

# Risks Beyond Human Eyes

## PROJECT INFORMATION AND FAQs FOR PARTICIPANTS

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Risks Beyond Human Eyes is a pioneering six-month community research project assessing how the risks facing the River Tone can be understood through the eyes of the river's nonhuman inhabitants—otters, herons, oak trees, and the river itself—creating pathways for systemic action. The project is a collaboration between the University West of England and [ASRA](#), funded by the [Ecological Citizen\(s\) Network](#), working in partnership with Friends of Longrun Meadow (at French Wier) and Somerset Wildlife Trust.

The project aims to do three things: (1) to build a digital platform mapping the risks for River Tone as seen by five nonhuman animals - the first of its kind; (2) use this platform to develop an operational plan to systemically respond to the threat and risks our nonhuman animals face and (3) connect the people of River Tone to help build a whole-of-river network.

Early this year, UWE (Casanova and Fraga) and the team at ASRA both produced online tools that help people to explore more-than-human worlds (see the [MTHL](#) tool) and systemic risks (see the [STEER](#) tool) respectively. These tools demonstrate the utility of building simple interfaces that direct users to engage in radical, alternative ways of analysing and assessing systems, and the power of integrating multiple knowledge forms (e.g., scientific, socio-historical).

This new project will bring the two together to build and apply a new digital platform for nonhuman risk mapping for a bioregion; River Tone. In doing so, our hope is that the project will result not only in a new tool but also strengthen ecological citizenship, support community-led river governance, and offer a replicable model for other bioregions seeking to design systemic-risk responses that centre non-human life and multispecies flourishing.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What will my participation involve?

*Discussions in small groups; sharing stories; observing and studying animals; spending time with River Tone; some creative practice; working with the research team to help build the digital platform; working with each other to work out a plan to lower systemic risk for River Tone.* The main feature of your involvement will be trying to leave some of your human thoughts behind and centre your thinking from your nonhuman animals' perception - getting to know them in deeper ways and working hard to represent them faintly. All aspects of the project are voluntary and you can withdraw your involvement at any time.

## How do I sign up?

You can [sign up here](#), via our event platform, Luma. Alternatively, please email [ptovey@asranetwork.org](mailto:ptovey@asranetwork.org) if you'd like to discuss any aspects of the project.

## What will my participation involve?

Discussions in small groups; sharing stories; observing and studying animals; spending time with River Tone; working with the research team help build the digital platform; working with each other to work out a plan to lower systemic risk for River Tone.

## I can't make all the sessions, can I still participate?

Yes. The gatherings are an important part of the project as they help form the relationship between participants up and down River Tone. However, we understand that people have busy lives and attending events can be difficult. If you think you might struggle to make all the dates, you can:

- "Buddy up" with a friend or neighbour who you can share attendance
- Form a small local group to share attendance
- Speak to Phil to make bespoke arrangements

## I can't make the first session, can I still participate?

Yes. We understand it's hard for people to get the time for these types of projects, so we encourage you to sign up and speak to us at any stage if you're keen to be involved.

## **What is the time commitment?**

*About 15 hours.* In total, we estimate the time commitment to be 15 hours spread across the 6 months, consisting of 4 x 3 hour in-person gatherings in Taunton, 1 x online meeting and time for food. Between gatherings, we'll encourage you to spend as much time as you can with your species and we'll be providing some interesting methods that can help you explore their worlds and how they might perceive risk.

## **Who should join?**

*Anyone that lives, cares for and is concerned about River Tone and the nonhuman animals that call this place home.* This is a project for the people of River Tone and the river themselves. Through this project, we are trying hard to get folks from the headwaters to the confluence to join, and everyone in-between.

## **What's the benefit of me joining?**

*Lots!* Here are some of the main benefits we foresee those that join the project will get:

- New friendships with people up and down River Tone
- A warm, friendly and inviting space to think creatively about the future of your River
- Nice food
- An increased closeness to the nonhuman animals of this place
- Enhanced sense of community and identity
- Opportunity to contribute to cutting-edge research
- Chance to reduce risks you face
- Chance to advocate and advance rights for nature
- Chance to learn new knowledge and skills

## **What are the main outputs?**

*A digital risk map and operational plan.* At the core of this project is the creation of a novel digital, likely 3D and interactive map of the animal worlds we are working with. We'll then use that to design and plan responses to reduce the risk our nonhumans face.

## **Who will own the outputs?**

*Good question.* We're still working on this and final decisions will be discussed and agreed on with all partners and participants. Essentially, we want to honour the rights of the people of River Tone and River themselves, and are exploring innovative approaches to ownership agreements.

## I'm not an expert, can I still take part?

YES! The only criteria for participants is that you consider yourself from River Tone, your care about improving the overall health and functioning of this place and are up for trying something a bit different. The research team will support and guide you throughout the life of the project and we have a range of expertise from philosophy, systems theory, risk assessment to speculative design and ethnography.

## Do I get paid to participate?

No. Unfortunately, we can't pay participants to attend but we can cover travel costs and will be providing food and refreshments for all of the in-person gatherings.

## Can you cover travel expenses?

Yes. We have a small budget to cover things like fuel costs, parking, bus tickets etc.

## What are the dates?

#	Date/Time	Event	Location	Notes
001	09 January 2026 1200-1330	Launch Event	Online	
002	17 February	Animal collaboration and river stories	<a href="#">Museum of Somerset</a> Taunton (TBC)	Food provided.
003	16 March	Building animal risk worlds	<a href="#">The Studio, Brewhouse Theatre</a> (TBC)	Food provided.
004	27 April	Planning systemic response	<a href="#">The Studio, Brewhouse Theatre</a> (TBC)	Food provided.

005	25 May	Collective action and sense making	<a href="#">Museum of Somerset</a> Taunton (TBC)	Food provided.
006	30 June	<i>Hybrid Public Event. Broadcast.</i> The story of River Tone Risks Beyond Human Eyes	TBC, Online	

### Where are the in-person meetings taking place?

Central Taunton; either at the [Brewhouse Theatre](#) or [Museum of Somerset](#). Taunton acts as a central point for everyone and both venues have good levels of accessibility.

### Who are the project partners?

The project is a collaboration between the University West of England and [ASRA](#), funded by the [Ecological Citizen\(s\) Network](#), working in partnership with Friends of Longrun Meadow (at French Wier) and Somerset Wildlife Trust. The community project partners will help steer the direction of the project and take a leading role as we move towards the end of the project in May. The project leads from the partner organizations are:

- **Helen Lawy**, Chair of Friends of Longrun Meadow, Taunton, Somerset ([here](#)). The Friends coordinate community activities and work with Somerset Council to manage the wildlife in the meadows, which is a flood plain for River Tone. For this project, Helen will act as the primary point of contact in facilitating community co-production of the tool via Friends of Longrun Meadow, and supporting in outreach to other catchment community actors.
- **James Grischeff**, Director of Nature Recovery, Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) ([here](#)). SWT is Somerset's leading environmental charity. For this project, James will act as the primary contact with the Somerset Wildlife Trust and other established environmental NGOs operating in the Tone Catchment and to act as a conduit for the provision of environmental data from the Somerset Environmental Records Centre.

We are also extremely fortunate to have additional operational and subject-matter expertise support from:

- **Jordan Daines** MSc, Climate Officer, Taunton Town Council ([here](#)). Jordan is leading the delivery of the Town Council's 'Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy'. For this project, Jordan will provide support and guidance in facilitating wider catchment

engagement and alignment to TTCs strategic objectives, and to help exploit and amplify the insights of the project beyond concept development and prototyping phase.

- **Sarah Brady**, BA, Innovation Officer, Firepool Centre for Digital Innovation (FCDI) ([here](#)), Somerset Council. Leading innovation efforts for Somerset Council, Sarah is connected with the new FCDI, designed to drive innovation-led growth in the digital economy and provides digital and data led businesses the space, environment and support needed to help them grow. For this project, Sarah will help the core team to connect and collaborate with the local digital innovation ecosystem.
- **Jason Dinsdale**, MSc, Manager, Horizon Scanning and Futures Team, Chief Scientist Group, Environment Agency (EA) ([here](#)), UK. Jason specialises in futures and foresight methodologies. For this project, Jason will act as an observer and advisor to support translation of the concept and prototype within Defra Group and UK Government more widely.
- **Phoebe Tickell**, MACantab, Founder and Director, Moral Imaginations ([here](#)); Executive Fellow, Harvard Business School, Harvard University, Visiting Research Fellow, School of Biological Sciences, University of Reading ([here](#)). Moral Imaginations is a leader in the field of nature-centric institutional governance innovation. For this project, Phoebe will collaborate on the conceptual development of the nature-centric systemic risk framework and integration of interspecies perspectives into risk assessment methodologies, and help bridge the insights from this project into other active nature-centric governance movements on rivers (e.g., River Ouse)
- **Lorenzo Benini**, PhD, MSc, Expert- Sustainability Transitions, European Environmental Agency (EEA) ([here](#)). Lorenzo is also a lead author for Global Environmental Outlook (GEO-7), Chapter 8: Interlinkages across environmental changes, scales and geographic regions and sub-regions. For this project, Lorenzo will act as an observer to support translation of the concept and prototype outside of a UK context, including dissemination of the project outcomes to the EEA.