

BLEED FROM A4 (21.0\*29.7CM)

Issue 15 | August 2022



**Wessex**  
Rivers Trust

# WESSEX RIVERS NEWS



In this issue:

Developing River  
Projects

Working with  
Farmers

Our Growing  
Education Team



# Chair's Introduction

*George Seligman, Chair of Trustees*

I have been wondering as I write this introduction to what extent this summer is a portent of years to come for the Wessex region. Yesterday it rained briefly where I live near Romsey on the Middle Test. It was the first rain in about three weeks, and we have had almost none this spring and summer. The River Test is already very low with every prospect of things getting worse before they get better next winter. Southern Water has made an application for a drought order to allow them to take more water from the lower Test to top up their dwindling supplies. While they have done that as a precaution in recent dry years, it seems very likely that this year they will need the order. If so, it will mean increased abstraction this autumn and more stress for our rivers and their inhabitants.



*Kingfisher flying above river*

Years of population growth and under investment by water companies, combined with climate change, have contributed to this sorry state of affairs. But this is not a dystopian vision of life in southern England. Rather, it is a recognition of what we have to deal with in 21st century, crowded Britain. Many public and private organisations can see the problems and are working for change. Habitat improvement, investment in wastewater treatment and changes to farming methods have all moved up the agenda in public consciousness. Whether our politicians will respond adequately is an

open question, for the moment they seem largely obsessed with their own squabbles. But at Wessex Rivers Trust we are doing everything we can to strengthen the resilience of our rivers. This edition of Wessex Rivers News illustrates the increasing scope of our work to offset some of the damage done to rivers in the past, mitigate damage still being done and educate people about why it all matters. I hope you are pleased with what your charity is doing. Please continue to support us in every way you can.



*River Test*



# CEO's Round Up

Dave Rumble, Chief Executive



River Education Session. Photo credit: Tom Aldous

Now is the season for celebrating all that is good about our rivers, and at the Trust we are demonstrating their special appeal to anyone and everyone! Our education and public engagement programme has received a boost through new projects and we showcase this work on pages 15, 16 and 18. Volunteers are key to the success of the Invasive Non-Native Species problem and progress on the Test and Itchen is brought to life by Courtney on page 12.

This is also the season when we worry about the lasting impacts of a changing climate on chalk streams in particular, with low flows and patchy rainfall being most noticeable. Doing something about this is what motivates and inspires us and this includes planning our next round of projects to boost the resilience of chalk streams to low flows. Andy's article on pages 4-5

explores the unfolding and delivery of our work to restore rivers towards their more natural state. Meanwhile on page 8 Mike revisits sites where recent and sometimes drastic-looking river restoration work has taken place, reflecting on some of the challenges (and rewards) of undoing the past.

The vast majority of our catchments are farmed and so farmers are key to achieving improvements to our rivers, streams and the groundwater that lies beneath. On page 6 Matt compares and contrasts tributaries of the River Stour, bringing to life what our team looks for when visiting a watercourse. On page 14 Alex highlights an exciting new avenue of potential opportunity for the Trust – working with farmer groups to improve water quality especially – and my article on page 13 introduces the sometimes-thorny issue of nutrient neutrality.

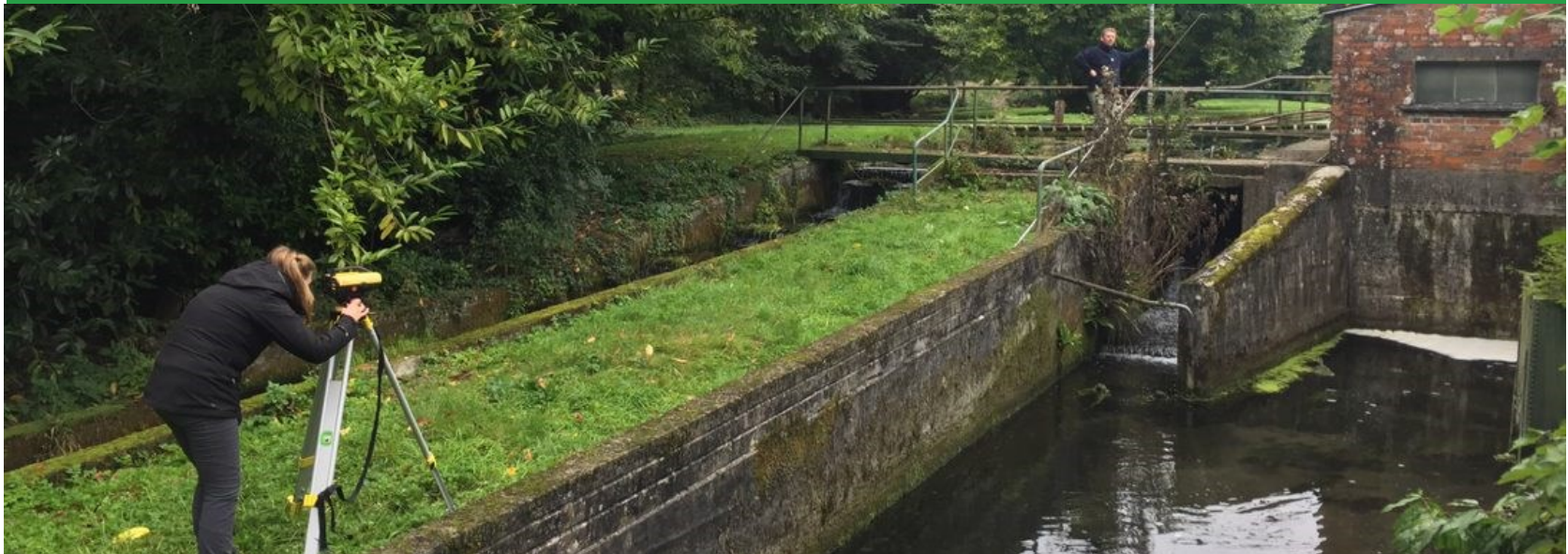
We hope you that you feel inspired by this offering, and that next time you visit a favourite section of river, you derive as much satisfaction as we do from knowing that, together, we are helping to bring positive change to our rivers, one step at a time.

## Contents of this issue

Chair's Introduction .....	2
CEO's Round Up .....	3
River Projects—Desktop to Delivery.....	4
Water Quality in the River Stour .....	6
Breaking Eggs to Make Omelettes.....	8
Watercress and Winterbournes Update.....	10
Test & Itchen Non Native Species Project .....	12
Catchment Nutrient Schemes.....	13
Farmer Groups in Wessex.....	14
Chalk Stream Challenge .....	15
Growing Education & Engagement Team.....	16
Our River Our Water .....	18
In Other News .....	19

# River Projects - Desktop to Delivery

*Andy Blincow, Senior Project Officer*



*Undertaking a topographic survey of a mill structure to inform potential design solutions*

The Wessex Rivers Trust delivers a wide range of practical improvement projects across our various catchments, including river restoration, wetland creation, fish passage and natural flood management schemes. Whilst we tend to showcase the final product, the steps that go into the development of these projects are rarely mentioned. For those interested, hopefully this article will shed some light on the various stages the project delivery team navigate when developing a project from 'concept to completion'.

The example below is typical of the 'average' river or floodplain project. In reality, the development of each project may depend upon a wide range of variables. Geographical location has a significant influence both in terms of landscape and stakeholders (think a New Forest bog vs the Middle Test). Size and scope have a considerable impact with increasing scale often (but certainly not always) leading to increased complexity. In some instances pure luck (or more than often, lack of) can play a pivotal role in the process. For the purpose of this article, we will also assume that suitable funding has been identified and secured, as that's content enough for another magazine altogether!

## Stakeholder Liaison

Achieving 'buy in' from stakeholders is essential to the success of a project and in some cases might have been an ongoing process for years prior to a project being delivered:

- Riparian owners.** Often including separate landowners for each bank (and occasionally even the riverbed), plus access arrangements over adjacent land parcels
- Fisheries.** May range from well-established commercial fisheries to small syndicates, the ambitions and management objectives of which can vary greatly
- Regulators.** Pre-application discussions can help shape the scope of a project
- The public.** Extensive public engagement is certainly required where sites are publicly accessible, and in some cases even if only visible!
- Partner organisations.** Discussions with partner organisations can add real value to projects, sometimes resulting in a partnership approach





Undertaking otter and water vole surveys to gather data for the design and permitting processes

### Surveys

Surveys guide the scope and feasibility of a project, inform designs, and provide relevant information in support of permit applications:

- Topographic survey.** Long section and cross section ‘topo’ surveys provide information on bed gradient, channel profile, floodplain connectivity and flood risk
- Mapping resources.** Historic mapping and LiDAR datasets can provide valuable insight into past modifications within the floodplain
- Ecological survey.** Presence and location of protected species, plus invasive non-native species must be determined to inform methodology and mitigation measures

and in some instances...

- Detailed hydrological modelling.** Used to determine flood risk where works are determined likely to pose a significant risk to property.

### Designs

Used to convey an image of the final ‘product’ to stakeholders i.e. landowners or fisheries. Design drawings also form the basis of permit applications, and are guides for the installation of works

**Outline designs** form the initial basis for discussions between the Trust and relevant stakeholders

**Detailed designs** of to scale plan view and cross section drawings (as informed by topographic/drone surveys) form the basis of permit applications

### Permitting

Both permanent and temporary (enabling) works require permitting. Once submitted some permits can take up to 12 weeks to be determined. Just *some* of the permits and licences that may need to be granted include:

- Environment Agency Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) or Local Authority Ordinary Watercourse Consent (OWC) – or both!
- Natural England Site of Special Scientific Interest consents
- Forestry Commission Felling Licence
- Local authority Conservation Area/Tree Preservation Order (TPO) permissions
- Local authority planning permission (if scope/scale of works qualify and the project doesn’t fall under permitted development rights)
- Natural England protected species mitigation licence (depending upon outcomes of surveys)
- Environment Agency impoundment/abstraction licence (if an existing impoundment of flow split will be altered by the works)

As you may have gathered from the list above, the process of developing a river or floodplain project is not a straightforward one. There are often more snakes (or should that be eels) than ladders that require navigating on the path from ‘concept’ and ‘conception’. Keep an eye out for future issues to see the outcomes of this years efforts.



# Water Quality in the River Stour

*Matt Irvine, Senior Project Officer*

During recent walkover surveys to assess the habitat of some of the tributaries of the River Stour, we also observed some stark differences in water quality between tributaries. Here we outline the signs—positive and negative—we look out for when assessing a watercourse.

The Environment Agency assess water quality through the use of several different measures: Biological indicators (fish, invertebrates and macrophytes), as well as physical indicators (the river's morphology and flow regime). They also test the water quality and look for hazardous substances; measuring dissolved oxygen, ammonia and phosphorous levels. We based our visual observations around the biological and physical indicators, aware that of course this doesn't tell the full story.

At the first site we visited, and evidenced in the adjacent photograph, there were a number of indicators that would suggest that the water quality was good. If we look at the physical indicators, the channel had a good flow regime, evidenced by the *Ranunculus* growing. It was well connected to the floodplain, meaning in times of higher water any sediment could be distributed on the floodplain, helping keep the water clean. It had a clean gravel bed, a sign of a lack of any significant physical modifications, and the water clarity was very good.

Secondly, the biological indicators. There was a good assemblage of macrophytes, both in-channel and within the marginal zone. *Ranunculus* and starwort were growing in-channel. In the emergent and riparian zone, we found watercress, water parsnip and water mint, making way to yellow flag iris and hemlock water dropwort.

A good number and size of brown trout were observed in-channel along with hatching mayflies and large olives, suggesting that the fish and invertebrate populations were healthy. All the above are linked to good water quality.



*First site*

The second site we visited was on a different tributary. Our visual observations suggested that the water quality at this site wasn't as good as at the first site.

Most striking were the physical indicators: there's a stream down there somewhere! The channel is disconnected from the floodplain, suggesting that at some stage in the past the channel had been deepened to aid with land drainage. This means a lot of sediment that could potentially be deposited on the floodplain remains in channel and the river banks can suffer increased rates of erosion.





Second site

The water clarity was also poor suggesting either sediment input or nutrient enrichment causing algal blooms, again pointing to a reduction in the quality of the water when compared to the first site. The apparent change in geology was highlighted on the river bed which was predominantly clay or heavily sedimented, with small patches of gravel few and far between.

The flow regime was however varied and there were many in-channel natural large woody habitat features aiding the diversity of flow.

The biological indicators, there was a paucity of in-channel macrophyte growth, potentially due to over-shading or the speed of flood flows contained within the channel preventing plants from taking hold in the clay-rich river bed. Due to the incised nature of the channel there was no marginal zone and the bank tops were dominated by a rank sward comprised of nettles, Himalayan balsam and grasses. No fish were observed, not aided by the lack of clarity of the water. With all indicators taken into account the water quality appeared to be poorer than that of the first site.



Second site

The third site we visited I wasn't actually convinced was a stream. It looked much more like a drainage ditch with what appeared to be poor water quality. Firstly, if we look at the physical indicators, the channel had a poor flow regime with very little to no flow and very poor water clarity. It is largely disconnected from the floodplain and appears to have been deepened and straightened. It was impossible to see the bed of the channel due to the water clarity, but I suspect it would be clogged with sediment. All in all, the physical indicators pointed to poor water quality.

It was impossible to see many biological indicators. A few pond skaters were observed on the surface of the channel, but there was no in-channel macrophyte growth and the riparian zone was dominated by a rank sward of grasses and nettles. Quite different to the first stream we visited.



Third site



# Breaking Eggs to Make Omelettes

*Mike Blackmore, Head of Project Delivery*



Habitat restoration is all about undoing historic damage. It's an equal and opposite reaction to an ecological impact. Some impacts, such as inappropriate land management, happen incrementally over a long period of time, and so the best medicine might be regenerative land management over an equally prolonged period. However, many of the activities inflicted upon our rivers and chalk streams, such as dredging and channel straightening, were sudden, violent acts which no amount of gentle, incremental management can undo.





The equal and opposite force we apply to undo such impacts is by its very nature, sudden and disruptive. River restoration is a violent act, and its immediate aftermath can be alarming to those who witness it.

However, the time of year that such projects are delivered, and the often-abrupt reinstatement of natural processes that ensue, mean that restoration sites recover *remarkably* quickly once the spring/summer growing season reaches its zenith. I've been doing this work for 15 years now, and yet the bounce-back and greening-up of restoration sites remains a wonder. A

recent check-up of a few of last autumn's projects captured this phenomenon perfectly, as I hope do the following images, taken 7 months apart.

It will take a few more years before the 2021 sites settle into their new equilibrium, and the dry winter resulted in less morphological change than we'd have seen in a wet year. However, even without a really good 'flush-through', the changes we're seeing are highly encouraging, and with fears of drought escalating, may yet prove to be vital in the months ahead.





# Watercress & Winterbournes

*Moragh Stirling Watercress and Winterbournes Projects & Conservation Officer*



*Gearing up for the survey*

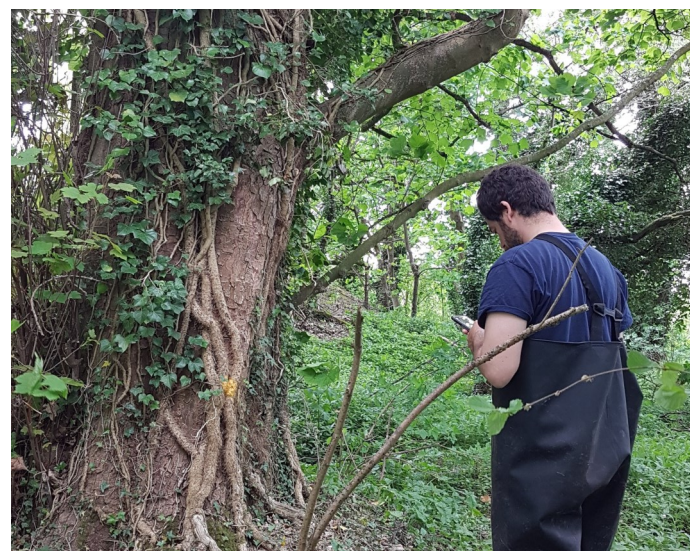
The spring period for delivery is like...well I wouldn't say a swan, more like a moorhen; not quite so tranquil above but still paddling frantically below. Method statements and permit applications don't make great reading though, so here are some other highlights from the Watercress and Winterbournes programme:

One way of getting senior staff out to play is to provide fancy new neoprene waders – and boy, were they needed here! My revenge for being laid up for a couple of months was to delegate some deeply silty surveys to more robust legs – although both Maddie and I managed to defy the mud on a follow up survey later in the spring.

Surveying for protected species is part and parcel of our planning. Here Andy is checking out bat roosting potential at one of the project sites set for delivery later this year. We will leave this one well alone.

We've also been eyeing up new sites for potential works, cleverly choosing one of the nicest days to explore. It's lovely to see how a diverse riparian vegetation thrives where it is allowed to.

Finding new partners to work with is always exciting and we are lucky to have new colleagues at Natural England



*Andy checking for bat roost potential*



*Beautiful spring vegetation on a well managed angler bank*





*Ephemeral rivers are sometimes forgotten when they are dry, so unforeseen problems only become obvious when the streams are running*

to help us understand what support is available to landowners and managers who want to continue improving the health of our rivers and wider landscape. We've also been talking with the National Trust on their exciting new land-use change initiative at Hinton Ampner at the head of the Itchen.

Getting the wider community out and about and enjoying rivers is a key objective for the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), and the first instalment of the Open Chalk Streams programme 2022, coordinated by Maggie at the Wildlife Trust, got under way. We were able to see how the works at St Mary Bourne were bedding in, and hear about local efforts to help toads survive without the green cross code. It was great to see the site well and truly greening up when a group of staff and volunteers returned in late May to plant up some of the seedlings volunteers have been raising through the winter and spring.

I also was lucky enough to shepherd a group visiting a beautiful garden and disused watercress bed in Alresford, led by our very knowledgeable host who lives there. The potential for transforming the watercress beds had us scratching our heads with ideas for the best way to make use of such a great opportunity.

Watercress and Winterbournes staff and volunteers were invited to take part in the Watercress festival in Alresford which, despite a miserably wet day, was very well attended. To the visitors' (and our) delight a mayfly took the chance to emerge from our tray of



*Creating ways to manage grazing can really help reduce sediment load in rivers*

invertebrates collected from a nearby stretch of the Arle earlier in the morning, and stayed with us until we took it back to the river and released it into a well vegetated margin.

Lastly, it's always good to revisit a site and see how it is progressing. The reduced grazing intensity on this stretch of the Bourne Rivulet is showcasing potential benefits with signs of the recovery to come.



*Showing off for the crowds!*



*Our host explaining the history and botany of the site*





# Test & Itchen Non Native Species Project Update

*Courtney Brain, Test & Itchen Invasive Non Native Species Project Coordinator*

This summer marks the Test and Itchen Invasive Non-Native Species (T&I INNS) project's first full delivery season, which is very exciting! I hope to have lots of updates in the Winter issue once the season is complete. In the meantime here's what we've been up to.

We kicked off the first delivery season with National Invasives Week; an annual series of events aimed at raising awareness about INNS. Set up by the GB Non Native Species Secretariat, this week of events allows community groups to highlight their work and get involved in nearby projects, so we couldn't wait to join in on the fun! This year we ran our first T&I INNS Training event as well as removing 500m<sup>2</sup> of Himalayan balsam with volunteers along the banks of the River Itchen. We're already excited to go bigger next year and connect with more local action groups in the area.

With the growing season getting into full swing, June marked the start of our Summer INNS Surveys. This year we had **6 volunteers** join 5 members of staff to survey **36 km** of river over **7 days**. Our survey teams recorded a troubling **217** instances of priority target invasive non native species across the catchment.

Monkey flower was the biggest culprit along these stretches, some of which only had a few flowers but there were several larger patches dominating between 20 to 50 m lengths of river bank. There were also several instances of American skunk-cabbage, Orange balsam, Red-osier dogwood and Water fern. Check out this cracker of an American skunk-cabbage spotted on the Upper Itchen, it stands at chest height and a diameter of around 1.5m!

## The Mink Monitoring Network Update

Back in March we successfully launched our Mink Monitoring Network, which aims to reduce the presence of American mink in the T&I catchments. In its first few months we have been able to launch a whopping 32 mink monitoring rafts, all thanks to the amazing river keepers, who are monitoring their rafts on a weekly basis, recording any signs of American mink, Otter and Water vole.

So far, we've had at least 3 rafts visited by American mink, which led to one female being humanely dispatched. We also had an Otter visiting one of the rafts and a further 3 rafts recorded Water vole presence. We are very happy with the results to date, and we are very excited to see how the activity changes seasonally in the coming years!



*INNS volunteers hard at work removing Himalayan balsam on the Lower Itchen for Invasives Week 2022.*



*American skunk-cabbage spotted on the Upper Itchen during the Summer INNS Survey. Photo credit: Andy Blincow*



*Mink tracks spotted on the tracking cartridge from one of the Mink Monitoring Rafts deployed on the Middle Test.*



# Catchment Nutrient Schemes

*Dave Rumble, CEO Wessex Rivers Trust*

It seems that many conventional environmental problems involve a romp through the periodic table: Carbon has the limelight, but increasingly Nitrogen and Phosphorus are entering the broad parlance of public and political life! Experts have known for a long time that our rivers and wetlands are suffering the consequences of nutrient over-enrichment but it seems Nitrogen and Phosphorus have never been talked about so much.

There is a reason for this: environmental legislation requires that housebuilding must not make the problem of nutrient pollution worse and measures must be put in place to offset any increases when they are released into rivers and coastal waters. So, solutions are needed quickly to allow housebuilding to proceed. These have created a new language and a new way of looking at catchments, what seems like overnight. To make things even more complicated, farmers are struggling to afford the fertilisers containing N and P to maximise yields at a time of global food shortages because of fuel price hikes.

N and P enter the aquatic environment from agriculture either when quantities not consumed by crops leach from soils and enter groundwater over a period of decades, or when they enter watercourses as runoff from fields, roads and farmyards. Large quantities are also released as effluent from domestic sewage when both treated and untreated forms are discharged. This then creates a surge in growth of algae which smother gravels and outcompete desirable plants like *Ranunculus* in chalk streams (caused by P) and form a mat of algae on coastal mudflats which harm their ecology too (caused by N). Low flows and other issues exacerbate an already complex problem.

So, there are various ways of turning around the nutrient juggernaut. Farmers are already using smart technology to target spraying and minimise over-application, but nutrients reside in groundwater for decades and so these benefits do not help our rivers, which are stressed, now. Water companies are slowly

but surely upgrading water treatment works in order to strip out nutrients using various means including Nature Based Solutions, such as using reedbeds as filters. But more needs to be done urgently if proposed levels of housebuilding are to be deemed sustainable.

Nutrient neutrality must be demonstrated by developments and this is increasingly achieved through offset schemes. These schemes involve conversion of fields under conventional agriculture to 'no-input' land use, including reversion to extensive pasture and re-wilding to scrub or woodland. Buyers (housebuilders) pay sellers (farmers and landowners) for nutrient credits to offset their new dwellings.

So what is the scale of the issue and how are others responding? Local authorities covering most of our catchments and coastal waters have enlisted specialist technical support, and even have dedicated nutrients officers, to navigate what can be a complex array of options to achieve nutrient neutrality. One specific challenge, emphasised by our predominantly groundwater catchments, is the securing of measures to offset inputs from housing in perpetuity. In Hampshire the Solent Nutrient Market Pilot aims to address just that challenge with support and advice from government. Options for developers and local authorities include the Wildlife Trust scheme to take land out of production, enhancing it for nature, reducing inputs of nutrients into waterbodies. Other approaches include working with farmers directly.

Whether the Trust actively involved in nutrient neutrality in future, for example by advising landowners and farmers, or simply continues to facilitate meaningful discussion and sharing of evidence through the Catchment Partnerships it hosts, remains to be seen. Either way, nutrients are not going to go away in a hurry, even if policies do change; and so helping to ensure there is enough water in the system to dilute nutrients, and restoring rivers so that they are better able to deal with their effects, will be invaluable.



# Farmer Groups in Wessex

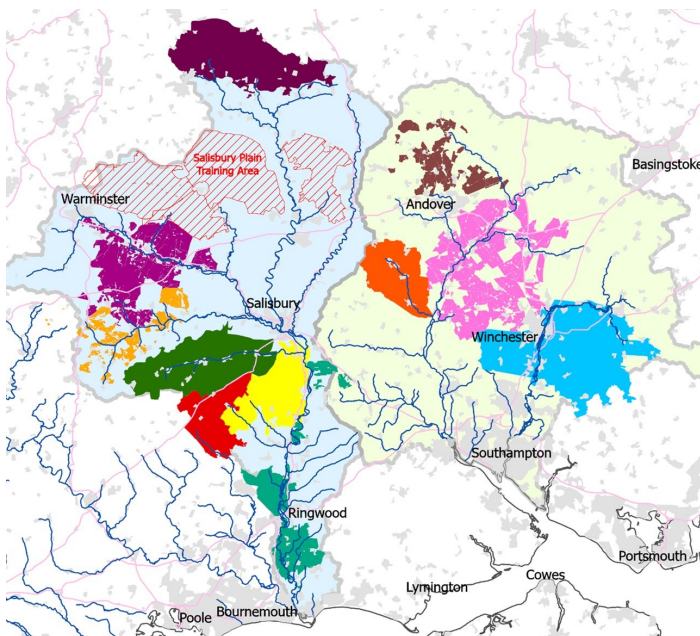
*Alex Deacon, Catchment Partnership Manager*

From flower rich meadows dotted with sheep and cattle alongside our chalk streams to the open expanse of wheat and barley fields swaying in the breeze upon the chalky downland, Wessex is a heavily farmed landscape.

Whilst farming practices may have changed a lot over the years, neolithic man was cultivating our floodplains 6000 years ago. So it's safe to say our rivers and streams are very much a product of our interaction with the landscape.

Many of our local farmers recognise the important role nature plays in underpinning a sustainable, productive farming system. By working together, typically with the support of a facilitator, farmers have established farmer-led groups (aka clusters) which can work more cohesively to deliver greater benefits for soil, water and wildlife at a much greater scale than working alone.

With the country departing the EU, farmers in England will now be paid to deliver benefits for nature through the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS). In addition to the change in farm subsidies, farmers are also being approached by local authorities, developers and the wider corporate sector with the desire to work with them to offset their activities, or help meet new Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria.



*Farmer groups in the Avon, Test and Itchen catchment. Image courtesy of J Stratton, Environmental Farmers Group.*

The new subsidy scheme for farmers has a greater focus on restoring the health of our rivers and streams. With farmers in our area eager to find out more about the health of the water in their catchment, Wessex Rivers Trust has stepped up its engagement with the increasing number of farmer-led groups across our area.

Our area is rich in farmer groups, in particularly the Hampshire Avon catchment where 9 groups cover nearly half of the 170,000 hectares of land in the catchment. Groups are also now well-established in the Test and Itchen, whilst new groups are forming in the Stour and Meon catchments.

## **An opportunity for Wessex Rivers Trust?**

Based on the nature restoration principle of 'Bigger, better, more, and joined up', engaging with farmer groups offers the Trust an opportunity to work in partnership with land and river managers, and their facilitators, to deliver more for our rivers. To put this potential for delivery 'at-scale' in perspective, the majority of both the River Wylfe and Ebbel are under the ownership and management of the respective farmer groups. The potential for enhancing nature on a significant, reach-wide scale cannot be ignored.

The Trust are actively engaged with a number of the farmer groups across our area, supported by new and existing projects, including the Wider Wylfe Strategy, Crystal Clear Ebbel Project, and our role as host for the Hampshire Avon Catchment Partnership.

River walkovers, Riverfly monitoring, fish surveys, and habitat enhancement opportunity mapping have all formed part of our offering to date, and have been very well received by the farming community. The enthusiasm to find out more about freshwater life on their farms and the opportunities to both protect and enhance riverine biodiversity is second to none. It's proven to be a two-way learning exercise, with farmers sharing decades of local knowledge which is vital to inform our advice and project development.

The Trust is currently exploring whether it could play a more active role in offering advice to farmers on freshwater issues in our region, adding more impact to the catchment work we already do.



# Chalk Stream Challenge

Tracy Standish, Education Officer



Chalk Stream Challenge Badge

Created by two enthusiastic Watercress and Winterbournes Landscape Partnership Scheme volunteers, Hazel and Sarah, the Chalk Stream Challenge provides youth groups with a new way to explore their local chalk stream.

The challenge is suitable for uniformed groups (for example Scouting and Guiding), home educated groups and other children's groups such as Wildlife Watch. It can be customised to suit different age ranges and involves a number of activities which will enable groups to discover the amazing wildlife and heritage of this rare and precious habitat. Children and young people are encouraged to investigate chalk, hunt for heritage features, consider current land uses, discover the wildlife that calls this wonderful habitat home and much more, all whilst having fun outside.

After exploring their chosen stream and completing the activities, groups can be rewarded with a fantastic fabric badge (for a small fee), certificate or both.

Whilst there are currently four routes within the scheme area for groups to choose from (two in Andover, one in Whitchurch and one in Alresford) the activities that make up the challenge can be completed elsewhere and group leaders further afield are being encouraged to find a stretch of stream local to them and create their own.

We are also excited to be utilising other funding streams to create further routes to share with groups on other rivers across the Wessex region: we hope to create one on the River Ebble as part of the Chase and Chalk Landscape Partnership Scheme and another on the River Bourne in Laverstock, working alongside the Devenish Bradshaw Charitable Trust and the Parish Council.

Information about the Chalk Stream Challenge, including links to the relevant documents, can be found on the Watercress and Winterbournes Landscape Partnership Scheme here:

[www.hiwwt.org.uk/watercress-and-winterbournes/chalk-stream-challenge](http://www.hiwwt.org.uk/watercress-and-winterbournes/chalk-stream-challenge)

Watercress and Winterbournes is a Landscape Partnership Scheme protecting, enhancing and celebrating the seven chalk streams that make up the headwaters of the Rivers Test and Itchen. The scheme is supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and brings together 16 partners, including Wessex Rivers Trust who host the education programme.

## Route Map





# Our Growing Education and Engagement Team

*Amy Ellis, Senior Education and Engagement Officer*

Less than 18 months ago we had one, sole Education and Engagement Officer. On a 3-day a week contract, this officer was responsible for all our school and uniformed group (Scouting and Guiding) promotion and session delivery, events, volunteer management and communications. The latter included the Trust's website, blogs, social media and magazine.

Today, with the help of several projects and their funding we have a team of seven staff and three volunteers, with more room to grow!

This article aims to give you an idea of the kind of work we are currently doing and a glimpse of what we hope to achieve in the future.

## **Amy Ellis, Senior Education and Engagement Officer (3 days a week)**

Funded by The Linbury Trust, Amy takes the lead in developing the team and the Trust's education and engagement offer. She is responsible for building and administering school, uniformed group and home education session bookings across the Wessex region. Amy also manages the Trust's volunteers.



*Amy Ellis*



*Tracy Standish*

## **Tracy Standish, Education Officer (full time)**

As the only paid full time member of the team, Tracy works on several education projects across the Trust. She leads on the educational elements of the Watercress and Winterbournes Landscape Partnership Scheme, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, three days a week, delivering school and uniformed group sessions as well as promoting the Chalk Stream Challenge Badge (which you can read more about on page 15). On her other two days Tracy works on the Our River, Our Water project, funded by Southern Water alongside South East Rivers Trust, as well as the education elements of the Crystal Clear Ebbles and Wider Wylfe projects.

## **Alex McKay, Communications and Events Officer (1 day a week)**

Our communications work has improved hugely since Alex joined the team. Although limited to one day a week, she uses her expert knowledge of this field to create a professional online presence for the Trust whilst helping all staff present their projects on brand. For her other half a day, Alex leads on our event management and delivery, supported by The Linbury Trust.





Tom Aldous

**Kate Carpenter, Holly Tozer, Ross Irving and Sarah Perin, River Educators (variable hours)**

Our team of River Educators are primarily responsible for the delivery of the Trust's education sessions and events. In addition, they support the team in the development of sessions, site visits and promotion. Having their support allows us to follow demand and grow where we see fit.

**Leah Farrer, Graduate Placement (3 days a week)**

After completing an Environmental Science and Geography degree, Leah supports staff across the Trust, gaining knowledge and experience to progress her along her career path.

**Perline Bastid, Henry Badman and Tom Aldous, Education and Engagement Volunteers (variable hours)**

All our education sessions and events require support from volunteers, due to the nature of our work. Perline is a huge help in this role, with helping children identify freshwater invertebrates and making willow fish. The

latter may even be her area of expertise! Tom is kindly helping us increase our photo and video library for both education and communication purposes. Keep an eye out on our social media for some of his recent photos!

**Libby Norton, Work Industry Placement Student (full time)**

Libby will be working with the Trust for 10 months as part of her Physical Geography degree placement year. Libby will be working within all teams learning the ropes and, hopefully, getting a clearer understanding of where she would like her career path to lead.

So, what does the future hold for the team? Well, we hope to continue to grow with the help of incredible grants and generous donations from our supporters. There is so much we can deliver across the Wessex region, from nature trails to educational films, in addition to continually growing and developing our session delivery: we are keen, for example, to develop sessions tailored to secondary schools and older students. Our communication and outreach work has great potential, which will in turn inform the public and our stakeholders of our work and what they can do to look after our precious chalk streams and rivers of Wessex.



Perline Bastid



Low spots identified and formalised



# Our River Our Water

Tracy Standish, Education Officer



Riverbank education session

Rivers are the lifeblood of the landscape. They are an important habitat for wildlife and an essential resource for people – we all need to use water wisely to make sure there is enough for everyone and everything.

Saving water to protect our precious environment is the central message of a new, funded, education session available to primary schools in the Southern Water supply area from September onwards.

Schools are being invited to sign up for these free outdoor education sessions under a new programme called 'Our River, Our Water'. This project is a partnership between Southern Water and a number of Rivers Trusts in the southeast of England, who are working together to spread the water saving message.

We will be delivering our inspiring and hands-on sessions on the River Dun, a tributary of the River Test northwest of Romsey. The national curriculum linked sessions will highlight that the southeast of England is water stressed. The area has less rainfall each year, yet demand for water is increasing, as the population grows and the climate continues to change.

Children will learn that the water we use in our daily

lives is taken from the local environment, which leaves less water for our vital river habitats. Through the sessions, they will learn to appreciate the value of our rivers, how to save water and engage with our river wildlife in a fun and hands-on way through outdoor activities, including river dipping. Pupils will also receive follow-up resources for the classroom and a leaflet to take home so they can share their learnings there too.



Our River  
Our Water



Wessex Rivers Trust



# In Other News...

*Dave Rumble, CEO*

## Supporter Fundraising 2022

Thanks to the generosity of supporters, the Trust has been able to raise much-needed funds for its conservation work. We are grateful to those individuals who both donated and bid for fishing days and very much hope that unforgettable days on the river were experienced!

The Trust's founding Director, Tom Davis, and his wife Julie have been on an epic adventure—a Pilgrimage by foot from Salisbury to Rome. We are delighted that Wessex Rivers Trust was chosen as one of the beneficiaries of their sponsorship campaign and we are grateful to everyone who has chosen to support us, both new friends and stalwart supporters. Further details and a link for making a donation are available via Tom and Julie's blog at [www.salisburytorome2020.com](http://www.salisburytorome2020.com).

We can also report growing interest in leaving a legacy to the Trust through gifts in wills. Please do get in touch if this is something you would like to discuss.

Last but not least, I have persuaded myself that a sponsored feat is on the cards—keep an eye on the Trust's website and social media over the next month.



## Healthy rivers for wildlife and people



## World Fish Migration Day

On May 21st 2022 we joined in with the global World Fish Migration Day celebrations by hosting a fun and educational day for the whole family, to spread the word about the importance of opening up rivers and recovering migratory fish populations

Visitors enjoyed a fish safari walk, fish flag decoration, a fish obstacle course, as well as fantastic interactive experiences which demonstrated the challenges fish face during their migratory journeys.

We had around 200 people attend the event in Maltings Park in Salisbury and received brilliant feedback from both attendees and exhibitors; we were joined by the Environment Agency, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Southampton University and Nature Metrics. We are incredibly grateful to FiveRivers who sponsored our event and hosted safari walks to show visitors the wildlife that could be seen along the River Avon.



BLEED FROM A4 (21.0\*29.7CM)



**Wessex**  
Rivers Trust

Help us protect and restore the chalk streams and rivers of Wessex. Please consider leaving a legacy for Wessex Rivers Trust in your will or becoming a supporter. Visit our website [www.wessexrt.org.uk/becomeasupporter.html](http://www.wessexrt.org.uk/becomeasupporter.html)

info@wessexrt.org.uk  
Registered Charity no: 1130991  
Registered Company no:  
06822819



Wessex Rivers Trust  
The Granary, Philips Lane,  
Stratford sub Castle, Salisbury,  
Wiltshire, SP1 3YR



**savills**

This newsletter is kindly sponsored by Savills  
1 Jewry Street, Winchester, SO23 8RZ  
William Sleeman, Director (Rural)  
01962 857426, 07967 593994  
WSleeman@savills.com

Wessex Rivers Trust are proud to  
support sustainable printing using  
Greenhouse Graphics

**greenhouse**  
Design | Print | Storage | Display

