this area has fashioned riffles and deeper water.

**Middle Wetland:** The topsoil was removed, exposing the river gravels and clay subbase. New channels push the water into the field where it's no longer constrained.

**Lower Wetland:** This wetland had the least intervention with channels created to push water into the field and re-join the brook lower down. The water can spread widely across the field which has a gentle gradient. The flow has slowed considerably, and vast amounts of sediment have been deposited already.

**Fish Spawning Bed:** Constructed with gravel, boulders and tree trunks to create slower flowing refuges in steps

to allow fish to swim against the fast flow. The gravel bed is the favoured substrate for fish spawning and the faster flowing water keeps the gravel free of sediment.

### Outcomes

- 3.4 ha wetland habitat created
- 3.03 ha species-rich grassland created
- 1 km of river reconnected to its floodplain
- 14,500 aquatic plugs planted
- 175 native broadleaved tree whips planted
- 25,000 m<sup>3</sup> flood water stored

### Project costs

Thames Water contribution: £88,000

Public funding contribution:

- EA WEIF grant £105,000
- CNL FiPL grant £146,000

**Total Cost: £339,000**

### Lessons learnt

- Allow plenty of time and contingencies for disruption due to bad weather
- Thames Water don't have records of all their services – there is a parallel pipe between Kingham and Chipping Norton
- Water runs down the gravel filled trench for the foul water pipe in great quantity
- Don't stand still while walking in soft clay!
- Grant payments that only occur at the end of the project can put a small charity in financial jeopardy

### Future plans

Ideally, to secure one or more PhD students to study these three different wetlands analysing:

- How the channels and the ecology change with time
- How effective the wetlands are at nutrient reduction

## Project highlights

Heron and egret arrived within days of project completion. Within months we had the first recorded sightings of Green Sandpiper and Ringed Plover. Unusual sightings were Ruff, Osprey and Great Egret. The water entering the upper wetland is high in nutrients and very turbid. The water exiting the lower wetland is clear with a lower nutrient load, and this is even before many aquatic and marginal plants have established.



Upper wetland



Middle wetland



Lower wetland

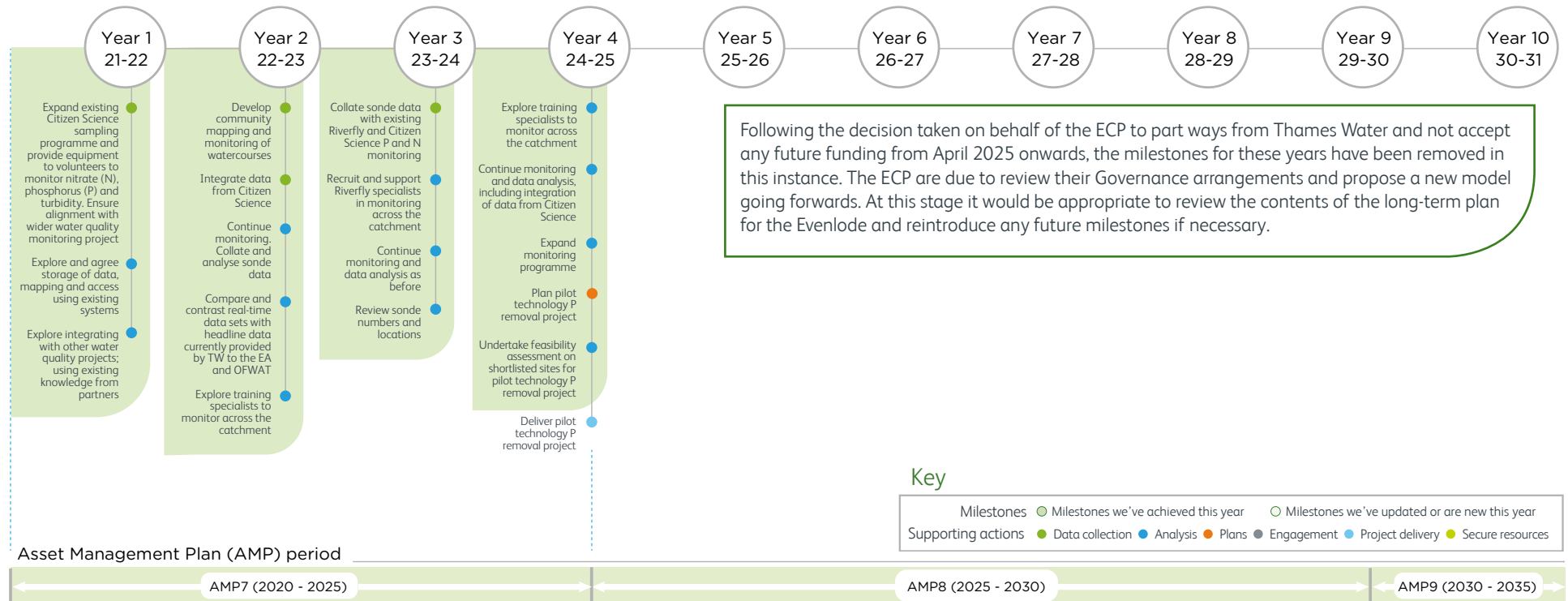


# Delivering our shared plan

Highlighted below are the milestones we have achieved in 2024/25.

## Water quality and advocacy action plan

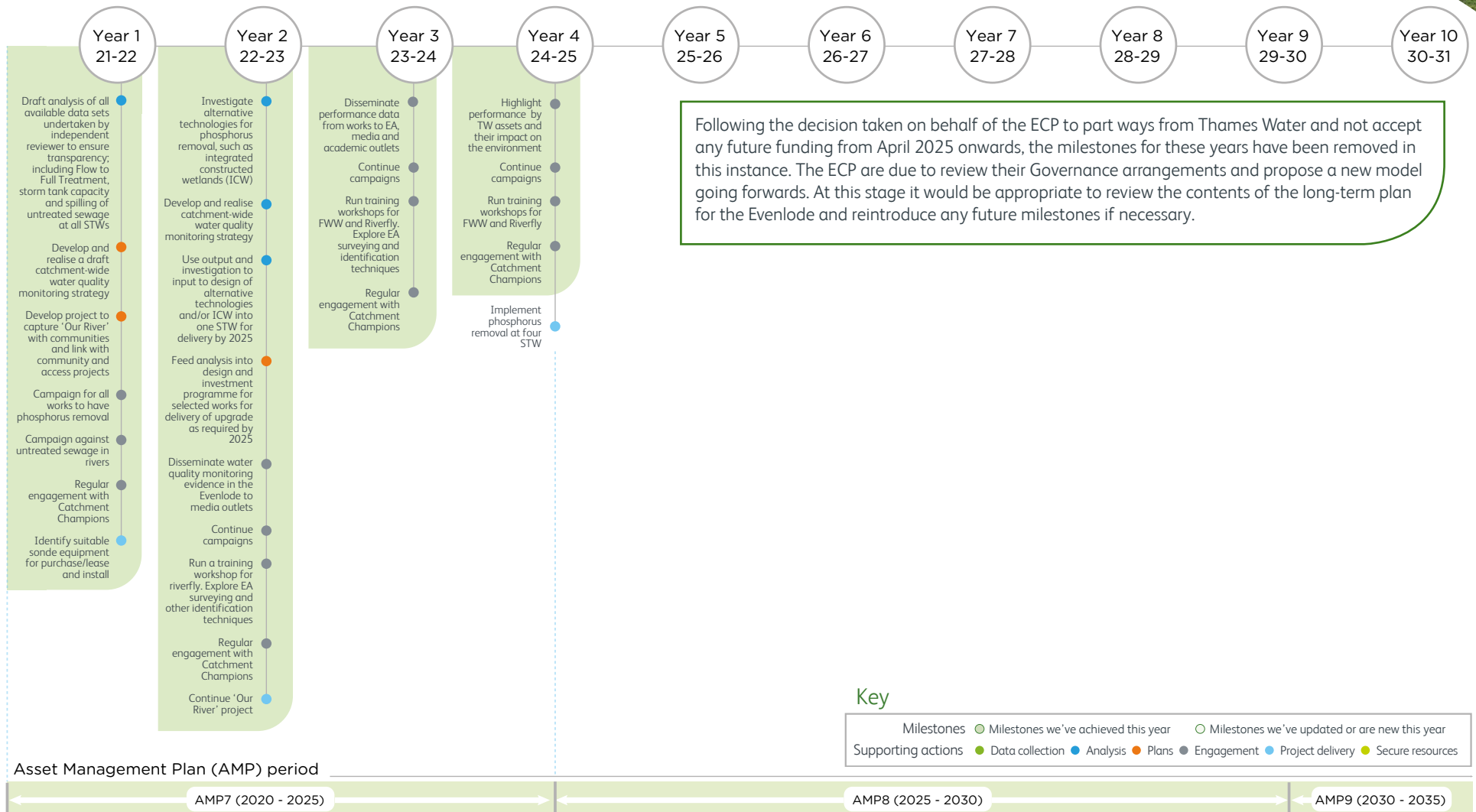
Sub-theme: Point source pollution



# Water quality and advocacy action plan



## Sub-theme: Point source pollution

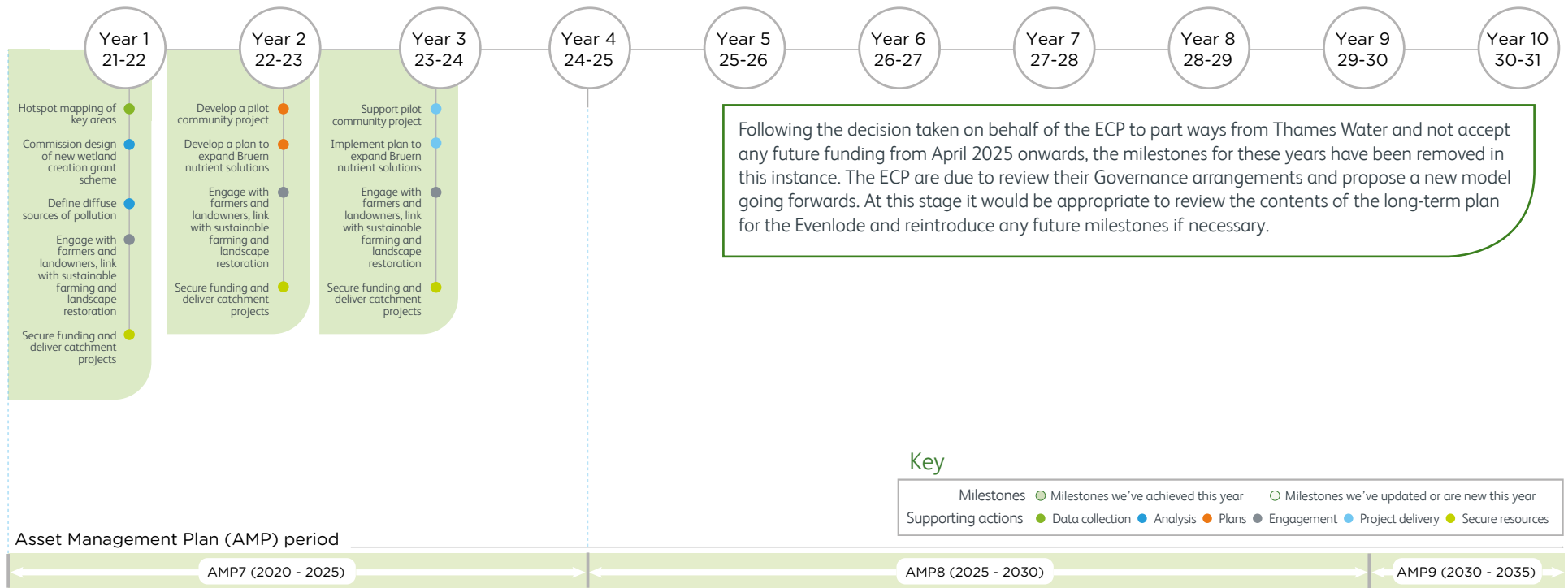




# Water quality and advocacy action plan



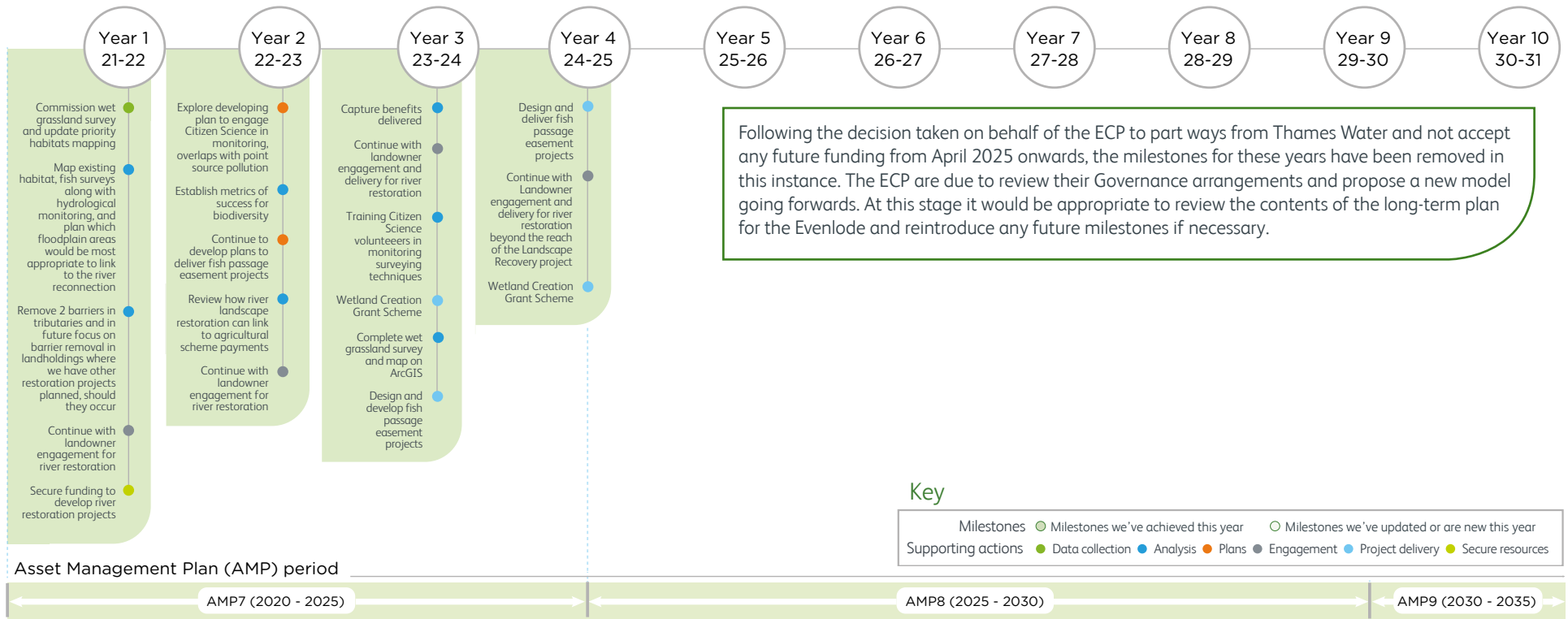
## Sub-theme: Diffuse pollution



# Biodiversity, habitat and landscape action plan



## Sub-theme: River and floodplain restoration

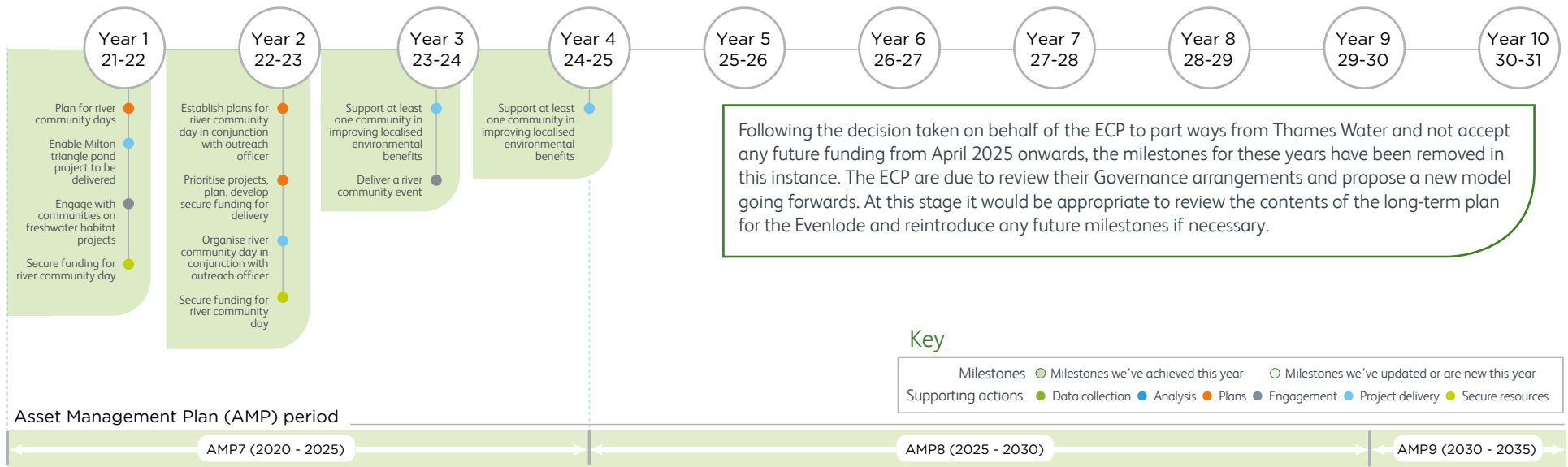




# Biodiversity, habitat and landscape action plan



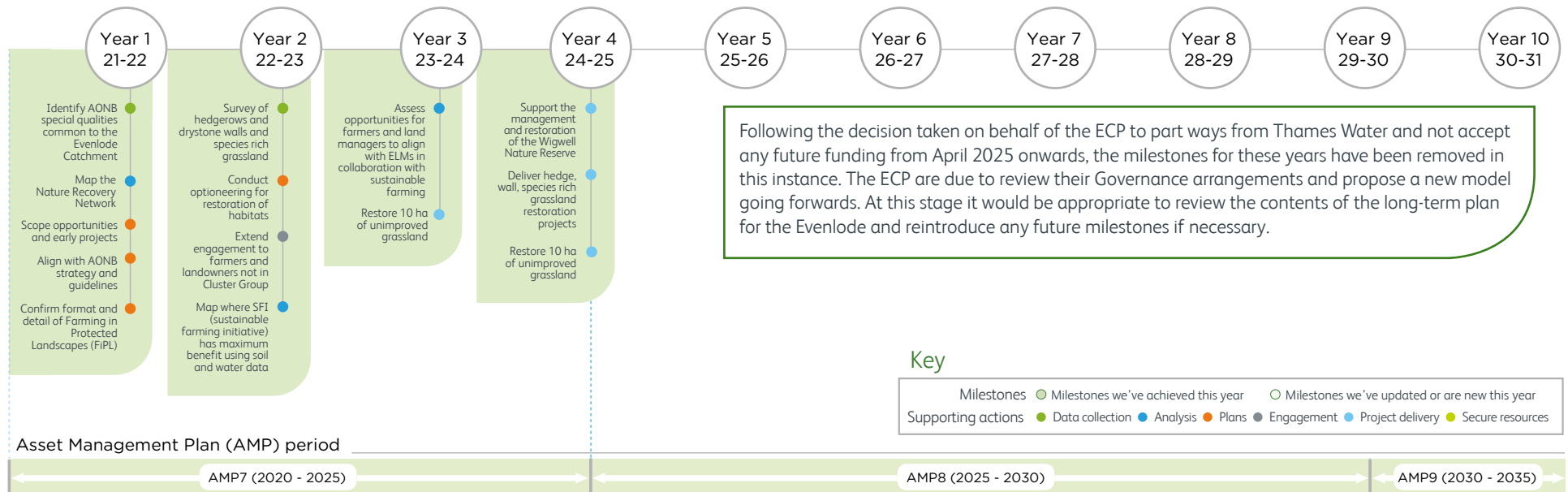
## Sub-theme: Community



# Biodiversity, habitat and landscape action plan



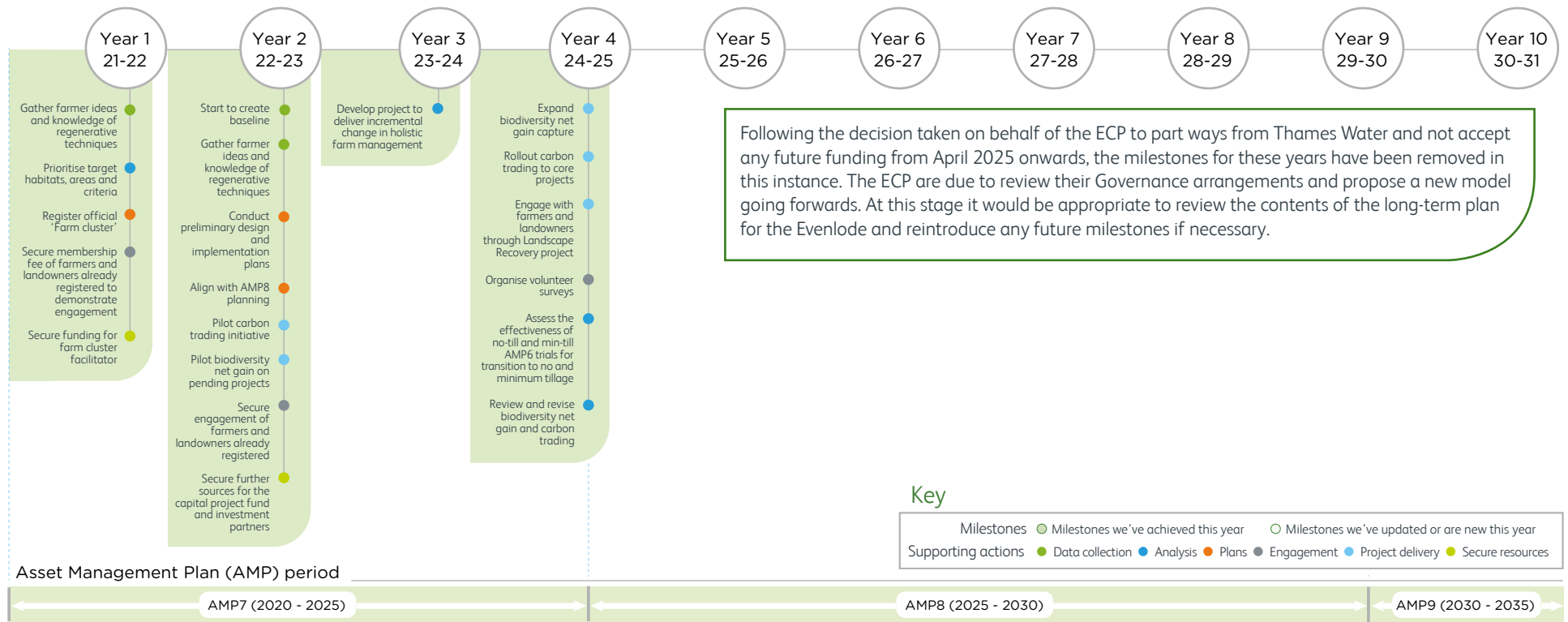
## Sub-theme: Landscape restoration



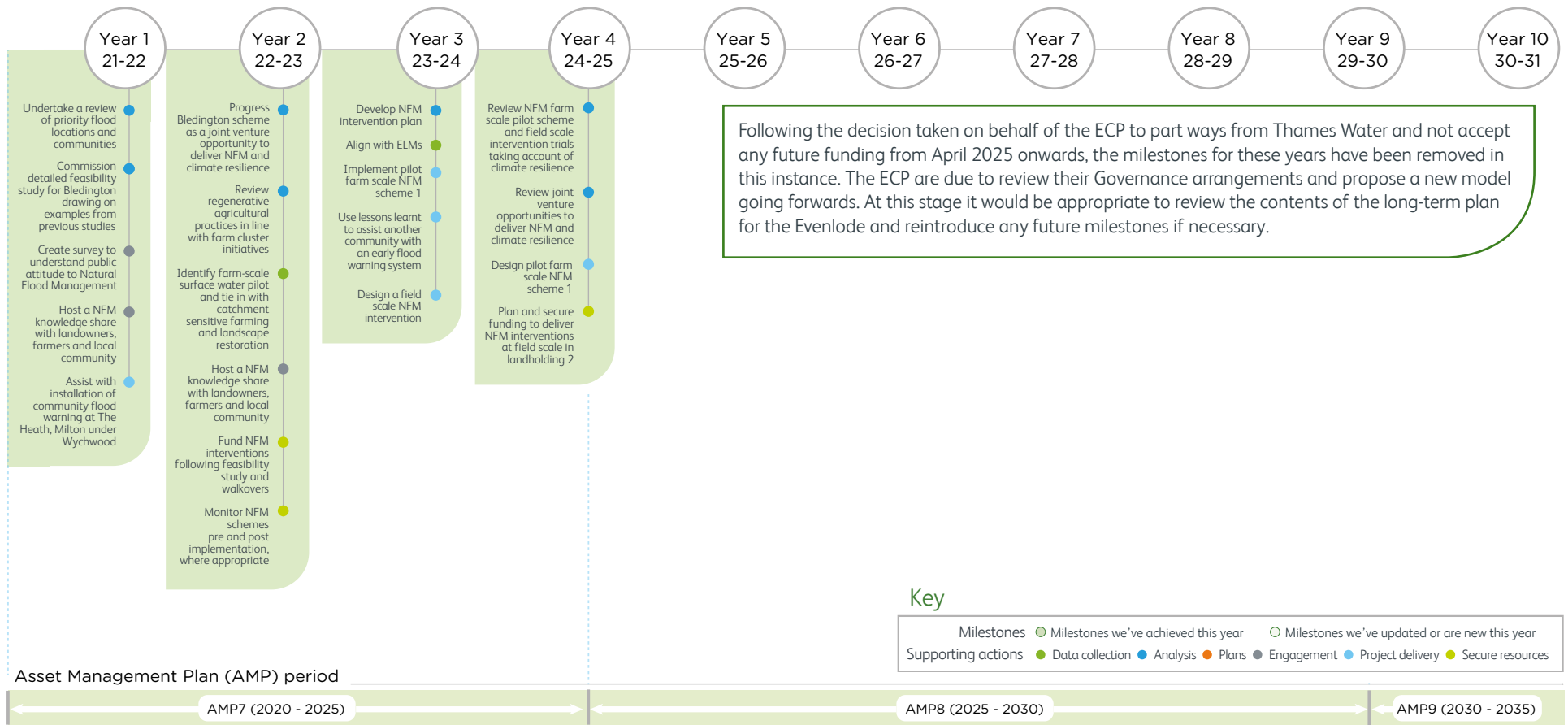
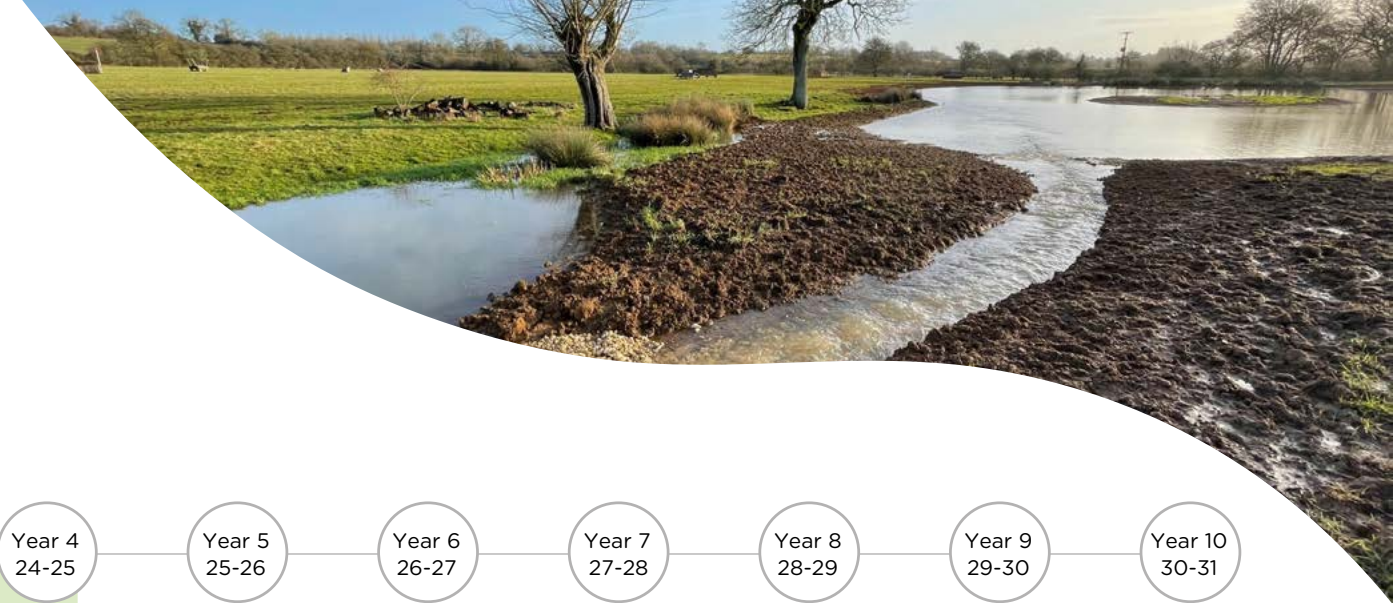


# Biodiversity, habitat and landscape action plan

## Sub-theme: Sustainable farming



# Natural Flood Management and resilience action plan

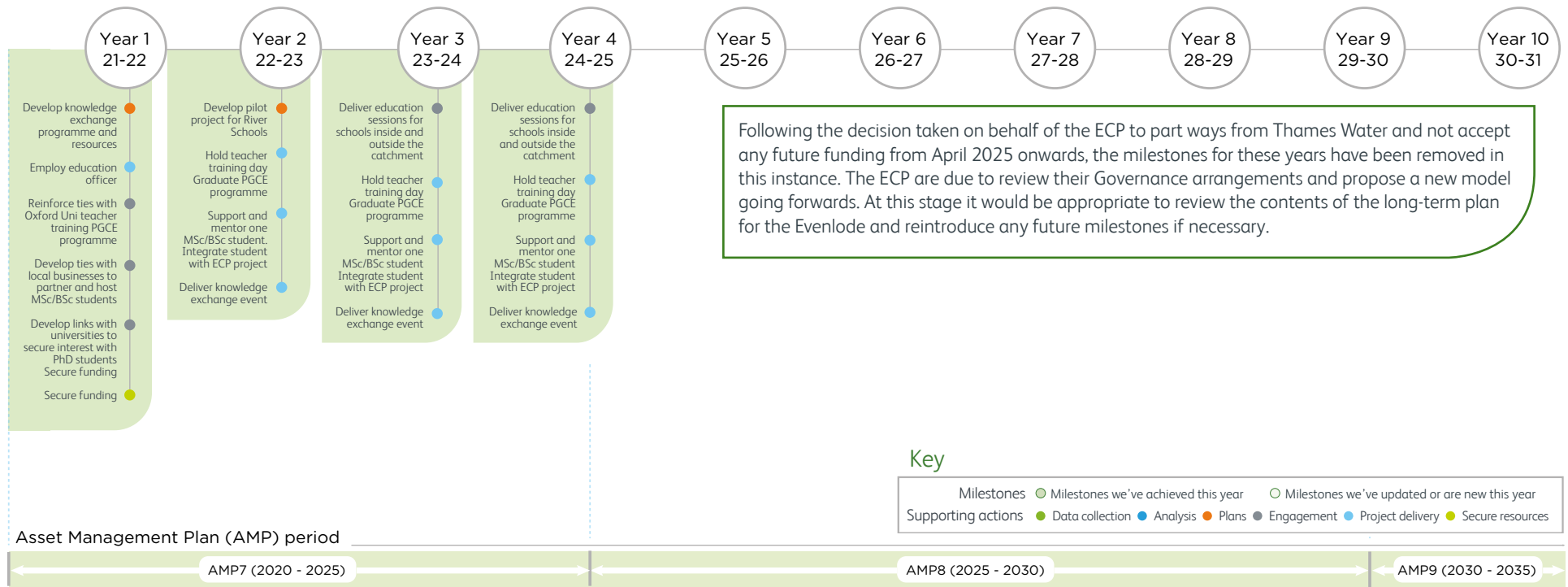




# Education, access and recreation action plan



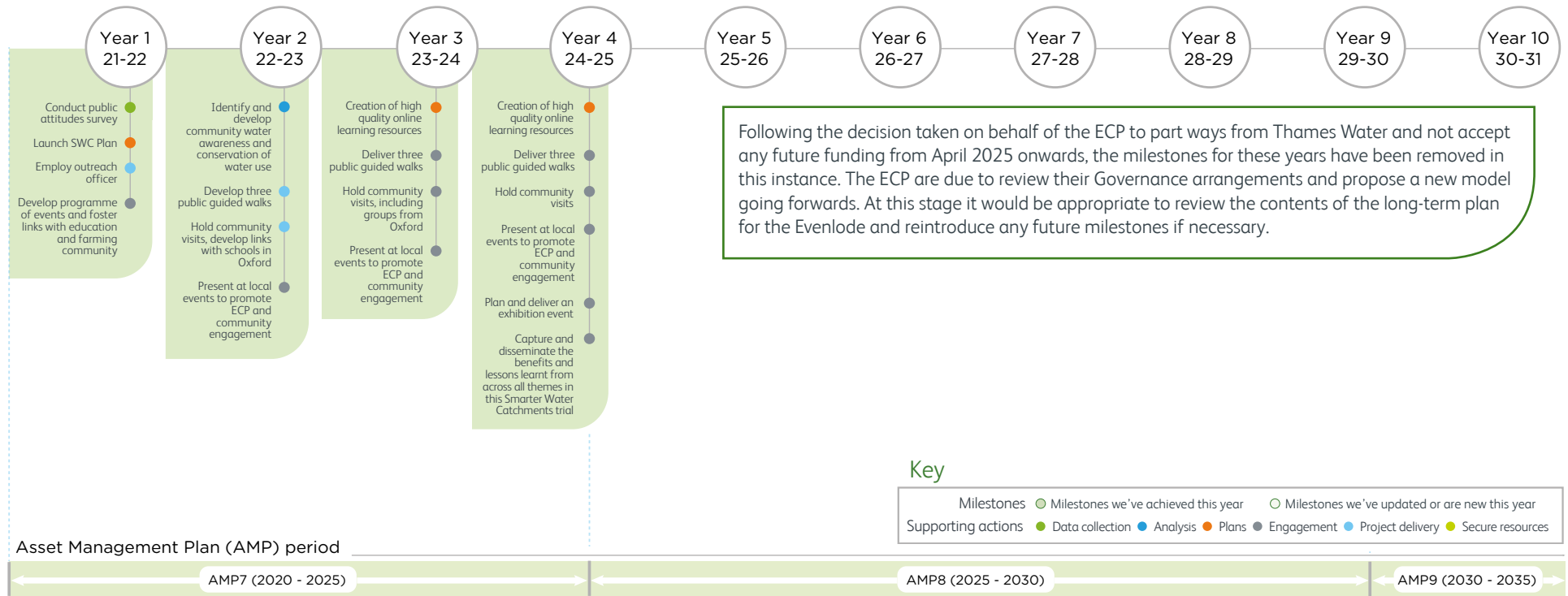
## Sub-theme: Education



# Education, access and recreation action plan



## Sub-theme: Community, access and recreation





# Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank all the organisations and individuals in the partnership who've contributed their valuable technical inputs, insights and time. Through various forums and engagement platforms, we've been able to jointly develop this plan. We greatly appreciate everyone's commitment and enthusiasm, so we can collectively achieve this vision and deliver the plan.

The information provided in this plan is correct as of 31 March 2025 and has the formal support of all key stakeholders.

## Partners

Atkins  
 Berks Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)  
 Blenheim Palace and Estate  
 Catchment Champions  
 Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH)  
 Cotswolds National Landscape  
 Cotswolds Rivers Trust  
 Daylesford  
 Earthwatch  
 Environment Agency  
 Evenlode Catchment Partnership members  
 Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group - South West  
 Farm-Ed  
 Forestry Commission

Natural England  
 North East Cotswolds Farmer Cluster  
 Oxfordshire County Council  
 RSK  
 Sylva Foundation  
 Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre  
 University of Oxford  
 Upper Thames Fisheries Consultative  
 West Oxfordshire District Council  
 Wild Oxfordshire  
 Windrush AEC  
 Wychwood Forest Trust  
 Wychwood Project

## Photography

Front cover photos taken by Jo Old - Environment Agency, Thames Water and Wild Oxfordshire

Page 2 photo taken by Earthwatch

Pages 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 13 and 15 photos taken by Thames Water

Pages 4, 8, 9 and 15 photos taken by Wild Oxfordshire

Pages 5, 12 and 14 photos taken by David Gasca-Tucker, Atkins

Page 11 photo taken by Jay Neale, Atkins



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# Your views

We'd really welcome your views on this smarter water catchment plan. Please share your thoughts and ideas on an email to our dedicated team at [partnerships@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:partnerships@thameswater.co.uk).

Working in partnership

