

UK Rivers Network

Weekly News Update –9/2/26

February 2026

- ➔ 6 February 2026: [WildFish calls out stale data](#): WildFish has spotted the Environment Agency's (EA) upcoming 2025 river health classifications using long out-of-date biodiversity research dating back to 2016. Sam Green, senior freshwater ecologist at WildFish, said: "We can only take action to save Britain's rivers when we know what's going on under the surface, and so a lack of up-to-date science and a reliance on rollover data from previous years is deeply concerning."
- ➔ 6 February 2026: [Big Paddle Cleanup 2026: Invite your MP](#): PaddleUK is starting preparations for this year Big Paddle Cleanup, scheduled for 23 May to 7 June, where canoeists and other water users help to clean their local patch. This year, they're suggesting paddlers invite MPs along to keep up the political pressure for cleaner, safer recreational waters.
- ➔ 6 February 2026: [Measuring the Difference: How We Monitor Natural Flood Management Projects](#): Charlotte Ireland Pope from the Ribble Rivers Trust talks us through some methods of measuring the effectiveness of natural flood defences.
- ➔ 6 February 2026: [Kent waters are 10 times dirtier than the Seine](#): One of Kent's historic waterways has 10 times more bacteria than the River Seine in Paris when Olympic events were postponed because of pollution, according to Chris Foster of maritime heritage community company Raybel Charters. Here's an update on his brilliant campaign to put things right.
- ➔ 5 February 2026: [Environmental and nature-friendly farming groups warn Government risk missing river clean-up targets without action on agricultural pollution](#): Leading environmental and nature-friendly farming organisations, including River Action, Nature-Friendly Farming Network, The Rivers Trusts, Surfers Against Sewage, Wildlife and Countryside Link,

WWF-UK, Wildfarmed, RSPB and the Soil Association, have written to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs calling for urgent government action to tackle agricultural water pollution. The letter follows the launch by River Action in December 2025 of a dedicated Agricultural Water Pollution Strategy, warning that current efforts to clean up rivers risk falling short by focusing too narrowly on sewage while neglecting a major source of pollution.

- ➔ 5 February 2026: [Anger over Scottish salmon farm inspections amid 35m unexpected fish deaths](#): The Guardian reports a shocking disconnect between government claims of "a really robust regulatory regime" and the tens of millions of fish deaths officially recorded in Scottish salmon farms over the last three years.
- ➔ 5 February 2026: [Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust: Rivers4Life Photography Competition](#): From the YDRT: "From macro images of microscopic life to marvellous mammals, from waterfalls to water voles – we're launching a competition to find the best photographs of our Yorkshire Dales rivers and wildlife, to be included in our Rivers 4 Life exhibition, which will be mounted at the Dales Countryside Museum in 2026. Photos will also feature in our 2027 calendar".
- ➔ 5 February 2026: [Worldview: The beautiful river that becomes a dump every year](#): Environmental activist Dejan Furtula, from Bosnia's Eko Centar environmental group, voices frustration about debris building up in the Drina River.
- ➔ 5 February 2026: [Marine Conservation Society Policy Roundup: February 2026](#): What's happening in Whitehall? The latest MCS roundup covers the High Seas Treaty, Water Reform, PFAS... and much more.
- ➔ 4 February 2026: [Millions more for canals](#): The Canal and River Trust (CRT) has secured a £6.5 million funding boost from the government to help secure its 200-year-old, 2000-mile waterway network.
- ➔ 4 February 2026: [Kurt Fausch: A Reverence for Rivers](#): FBA has a great interview this month with river conservationist Dr Kurt Fausch, author of the recent book "A Reverence for Rivers: Imagining an Ethic for Running Waters" (2025. Oregon State University Press): "My hope is that once people become inspired to clamour for real rivers, then the hard-won science that has been developed can be brought to bear on the problems. Yet, without that public advocacy, science can be easily ignored. Both are critical for having real rivers."

- ➔ 4 February 2026: [Anti-nature rhetoric turns off voters, new poll finds](#): A new poll published today reveals that Labour's anti-nature rhetoric is damaging the confidence of voters across both the right and left. According to a poll carried out by Savanta, nearly a third of Reform voters (28%) and Green voters (28%) are less likely to vote for Labour at the next election, as a result of the Prime Minister's recent speech which described environmental regulations as "well-intentioned but fundamentally misguided".
- ➔ 3 February 2026: [Just how do you tackle a blocked river?](#): Natural Resources Wales (NRW) explain how they deal with trees, natural blockages, and debris in rivers: "These features can influence flood risk, but they can also have ecological benefits. So, when does NRW intervene; when do we expect others to act; and when might nature be allowed to take its course?"
- ➔ 3 February 2026: [Chalk-stream 4x4 boy racers cause consternation](#): BBC News reports the strange tale of an ancient byway in Hampshire, where it's perfectly legal to thrash your SUV up and down the River Meon.
- ➔ 3 February 2026: [CPRE: Three-quarters want more protection for UK countryside, new poll reveals](#): A new poll by More in Common, for countryside charity CPRE, reveals that 86% of Britons support Green Belt and three-quarters of young people want more of the UK countryside protected, though most don't trust leaders to deliver on this.
- ➔ 3 February 2026: ['Last-ditch' effort by volunteers to save River Leven footpath](#): Up in Yorkshire, volunteers have been making a last-ditch attempt to halt rapid erosion before a footpath collapses. The Tees Rivers Trust was contacted by North Yorkshire Council at the end of 2025 about halting damage being caused by the River Leven in Little Ayton.
- ➔ 3 February 2026: ["Cleaner rivers, stronger regulation, better accountability": Wales charts new course for water governance](#): The Welsh Government has published a Green Paper setting out once-in-a-generation proposals for fundamental reform of the water system in Wales, which it claims "will mean cleaner rivers, stronger regulation and better accountability". Shaping the Future of Water Governance in Wales responds to the findings of the Independent Water Commission, established jointly by the Welsh Government and UK Government and published in July 2025.

- ➔ 2 February 2026: [Worldview: These Four States Are in Denial Over a Looming Water Crisis](#): Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, The New York Times has an interesting opinion piece on how "seven Western states that rely on the Colorado River are fighting over how to keep [their] reservoirs from crashing -- an event that could spur water shortages from Denver to Las Vegas to Los Angeles" for tens of millions of people.
- ➔ 2 February 2026: [The toxic chemicals in your clothes and frying pans polluting rivers and seas](#): Lucie Heath, The I's intrepid river-champion, looks at PFAS "forever chemicals" and new plans for testing their prevalence in rivers and coastal waters.
- ➔ 2 February 2026: [How Dorset river restorations are tackling sudden floods](#): A closer look at how the Wild Woodbury project in Bere Regis is slowing and spreading rainwater to ease flooding and create new wildlife habitats.
- ➔ 2 February 2026: [Science: How can a river flow uphill?](#): Scientists have long sought an answer to the question of how the Green River, the largest tributary of the Colorado River, managed to create a 700-metre-deep canyon through Utah's 4km-high Uinta Mountains instead of simply flowing around them. Now, researchers from universities in the UK and the USA have gathered persuasive evidence that a phenomenon called "lithospheric dripping", which causes mountains to subside and rebound over millions of years, is likely to be the cause of the Green River's unusual route.
- ➔ 1 February 2026: [River Mole River Watch catches sewage overflows in the act!](#): Citizen scientists from River Mole River Watch in Surrey found nearly 800 cumulative hours of sewage was pumped into the river in just five days, from 20-24 January, pushing levels of E-coli bacteria over 10 times the legally safe limit.

January 2026

- ➔ 30 January 2026: [Worrying trends for the UK's protected freshwater species and habitats](#): The Habitats Regulations have been the bedrock of nature protection for over three decades. But in all four nations of the UK, according to the Freshwater Habitats Trust, "Most species and habitats which should be protected by the Habitats Regulations are in fact in peril. Many are reliant on clean freshwater – which across the UK is an increasingly scarce resource... In England, the upcoming Water Reform Bill is a huge opportunity to join up water management with the restoration of protected freshwater habitats and species. To make the

best of this opportunity, the Bill must focus on outcomes for nature, not just technocratic changes to water industry governance and regulation."

- ➔ 24 January 2026: [New report looks at sewage pollution in Cumbria's River Kent](#): The Clean River Kent Campaign (CRKC), in collaboration with the University of Sheffield, has published a new study looking at the nature of faecal pollution in the river, focused on samples taken above and below two wastewater treatment works (WwTW) at Staveley and Kendal.
- ➔ 24 January 2026: [WASP tears down "New Vision for Water"](#): Windrush Against Sewage Pollution offers an alternative take on the government's new Water White Paper, where it's really coming from, and why it fails to address the key issue: water is for nature and people, not an investment vehicle for private profit.
- ➔ 22 January 2026: [Harmful investments outpace nature protection by 30 to 1 - UNEP](#): For every (US) dollar the world invests in protecting nature, it spends 30 dollars destroying it. This stark imbalance is the central finding of a new UN Environment Programme (UNEP) report released today. It calls for a major shift in global financing of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and phasing out harmful investments to deliver high returns, reduce risk exposure, and enhance resilience.

Jobs and other opportunities

The closing dates for jobs are in brackets.

Jobs

- [Chief Executive Officer: Eden Rivers Trust](#) (15 March 2026)
- [Senior River Engagement Officer - Lead Inspiring Programmes for People and Rivers: Severn Rivers Trust](#) (1 March 2026)
- [Freelance Opportunities - River Learning and Engagement Officer: Severn Rivers Trust](#) (No closing date given)
- [Data and Evidence Officer: Don Catchment Rivers Trust](#) (26 February 2026)
- [Agricultural Officer: Don Catchment Rivers Trust](#) (26 February 2026)
- [Development Manager: Mersey Rivers Trust](#) (25 February 2026)
- [Marine Engagement Assistant: Community of Arran Seabed Trust](#) (15 February 2026)
- [Senior Environmental Scientist: Canal and River Trust](#) (14 February 2026)
- [Senior Ecologist: Canal and River Trust](#) (14 February 2026)

- [Catchment Partnerships Development Officer: Thames21 \(Oxfordshire\)](#) (13 February 2026)
- [Biodiversity Specialist: Southern Water](#) (13 February 2026)
- [Rivers Officer - Catchment Support: Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust](#) (10 February 2026)

Trustees and other voluntary posts

- [Trustees: Devon Wildlife Trust](#) (22 February 2026)
- [Trustee: Bristol Avon Rivers Trust](#) (15 February 2026)

River of the week



The River Leven at Little Ayton – Well done to the Tees Rivers Trust who've been working hard to tackle erosion on the Leven after recent heavy rainfall. Here's the river as it was in 2022, dramatically different from what you see in the BBC report up above. Photo © [Gordon Hatton](#) originally published on [Geograph](#) under a [Creative Commons \(CC-BY-2.0\)](#) licence.

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