

ELF Newsletter

Spring 2023

Renewal, Resilience, and the Fight for our Planet

As Spring arrives, we're greeted by birdsong, thrushes and robins already claiming territory and the snow white blossoms appearing in our landscapes. With the hues of floral blooms and the great re-greening unfurling before our eyes, it is a time of renewal and hope. Yet, as the Earth awakens, we must confront the stark realities and challenges that lie ahead. The recent IPCC report serves as a clarion call for swift and decisive action; the time for slow, incremental changes has long passed. We have the technology, but where is the political will. It is now, more than ever, imperative that we rise to the occasion and protect the swallows and swifts, the red squirrels and the bumble bees and countless other creatures that share our world.

Unfortunately for Plymouth, local authorities have broken trust by felling over a hundred mature trees, leaving residents and campaigners shocked and traumatised. We at ELF have worked closely with those advocating for the protection of these trees, and witnessing this breach of trust serves as a stark reminder of the battles that still lay ahead.

Although the situation in Plymouth and the IPCC report presents a sobering portrait of our planet's future, it is important to remember that progress is being made. Take, for example, the recent halt of the Red Route Development in Wales. After much campaigning, this political shift in road building policy in Wales, signifies a much-needed culture shift, a turning of the tide toward nature over development and a realignment of priorities.

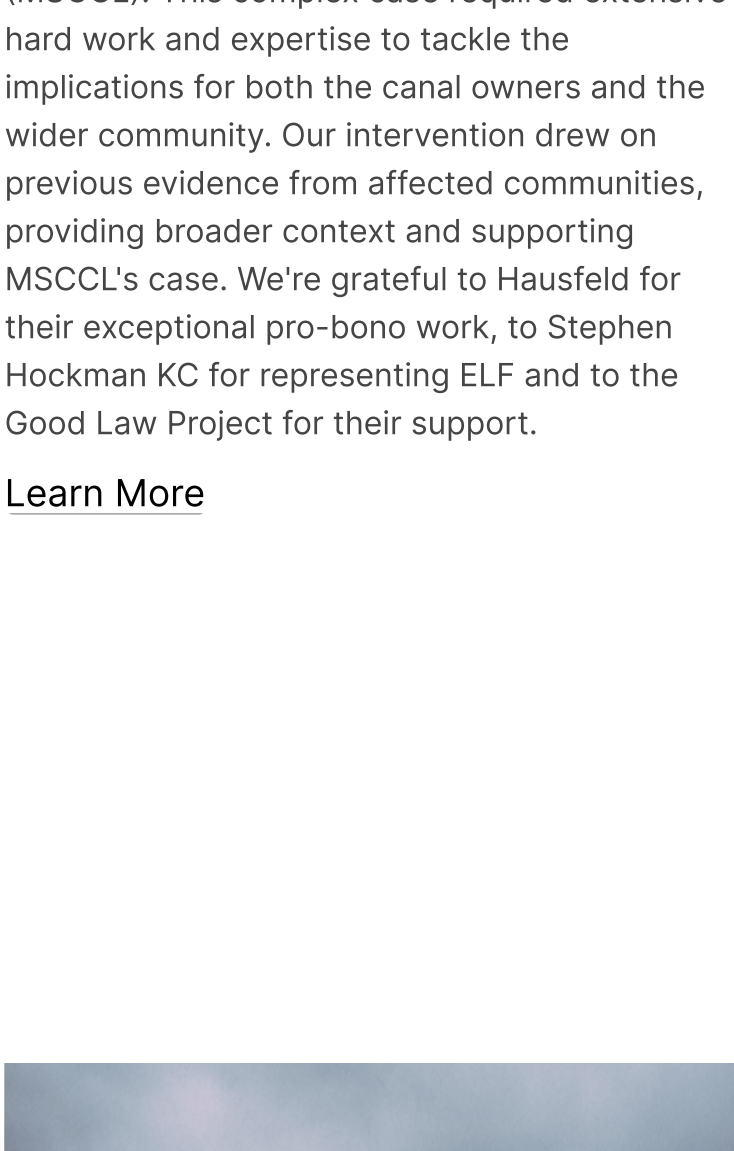
In a landmark moment for ELF, we recently had the opportunity to intervene in an important Supreme Court case. This high-profile appearance not only demonstrates our unwavering commitment to the environment but also highlights the growing recognition of the importance of environmental issues on a national stage. We were represented by Hausfeld, our former chairman, Stephen Hockman KC, was legal counsel, we were supported by the Good Law Project and had involvement from a number of our ELF community throughout. Our presence at the Supreme Court serves as a testament to the dedication and hard work of the entire ELF team, proving that together, we can make a significant impact in the fight for a greener future.

This year, ELF has been championing the [Rights of Nature](#), especially the Rights of Rivers. Our own, Tom and Emma, have been instrumental in developing a Rights of Rivers motion for the [River Ouse](#) which was passed by Lewes District Council, marking an inspiring milestone in our journey. This motion will involve a 2 year consultation period that will have community at the core to develop a Rights of Rivers Declaration. As part of our goal in forwarding on our learning from this experience and inspiring those around us, we will also be launching a Community Rights of Rivers toolkit in the coming months. Watch this space.

The Aarhus Convention is another crucial part of our mission, emphasising public participation, access to information, and justice in environmental matters. At ELF, we believe environmental justice shouldn't be a privilege reserved for the wealthy. Upholding the Aarhus Convention, we support those who might otherwise be unable to fight for the environment, fostering a more inclusive and effective movement. It is also the 25th Anniversary of the Aarhus Convention this year and ELF in partnership with UCL will be producing a new report, our latest Aarhus Access to Justice Report. As we forge ahead, we remain dedicated to the Aarhus Convention's values and the pursuit of environmental justice for all.

With each success and challenge, we're reminded of the importance of unity, perseverance, and our collective strength. As we celebrate Spring's renewal, let's use this season to reinvigorate our shared efforts, making a difference and creating lasting change for the environment and all its inhabitants.

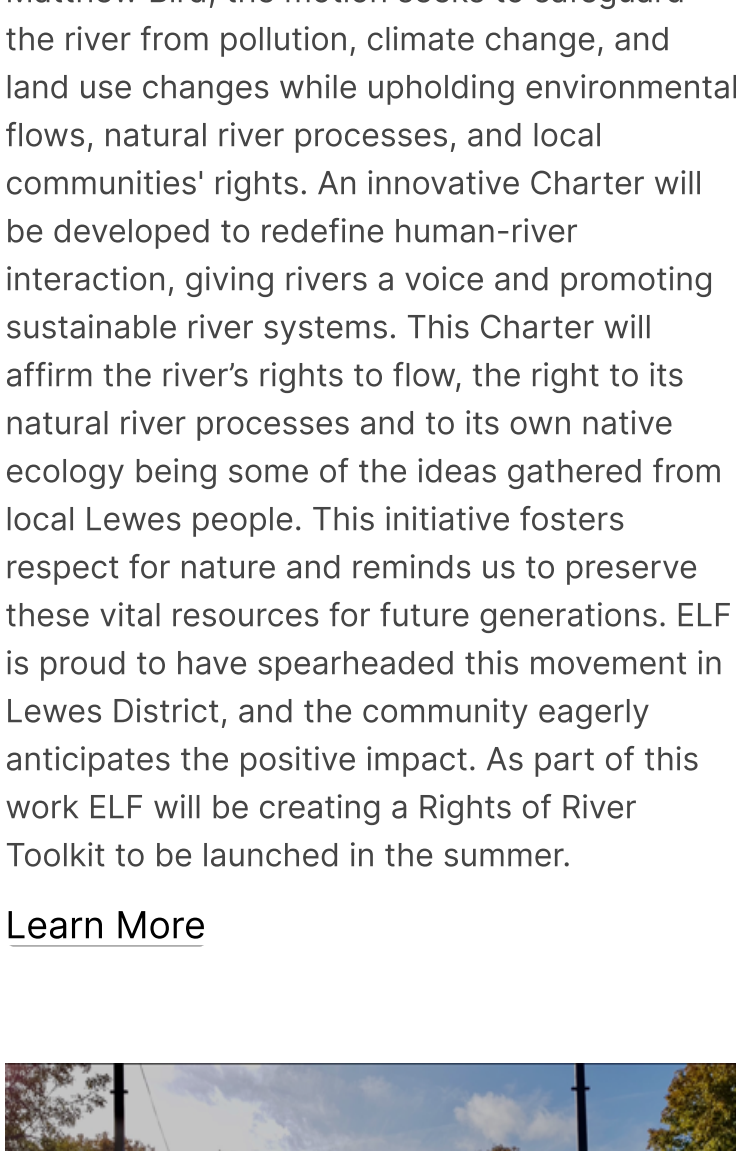
Recent Case Updates



ELF Intervenes in 'Monster' Supreme Court Case

ELF recently stepped in to provide crucial intervention on a highly technical Supreme Court Case concerning water and sewage undertakers' rights to discharge sewage, specifically into the Manchester Ship Canal (MSCCL). This complex case required extensive hard work and expertise to tackle the implications for both the canal owners and the wider community. Our intervention drew on previous evidence from affected communities, providing broader context and supporting MSCCL's case. We're grateful to Hausfeld for their exceptional pro-bono work, to Stephen Hockman KC for representing ELF and to the Good Law Project for their support.

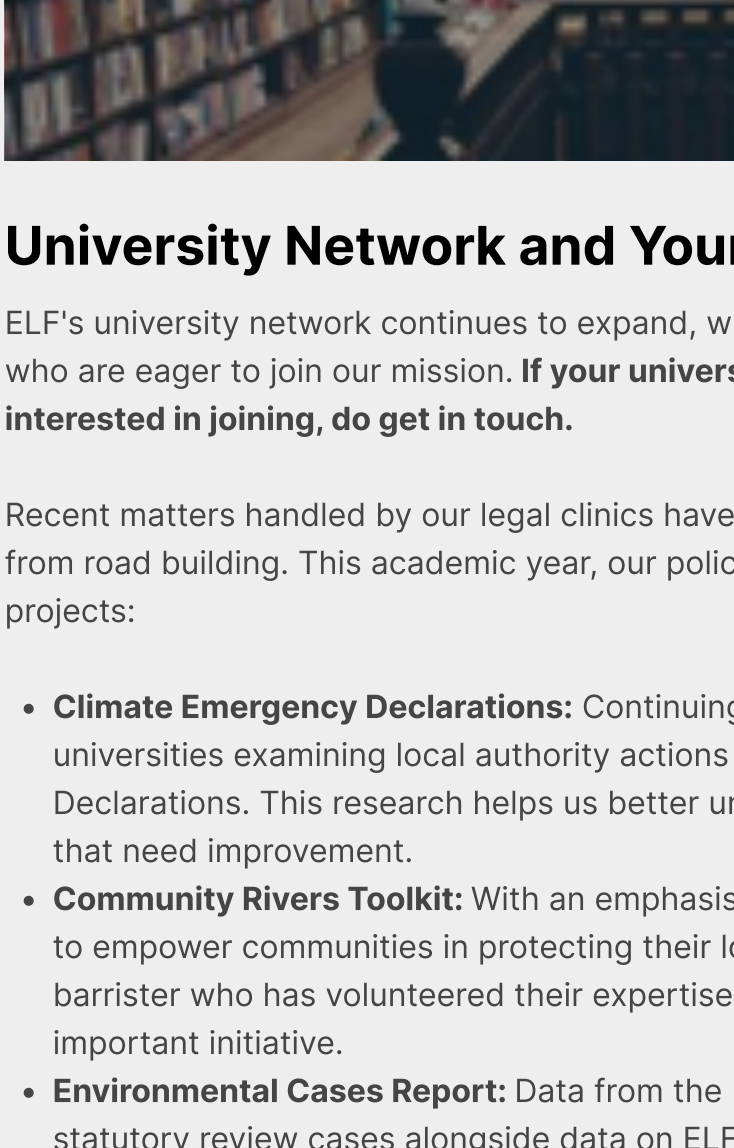
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Rights of Rivers motion passed in Lewes

In a groundbreaking move, Lewes District Council passed a motion in February for the Rights of Rivers aimed at protecting the River Ouse in East Sussex, UK. Co-authored by ELF's own Emma Montlake, Tom Brennan, and Cllr Matthew Bird, the motion seeks to safeguard the river from pollution, climate change, and land use changes while upholding environmental flows, natural river processes, and local communities' rights. An innovative Charter will be developed to redefine human-river interaction, giving rivers a voice and promoting sustainable river systems. This Charter will affirm the river's rights to flow, the right to its natural river processes and to its own native ecology being some of the ideas gathered from local Lewes people. This initiative fosters respect for nature and reminds us to preserve these vital resources for future generations. ELF is proud to have spearheaded this movement in Lewes District, and the community eagerly anticipates the positive impact. As part of this work ELF will be creating a Rights of River Toolkit to be launched in the summer.

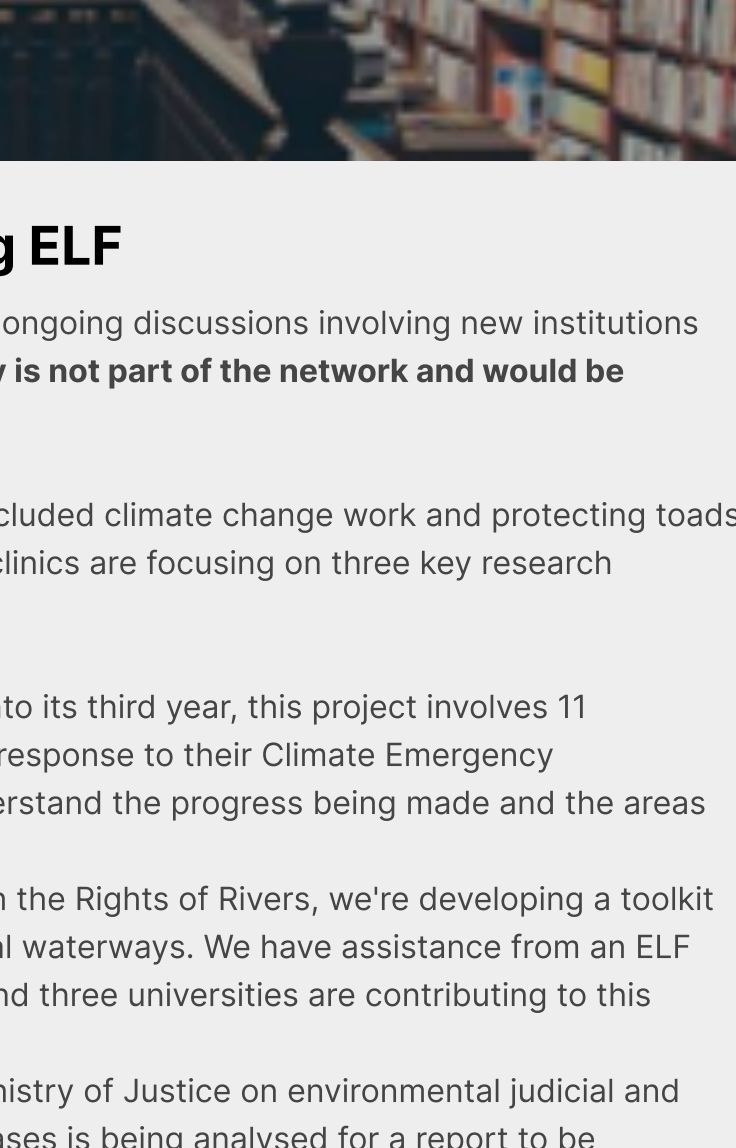
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Red Route Development Stopped

In a remarkable display of community action, NWWT, Stamp Out the Red Route, and local members joined forces to halt the proposed Red Route road development, which threatened ancient Welsh woodlands and native habitats. This triumphant campaign, which ELF supported with the excellent collaboration of Sioned Davis at 6 Pump Court, exemplifies the power of public pressure in achieving sustainable, environmentally-conscious outcomes. Serving as an inspiration for other activists, this success story underscores the importance of resilience and perseverance when tackling environmental challenges. We believe that this shift in priorities signals a larger culture shift from the Welsh Government that we hope leads to further change going forward.

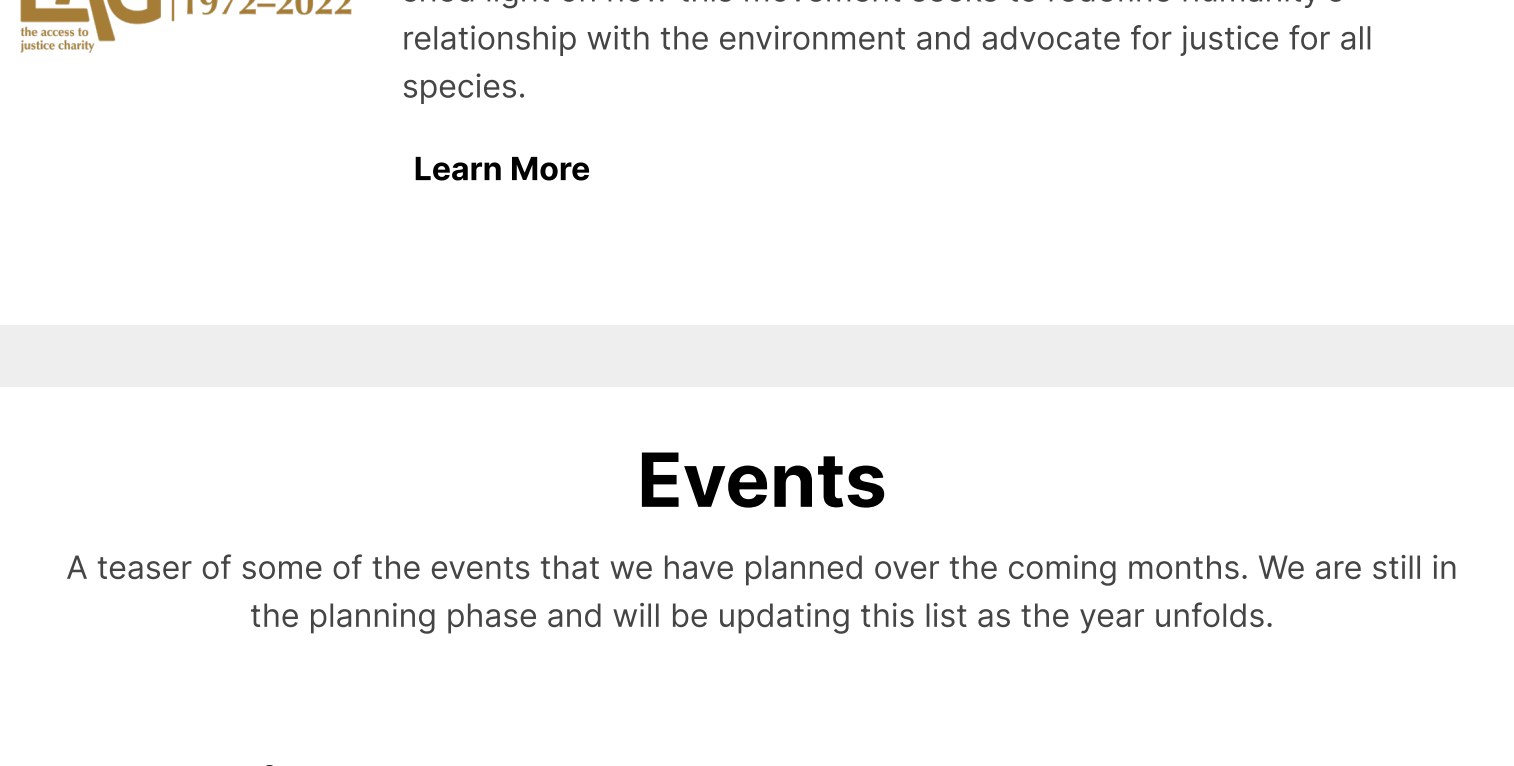
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Plymouth Trees Felled

Recently, in Plymouth, over 100 mature trees were felled overnight to make way for a £12.7m pedestrian walkway, despite significant local opposition and a petition with more than 16,000 signatures. The Woodland Trust and Plymouth City Council's own survey revealed that the majority of respondents were against the redevelopment plan. This event highlights the pressing need for stronger environmental protections, especially for mature and veteran trees, which play a crucial role in supporting local ecosystems, creating shade in otherwise concrete environments and sequestering carbon and reducing air pollution. Current protections, like Tree Protection Orders, are insufficient and can be overridden by planning permission. Moreover, the councils responsible for issuing these orders may also be the ones leading the developments that threaten the trees.

[Learn More](#)



University Network and Young ELF

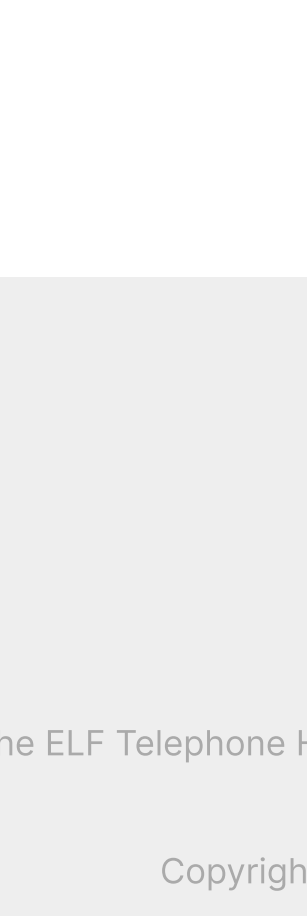
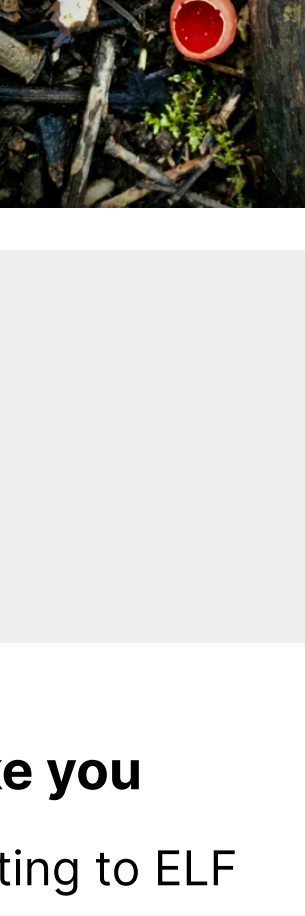
ELF's university network continues to expand, with ongoing discussions involving new institutions who are eager to join our mission. **If your university is not part of the network and would be interested in joining, do get in touch.**

Recent matters handled by our legal clinics have included climate change work and protecting toads from road building. This academic year, our policy clinics are focusing on three key research projects:

- **Climate Emergency Declarations:** Continuing into its third year, this project involves 11 universities examining local authority actions in response to their Climate Emergency Declarations. This research helps us better understand the progress being made and the areas that need improvement.
- **Community Rivers Toolkit:** With an emphasis on the Rights of Rivers, we're developing a toolkit to empower communities in protecting their local waterways. We have assistance from an ELF barrister who has volunteered their expertise, and three universities are contributing to this important initiative.
- **Environmental Cases Report:** Data from the Ministry of Justice on environmental judicial and statutory review cases alongside data on ELF cases is being analysed for a report to be published in June.

Wishing paralegal, Megan Tyson, every success for the future and welcoming Annabel to the team.

ELF is very sad to be saying goodbye to Megan Tyson, who has been a steadfast paralegal working with ELF for over a year. Megan first joined ELF in May 2021 and stayed for a year, returning at the end of 2022 when her planned role at the Foreign Office was postponed. Megan is now going to take up her role there and we want to wish her every success for the future. Megan has been a wonderful colleague and companion at ELF, dealing with many complex enquiries that come to ELF through our Advice and Referral service. She will be sorely missed. She will be replaced in the interim by Annabel Walker, qualified solicitor currently undertaking her environmental law LLM at UCL. We look forward to working with Annabel.



Introducing our new Communications Officer

We're excited to introduce Lasserina Rath, our new Communications Officer at ELF. Lasserina will play a crucial role in developing and implementing effective communication initiatives that align with our organisation's vision and mission. Her work will help us enhance our brand's visibility and reputation, ensuring that we continue to foster meaningful connections with our audience and stakeholders.

Environmental Justice For all

Joint Directors, Emma and Tom recently connected with Legal Action Group to discuss the transformative Rights of Nature movement. They shed light on how this movement seeks to redefine humanity's relationship with the environment and advocate for justice for all species.

[Learn More](#)

Events

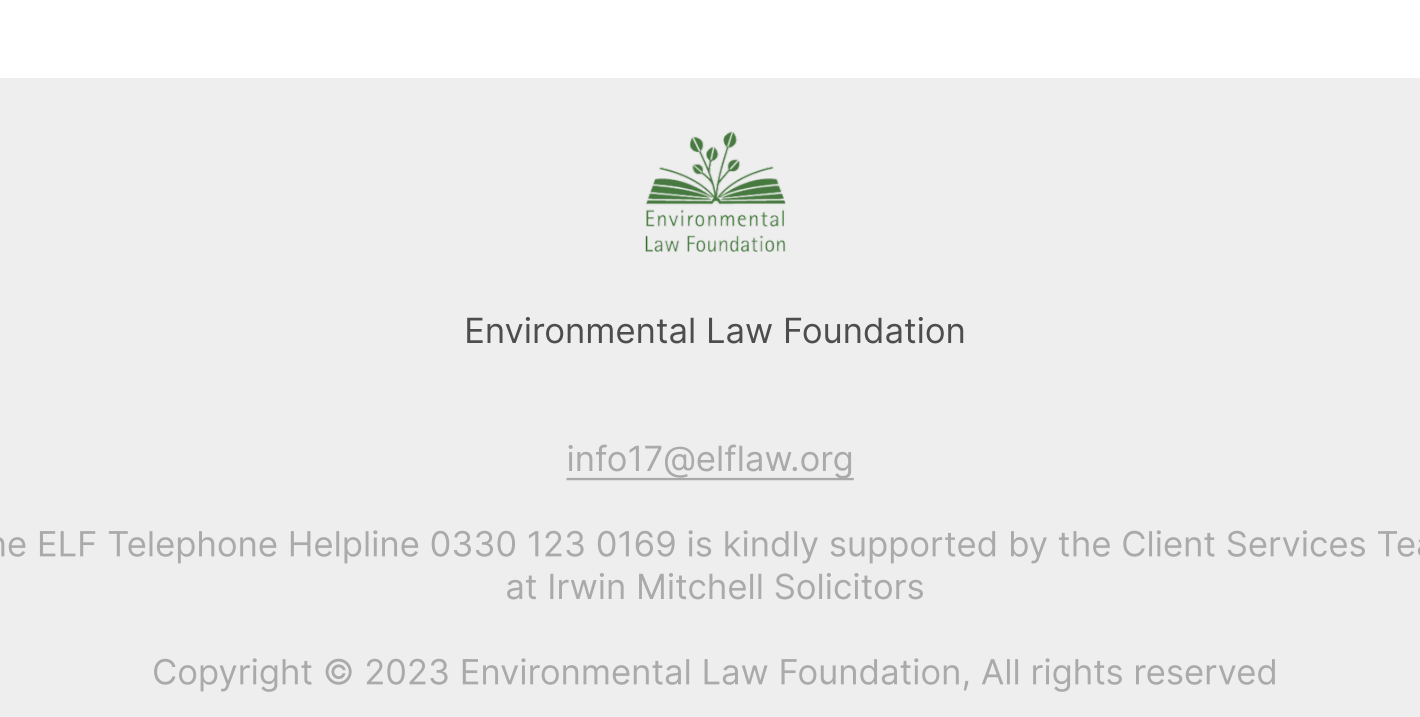
A teaser of some of the events that we have planned over the coming months. We are still in the planning phase and will be updating this list as the year unfolds.

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| Follow-on event from Reviving UK waterways | Supreme Court Roundtable | Aarhus Convention ratification - 25th anniversary |
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| Building on the success of our World Water Day event on 22 March 2022, ELF is excited to announce a follow-on event, launching our innovative Rights of Rivers Toolkit. This event will take place both in-person and online, ensuring maximum accessibility for all interested parties. | Once a decision has been reached by the Supreme Court in the case between Manchester Shipping Canal and United Utilities, we will host a virtual roundtable discussion that will bring together legal experts, academics, and community members to examine the significance of the ruling. This event will be designed to facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the case, exploring the wins, losses, and the potential implications for future legal developments. Further details will be announced when a Supreme Court decision has been reached. We look forward to seeing you there! | We are planning an event in June to mark the 25th anniversary of the UK's ratification of the Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. We'll be launching a new report analysing data on environmental judicial and statutory review cases at the event. More details to follow soon. |
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Whether you are an individual passionate about river conservation, a community leader, or a policymaker, this event will provide valuable insights and resources to support your efforts in safeguarding our precious rivers and waterways. Stay tuned for more information on the date, time, and location. We look forward to seeing you there and working together to protect our rivers for future

The many shades of Spring



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We support grassroots activists and small communities in their fight for environmental justice. Every donation counts towards the success of our shared future.

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