

Welcome!



The River Avon parish resource pack

This resource pack is intended to help parishes and community organisations to care for the River Avon. It provides advice and resources on how to improve the river for wildlife and people alike.

The Avon and its tributaries are some of the most important rivers in Europe. Together they form the largest chalk river system in England which supports a unique variety and abundance of wildlife. The current look and character of the river and its flood plain has been shaped over centuries by human use and modification. This process has created conditions for rare and threatened animal and plant species such as Atlantic salmon, brown trout, lamprey, Desmoulin's whorl snail, otters, water voles and water crowfoot.

As a result much of the River Avon is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Parish councils can play an important role in caring for the river. Often parishes have land next to the river, which can be a valuable community space. In addition people in the parish will look to the council for advice and guidance on river related issues, whether they own and manage stretches of it or not. Some parish councils include the river in their parish plan, others have a river warden who acts as the voice of the river. If your council does not already have a designated person for the river, this might be a good time to appoint somebody.

This resource pack consists of a set of guidance notes based on some of the most frequently asked questions about river care. The guidance notes take you through the first stages of addressing these questions, provide ideas for making the most of your river and give practical advice on where to get help and find out more.

Two main considerations before you get started:

- ▶ Always check the necessary permissions and consents before you plan any river related work. This pack will point you in the right directions under the various sections.
- ▶ Health and safety is paramount. Make sure no one ever puts themselves at risk.

We hope this resource pack will become a valuable part of your parish plan and will soon be covered in fingerprints and splashed with river water. As a result the river and its wildlife will continue to thank you in their own way; from providing you with drinking water, food and energy, to sharing its secrets and its capturing beauty.

With best wishes from Living River



Living River

The resource pack and guidance notes were produced by the Living River project (www.livingriver.org.uk).

The Living River project is a Heritage Lottery funded project that aims to increase awareness and appreciation of the River Avon and its tributaries with a focus on how the special wildlife of the river has developed alongside the history of the area. The project was initiated through consultation with local stakeholders across the catchment as an outcome of the 2003 River Avon Conservation Strategy. This Strategy identified issues affecting the River Avon system and gaps where new action was needed. Two major projects were established as a result: the STREAM Project which was funded by the European Union and focused on river restoration (2005–2009) and the Living River project (2006–2010).

Over the course of four years Living River has worked with local communities across the Avon catchment from the river's headwaters in the Wiltshire Downs to the sea at Christchurch. It has involved people who live and work in the area in looking after the Avon's natural heritage, and has introduced many people to the river for the first time.

The project has carried out work in partnership with the local communities including:

- ▶ Restoring river habitats at sites the public can access and enjoy.
- ▶ Tackling invasive plants.
- ▶ Running activities such as open days, guided walks and arts projects to enthuse and engage people.
- ▶ Providing formal and informal education resources to help people learn about the river, its natural heritage, its provision of drinking water, and the issues facing it today.

Living River is led by Natural England – an independent public body whose purpose is to protect and improve England's natural environment and encourage people to enjoy and get involved in their surroundings. The project is supported by Salisbury City Council, Wiltshire Council, Salisbury International Arts Festival, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Hampshire County Council, Wessex Water and the Environment Agency.

