

The White River Project

What is the White River Project?

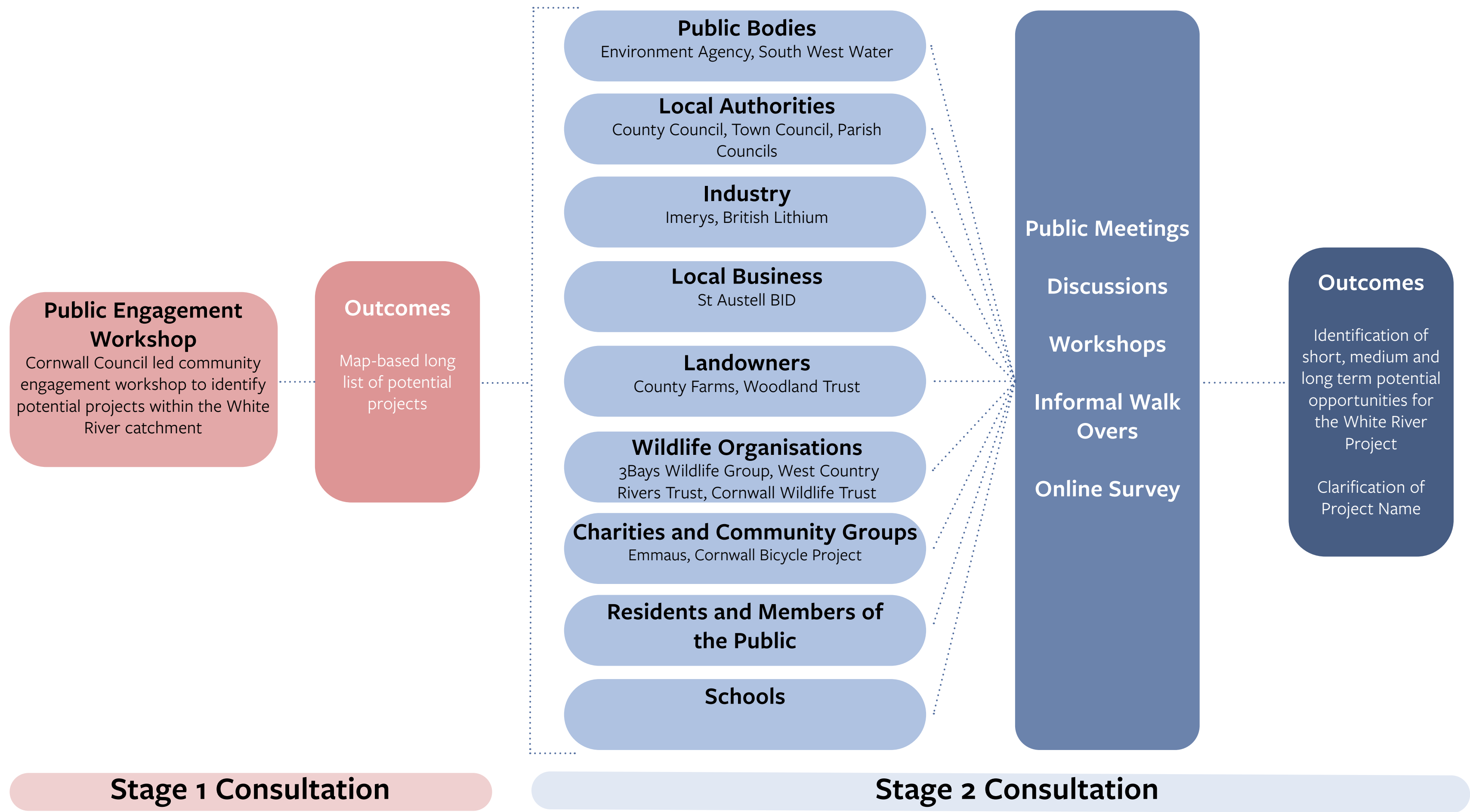
In response to feedback from Pentewan Valley Parish Council, local residents, wildlife groups and other interested parties about potential improvements to the St Austell River (locally known as the White River, River Vinnick or Gover Gwynn in Cornish), in 2021 The White River Project was created and adopted by Cornwall South Community Area Partnership (Kemeneth Kernow Soth).

In 2024, Pentewan Valley Parish Council agreed to act as the commissioning body for a grant application to Cornwall Council’s Community Capacity Fund and the project aims expanded. The project area now covers the whole catchment of the St Austell River, from the source to the sea, including the Gover Stream, Polgooth Stream and all the minor tributaries, as shown on the map below. The project now aims to explore opportunities in many areas including promoting wildlife, heritage, healthy living and economic activity alongside addressing pollution issues.

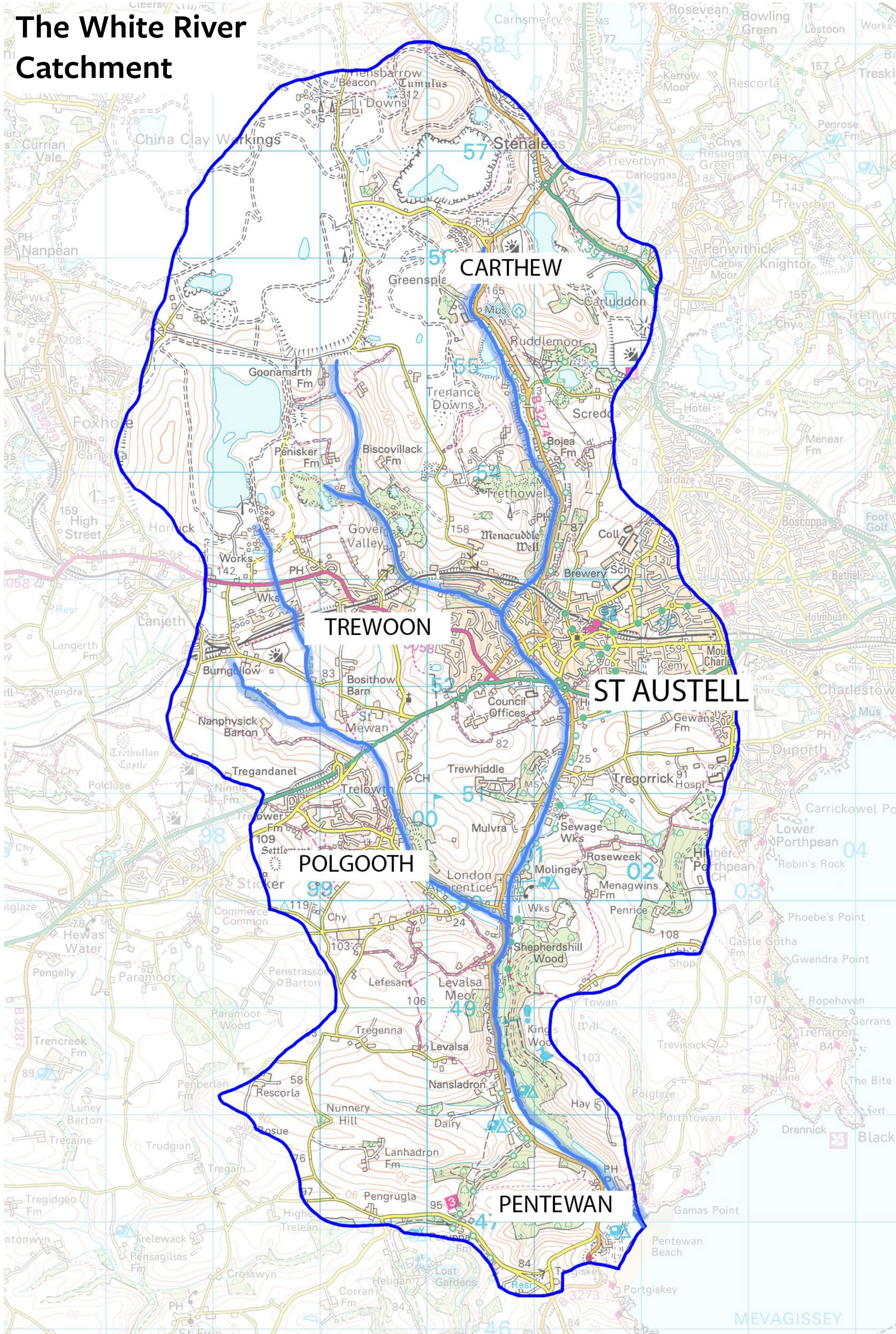
What stage is the White River Project at now?

In 2024, Truro based Landscape Architects, Mei Loci, were commissioned to create a Vision Plan for the White River project which is scheduled for completion in December 2024. The aim of the White River Vision Plan is to consider the short, medium and long term potential opportunities within the river catchment, informed by technical understanding of the river environment and community aspirations. This plan will then support subsequent funding applications and attract investment opportunities.

In order to ensure these opportunities best fulfil the needs of the local community, business, industry and the environment, Mei Loci are currently undertaking **Stage 2 Consultation**, building on work done in 2023 by Cornwall Council.



The White River Catchment



White River Vision Plan

What is special about the White River area?



Unique Environment

To the north of St Austell lie the iconic clay tips and glistening turquoise quarry pits of the historic and working clay mining landscape, found nowhere else in the country.

But... these come with a cost: land is not always accessible and clay waste can enter the river system. The White River got its name due to heavy clay pollution in the past.

Rich History

The St Austell area has a rich and successful industrial history, through cloth making, clay and tin mining and the development of the railways.

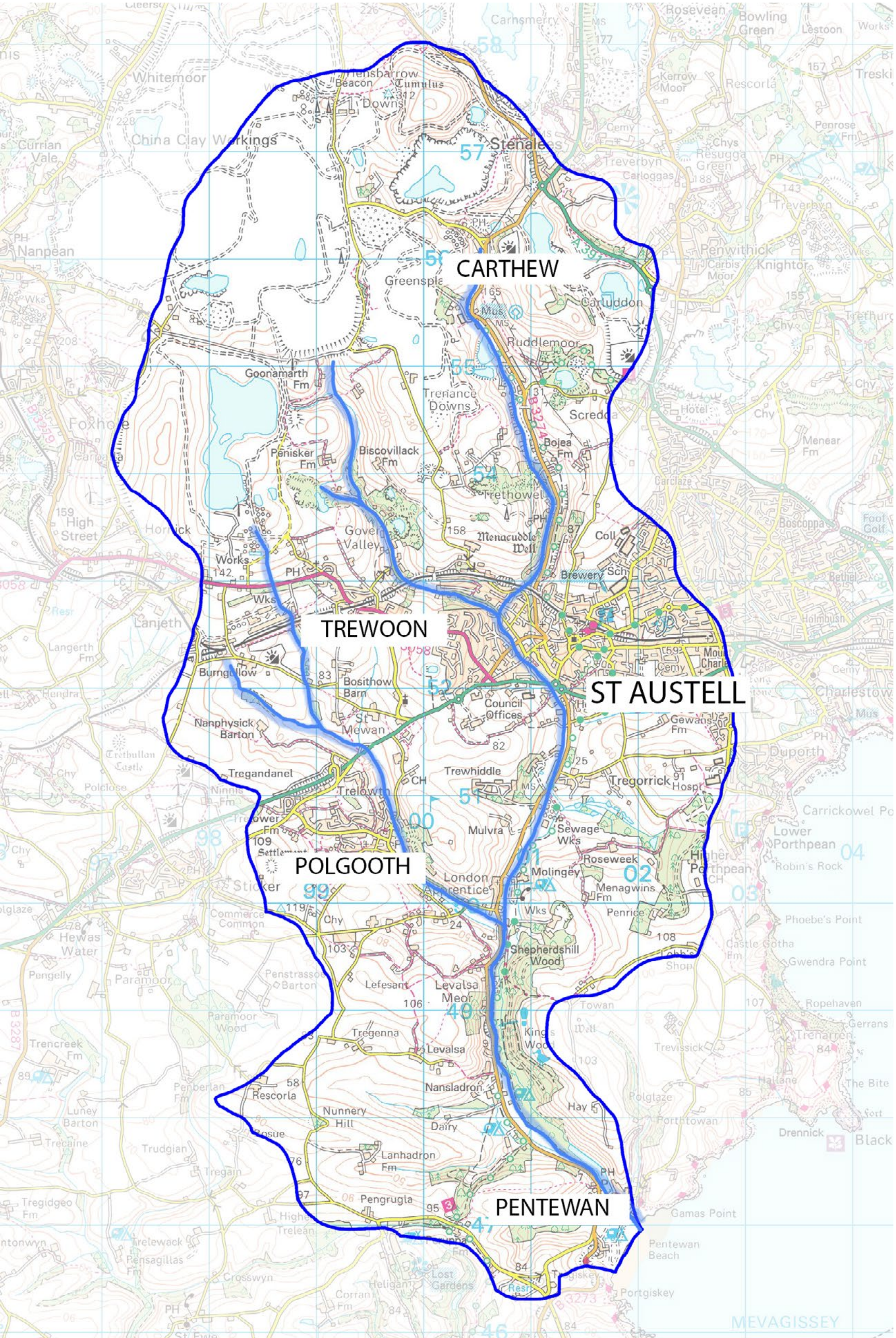
But... this history is often hidden and deserves to be celebrated, whilst at the same time addressing the environmental costs that this history has had on the river system through canalisation and mining waste.



Wildlife Potential

Along the river some native wildlife has found its home, including brown trout and eel, with otters having been seen passing through.

But... not all areas of the river are accessible for fish to spawn, invasive species threaten our native wildlife and the range of habitats available, such as lack of wetlands, mean that our native wildlife cannot thrive as it should; it is in need of nature recovery.



What is special to you about the White River area?

Relaxing Trails

Along the river and up into clay country are a range of walking and cycling trails allowing visitors and locals alike to get out into nature.

But... these trails are not yet fully accessible for all, particularly those using mobility aids, there is limited connectivity between trails and signage is not clear enough to allow easy access for all users.



Vibrant Town

St Austell town centre has undergone continued improvements in recent years through the 'Austell Project' and the Art Trails.

But... as the town improves, it grows. With at least 4 major residential and commercial developments planned for the south of the town, there will be increased pressure on the water and sewage system that supplies and treats it.

Beautiful Beach

At the southern end of the White River lies Pentewan beach, a stretch of hugely popular white sand and calm blue water, popular with tourists and locals alike.

But... Although Pentewan beach does not have Blue Flag status, the Environment Agency rated it as 'Excellent' between 2019-2023. However, there were 148 sewage spills in 2023.



White River Vision Plan

The White River Project Aims

Are you a business owner within the White River catchment?

What projects or improvements do you think would benefit the businesses and working people along the White River?

Are shops and services well connected to the open spaces along the White River?

Do you see opportunities for forward thinking investment that would benefit the White River area?

Do you live in an area prone to flooding?

Are you concerned about the future risk of flooding to your property, land or business?

Have you noticed a change in water quality along the river?

Are you involved with a local group who engages with wildlife in the White River area?

Have you noticed an issue with invasive species in the White River catchment?

Would you like to see native species re-introduced to the area?

How can we strengthen our connection with the natural environment on our doorstep?



Are you part of a charity or community project that you think we should know about?

What community services do you use?

Are you involved in any local groups that need help to develop?

Would your school like to be more involved in outdoor or community opportunities around the White River?

How often do you access the White River area?

Have you experienced any problems when trying to get around the area?

Do you have ideas about how connections between areas could be improved within the White River catchment?

Are you part of a historical group we should know about?

Do you have ideas of how the history of the area could be better celebrated?

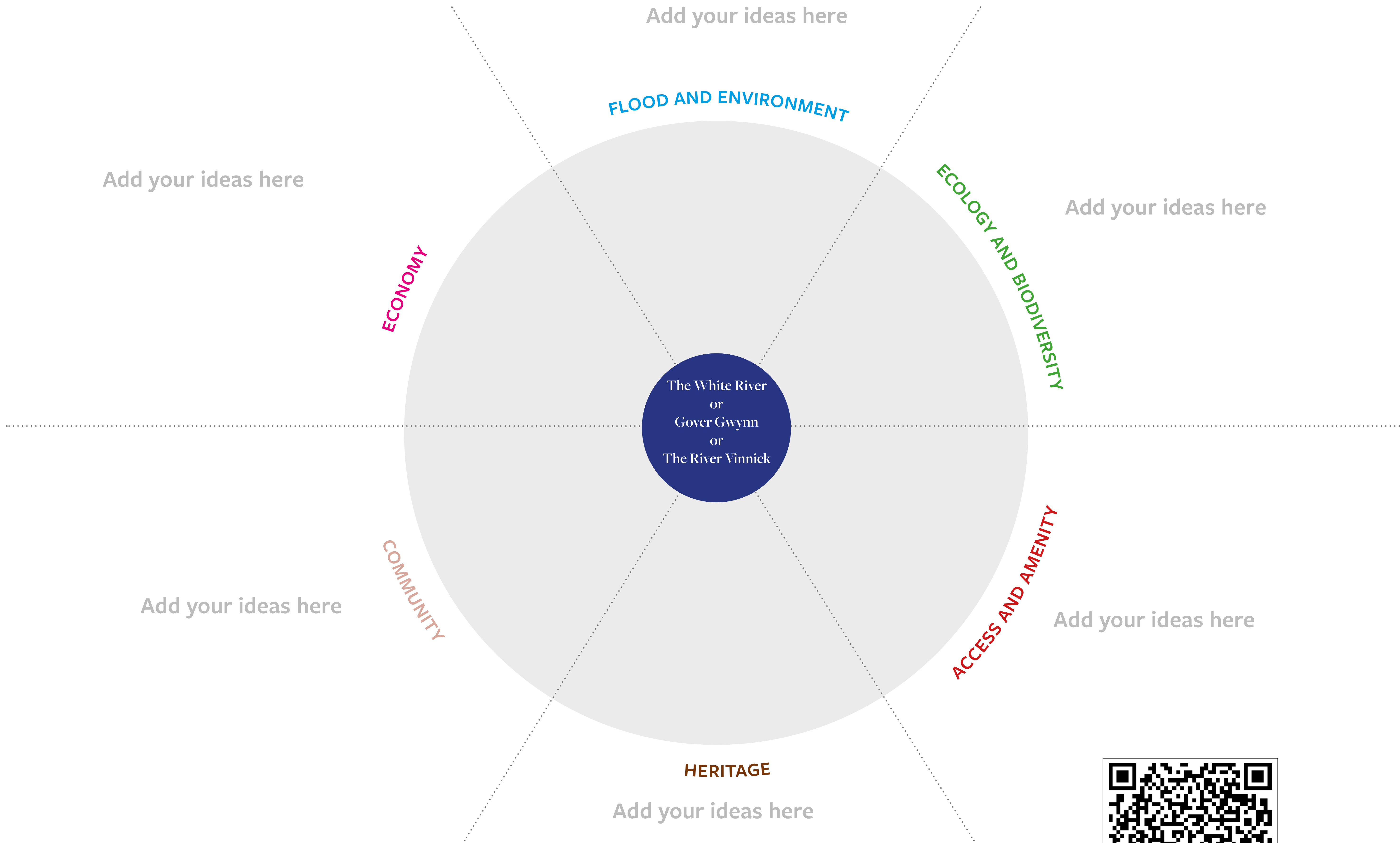


Fill in our online survey to let us know what you think!

MEI LOCI

White River Vision Plan

The White River Project Aims - Community Priorities



Fill in our online survey to
let us know what you think!

MEI LOCI

White River Vision Plan

Potential Opportunities in the White River Catchment



Pollution Reduction

The White River is vulnerable to multiple sources of pollution from mining discharge, storm water overflows, agricultural runoff, construction discharge and road runoff. The White River Project could potentially engage with local industry, landowners and public services to reduce, monitor and carefully manage pollution to improve water quality throughout the catchment.



Habitat Creation and Diversification

Due to the historic canalisation of the White River for 19th century industrial development, many natural habitats along the river were lost. The White River Project could restore and diversify a range of these habitats, such as wet woodland and marshland to increase the range of species, both flora and fauna, to benefit wildlife and people.



Species Reintroduction

Building on the work of Cornwall Council’s Species Reintroduction Feasibility Study and following the example of other projects within Cornwall which have successfully reintroduced water voles, beavers and wild cats, with effective land management, the White River project could potentially support the reintroduction of both mammal and avian species into the White River catchment. In addition, existing work to monitor fish populations within the river’s tributaries could be expanded to allow access to the full catchment.



Natural Flood Mitigation

With climate change causing more frequent extreme weather events alongside increased populations, the risks of flooding from UK rivers is rising. The White River Project could potentially work with local riparian owners and governing bodies to model and introduce natural flood mitigation measures such as sustainable drainage systems, floodplain protection and tree planting to reduce the risk of flooding to local properties.



Recreational Opportunities

The White River catchment offers a range of wonderful outdoor recreational opportunities including multi-use trails, water sports opportunities and family friendly places to play. The project could expand these opportunities to ensure inclusivity for all residents and visitors, regardless of ability or background.



Improved Access

The catchment of the White River includes a variety of multi-use trails, narrow Cornish lanes and busy main roads. The White River Project could ensure that safe and easy access is available for all whether for recreation, commuting, or connecting local villages. In addition, the project could explore ways to improve facilities to enable people of all abilities to spend more time in the area.



Interpretation and Engagement

The White River catchment has a rich industrial history including tin and clay mining alongside railway history. The White River Project could celebrate this history and bring it alive again for visitors by working with existing groups and building on research to create signage, artworks and information boards to engage visitors and resident alike.

Something Else? Make your suggestions for other improvements that could happen within the White River catchment here.