

## Shillingford to Clifton CTA

Chris Parker, Earth Trust



*Aerial view of River of Life I*

Building on the success of the River of Life wetland creation project near Shillingford, Earth Trust is partnering with local landowners for the River of Life II. The project will be funded by a Water Environment Grant through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

New ponds, backwaters and wet woodland within the floodplain will provide vital habitats for wildlife and slow down and filter water as it flows towards the River Thames. The creation of these features alongside mosaics of other natural habitats such as woodland improve the quality of the landscape. These features also provide havens for spawning fish and wildlife essential to a thriving living system, from dragonflies to kingfishers and otters.

River of Life II will create these vital wetland habitats at three locations within the Parishes of Long Wittenham, Little Wittenham and Dorchester-on-Thames: at Earth Trust's Clifton Meadow on the south bank of the River Thames; at Church Farm north of Days Lock, owned by the Church Farm Partnership; and at Overy Mead on the banks of the River Thames, managed by The Hurst Water Meadow Trust. Once completed, the new habitats will include 16 ponds and seven backwater channels, plus wet woodland at each of the three locations, all of which will connect to the main river to provide a refuge habitat for fish and a wealth of other wildlife. The works at these locations involves the movement of approximately 44,000m<sup>3</sup> of spoil in order to shape the new wetland features.



*River of Life I*



*Preparations for River of Life II*

In addition, six new ponds will be created at the centre of Little Wittenham Wood, home to one of the country's most significant populations of great crested newts. Nationally, populations have dramatically declined due to loss of habitat and these new ponds will help strengthen the population of newts and other amphibians and make the population more robust and less susceptible to local extinctions. Little Wittenham Wood is managed by Earth Trust and is a designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to its importance as a habitat for great crested newts.

Pre-construction work will begin in 2019 and include discussions with local communities and other interested stakeholders, negotiating access agreements, archaeological and ecological surveys, and refining designs. The main earth works construction period will take place in summer 2020, followed by the final physical elements of the project relating to access and interpretation.

<https://earthtrust.org.uk/what-we-do/water-wetlands/river-of-life-2/>