

UK Rivers Network

Weekly News Update –23/3/26

March 2026

- 19 March 2026: [Law: High Court quashes river dredge disposal licence](#): The High Court has quashed a licence for disposing of material dredged from the River Tees in north-east England, which campaigner Simon Gibbon fears was responsible for seal pup deaths. You can help fund Simon's ongoing (and partly crowd-funded) legal campaign at [Crowd Justice](#).
- 19 March 2026: [Ilkley 'World Water Wedding' ceremony to celebrate River Wharfe](#): Climate activists and residents from Ilkley Extinction Rebellion (XR) are inviting people to gather with them this week for a 'World Water Wedding'. The Ilkley event will feature a short, family-friendly procession led by the Blue Water Beings, whose flowing blue costumes symbolise water and the life it sustains. The procession will be followed by a reading and a simple offering of flowers to the river. Those attending will be invited to make a personal pledge to look after the Wharfe and to share what they love about the river, while activists speak with the public about the pressures facing local waterways, especially the River Wharfe, including pollution and biodiversity loss.
- 19 March 2026: [Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust - March 2026 update!](#): Lots of progress to report from the North, including plans to record non-native species, the Earth Raise fund raiser, YDRT's take on "Dirty Business", celebrating the River Ure, and more....
- 18 March 2026: [Developer-funded ponds boosting newts and rare wildlife](#): "Developers" and their "mitigation schemes" often raise eyebrows: are they just greenwashing destruction of irreplaceable places? When it comes to ponds, new research suggests not. According to Freshwater Habitats Trust: "A pioneering conservation programme funded entirely by developers appears to be helping Great Crested Newts and other threatened species recover across England. Nine out of 10 compensation sites where new ponds are created or restored through the NatureSpace

Licensing Schemes are occupied by Great Crested Newts once ponds become established. Researchers analysed hundreds of ponds created and restored under the NatureSpace schemes. As well as being colonised by Great Crested Newts, 58% of ponds support regionally or nationally threatened wetland plants, while 91% qualify as 'Priority Ponds', a national designation for waterbodies that are important for rare or threatened species".

- 18 March 2026: [Beavers can turn streams into carbon stores: we measured how much](#): From Joshua Larsen, Associate Professor in Water Science, University of Birmingham: "Across Europe, beaver numbers are increasing after a long period of decline. As these aquatic mammals recolonise rivers, they are gradually rebuilding wetlands that once existed across many river valleys. Our new study shows that a wetland created by beaver damming can store carbon at rates up to ten times higher than an equivalent stretch of river and floodplain without beavers".
- 17 March 2026: [SAS investigation exposes illegal sewage dumping at England's 'cleanest' beaches](#): Wild swimmers and surfers won't be surprised by a new SAS report on "dry spills", which reveals that water companies discharged sewage illegally for more than 204,000 hours during dry weather in 2025. Even more alarming, 142 bathing waters experienced 8,477 hours of illegal dry spills, and 80% of those locations are classified as "good" or "excellent" bathing waters.
- 17 March 2026: [Law: Surfers Against Sewage vs the government](#): More from SAS in the shape of a new legal challenge of how flawed "feasibility tests" are used to refuse bathing water designations. SAS say: "We believe [the government] have legally overstepped and are endangering water users across the UK by prioritising profit over our health".
- 17 March 2026: [Pioneering saltmarsh restoration project launches at RSPB reserve](#): RSPB Stour Estuary on the Suffolk/Essex border, is working closely with the Harwich Haven Authority (HHA) to help restore saltmarsh habitat on the nature reserve. The saltmarsh has succumbed to erosion, meaning this rare and special habitat which normally attracts a multitude of threatened species including Black-tailed Godwits, Redshank and Curlew, is gradually disappearing.
- 17 March 2026: [Bath creates new "linear river park"](#): Bath and North East Somerset Council has completed the first phase of works on the ambitious Bath River Line project, marking a significant milestone in

creating a 10km linear park that connects Bath's riverside spaces, improves biodiversity and enhances active travel routes across the city.

- 17 March 2026: [Citizen scientists inspire new national river monitoring tool](#): Pollution in England's rivers has become a growing concern in recent years, prompting volunteers across the country to begin testing waterways themselves. In Suffolk, citizen scientists monitoring the River Deben regularly uncover evidence of sewage contamination. East Anglia Bylines takes a look at their work... and its wider implications.
- 17 March 2026: [Clean-river champion John Mildmay-White completes 10-day run!](#): Congratulations once more to John for finishing his 380 mile (611km) running challenge from the River Erme in Devon to central London to highlight concerns about pollution in his local waterway. The 40-year-old landowner was inspired to complete the challenge after the Erme Estuary's popular swimming beach failed official bathing water tests.
- 17 March 2026: [Roe Valley angler expresses fears that local rivers are being 'poisoned'](#): A lifelong angler from County Derry has expressed fears that local rivers are being 'poisoned' by illegal discharges.
- 17 March 2026: [Update on conservation breeding of the freshwater pearl mussel population in the River Irton](#): In 2018, a collaborative project commenced between Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the Freshwater Habitats Trust (FHT) and the Freshwater Biological Association to begin conservation breeding of the Afon Irton freshwater pearl mussel population. The FBA has just published this update on the project.
- 17 March 2026: [Law: River Action: High Court rules on lawfulness of Ofwat's approach to customers not paying twice](#): From River Action: "The High Court has handed down its decision on the lawfulness of Ofwat's approach to its policy that water company customers should 'not pay twice' for sewer overflow upgrades to achieve environmental compliance and reduce pollution of our waterways. Although River Action's claim was dismissed, the case has resulted in important clarity and should result in a better regulatory approach".
- 16 March 2026: [WWT to create bigger, more connected wetlands in Wales thanks to funding boost](#): Made possible by funding from the Nature Networks Programme, WWT will carry out extensive wetland habitat creation and restoration works at WWT Llanelli. The wetland charity's only Welsh site, as well as the surrounding Tir Morfa coastline and wider Burry

Inlet, will benefit from new and restored wetland habitats that will provide shelter for internationally important wintering birds and bring local people closer to nature.

- 16 March 2026: [Heritage Fund support Wye and Usk Ranunculus surveying](#): The Heritage Lottery has awarded £174,633 to Friends of the River Wye, working with Save the River Usk, to investigate the decline of Water Crowfoot in the River Wye and the River Usk as a three year development project. Large swathes of the River Wye and River Usk used to be covered in white flowers every summer, yet over the last decade, the water crowfoot which carpeted the rivers has largely disappeared.
- 16 March 2026: [Riverside land to be maintained as a wildlife haven](#): A council has bought almost eight acres of land so it can be preserved as a riverside haven for nature and wildlife. Mid Suffolk District Council has taken on the land in Stowmarket between Takers Lane and the River Rat adjoining Pikes Meadow and near the A14.
- 16 March 2026: [Is it safe to swim in Windermere?](#): Save Windermere, leading the charge against pollution of the lake, share stories from two people who have suffered serious illness after entering the water.
- 16 March 2026: [Carrot cake and chalk streams at the Cam Valley Forum](#): This year's Cam Valley Forum AGM reviewed the group's progress over the last 25 years, celebrated with a vegan carrot cake, and enjoyed an informative lecture from Alison Matthews, Chalk Stream Programme manager at The Rivers Trust. You'll find a link to the slides of her presentation, "Finding a way to protect and restore our Chalk Streams", in the minutes here.
- 14 March 2026: [Law: South West Water pleads guilty to six years of pollutions](#): South West Water (SWW) has pleaded guilty to a catalogue of pollution-related charges spanning six years across Devon and Cornwall. Of the charges, 17 are for illegal discharge activities including sewage discharges and one is for failing to take reasonable remedial measures following failure at a sewage pumping station. The offences took place between January 2015 and July 2021 in five locations: Bodmin, Harlyn, Playing Place, Polperro and Plymouth. Three of the offences that took place occurred across an August Bank Holiday weekend.
- 14 March 2026: [Norfolk Rivers Trust celebrates the International Day of Action for Rivers](#): To mark the occasion, NRT is looking back at one of their

favourite recent success stories: the wiggle-tastic restoration of the River Stiffkey at Fulmodeston with some majestic new meanders!

- 13 March 2026: [Law: Government grants nature a partial reprieve... but risks to wildlife remain](#): From The Wildlife Trusts: "Today, the Government has published its 'plan to overhaul nuclear system will speed up building, strengthen national and energy security, and cut costs'. There have been signs for some months that the Government would use the opportunity to deregulate and replace some of the laws that protect nature. The Government has pulled back, for now, from a wholesale legal weakening of the Habitats Regulations which protect nature sites and will not now remove the legal duty that helps National Park and National Landscape authorities to protect landscapes; both would have had devastating consequences for what remains of the natural world."
- 11 March 2026: [Law: WildFish loses at Court of Appeal but wins fight for protection of Great Ouse](#): The Court of Appeal has just given its judgment in the case of WildFish v Buckinghamshire, Wilson Homes and Anglian Water, standing by the ruling of the High Court overall, but clarifying that the sewage capacity plans for a development in Buckinghamshire must be sorted out before the development goes ahead. The case comes at the end of a year-long struggle.
- 11 March 2026: ["I'm a flooding expert: these are the biggest mistakes people make when buying a property"](#): When it comes to buying a new home, you may be choosing the location based on amenities, safety, structural integrity and financial viability. But how seriously have you thought about the flood risk? Over 3 million homes are at risk of flooding from surface water or blocked drains and overflowing sewers; the I Paper explains how to find out if you're likely to be one of them.
- 11 March 2026: [Grantham RiverCare's David Martin named a Leading Litter Hero!](#): Keep Britain Tidy has just named David Martin one of the winners of its Spring Clean awards. Grantham RiverCare (co-lead by David Martin and Ian Simmonds) has a vibrant team of over 65 volunteers who have tirelessly prevented countless pollutants from entering their precious local waterways. Keep Britain Tidy say: "Their two decades of dedication, their immediate response to the January floods, and their ongoing commitment to environmental protection and community resilience make them true champions of the River Witham and the entire Grantham community".

Jobs and other opportunities

The closing dates for jobs are in brackets.

Jobs

- [River Restoration Project Officer: Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust](#) (12 April 2026)
- [Sound Rivers Project Manager: Westcountry Rivers Trust](#) (10 April 2026)
- [Lead Communicator: Friends of the River Wye](#) (10 April 2026)
- [Ranunculus Project Lead - Wye and Usk: Friends of the River Wye](#) (10 April 2026)
- [Citizen Science Volunteer Coordinator and Science Communicator: Friends of the River Wye](#) (10 April 2026)
- [Farming Learning and Engagement Officer: West Cumbria Rivers Trust](#) (8 April 2026)
- [Wilder Rivers Officer: Essex Wildlife Trust](#) (7 April 2026)
- [Warden - Norfolk Broads Reserves \(Wet Grasslands and Woodlands\): RSPB](#) (5 April 2026)
- [Researcher, Wetland BioScience: WWT](#) (5 April 2026)
- [Farm Advisor: Boyne Rivers Trust](#) (1 April 2026)
- [Seagrass Project Officer: Wester Ross Fisheries Trust](#) (31 March 2026)
- [All-Ireland Finance Manager: The Rivers Trust](#) (30 March 2026)
- [Catchment Restoration Officers: Severn Rivers Trust](#) (27 March 2026)
- [Catchment Adviser: South East Water](#) (27 March 2026)
- [River Catchment Project Officer: ARK](#) (26 March 2026)
- [Project Officer - Surrey and South London: Waterlife Recovery Trust](#) (Closing date not given)
- [Campaigns Manager: Surfers Against Sewage](#) (22 March 2026)
- [Project Officer - EU LIFE R4Ever Kent: South Cumbria Rivers Trust](#) (18 March 2026)
- [Farm Advisor: South Cumbria Rivers Trust](#) (18 March 2026)

Trustees and other voluntary posts

- [Trustee \(accounting skills\): Aire Rivers Trust](#) (N/A)
- [Education Officer: Wessex Rivers Trust](#) (N/A)
- [Learning and Engagement Volunteer: West Cumbria Rivers Trust](#) (N/A)
- [Trustee Director: The Open Spaces Society](#) (17 May 2026)
- [Paddle England Assembly \(12 members\)](#) (20 April 2026)

River of the week



The River Avon, Bath: The Bath River Line project is creating a 10km linear park following the River Avon through the heart of Bath. The project has three phases and phase one (2025-2026) will cover the stretch from Newbridge to Bath Quays. Photo © [Richard Humphrey](#) originally published on [Geograph](#) under a [Creative Commons \(CC-BY-2.0\)](#) licence.

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