

What should we do if the river gets polluted?

The water in a healthy river is clean and usually clear. However, it can easily get polluted from many different sources.

WHY does it matter?

The clean fast flowing water of the River Avon provides an environment for plants and animals that are rare both in the UK and also in Europe. This environment is also used and enjoyed by many people for recreation, amenity and resources. So it is important for wildlife, plants and people alike that the river doesn't get polluted – and if it does, that it is reported and cleaned up quickly.

WHAT is river pollution?

Dead fish floating on the surface, discoloured water or foul smells rising from the water can all be an indication of a pollution incident. River pollution can come from many different sources, such as industry, agriculture and roads, and can be caused by:

▶ Organic material:

Such as fertilisers, sewage, food waste or farm effluent. Bacteria feed on the organic waste and large populations quickly develop using up much of the oxygen in the water. Even a small drop in oxygen levels in the water can be harmful to river animals. Organic material may also lead to large growths of algae which can cause a decline of characteristic plant species such as water crowfoot.

▶ Pesticides:

From agriculture, can either be in high concentrations that can kill fish and animals immediately or in less concentrated form that accumulates over time to become toxic.

▶ Industrial waste:

Often accidentally released into the water. This can either be in high concentrations that can kill fish and animals immediately or in less concentrated form that accumulates over time to cause problems.

▶ Oil:

If oil enters a slow-moving river it forms a rainbow-coloured film over the entire surface preventing oxygen from entering the water. Oil can also damage bird's feathers reducing their water repellence and increasing their risk of drowning.

▶ Run off:

From transport and other on-street activities such as car washing.

WHAT can be done?

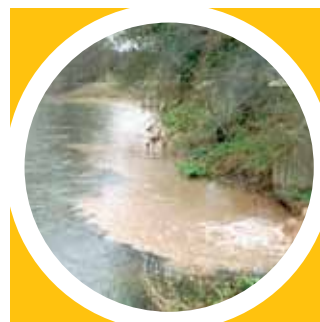
▶ Any pollution:

If you suspect there has been a pollution incident or something in the river looks unusual, call the Environment Agency 24 hour incident hotline on 0800 807060 as soon as possible. The Environment Agency is the leading organisation for coordinating a clean up and tracing the source of the pollution.

River pollution can have various causes and symptoms



Oil pollution from discarded containers



Silt from road drain polluting the river



Dead fish can be a sign of a pollution incident

- ▶ **Injured or dead animals**
Contact your nearest local wildlife rescue service (see right).
- ▶ **Litter or garden/grass cuttings:**
See sheet 5 'The river looks "messy" – should we do something?'

WHAT needs to be considered?

- ▶ Consider your health and safety first.
- ▶ Don't think that someone else will report it. Many of these issues rely on the vigilance of local people to spot changes in the river.
- ▶ Take pictures and make notes of the exact location, time and date of noticing the incident. This may help for reporting and for the further investigation and clean up.

WHO can help?

The Environment Agency is the first point of contact for pollution incidents. The other organisations, right, will be able to give advice if you have any questions or concerns. The England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative (ECSFDI) has a network of expert advisers that are on hand to help farmers tackle agricultural issues related to water pollution.

WHERE can I get more information and ideas?

- ▶ **Environment Agency:**
www.environment-agency.gov.uk;
24 hour incident hotline 0800 807060
- ▶ **England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative:**
www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/csf/default.aspx
- ▶ **Water companies:**
Wessex Water (www.wessexwater.co.uk);
Bournemouth and West Hampshire Water (www.bwhwater.co.uk);
Cholderton and District Water (www.choldertonwater.co.uk)
- ▶ **Councils:**
Wiltshire (www.wiltshire.gov.uk);
Hampshire (www.hants.gov.uk);
Dorset (www.dorsetforyou.com);
New Forest (www.newforest.gov.uk)
- ▶ **Wildlife Rescue Services:**
Wiltshire (www.wilts-wildlife-hosp.org.uk or 01980 629470); Salisbury (www.wildlife-rescue.co.uk or 01980 862291); Hampshire (www.hartwildlife.org.uk or 01256 770 438); Dorset (www.dorsetwildliferescue.co.uk or 01202 246555)
- ▶ **Wildlife Trusts:**
Wiltshire (www.wiltshirewildlife.org);
Hampshire (www.hwt.org.uk);
Dorset (www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk)

