



PICK ME UP!



LIVING RIVER

AVON

calling

WINTER 2008

THE LIVING RIVER NEWSLETTER



Supported by
The National Lottery[®]
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



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AVON

calling

PHOTO © P. HAVES



Welcome to the Living River newsletter.

The Living River project 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 will be working with local communities from the rivers' headwaters in the Wiltshire Downs to the sea at Christchurch and will involve people who live and work in the River Avon catchment in its conservation. The project, running for four years (2006–2010), will:

- Restore river habitats at sites the public can access and enjoy
- Enhance existing access to, and information about the river
- Hold public events, training and volunteer activities to help people understand their relationship with the river system and take responsibility for it.

Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and:

- Natural England
- Salisbury District Council
- Salisbury International Arts Festival
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
- Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
- Hampshire County Council
- Wessex Water
- Environment Agency.



CRANE GANG

In our flagship restoration site at Crane Street we have involved 105 people on 12 different days this year to complete a 90 metre section of river bank restoration. As well as the improvement to the area both visually and for wildlife we have had dozens of conversations with local people walking past about what is going on

and why. Without exception people have been enthusiastic and supportive of the work taking place, and in 2008 the restoration work will continue to complete the opposite bank. We will also be working in the heart of Salisbury in the Maltings, enhancing the river to provide more places for wildlife.





FLY CREATES A BUZZ

The Dragonfly sculpture standing over 6m tall in Solstice Business Park by the A303 (as featured last issue) has attracted enormous amounts of attention – and now awards too.

Created by apprentices at QinetiQ the Dragonfly was unveiled during the Salisbury International Arts Festival. The project has been hailed as a brilliant partnership between arts, business and public bodies, and was recognised by Arts & Business at their regional awards in October, where the project scooped three awards, including best project in the south-west region.

The sculpture was put together at MoD Boscombe Down over a 14 week period. During this time the apprentices worked intensively with Living River staff, to understand and appreciate some of the wildlife of the River Avon and the issues that it faces, before working with artist Charlotte Moreton to complete the creative process.



A IS FOR AVON

Through the year the Living River project worked with young people in the catchment, helping them to explore the river and find out what makes it special. Highlights include:

- Workshops at Salisbury District Council Schools Environment Day with large numbers of primary aged children who had the chance to hear the message of the project first hand with our fun watery workshop.
- Worked intensively with two schools, Sarum St Pauls (pictured above) and Broadchalke Primary (below) in the creation of two sculptures as part of Salisbury International Arts Festival.
- Held workshops with eight schools and preschools to create dragonflies for the River is Revolting as part of Salisbury International Arts Festival.
- Worked with Salisbury Cathedral Education Service on a Water Conference which was targeted at

secondary children as well as the easier to involve primary age group

- Worked with a Duke of Edinburgh group to create an otter holt in Lord's Walk in Amesbury
- Worked closely with Salisbury Library particularly on their projects aimed at teenagers such as Mini Street.
- Worked with young people permanently excluded from school based at the John Ivie Centre, Salisbury. The young people carried out some river restoration in Churchill Gardens. They worked together learning new skills and experiencing new things about the river.





LAKE-MINDED

This year has seen over 2.5km of paths created at the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust reserve, Blashford Lakes, providing new access to this part of the reserve for the first time in 40 years.

Three observation hides (one pictured below) complete the

experience and provide wonderful opportunities for watching wildlife.

The reserve is a former gravel extraction site and now provides a home to many different plants and animals as well as being an important part of the water supply network for the catchment.



WEED KILLERS

We've started our 'Nip it in the Bud' campaign by checking invasive plants records for the catchment held by the three county record centres.

This has revealed some large infestations of Himalayan balsam in the catchment, particularly on the Nadder, which will need to be addressed as a priority. Smaller patches of Japanese knotweed (pictured above) and Giant hogweed (below) will also need to be tackled.

Work has begun on building the stakeholder forum with a meeting of angling groups to discuss invasive plant issues, and a seminar for public bodies and planners. The two demonstration areas for the project have been selected which include the Nadder and Salisbury District, and the Blashford Lakes and Ringwood area.



POWER OF FRIENDS

Friends Provident is one of the biggest employers in Salisbury with over 1000 staff in several offices across the city, and we have been really happy to have their involvement with:

- Practical access projects – upgrading a well used riverside boardwalk in the Avon Valley Nature Reserve to improve accessibility
- River restoration at Crane Street

- Promoting the project and its message. We have given eight presentations to groups of staff at their café in the social 'HUB'.

The response of Friends Provident staff to the project and its aims has been extremely positive and we hope to work with the company again next year to enable even more of their staff to experience working on the river.



RESTORATION

The Avon Valley Nature Reserve 'access for all' project worked with volunteers (pictured above) to replace 60m of boardwalk in the reserve over the summer. The Salisbury Wildlife Group, Friends Provident, and British Trust for Conservation Volunteers were all involved. It is hoped the work will be completed in 2008.

On 20 August we held a training day in the 'coir-net' restoration method designed by Cain Bio-Engineering Limited. The day was a chance for our partners and others organisations who are involved in river restoration to learn about the method and have a go at installing part of it in Crane Street. The new system will provide more structural stability and is replacing

a section in the Avon that was enhanced as part of the Salisbury millennium celebrations. This work from 2000 started to come apart over time so a more stable structure is required. Thanks to Salisbury District Council, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Wessex Water, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Christchurch Borough Council, Salisbury & District Angling Club, South Wiltshire Agenda 21, Natural England and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust for coming along.

We'll shortly be working with Durrington Parish Council to make their riverside path more accessible and Ringwood Town Council to improve access and interpretation near the river at Bickerley Pocket Park in Ringwood.



RIVER MONITORING

The River Monitors programme is a voluntary scheme established in 1992 by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and provides equipment, training and support for people who want to monitor river health.

The scheme includes surveying for aquatic insects, in particular river flies, which are excellent indicators of environmental changes and river health. This year has seen a change to the scheme with a new sampling method introduced that has been developed by the Riverfly Partnership.

The method is used nationally by angling groups and training days for the River Monitor volunteers were held by the Natural History Museum this year. The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust is the first Wildlife Trust in the country to undertake training in the method.



WHAT A YEAR

Some highlights and achievements from 2007:

- 245 volunteers involved giving 60 days of time to the project
- 168 people new to volunteering involved in the project
- 290m of river bank enhanced
- 1300 people involved in education and river awareness events
- River Monitors programme re-launched with nationally recognised sampling method
- Living river website launched

...THANK YOU

Living River activities are wide ranging and varied and involve lots of people. Thank you to all we have worked with over the last year:

Amesbury Duke of Edinburgh; Amesbury Town Council; Bournemouth Council; British Trust for Conservation Volunteers; Broadchalke Primary School; Cain Bio-Engineering Limited; Charlotte Morton; Christchurch Borough Council; Council for Voluntary Service; Dorset Wildlife Trust; Durrington Parish Council; Friends Provident; Harnham Water Meadows Trust; John Ivie Centre; Laverstock & Ford Downland and Watermeadows Trust; Matthew Cutts; Olivia Keith; Pewsey Parish Council; QinetiQ (Boscombe Down); Ringwood Town Council; Salisbury & District Angling Club; Salisbury Cathedral Education Centre; Salisbury Library; Salisbury Poetry Café; Salisbury Wildlife Group; Sarum St Pauls Primary School; South Wiltshire Agenda 21 Biodiversity Group; Sparsholt College; Stapleford Parish Council; STREAM project; The Langford Trust; Tisbury Parish Council; Wessex Salmon & Rivers Trust; Wessex Chalk Streams Project; Wiltshire Fisheries Association; Wiltshire Young Carers.



MAKING AN EXHIBITION

We're very impressed with how our interactive water exhibit looks and it's been well used this year around the catchment at talks and event days.

The exhibit shows where the river starts and ends, places to visit the river and highlights how water from the river is used. A variety of questions

and challenges surrounding the aerial map provide tips on what people can do at home for the river. It has listening tubes linked to recordings of river sounds, poetry, memories and vox pops, and magnifiers displaying things collected from around the river including duck feathers, caddis fly cases and water vole droppings.



WINTER WALKS



With Winter around the corner you can still enjoy the river on one of the many walks in the Avon Valley. Blashford and Langford Lakes both have all weather paths and the reserves remain open over the winter, often with activities running from the visitor centres.

For more information see

- www.wiltshirewildlife.org (Langford Lakes)
- www.hwt.org.uk (Blashford Lakes)

Alternatively dip into the 34-mile Avon Valley Path and enjoy the spectacular winter views of the Avon Valley. Find out more at www.hants.gov.uk



STREAM LINES



In 2006 STREAM restored and monitored 1.5km of river and started

tackling conflicts between river and valley management. And in 2007 STREAM restored even more river – 2.5km of river at Woodgreen on the Avon and Chilhampton on the Wylde. In September they held their first workshop to give people a chance to see the restoration completed in 2006. The day started with a short talk at Langford Lakes Nature Reserve, followed by visits to the Upper Woodford (pictured above) and Fovant restoration sites. The 35 fishery and land managers attending generated a very useful discussion, and all enjoyed an excellent lunch!

Find out more about STREAM at www.streamlife.org.uk or email jenny.wheeldon@naturalengland.org.uk

CONTACT LIVING RIVER

If you would like to find out more or get involved with the Living River project please get in touch:

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AVON

LIVING RIVER

a network to the sea



IT'S CHALKY

and full of life

The chalk soils around the River Avon filter and purify the water, making the river a special place for wildlife



IT'S WET

and comes out of your taps every time you turn them on

If you live in the catchment, keep the rivers flowing and wildlife happy by saving water



GO SEE!

and discover for yourself

Have a picnic, take a walk, see the wildlife – you may be surprised how nearby the river is

 sites with great access

