RSPB habitat restoration works at Amberley Wildbrooks

An update for Amberley Society- November 2026

Oriole Wagstaff, Senior Site Manager RSPB

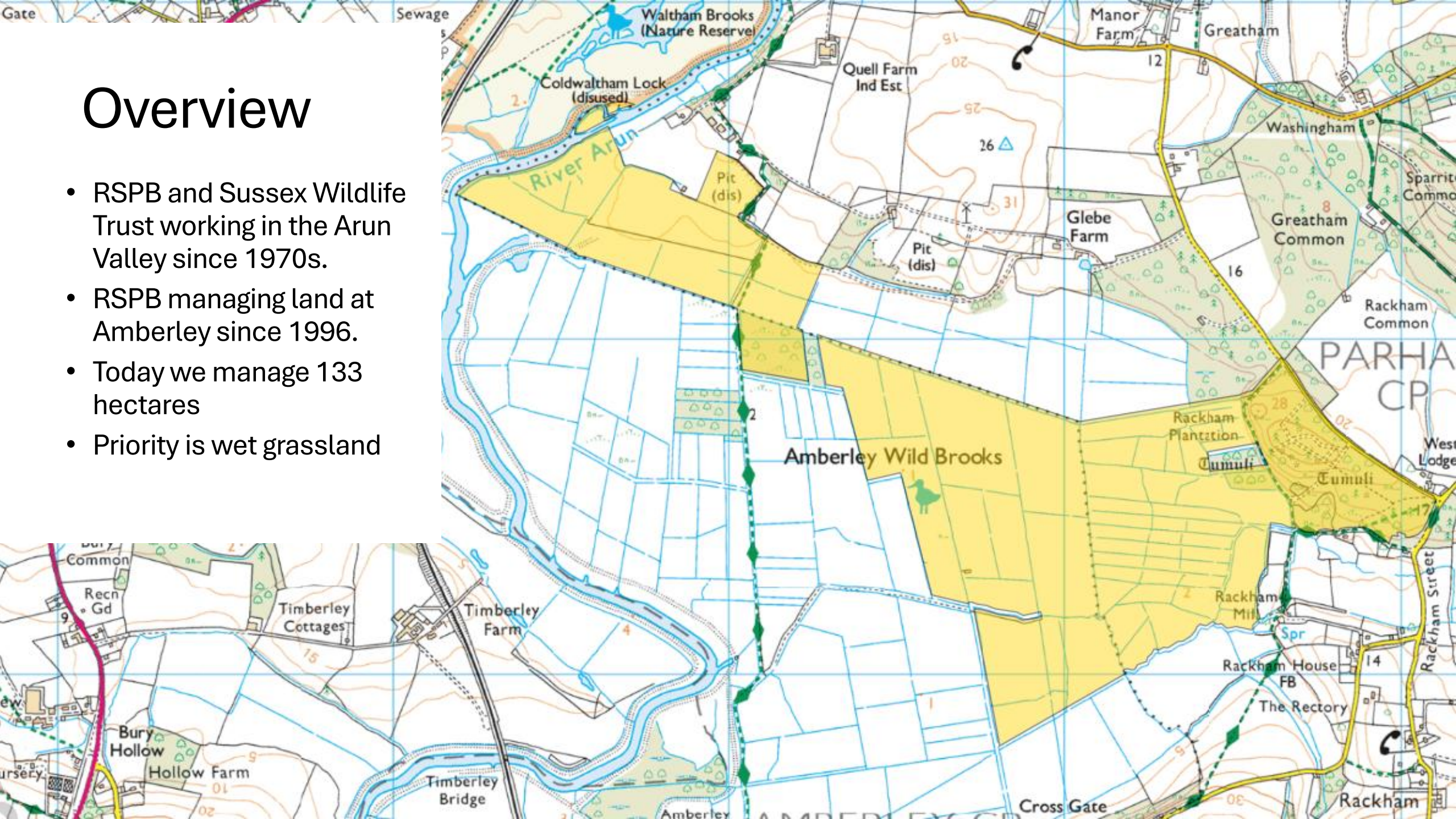


Outline

- Overview of RSPB management
- Amberley Wildbrooks: the site and it’s importance
- Challenges
- Our vision
- Recent work and achievements
- Questions

Overview

- RSPB and Sussex Wildlife Trust working in the Arun Valley since 1970s.
- RSPB managing land at Amberley since 1996.
- Today we manage 133 hectares
- Priority is wet grassland



Importance for wildlife

- ‘Jewel in the crown’ of the Arun Valley
- Nationally and internationally protected wet grassland
- One of the first sites in the country to be designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest



Image: Shoveler, RSPB

Outstanding ornithological importance for wintering wildfowl and breeding waders



Image: Lapwing chicks (Graham Osborne)

Ditches supporting many important plant species including cut grass.



A rich assemblage of dragonflies



Image: Graham Osborne

Little Ramshorn Whirlpool S

Anisus Vorticulus



Condition of the wetland

- 2021-2024 assessment found it Unfavourable Declining
- Many of the causes linked to degraded infrastructure


Access

Livestock infrastructure




Water Management

What is the RSPB trying to achieve at Amberley?

- Improve the condition of the site to create thriving wetland habitats to support priority species
- Support the Arun Valley's internationally important wildlife network.



Image: Redshank (Graham Osborne)

Our approach

- Focus on water and vegetation management
- Identify the key barriers
- Prioritise the highest-impact actions
- Future-proof the site
- Secure funding and capacity
- Work in partnership





Partnership project led by the **South Downs National Park** and funded by the **National Lottery Heritage Fund.**

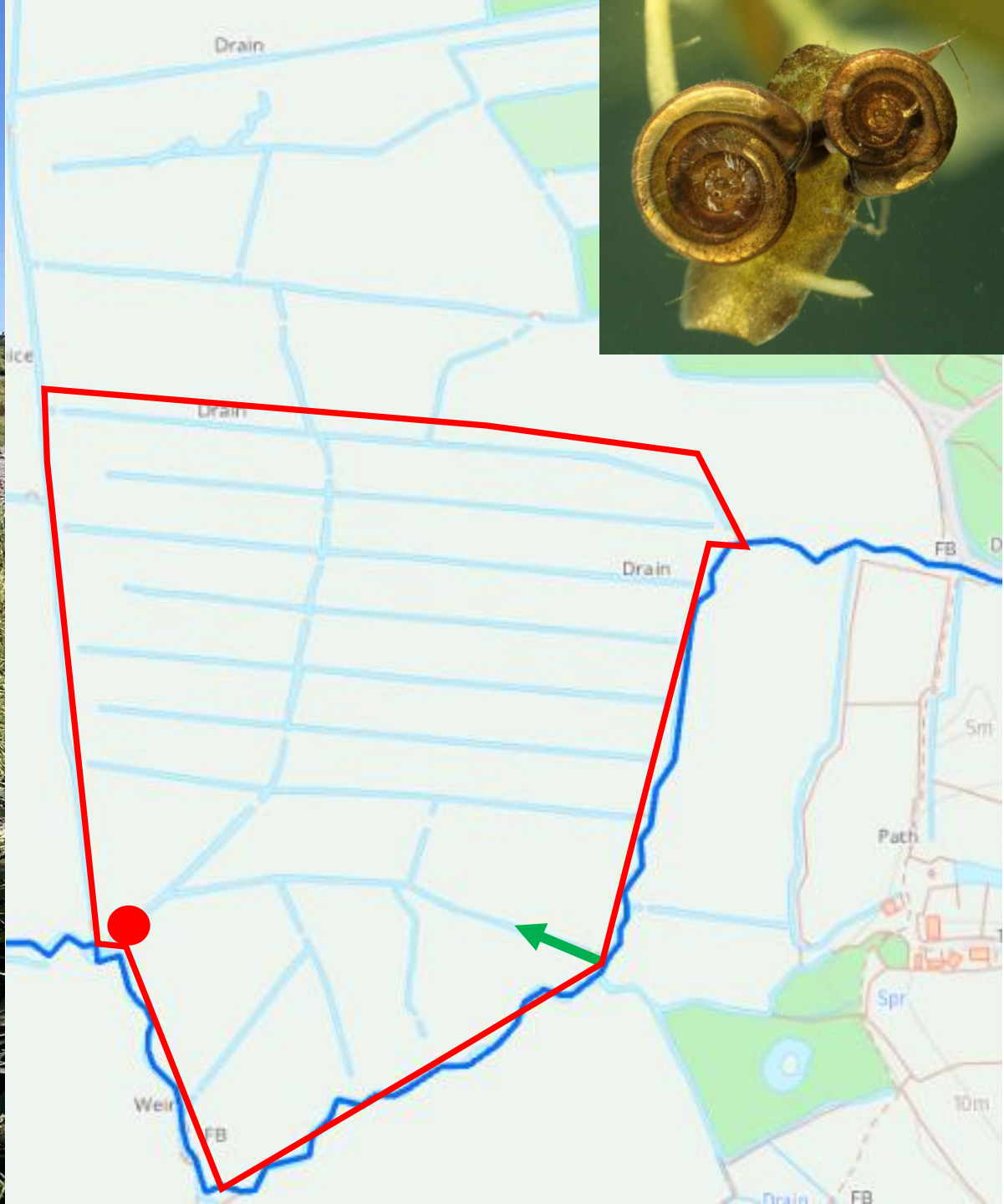
- **£1.7 million spent** focussing on:
- **Water in the landscape**
- **Water in peoples' lives**

Improving water control- culverts



Improving water control





Improving crossing points



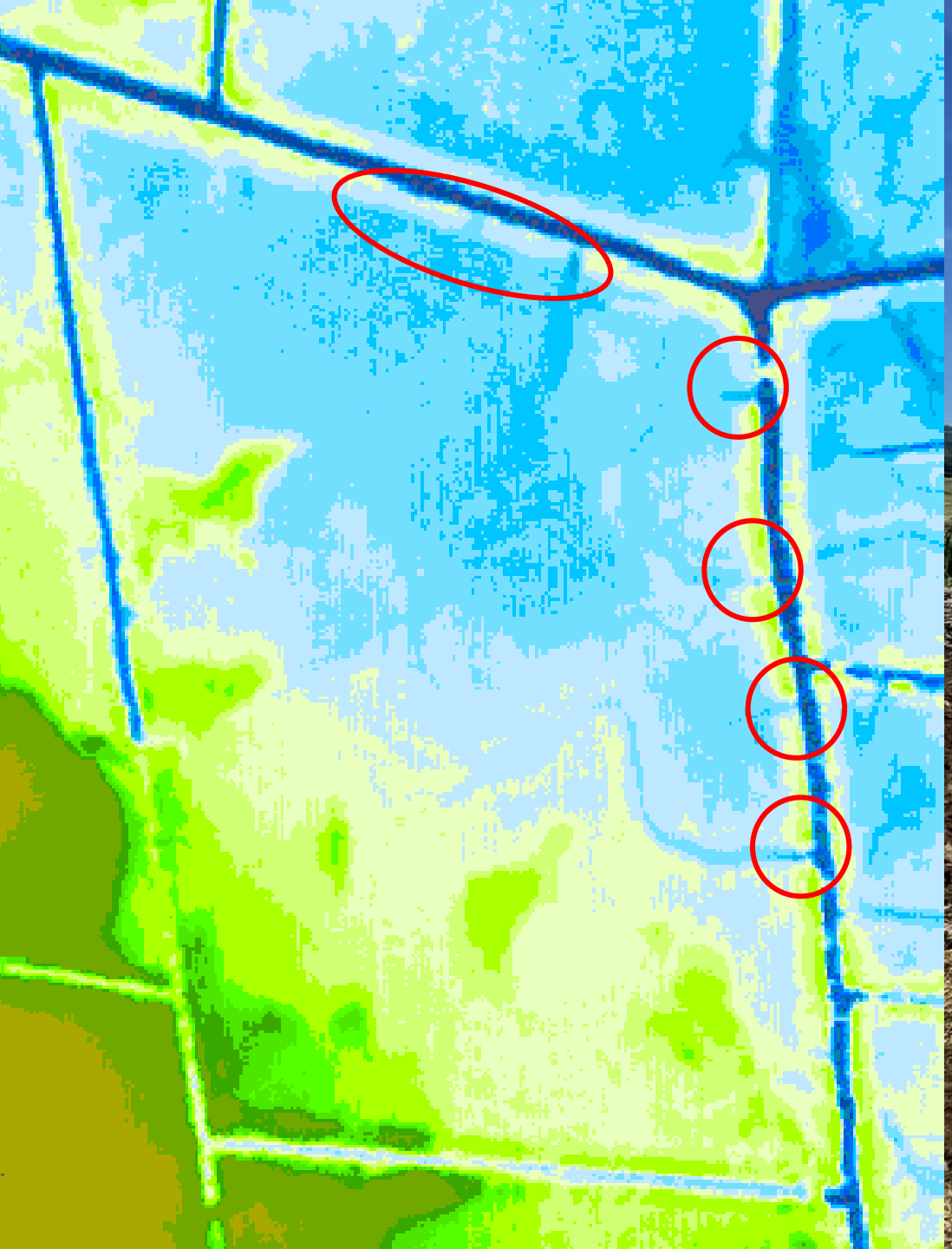




Gates & Fencing







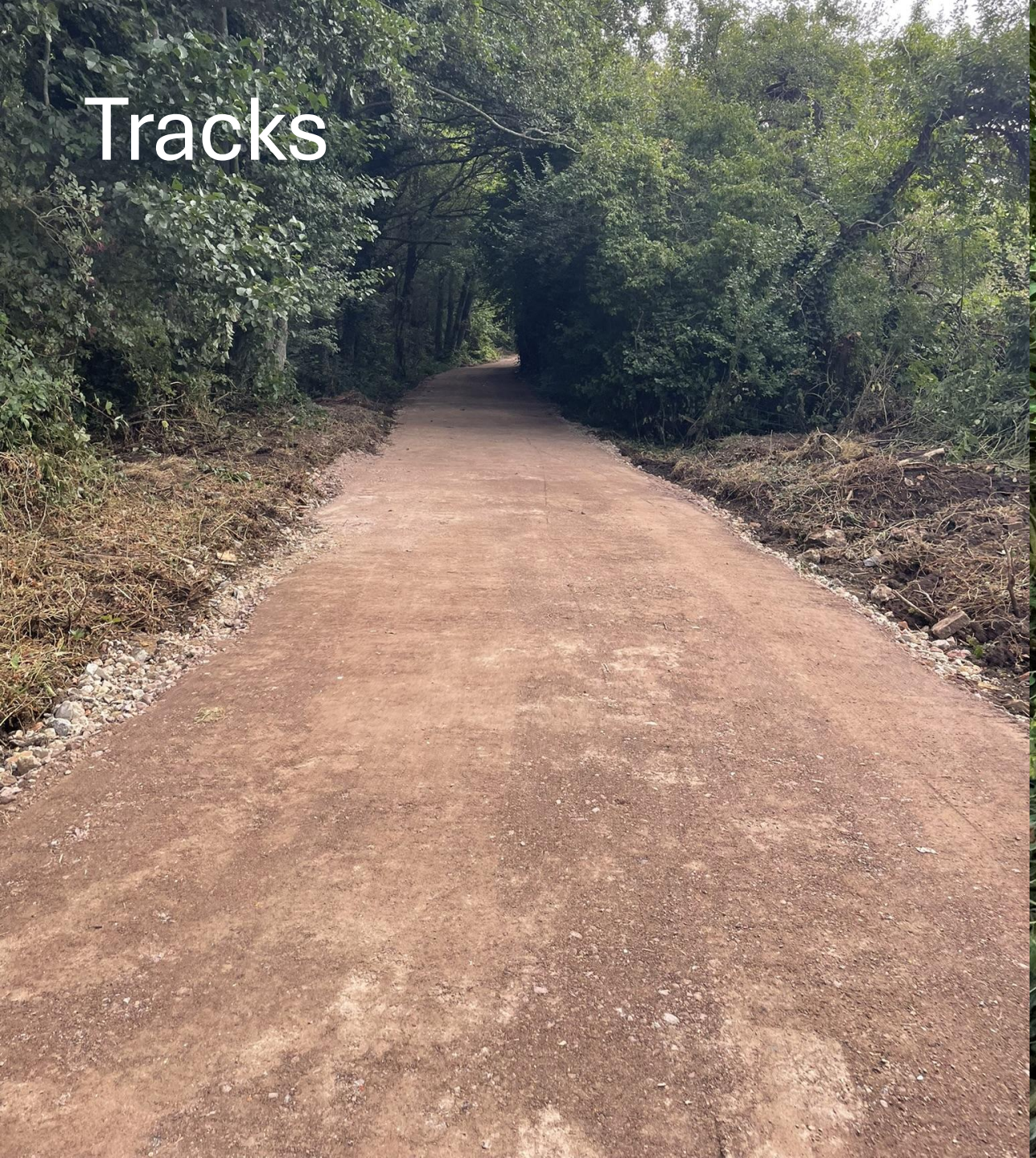


Bunding





Tracks





Ditching







Ditching – willow





Using money raised by National Lottery players, The National Lottery Heritage Fund supports projects that connect people and communities with the UK's heritage. Downs to the Sea is made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players, we have been able to improve the vital wetland habitats at RSPB Amberley Wildbrooks.



What impact has this work had?

- Water control
- Access
- Positive species trends
- Breeding birds
- Help dry out the footpath
- Working with other landowners





What’s next?



Image: Lapwing, RSPB


Questions?