CASE STUDY

Manage vegetation appropriately

Project Summary

Title: Environment Agency in-channel vegetation management
Location: Applied throughout England by the EA via the Operations Maintenance Standards
Technique: In-channel vegetation management
Cost of technique: £
Overall cost of scheme: N/A
Benefits: £££
Dates: Timed to minimise environmental impact (e.g. bird nesting season)

Mitigation Measure(s)

Manage Vegetation Appropriately
Sensitive Timing of Vegetation Management

How it was delivered

Delivered by: Environment Agency
Partners: Partners relevant to watercourse in question

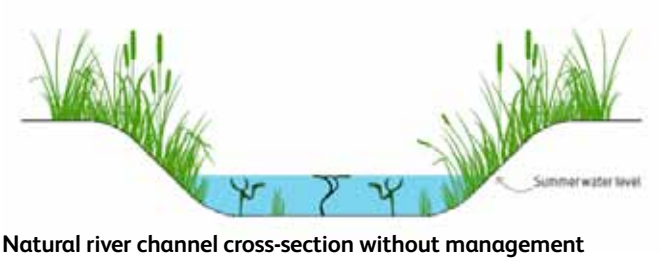
Background / Issues & Step-by-step

Routine maintenance can have a significant impact on the environment. Maintenance needs to be undertaken sensitively to ensure that the plants and animals that are dependent on the water environment are not negatively impacted.

The features and habitats in rivers must be retained to preserve the plants and animals they support throughout their life cycle. Their retention or restoration is a key requirement of the WFD.

Figures 1-5 show a range of maintenance options with a gradual decrease in environmental impact. Where possible the option with the least environmental impact should be selected. Vegetation management should be timed to avoid bird nesting seasons and to avoid impacting on habitats and species which are protected by law.

Where operational activities are to be carried out within or adjacent to statutory designated conservation sites (this includes SSSIs, SACs and SPAs), permission is required from Natural England or Natural Resources Wales.



Natural river channel cross-section without management
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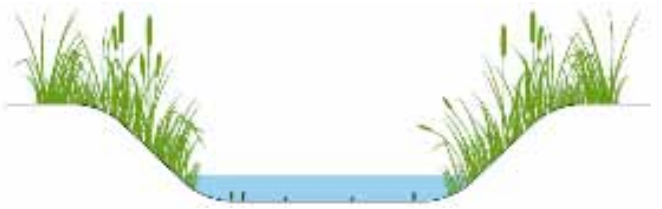
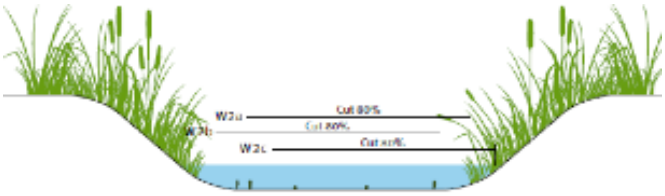
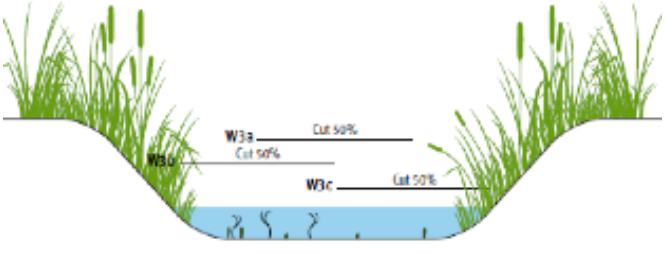


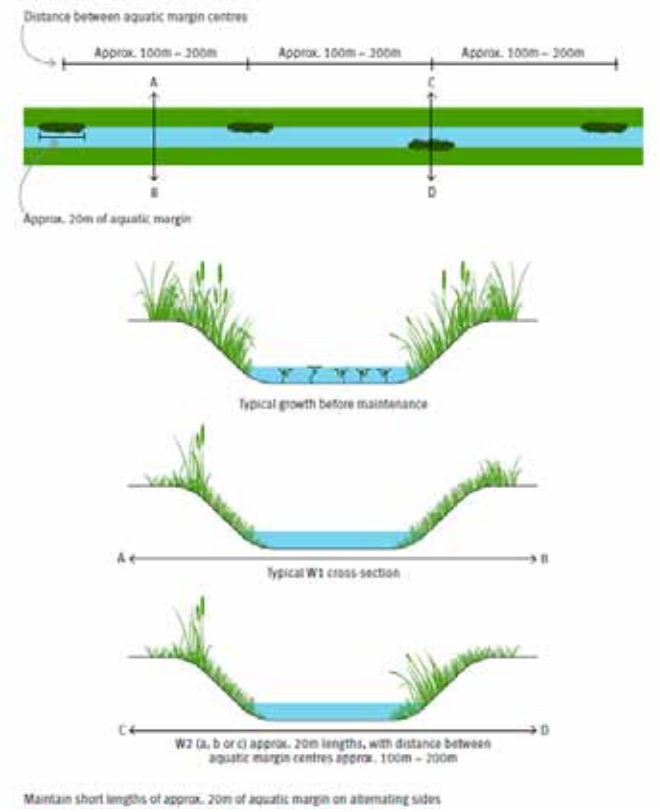
1) Cut in-channel vegetation completely



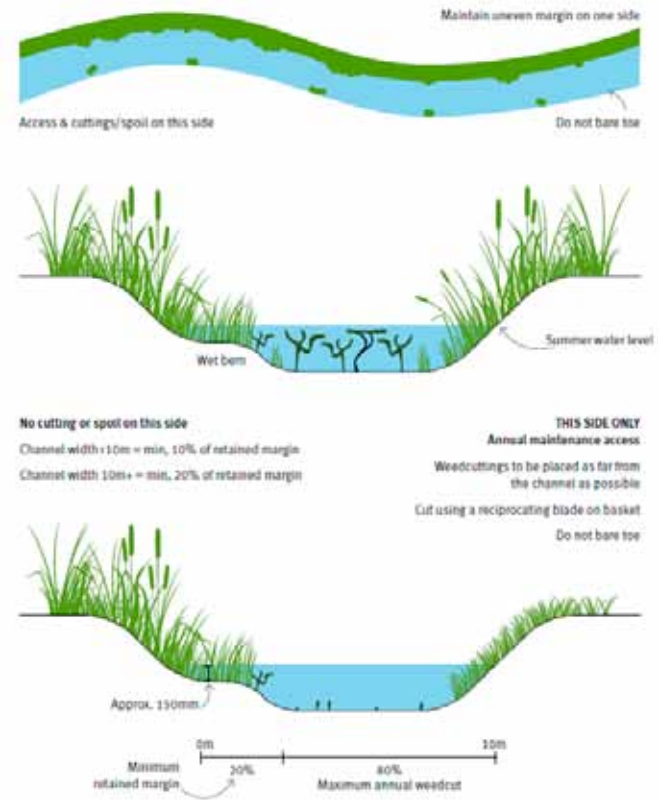
2) Cut 80% of in-channel vegetation



3) Cut 50% of in-channel vegetation



4) Vary cutting regime along length watercourse so that aquatic and marginal vegetation is only managed in key locations



5) Vary cutting regime along length watercourse so that aquatic and marginal vegetation is only managed in key locations and one bank is left uncut

Benefits & Lessons Learnt

- Altering bankside grass-cutting regimes to be less frequent and intensive can reduce costs.
- More sensitive grass-cutting improves habitat for plants and animals.
- Provides amenity value by creating clearer visuals of the channel.
- Helps manage sediment by trapping runoff and resucing its input to a watercourse.
- Can improve water quality by intercepting point source pollution.

Project contact: Environment Agency, Asset Performance Teams