

UK Rivers Network

UK Rivers Network: Weekly News Update – 12 May 2025

Welcome to our weekly newsletter, available on our website (in HTML and PDF) and (soon) by email. You can help us grow by subscribing to the feed for free: <https://www.ukrivers.net/rss.xml>. We'll have an option to subscribe by email very soon. Please send us your news, events, and anything else to: **hello at ukrivers dot net**

General news

* After a decade-long hiatus, we're continuing the slow process of rebuilding our website. Our interactive map of UK river groups (<https://www.ukrivers.net/network.html>) is (hopefully) up-to-date and we've provisionally refreshed our list of river-themed walks and cycle rides (<https://www.ukrivers.net/walkcycle.html>). Our weekly news feed is also back – you're reading it now!

River news

10 May 2025: Rivers are being drugged to death

A new study by McGill University researchers has found 8500 tonnes of antibiotics ends up in the world's 6 million km of rivers each year.

<https://academic.oup.com/pnasnexus/article/4/4/pgaf096/8113371>

10 May 2025: Fixing England's water isn't just the right thing to do – it can be the start of Labour's fightback

Clive Lewis argues that public ownership of water is central to real reform of politics.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/10/fixing-water-england-labour-fightback-clive-lewis>

9 May 2025: Why shouldn't rivers have rights?

Nature writer Robert Macfarlane has turned his attention to the plight of rivers around the world – and those closer to home – in a new book.

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/environment/article/robert-macfarlane-why-shouldnt-rivers-have-rights-companies-do-7cjd08hm6>

9 May 2025: 6000 tyres pulled from the River Ogmore

In one of the UK's biggest ever community river cleans, a frightening pile of old tyres has been pulled from the Ogmore in Brigend. Well done to Merthyr Mawr Women's Institute, Cardiff Rivers, and other groups who made it happen.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0j7pnvqj13o>

7 May 2025: Driest start to spring in 69 years across England

Are we heading for a drought? The Environment Agency is already floating the possibility. There was a meeting of the National Drought Group on 7 May and the current message is "more needed to be done to cut leakage and help customers use water more wisely".

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ea-steps-up-dry-weather-prep-after-driest-spring-start-since-1956>

3 May 2025: Fall in wild swimming as pollution takes a toll

The I Paper reports a big decline in wild swimming – 100,000 fewer people taking to the water – and fingers pollution as the culprit,

<https://inews.co.uk/news/100000-give-up-wild-swimming-polluted-rivers-3670998>

30 April 2025: Bugs Matter survey shows ongoing decline in UK flying insects

Worrying news indeed from Buglife: "The latest data shows that the number of flying insects sampled on vehicle number plates, across the UK, has fallen by a staggering 63% since 2021".

<https://www.buglife.org.uk/news/bugs-matter-survey-shows-ongoing-decline-in-uk-flying-insects/>

22 April 2025: Surge in swimmers falling ill from polluted UK waters

This story from The Independent sounds like a rollback to the bad old days of the 1990s...

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/sewage-water-pollution-hospital-treatment-b2738091.html>

24 April 2025: Polluting water bosses face up to two years in prison

The Environment Agency is talking tough about "New measures [that] will force water companies to end their disgraceful behaviour and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good". We'll see how that pans out in practice...

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/polluting-water-bosses-face-up-to-two-years-in-prison>

18 February 2025: Biodiversity in England's rivers improved as metal pollution reduced

Good news from the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH). Their new study of 1457 sites between 1989 and 2018 has found: "An improvement in freshwater biodiversity in England's rivers was linked to reductions in pollution of zinc and copper, largely due to the decline of coal burning and heavy industry".

<https://www.ceh.ac.uk/press/biodiversity-englands-rivers-improved-metal-pollution-reduced>

Watchable

In case you missed it...

BBC iPlayer: Paul Whitehouse: Our Troubled Rivers

In two episodes, Paul 1) "looks at the impact of water companies on the country's rivers" and 2) "travels around England and Wales to explore why rivers and waterways are in decline and what needs to be done to protect them".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/m001jw74/paul-whitehouse-our-troubled-rivers>

Events

17 May 2025: Surfers Against Sewage: Paddle out Protest

SAS are organizing a mass action to protest against polluted bathing waters.

<https://www.sas.org.uk/water-quality/our-water-quality-campaigns/paddleoutprotest/>

Jobs

Business & Corporate Engagement Partner, Canal and River Trust (paid)

<https://www.charityjob.co.uk/jobs/canal-river-trust/business-corporate-engagement-partner/1019492>

General Administrator, South East Rivers Trust (paid)

<https://www.charityjob.co.uk/jobs/south-east-rivers-trust/general-administrator/1017591>

Trustees: River Waveney Trust (voluntary)

<https://www.charityjob.co.uk/volunteer-jobs/river-waveney-trust/trustees/1011147>

Trustees: Tweed Foundation (voluntary)

<https://www.charityjob.co.uk/volunteer-jobs/river-waveney-trust/trustees/1011147>

Chair of Trustees: Wild Trout Trust (voluntary)

<https://www.wildtrout.org/news/wild-trout-trust-seeks-new-chair-of-trustees>

Trust Manager/Senior Biologist: Lochaber Fisheries Trust (paid)

<https://environmentjobs.co.uk/green-jobs/trust-managersenior-biologist.73454.htm>

Walk of the week

The Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail: A delightful walk (or walk) alongside the old canal running between Winchester and Southampton, easily accessible by public transport from Winchester, Shawford, Eastleigh, and Swaythling.

Here's a great printable leaflet highlighting the nature, geography, and history you'll find en-route.

<https://visit-winchester.files.svdccdn.com/production/Itchen-Navigation.pdf>

Campaign of the week

Stop the Wensum Link: Campaigners in Norfolk have been fighting the 3.9 mile, £274 million "Norwich Western Link" road across ecologically rich Wensum Valley (and the River Wensum) for quite a few years now. Currently, the road is on hold, but the campaign needs to keep up the pressure to have the scheme scrapped altogether.

<https://www.stophewensumlink.co.uk/>