

news release

15 August 2024

West Sussex County Council gives otters a helping hand to cross the road

West Sussex County Council is helping keep otters safe crossing the road by installing a new 'mammal shelf' in a culvert under the A272.

The council, in collaboration with the National Trust and Arun & Rother Rivers Trust, is installing the shelf close to one of the county's only breeding otter populations this Autumn.

At one point there were no otters in West Sussex with road casualties thought to be one of the main issues hampering their return. Rather than swimming under bridges or through culverts, otters will often choose to travel on foot, resulting in them crossing roads to reach breeding grounds. The specially designed mammal shelf will allow otters to run safely under the road on a ledge above the water.

Cllr Deborah Urquhart, West Sussex County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, said: *"It's fantastic to see these magnificent animals making a comeback in West Sussex, and we're extremely proud to have helped ensure the growth of a sustainable otter population with this new mammal shelf."*

"The resurgence of the otter in the UK is a huge conservation achievement after populations declined dramatically between the 1950s and 1970s. Cleaner rivers and healthier habitats have seen otter populations bounce back in recent years, however, one of the main dangers facing otters today are busy roads. Reducing the number of otter road casualties will ensure the successful return of this native mammal to West Sussex waterways."

The project is a part of the council's overarching commitment to protect our environment and promote nature recovery and biodiversity, as outlined in our Council plan. This partnership will continue to monitor the shelf to gauge its success.

ENDS

For further information please contact the news desk on 0330 222 8090 or email pressoffice@westsussex.gov.uk.

For urgent out-of-hours enquiries please call 07767 098415.

