

REConnect^{ed}!



REConnect

REConnect aims to deepen connections between people and nature across the Esk and Coastal Streams Catchment and surrounding communities, developing climate awareness, environmental stewardship, and wellbeing.

The project empowers communities to co-create and lead local action, removes barriers to participation, and builds lasting capacity for independent change.

Through collaboration among partners, it promotes sustainable practices, supports employment and skills development, strengthens organisational visibility, and nurtures long-term relationships that protect and celebrate the natural heritage and identity of the catchment.

Season's Greetings

As we wrap up an incredible year, we want to take a moment to thank each and every one of you for being part of the REConnect journey so far.

This year we've made connections with so many inspiring and knowledgeable people who've helped us with activities like beach cleans, dark skies celebrations, nature crafting, foraging workshops and much more. Your enthusiasm and support has really made all the difference.

As we look forward to 2026 with excitement, we wish you all a lovely holiday season and a bright, joyful New Year filled with opportunities to connect with nature and each other!



Autumn Round-Up

Voices for Nature - A New REConnect Initiative

We're thrilled to introduce *Voices for Nature*, a new REConnect initiative between the North York Moors National Park Authority and York St. John University, empowering communities in Whitby and Staithes to lead on climate resilience. Through hands-on activities and inclusive workshops, it ensures local voices shape real environmental action. Running from June 2025 to September 2026, the project prioritises inclusion, aiming to create practical, nature-based solutions for a sustainable future.

A warm welcome to Jayney Barnard, our new Community Facilitation Lead for *Voices for Nature*. Jayney's role is all about listening to community voices and making sure they are heard in shaping the project's direction.

Find out more here: [Voices For Nature: Local Leadership in Climate Resilience](#)

Voices for Nature is funded through the Communities Innovating Yorkshire (CIY) Fund, part of the Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership (YPIP) and supported by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The collaboration brings together universities, local authorities and community organisations from across Yorkshire and the Humber to explore new approaches to local leadership in sustainability.

REConnect Steering Group Launches

On 9 December, the new REConnect Steering Group met for the first time – bringing together voices from farming, arts, tourism, local councils, community groups, and youth representation.

The session focused on shaping the group’s purpose and co-designing a practical plan for community consultation. It was fantastic to see such energy and collaboration, with members sharing ideas on how REConnect can engage more people and make a lasting impact across the Esk & Coastal Streams Catchment and beyond.

A huge thank you to everyone who joined – we’re excited to work together to strengthen connections between people and nature.



Exploring our Dark Skies



In October, REConnect hosted two special Dark Skies events at Danby Lodge to celebrate the beauty and importance of our night skies.

The first evening featured an informative presentation on why dark skies matter – for wildlife, climate, and human wellbeing – along with practical tips on reducing light pollution.

The second event was all about discovery and fun! Families joined guided twilight walks to spot nocturnal wildlife, gazed at the stars through telescopes, and warmed up with soup and bread rolls under the autumn night sky.

Thank you to everyone who joined us – together, we’re helping keep our skies dark and full of stars.

A Tribute to the River Esk

We were delighted to be invited to host an activity at Musicport Festival this year. Nestled within the welcoming space of the Whitby Lobster Hatchery’s Lobster Lounge, the REConnect team invited festival-goers to help craft a living tribute to the River Esk.

One by one, participants offered a single line – an image, a memory, a feeling – and together, these fragments flowed into a collective poem. Like the river itself, it meanders through voices and visions, carrying with it the spirit of the Esk.

You can find the poem at the end of this newsletter. We hope you enjoy it as much as we do.

50 Voices - The Video

In our last newsletter, we told you about *50 Voices*, a REConnect initiative led by York St John University that captures how people connect with the River Esk and its landscapes.

We’re excited to share that the first *50 Voices* video is now live! It brings these stories to life and celebrates the deep connections between community and nature.

Watch it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zm9izAgd9M>

If you would like to get involved in this initiative, please get in touch with us at reconnect@northyorkmoors.org.uk



Concrete Coast Continues in Staithes

In 2026, we're delighted that Wild Spaces will be helping fund the Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership's *Concrete Coast* project in our catchment. *Concrete Coast* is transforming Staithes' sea walls into thriving habitats. By adding features like rockpools and textured tiles, creating spaces for marine life to flourish while strengthening coastal resilience.

Through REConnect, local communities will help shape this project - designing new habitat features and learning how climate change impacts our coast. Together, we're turning hard defences into living shorelines.

Visit Pearl & Dean cinemas and you might catch Wild Spaces' new short video on the project before your film begins - it features our very own REConnect team member, Heather Davison-Smith!

Find out more here: [Concrete Coast Project](#) • [Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership](#) • [YMNP](#)



Farming Knowledge Share

REConnect has teamed up with Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) to fund a programme of knowledge sharing events in the Esk & Coastal Streams Catchment and beyond. These events are designed to support practical, nature-friendly approaches that also benefit farm business resilience and long-term sustainability.

Farming consultants, Fraser Hugill and Karen Stanley, have run three engaging events in Dunsley, Sneaton, and Ugthorpe, with several more to come over the winter season.

If you're interested in joining one of these events, please contact fjhugill@yahoo.co.uk to be added to the mailing list.



Beach Clean Week

In September, REConnect joined the Great British Beach Clean, hosting four events at Hayburn Wyke, Skinningrove, Runswick Bay, and Whitby. Volunteers came together to clear litter from our beautiful coastline, helping protect marine life and keep these special places clean for everyone to enjoy.

A huge thank you to everyone who took part—your efforts make a real difference for nature and our communities! Learn more about Great British Beach Clean here: [What is the Great British Beach Clean?](#) | [Marine Conservation Society](#).



Upcoming Events

Stories by the Sea



Beyond Housing are funding four **nature crafting and creative writing workshops** in Staithes and Whitby over the winter period to bring families closer to nature and closer together.

Rockpool Safaris



Join us on one of our **guided tours of our rocky shores** where we'll be searching for weird and wonderful marine life within the rockpools!

Sunday Strolls: Source to Sea



Look out for more information on our new programme of guided walks for 2026.

Starting in February, we'll be spending one Sunday per month taking a stroll through our beautiful local landscape. We'll start at the top of the catchment and make our way towards the coast as the months roll on.

These walks will celebrate the journey of water from source to sea - connecting rivers, streams, and coastline, and highlighting the vital role each plays in the health of our environment.

Visit our webpage to find out how to book your place on any future events:

www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/reconnect



Get Involved!

To learn more about any of the information you have read about in this newsletter, or to book on to any upcoming events, email us at **reconnect@northyorkmoors.org.uk** or visit:

REConnect's webpage:

www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/reconnect

REConnect's Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/RiverEskConnect

Be Part of the Change

There are lots of ways you can help bring the Esk and its surrounding landscape back to life:

- Volunteer for habitat restoration sessions, litter picks, or wildlife surveys.
- Join local events like guided walks, workshops, and community days.
- Make small changes at home - like reducing plastic use, planting wildlife-friendly gardens, or using water wisely - to help protect the river from pollution and climate impacts.
- Learn more about the local landscape's history, wildlife, and future.

No matter your age, background, or experience - there's a place for you in this journey.

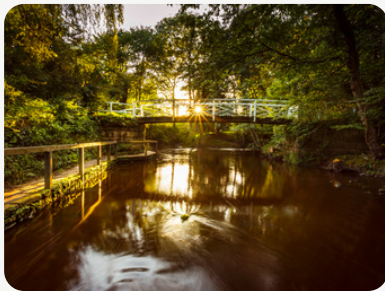


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Esk - Words to the Sea

The Esk, the Esk, the lovely Esk
It flows to the East and comes from the West
What better river than the picture-Esk

Rivery riverness flowing effortlessly to the ocean
Beckoning me into your freezing depths
I offer my fat sausage toes and then pad in
It's icy, silky, inviting
I slip inside the river's embrace and dissolve
Find myself going with the flow
Gently across each stone
Carrying time over mud
Slowly carving the river's truth
A beauty which lives and gives life

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What better river than the picture-Esk

I love my river
Walking from my home in Ruswarp to Whitby
With memories of deep, still pools waiting and dreaming
Full of beautiful wildlife
Dancing salmon splash through the shallows
Crumbled loaves pay hungry duck bills
The sinuous dive of an otter
A dipper on a rock, a seal surfacing
Bob, splash, swish
A brightly gurgling sound, never ending
Fishes eating poo

The Esk, the Esk, the lovely Esk
It flows to the East and comes from the West
What better river than the picture-Esk

Through the canyons and dissected hillsides
You show the way most gentle
A winding river braiding through the earth between two banks
Confined but singing slowly, serendipitously seaward
Freshwater currents rushing to seawater
Broody, rising steadily, pushed by the power of the sun and the moon
We rise with the tide that comes as it goes
The glinting water takes me home
Moves me towards, carries me towards
Clean and clear vastness
Breathing life ever onwards

The Esk, the Esk, the lovely Esk
It flows to the East and comes from the West
What better river than the picture-Esk