

UK Rivers Network

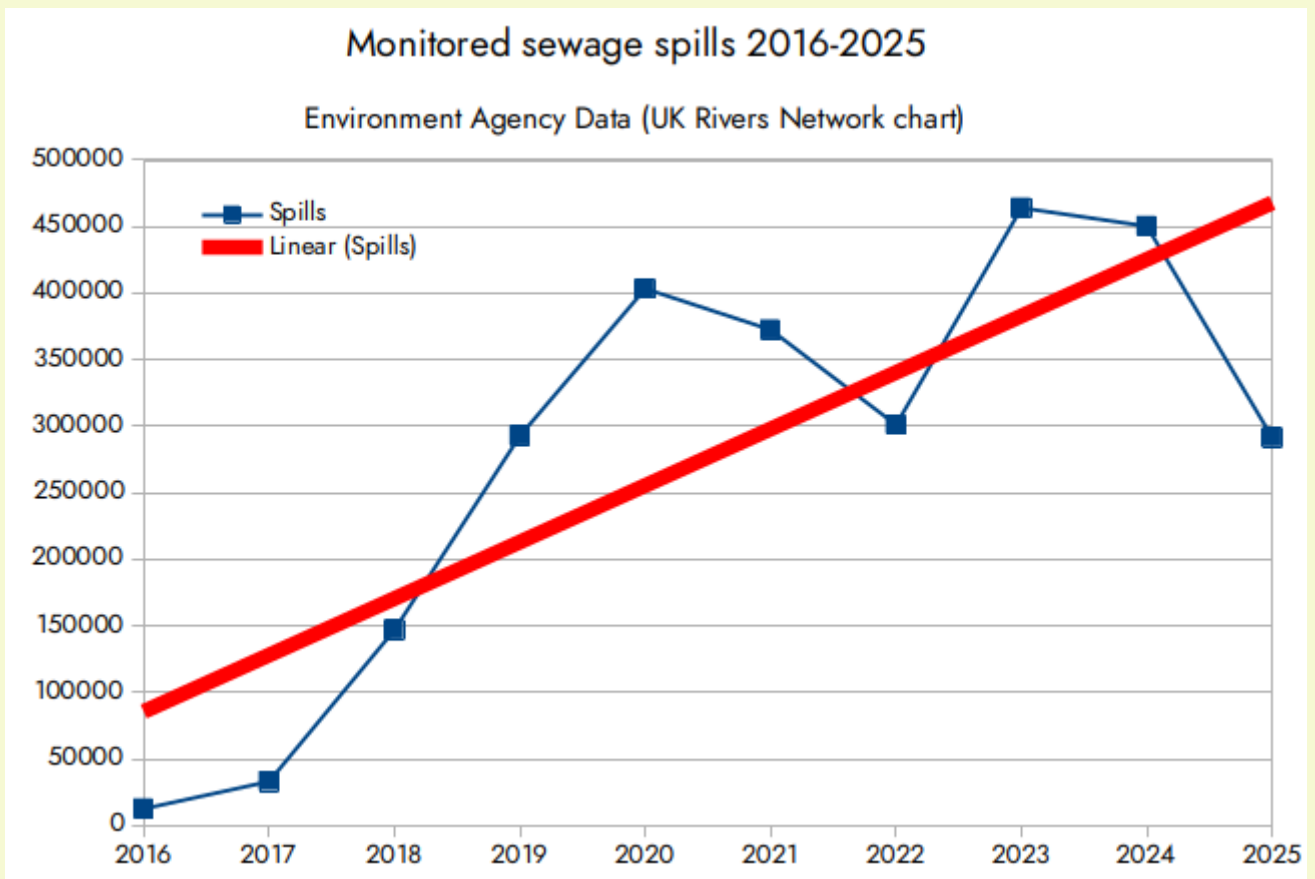
Weekly News Update –30/3/26

March 2026

28 March 2026: [Get ready for The Big River Watch](#): Are you ready for The Rivers Trust's next Big River Watch, which happens in a month's time between 24th and 30th April 2026? You don't need to be part of a river group to take part: all you need is 15 minutes to watch your local river and fill in a simple questionnaire. You can complete the Big River Watch at your favourite local spot, or get to know somewhere new. The survey will ask you about what you see, from wildlife and plants to any signs of pollution. Not sure what you're looking at? The in-app pollution and wildlife guides can help you make an identification.

- 26 March 2026: [Green Party: Bridlington water investment hasn't solved pollution](#): The East Riding's Green Party has called for greater detail over Yorkshire Water's £100m Bridlington investment plan: despite the Environment Agency recently upgrading the South Beach's bathing water quality from Poor to Sufficient, the number of pollution alerts has increased. The area saw 80 in 2024, which increased to 192 in 2025, 184 of which were sewage overflow activations by Yorkshire Water.
- 27 March 2026: [What could Derry's riverfront do with £45 million?](#): BBC News asks residents of Derry/Londonderry what could be done to improve the riverfront along the River Foyle.
- 26 March 2026: [Blue closes in on West Coast in her walk to save rivers, seas and wildlife](#): Another long-distance, awareness-raising marathon! Blue is a 51-year-old woman from Selby, North Yorkshire walking solo around the entire geographical UK coastline in aid of two marine conservation charities. So far she has walked 4,233.87 miles in 247 days completing all the north, east and south coasts of mainland Great Britain and many islands all on her annual leave from work!

- 26 March 2026: [Environment Agency still spinning good news from bad river quality](#): We've been highlighting the Environment Agency's disturbing tendency to put a positive spin on appalling water quality for over 25 years now, but they never seem to get the message. This week's EA headline: "Fewer and shorter storm overflow spills in 2025, new monitoring data shows" went on to explain how "New data published today by the Environment Agency shows a significant reduction in both the number and duration of storm overflow spills across England compared to 2024". Somewhat further down, they did eventually concede that most of the improvement was due to 2025's drought, not any positive change in infrastructure, policy, or process. If you plot a graph of sewage discharges over the last decade, it's pretty clear where the alarming trend (red line) is heading. The Guardian and The I Paper (see below) wisely reported exactly the same story with much more realistic headlines.



- 26 March 2026: [Sewage released into England's rivers and seas nearly 300,000 times last year](#): From The Guardian's Sandra Laville, a very different take on the EA's data: "Raw sewage was discharged into rivers and seas almost 300,000 times last year after the driest spring for more than 100 years and the sunniest and warmest year on record in England."
- 26 March 2026: [The Cornish beach swimming in sewage even on the driest days](#): From The I, Lucie Heath offers a similar take on the EA's data: "The number of sewage spills in England dropped by 35 per cent in 2025 to the lowest number ever recorded, new official data has shown. The sharp drop in pollution is largely due to the exceptionally dry weather last year, which followed a particularly wet 2024, The worst affected bathing location for dry day spills was Portreath in Cornwall, where sewage was emitted for 661 hours during dry weather. This is despite the fact Portreath has an "excellent" rating for bathing quality."
- 26 March 2026: [\[£££\]: "Our filthy rivers need a saviour" - The Times, 26 March 1926](#): The Times carries a timely reminder of how slowly things change by reprinting a letter from Bishop James Welldon, Dean of Durham Cathedral, first published exactly a century ago, highlighting "the ever extending contamination of English rivers", noting that "most of our rivers were being turned into sewers". [Paywalled]
- 26 March 2026: [Campaigner who refused to pay Southern Water bill over sewage discharges ordered to pay by court](#): An environmental campaigner ordered to pay unpaid Southern Water wastewater bills by a court after a four-year boycott, has said the case "will not stop us continuing to highlight the basic injustice" for water customers. Julie Wassmer has withheld paying for the sewage portion of her water bill since 2021, after the company was handed a record £90 million fine for 6,971 unpermitted sewage discharges.
- 26 March 2026: [Sewage overflows may pose greater threat to England's rivers than previously thought](#): Combined sewer overflows (CSOs) could be contributing far more pollution to England's rivers than previously recognised, according to new research involving scientists from Imperial College London and Brunel University London. The research provides the first national assessment of the pollution loads released during sewage overflow events, and the risks they pose to England's waterbodies.
- 26 March 2026: [Bristol Pavement art highlights plight of local rivers](#): Shoegazers around Bristol will be rewarded with views of colourful

artworks depicting local aquatic life, but only for the next fortnight. A campaign to improve river health has drawn on the talents of visual artists to beautify its message. Four local artists have created pavement murals depicting Bristol river wildlife to help encourage people to look after neighbourhood waterways, under the banner 'only rain down the drain'.

- 26 March 2026: [Salmon, eels and sturgeon heading towards extinction as migratory fish populations collapse](#): A new report on migratory freshwater fishes reveals that their population has dropped by more than 80% since 1970. This decline not only puts biodiversity at risk, but the people whose lives depend on them too.
- 26 March 2026: [Bugs Matter 2026: Popular UK Insect Survey crosses the Channel](#): The UK's popular insect citizen science survey is back – bigger, earlier and bolder than ever. Bugs Matter the bug-splat-counting survey, organised by Buglife and Kent Wildlife Trust, launches on Wednesday 1 April and runs through to Wednesday 30 September. That's a full month earlier than previous years, timed to coincide with Citizen Science Month and to capture precious early-season data, and the survey also extends to France this year.
- 25 March 2026: [Reconnecting Rivers for Wild Fish: Why Removing Barriers Is Essential](#): Janina Gray of WildFish writes: "River fragmentation in the UK is extensive. Only 1% of rivers are completely free of artificial barriers, and just 3.3% of the river network allows unrestricted movement of aquatic species. Across Great Britain, there are an estimated 0.75 barriers per kilometre of river, creating a heavily disrupted landscape for wildlife. We believe restoring river connectivity – primarily by removing redundant barriers – is one of the most effective and cost-efficient actions we can take to rebuild healthy freshwater ecosystems".
- 25 March 2026: [Community efforts to tackle nature's recovery get triple funding boost](#): The Wildlife Trusts are encouraging community groups to check out the Green Community Grants Programme. The grants award up to £25,000 to small charities and not-for-profit groups and will now be available at greater scale than ever before with three times the amount of community initiatives to be funded in 2026.
- 24 March 2026: [Fisherman launches High Court challenge against DAERA](#): From River Action: "Eel fisherman Mr Declan Conlon, whose family has fished Lough Neagh for generations, has brought a judicial

review against the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland. The case argues that DAERA continues to rely on inadequate plans and unenforced pollution regimes despite clear evidence of ecological collapse over several years. It raises serious questions about how agricultural pollution is addressed by DAERA."

- 24 March 2026: [Pensioners sue Environment Agency for £4.5m over damage to historic royal riverside home](#): A retired couple are suing the Environment Agency for £4.5m over severe damp issues in their historic riverside home, a Tudor royal residence in Sandwich, Kent, from which King Henry VIII once surveyed his fleet before embarking for France.
- 24 March 2026: [AI-powered smart signs have come to Worthing's bathing waters](#): Smart signs which answer questions about bathing waters are now at Goring Beach, Worthing and Worthing Beach House. The signs look like simple QR codes to be scanned with a mobile phone. But behind them is an artificial intelligence (AI) ready to share its knowledge with visitors about bathing water quality and any live issues.
- 24 March 2026: [Yorkshire Rivers to Reef campaign aims to cut pollution at source](#): A four-year campaign has been launched to protect Yorkshire's rivers, estuaries and coastal reefs. Rivers to Reef, launched in Keighley by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, is targeted at rivers from their source areas in the hills and moorlands down to the North Sea. The primary focus is on the rivers Aire in West Yorkshire and Derwent in North Yorkshire with the Aire Rivers Trust, the Yorkshire Derwent Catchment Partnership and Yorkshire Water all involved.
- 24 March 2026: [Oxfordshire treatment site is top of the poops](#): Campaigners from Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (Wasp) found that South Moreton sewage treatment works, near Wallingford, carried out 287 "illegal spills" between 2021 and 2025.
- 23 March 2026: [Labour doesn't care about protecting countryside, voters say](#): Britain's nature and countryside is the biggest source of national pride behind the NHS, but only 15 per cent of people think the Government is doing a good job of protecting it, according to research by the National Trust.
- 23 March 2026: [SAS: Return to offender is back!](#): Surfers Against Sewage have dusted off their popular "Return to offender" campaign, which

encourages people to send beach trash packaging back to the companies who make it.

- 22 March 2026: [Up Sewage Creek! River campaigners on the march over the Severn](#): A protest has been held over the condition of the River Severn, which campaigners say needs protecting. Up Sewage Creek marched through Shrewsbury on Sunday, and called for the water industry to be put back into public ownership. About 100 people gathered on the river bank with banners and placards angry at sewage spills and pollution in the river, which flows through Shropshire and Worcestershire in the West Midlands.
- 22 March 2026: [Eating fish at dirty river is idiotic, says charity](#): An environmental charity has warned people it would be idiotic to eat fish caught in a "very dirty" part of the River Great Ouse. Recent testing had uncovered "horrendous" levels of pollution in the waterway, according to the Bedfordshire Great Ouse Valley Environmental Trust.
- 20 March 2026: [If rivers had legal rights, sewage scandals would be much harder to ignore](#): Philippe Cullet, Professor of International and Environmental Law, University of London, explains how river rights might work: "A growing movement of campaigners and researchers say rivers should be granted their own rights, independent of their value to humans. In this framework, rivers are not just resources to be used, but entities with the legal right to flow and to remain unpolluted. Crucially, those rights could be enforced in court by designated human guardians. Advocates of these 'rights of nature' say it could give rivers a powerful new way to challenge pollution."

Jobs and other opportunities

The closing dates for jobs are in brackets.

Jobs

- [Agriculture Advisor: Wyre Rivers Trust](#) (22 April 2026)
- [Project Officer \(Water Stewardship: The Rivers Trust \(Ireland\)\)](#) (17 April 2026)
- [Citizen Science and Community Engagement Officer: Bristol Avon Rivers Trust \(BART\)](#) (16 April 2026)
- [Catchment Neutrality and Restoration Officer: Pembrokeshire County Council](#) (15 April 2026)
- [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)

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)
- [Trustee: Legal Expertise \(Bristol Avon Rivers Trust\)](#) (30 April 2026)
- [Paddle England Assembly \(12 members\)](#) (20 April 2026)

River of the week



The River Severn near Shrewsbury: Not quite as idyllic as it looks, unfortunately. *"It's about trying to make sure we've got clean water for future generations and wildlife because the river's in a toxic state. It's shocking,"* Claire Kirby from Up Sewage Creek said, at this week's well-attended River Severn protest. Photo © [TCEXplorer](#) originally published on [Geograph](#) under a [Creative Commons \(CC-BY-2.0\)](#) licence.

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