

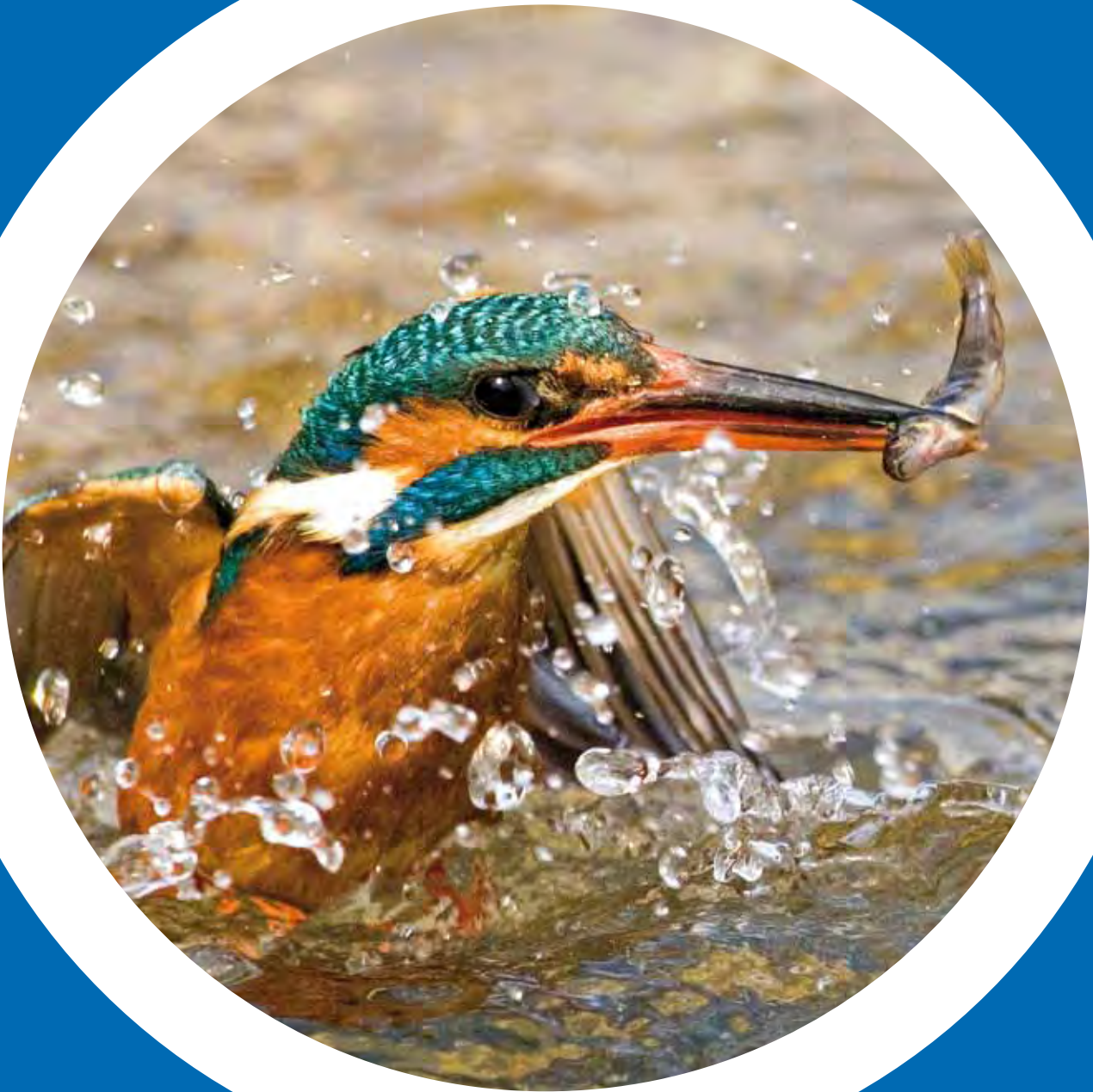


AVON

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AUTUMN 2009

THE LIVING RIVER NEWSLETTER



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





calling



PHOTO © DENNIS BRIGHT

Welcome to the Living River newsletter for autumn 2009.

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

A RIVER GUARDIAN



The Wiltshire Fishery Association (WFA) exists to safeguard and promote the interests of its members who are fishery owners, lessees or individual anglers on the Salisbury Avon and its tributaries upstream of the junction with the River Ebble.

The WFA is vital for good relations and communication between land-owners, authorities and organisations

such as Environment Agency and Natural England. The WFA works closely with these to protect the wildlife of the rivers. From time to time the WFA provides donations to protect fisheries or to drive forward research.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The WFA welcomes new members and can be contacted through richard.archer5@btopenworld.com (annual subscription just £10).



SAVING SALISBURY

As the Living River project comes towards its end (there is less than a year to go) lots of our work has now been completed. This summer saw teams of volunteers finish off restoration work in Salisbury.

We carried out a huge amount of work with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers on the flood relief channel, and we have restored over 300m of river bank putting in new wildlife friendly banks. These have already started to grow

and by this time next year you shouldn't even notice we were there – all that will be seen is a beautiful display of riverside plants.

We have also completed planting work in the new river banks behind Salisbury library. Repairs to the banks between Crane Street and Fisherton Bridge have now been completed too. Thanks again to all our volunteers and in particular to Friends Provident whose staff have done so much here.

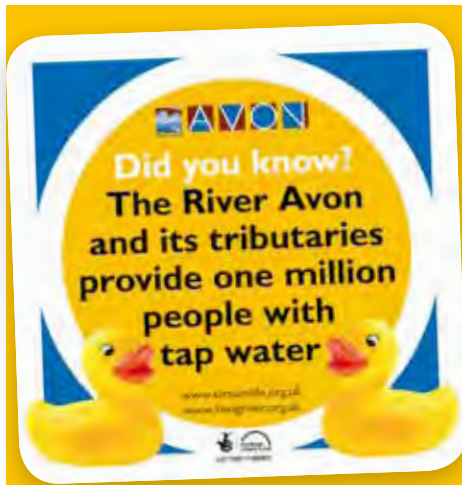
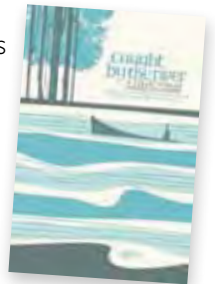
PRIZE SURVEY

The Living River Project will draw to a close in summer 2010. To find out if we were able to make a little difference, and to learn for the future, we are carrying out a short survey – and your views are very important to us and to the future of our work.

You should find a FREEPOST return postcard slipped into this copy of *Avon Calling*. We would be very grateful if you could answer the

brief question and then pop it back in the post. Alternatively you can go to www.livingriver.org.uk to complete the survey online.

The first five postcards drawn out of the hat (in January) will win a signed copy of the new book *Caught by the River*, a collection of words on water.



FACT FINDING

Have you noticed that our River Factoids have gone up in Salisbury this autumn? These are 14 interesting facts about the river, scattered all across the city. Let us know which ones you have spotted and we'll reveal the locations of the missing ones for you. Or why not tell us which of the facts took you most by surprise (for contact details see inside back page).

So far people seem to have been most surprised by the fact that the River Avon and its tributaries are the generous source of their daily tap water. It provides over 1 million people with fresh drinking water.

Factoids will soon also go on display in Ringwood, Christchurch, Pewsey and at Sandy Balls Holiday Centre near Fordingbridge.



The Wessex Chalk Streams Project (WCSP) has started work at a new River Avon project at Chisenbury, near Pewsey. The Environment Agency funded project is restoring 600m of the Avon to improve it for wildlife.

The WCSP team is putting in some new features to restore the river. This includes creating gravel beaches and

structures to move the water around in the channel, as well as digging some new large ponds to provide better places for frogs, toads and snakes, and for fish to lay their eggs.

WCSP officer Ruth Clarricoates will be putting photos of the project's progress on our blog at www.livingriver.org.uk; so watch this space!

GOOD LORD!

At Lord's Walk in Amesbury we have now finished restoring one of the side channels of the Avon by creating some riffles in the water. These are made of gravel and will speed the water up as it passes over them

– keeping it clear and making it even better for all the wildlife there. As ever, none of this would have been possible without all the efforts of volunteers including staff from nearby QinetiQ at Boscombe Down.

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS



The hated Himalayan Balsam

The Invasive Plant Stakeholder Forum was launched in May 2009. The forum will be producing a 20-year plan for managing invasive plants within the River Avon catchment. It will work with all the key people, from land-owners to councils, and provides a first point of call and source of information on invasive plants in the area. The Wessex Chalk Streams Project

also held an Invasive Species Day in May 2009. This was to keep the issue of invasive plants and other invasive species at the forefront of people's minds and to recruit volunteers for 'on the ground' invasive plant work. To find out more about this kind of volunteering or report any sightings of invasive plants go to www.wiltshirewildlife.org



POLES POSITIONED

September saw the official unveiling, by Robert Key MP, of 'The Avon' sculpture at Solstice Park. The sculpture was the result of a three year partnership between Salisbury International Arts Festival, QinetiQ, Solstice Park and Living River.

Local artist Charlotte Moreton created 'The Avon' with third year QinetiQ apprentices from MoD Boscombe Down. The aim was to provide further professional and technical development for the apprentices, in addition to their standard training programme.

The Avon sculpture represents the river as it meanders from Amesbury

through to Salisbury. 105 vertical steel poles, ranging from 90cm to 2m tall, ripple over 30m to represent the river and outline the shape of the region's most outstanding landmarks of Stonehenge, Old Sarum, MoD Boscombe Down and Salisbury Cathedral.

The poles are set into a river bed of flint inset with blue solar-powered lights echoing the river's sparkling water.

The other sculptures in this series (the Dragonfly and the Mallow, also at Solstice Park) have been shortlisted for, or won, a number of regional and national awards.



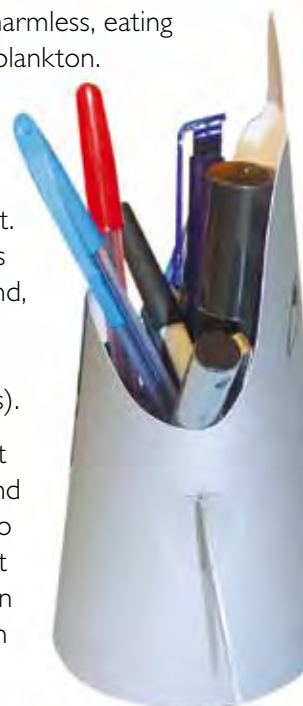
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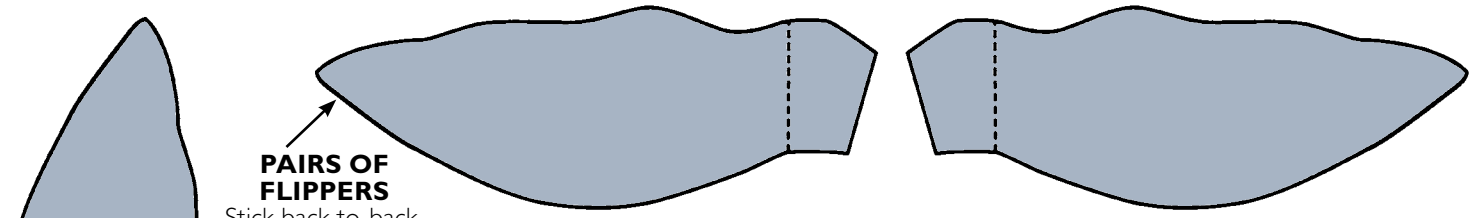
As you might know the River Avon starts near Pewsey in Wiltshire and flows 85 miles to meet the sea at Christchurch in Dorset. Like the river the sea is home to many creatures, some small and some mighty – like the basking shark.

Basking sharks are often seen off our coastline. But fear not, whilst a shark, they are generally harmless, eating only small fish and plankton.

The basking shark (right) is also harmless, but could be a helpful pen pot. All that's required is a steady cutting hand, scissors and glue (and a pen to draw on some shark eyes).

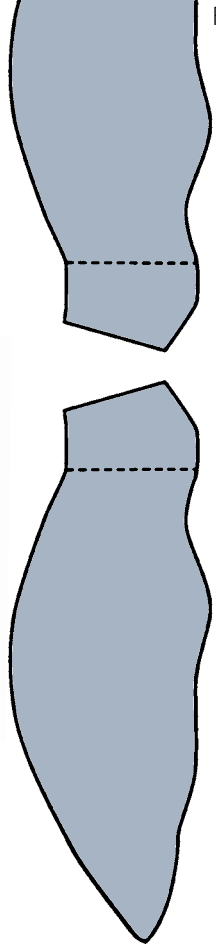
Note: it will be best to stick the body and base elements on to some grey card first (otherwise your pen pot will be a bit thin and flimsy).





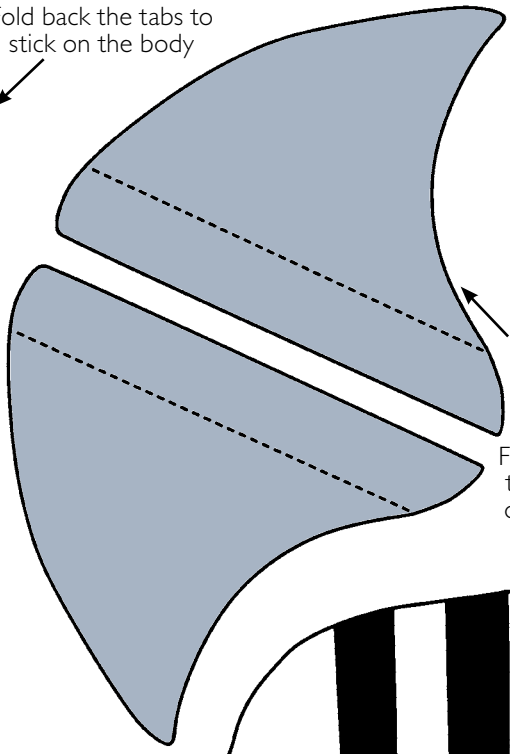
PAIRS OF FLIPPERS

Stick back-to-back.
Fold back the tabs to
stick on the body

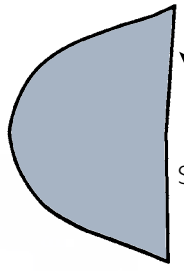


DORSAL FIN

Stick back-to-back.
Fold back the
tabs to stick
on the body

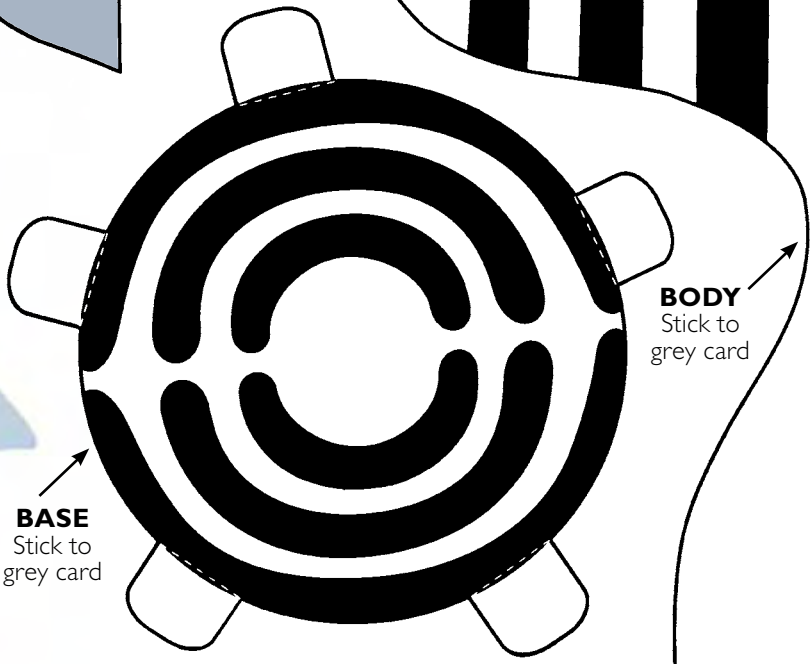
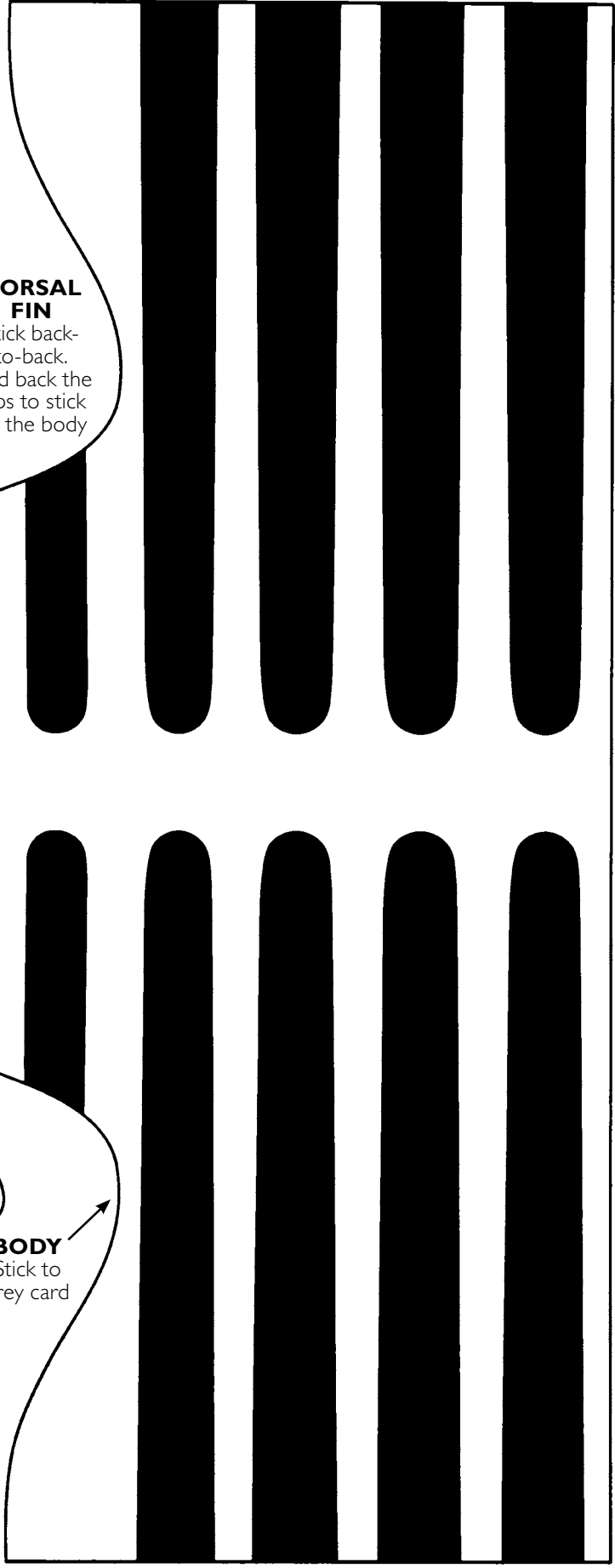


'A'



INSIDE NOSE

Stick on 'A'



BASE

Stick to
grey card

BODY

Stick to
grey card

2009 SO FAR...

Like the River Avon itself the Living River project is constantly moving. Every day in the life of the project seems to be different. Here is a flavour of what has happened throughout the year so far.



PLAYDAY

In the summer Living River's Playday attracted nearly 4,000 visitors who watched real trout in a chalk stream model, examined creepy river creatures, watched fly-fishing and crafted sharks, seahorses and portholes.



KEY ACHIEVEMENT

In September Salisbury MP, Robert Key, looked over Living River's river restoration work – whether he was discussing 'the one that got away' or the size of his majority is unknown.



PAINT IN THE PARK

At the Freshwater Festival in Moors Valley Country Park this summer Living River attracted a colourful audience.



BY THE BANK

A new dipping platform was put in place at the recreation ground in Stapleford.



BENCHMARK

The beautifully-crafted newly-installed bench at Figheldean has proved to be a popular place to pass the time.



BLASHFORD BEARS

Guided walks took place throughout the year. At the Blashford Lake walk (above) there was a hotly-contested games of 'Poohsticks'.



TILE FLAIR

Sarum St Paul's School created this enchanting river mosaic with assistance from local artist Joanna Dewfall (www.dewfallmosaic.co.uk).



GAME GIRL

Lizzie Boulter won a games console through Salisbury International Arts Festival, ABC Networking and Living River's 'Tarka Treasure Trail' competition.

AWARDED

Living River, together with its sister project STREAM, was recently short-listed for the Thiess International Riverprize. The competition recognizes and showcases excellence in river management with all the finalists showing leadership, innovation and commitment to sustainability.

We were competing against four other projects: the Yellow River in China; Lake Simcoe in Canada; the Polochic Basin in Guatemala and the Lower Owens River in the USA.

The first prize went to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority in Canada – a project that is restoring and protecting the environmental health and quality of Lake Simcoe and its watershed with



The pan-global prizewinning participants

community, municipal and other government partners.

Whilst we didn't win, being a runner up for this prestigious prize is a great recognition of the Living River and STREAM projects' achievements and a huge success story; and we dedicate our place as a finalist to all our enthusiastic volunteers, partners and supporters, without which we would have never got this far.

ON STREAM



Living River's sister project STREAM – a £1 million EC LIFE-Nature funded conservation project centred on the River Avon and the Avon Valley in Wiltshire and Hampshire – concluded in September. The project team would like to thank everyone who was involved, in particular the project partners, landowners, fishery managers and local people who all helped to make the STREAM such a success.

In total STREAM completed 7km of river restoration at Upper Woodford, Chilhampton, Woodgreen, Dinton, Amesbury and Blashford.

Landowners and fishery managers from around the UK visited the Avon to discuss the pros and cons of the STREAM river restoration techniques.

In July over 100 international river experts attended a STREAM conference, visiting its restoration sites, and picking up tips on how to restore Europe's rivers.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Information on all aspects, including guidance notes on river restoration techniques, permissions, linking river and floodplain, and community engagement will be available at www.streamlife.org.uk

STREAM has not solved all the problems affecting the River Avon system, but importantly it has built strong partnerships to carry on the work. A restoration plan covering the whole river system is already underway, and the project partners are considering what further actions may be required.



LIVING RIVER

What the team likes about the river...

• **Eva Stuetzenberger**
Project manager

“Knowing it will always be there to accompany me on my early morning walk to the office, wondering in which mood I might find it and whether this will reflect my own: sometimes calm, sometimes turbulent, sparkling or dull, peaceful or agitated.”

eva.stuetzenberger@naturalengland.org.uk

• **Martin Gilchrist**
Project officer

“You can't control it.”
martin.gilchrist@naturalengland.org.uk

• **Christopher Patrick**
Finance officer

“I like the way we can use the river as a focus for introducing people to the natural world.”

GET IN TOUCH

To find out more or get involved:

Living River, Natural England,
Salisbury Festival Office,
87 Crane Street,
Salisbury SPI 2PU

T 01722 334856

www.livingriver.org.uk

PLEASE NOTE!

Remember that the river is privately owned along much of its length and access either by foot or on the river itself is not permitted in these areas. If you want to know where you can visit the river find out on our website.

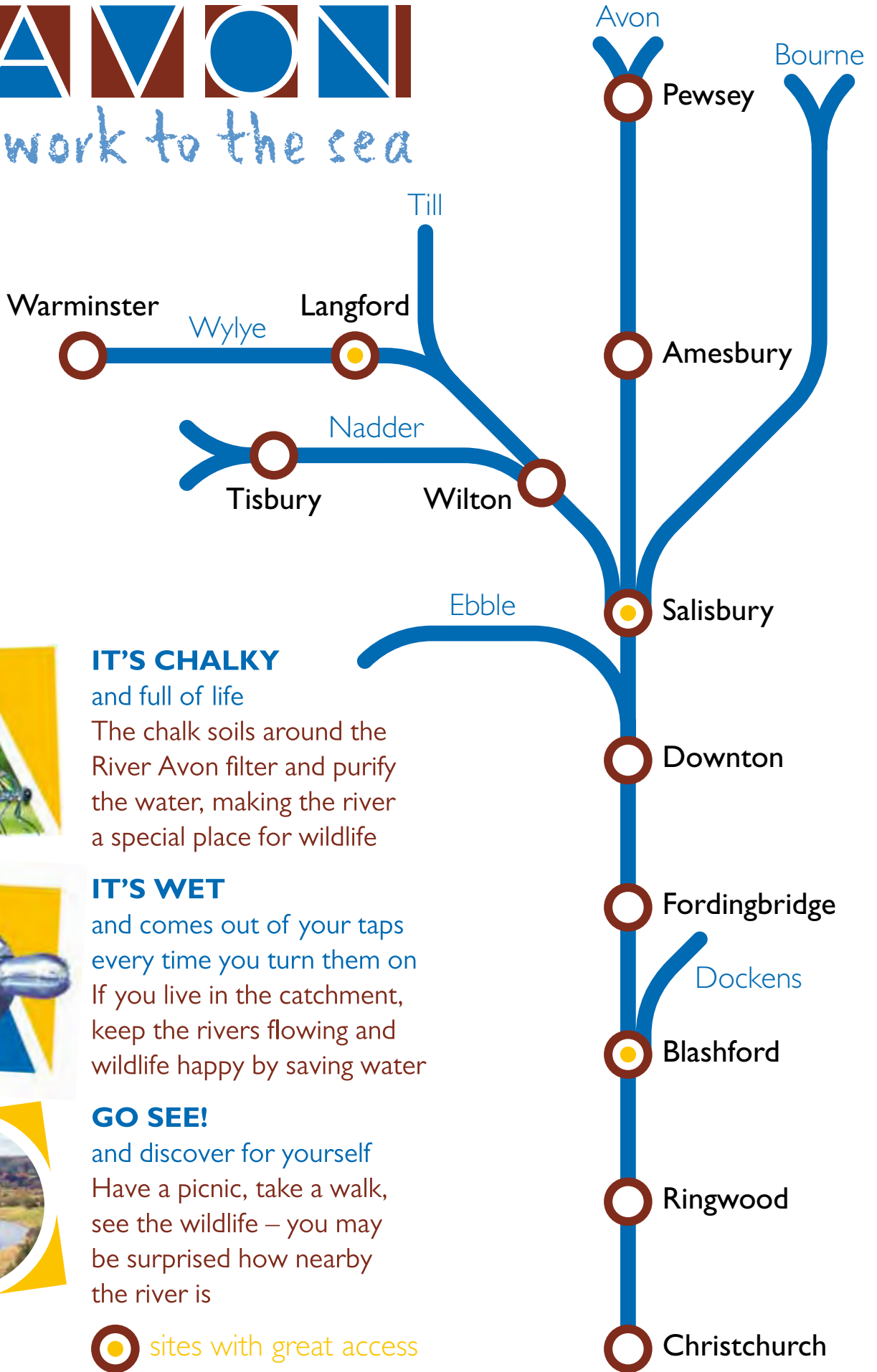
GRASS CAUGHT

Please DON'T put your garden clippings in the river where they can be harmful for wildlife and the environment.



AVON

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