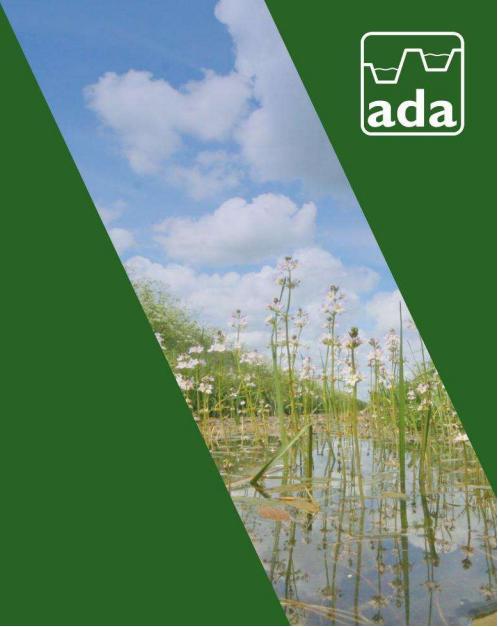


# ENVIRONMENT DAY 2026



KEYNOTE ADDRESS  
Sarah Fowler  
Chief Executive  
Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust

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## Beyond the ditch: creating new traditions

Sarah Fowler  
Chief Executive



For wetlands. For life.





## The power and history of land drainage

- "Reclaiming boggy ground."
- As old as agriculture itself.
- Between 1840 and 1890 c 12m acres of land drained in the UK.
- IDBs cover 10% of England & Wales.
- 64% of grade 1 agricultural land is within IDBs.
- Protect 6M properties & infrastructure.
- 27,923 ha of SSSI are within IDBs.



## Why wetlands?

- Nature-bursting
- Climate resilience
- Carbon-storing
- Water-purifying
- Mood-boosting
- Life-giving



## Why wetlands?

We have lost 87%  
of wetlands across  
the world



## Why wetlands?

We have lost 87%  
of wetlands across  
the world

National nature security assessment says  
about food security.... protecting and  
restoring ecosystems is easier, cheaper  
and more reliable than many technologies



## Working in the place where land meets water.

### IDB language:

Drain	Manage
Clean	Richness
Keep them tidy	Full of life
Quiet unseen service	Superpowers
Not shiny or concrete	Nature's infrastructure

### Wetland engineer language:



## Upgrading drainage infrastructure with wetlands

- Creating 'Natural Sponges' for peak flow management
- Reducing maintenance and capital costs
- Enhancing water quality and compliance
- Building resilience against extremes
- Unlocking new funding streams

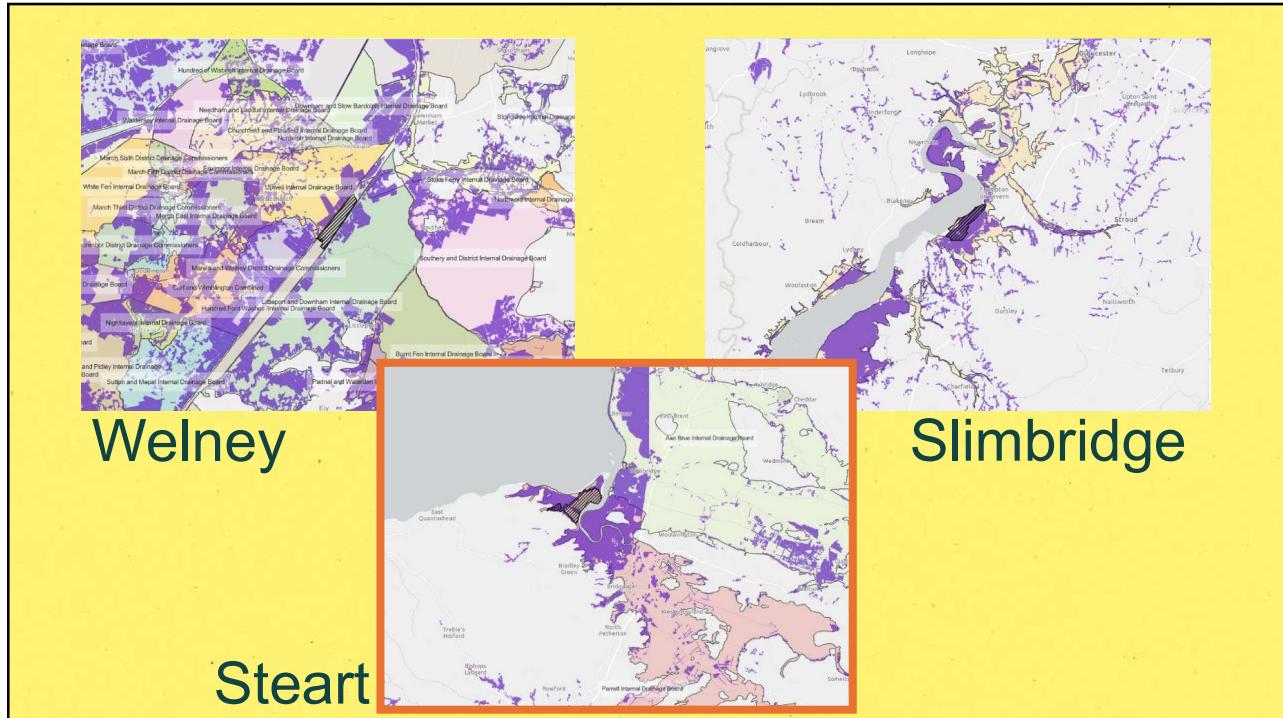


## SPATIAL OPPORTUNITY

- WWT investigated the potential of restoring 100,000 hectares of wetlands around the UK and mapped the potential.
- Our first goal is to restore 20,000ha.
- And these are our priority waterscapes.

Using data to put wetlands to work | WWT





**Thank you.**

