

UK Rivers Network

Weekly News Update –6/4/26

April 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.
- 3 April 2026: [Science: New maths shows how chaos shapes meandering rivers](#): Finally, mathematicians have turned their attention to meanders! A new analysis from New York University paints river evolution as an essentially unpredictable (mathematically chaotic) process: "Rivers are rarely the calm, orderly streams we imagine on maps. Over time, their winding paths - called meanders - shift, bend, and occasionally snap off in sudden 'cutoff' events that shorten loops and reshape the landscape. While scientists have long suspected that such cutoffs inject a dose of unpredictability into river evolution, a new study demonstrates that these abrupt events are, by themselves, enough to produce chaos in river channels".
- 3 April 2026: [The Underwater Awakening: How Spring Ignites our Freshwaters](#): We don't necessarily think of rivers coming alive in spring but, of course, they do! In this fascinating long-read, Wild Fish's Luis Moliner Cachazo looks at what's happening beneath the water surface.
- 3 April 2026: [Campaign to save heathland from mineral extraction](#): Conservationists are hoping to save 110 acres of heathland at the centre of

a nature reserve that has been put up for sale at Upton Heath, near Poole, Dorset. Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT) says the plot, which used to be part of its Upton Heath Nature Reserve, is also a protected Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation, and plans to launch a fundraising campaign to buy the site.

- 3 April 2026: [National Waterways Museum celebrates 50 years!](#): A flotilla of historical narrowboats and barges has arrived in Cheshire as part of celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the National Waterways Museum in Ellesmere Port, run by the Canal and River Trust. About 40 vessels from across the UK travelled along the Shropshire Union Canal for the four-day event at the museum, which is home to the nation's largest collection of historical boats.
- 3 April 2026: [Swimmable Cities... now in 37 countries!](#): The grassroots campaign to make cities swimmable is now a global phenomenon, comprising 236 diverse organisations across 115 cities and towns in 37 countries.
- 3 April 2026: [Sir James Bevan: the man who wrecked our rivers?](#): The I's Simon Kelner takes a lengthy at Sir James Bevan in its "people who broke Britain" series. Kelner writes: "Bevan, one-time head of the Environment Agency, is, in many eyes, seen as emblematic of the failures in oversight of privatised water companies, the personification of a system that has failed us all", "effectively, a friend to the water companies rather than a law enforcer" in "a disaster that outstrips even the Post Office Horizon scandal" and "a sordid story that shames our nation".
- 3 April 2026: [Councillors back River Cleddau public petition](#): A few weeks ago, we reported on a stormingly successful public petition to save Pembrokeshire's River Cleddau, which attracted more than 2,200 signatures and called on "Pembrokeshire County Council to create and enact a Clean Rivers Policy to restore the Cleddau to good health after decades of neglect and degradation". Happily, local councillors have got the message and are now getting behind the campaign.
- 2 April 2026: [Sellafield shrugs off river challenge](#): A judge has thrown out a legal challenge against a plan to extract water at the UK's largest nuclear site. The judicial review, mounted by [Leigh Day solicitors and Campaigners for Lakes Against Nuclear Dump \(LAND\)](#), argued that the nuclear plant's plans had not been properly assessed and could contaminate the rivers Calder and Ehen.

- 2 April 2026: [Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust to tackle heavy metal pollution in the Rivers Nidd and Swale](#): YDRT has launched twin projects to tackle heavy metal pollution in water in the Nidd and Swale caused by Nidderdale's industrial heritage.
- 1 April 2026: [Funding for Welsh rivers group to tackle climate emergency](#): Members of Welsh river group Ffrindiau Afonydd Llanidloes Rivers' Friends have received more than £2,000 in funding to purchase citizen-science water testing kits. The kits will provide the ability for common field tests, such as temperature, conductivity, pH levels, alkalinity, hardness, nitrates, and phosphates.
- 1 April 2026: [Sewage discharges in England: what the latest data really show](#): Here's a welcome follow-up from Surfers Against Sewage to the "fake news" about falling sewage discharges last week: "In 2025, water companies discharged raw sewage into England's rivers and seas nearly 300,000 times. While that figure is lower than the previous year, it's not evidence of a system improving, it's a reflection of unusually dry weather. And for water users, the reality hasn't changed: pollution persists and people are still getting sick... 2026 is already on track to be worse... This is not a system recovering".
- 1 April 2026: [RSPB: Good news as DEFRA commits to targeting nature-friendly farming funding](#): There's mixed messaging from the NGOs on farming reforms at the moment. In this new piece, RSPB welcomes "the positive impact this could have for nature on farmland". But drilling down into some of the details, there remain concerns, as Buglife, The Wildlife Trusts, and others have pointed out (see below).
- 1 April 2026: [New briefing to help farmers become beaver-ready](#): New guidance published today by The Wildlife Trusts and Beaver Trust sets out the practical support and funding needed to welcome beavers back across England while ensuring both farmers and beavers can thrive. The charities are urging the UK Government to provide long-term support and warn that future cuts to nature-friendly farming grants could undermine the successful return of this native species.
- 1 April 2026: [WWT celebrates the end of toxic lead ammunition](#): After a decades-long campaign by WWT and others, legislation banning poisonous lead ammunition in outdoor shooting has finally been enacted, throwing a lifeline to the country's wildlife. Sarah Fowler, Chief Executive at WWT, the wetland charity, said: "Today has been decades in

the making. With lead ammunition claiming the lives of up to 100,000 waterbirds every year in the UK, this is a major and historic win for wildlife and the habitats they depend on. This is truly a moment worth celebrating".

March 2026

- 31 March 2026: [Greenpeace: More than 1.3 million tonnes of fish taken from UK's marine protected areas since 2020](#): Between 2020 and 2024, 1.347 million tonnes of fish were caught inside the UK's Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) according to new analysis by Greenpeace of official data. That's enough fish to fill around 500 Olympic swimming pools. UK MPAs are designated to protect marine wildlife and fragile ocean habitats but, as the analysis of European fisheries landings data proves, these designations are currently nothing more than lines on a map.
- 31 March 2026: [Storm made river near untreatable, says water boss](#): The boss of the water company responsible for thousands of homes losing water in January has said water from one river had been "almost untreatable" at the time. South East Water executives appeared in front of Wealden councillors this week to answer questions about the widespread supply failures in Kent and Sussex.
- 31 March 2026: [Species-rich grassland action removal? No thanks!](#): A number of organisations, including Buglife, have joined together to share a statement with the Food Security Minister and Defra Director Mike Rowe calling on the UK Government to consider the impacts of the removal of species-rich grassland action from the Sustainable Farming Incentive 2026. According to Buglife, "Farmers have been dealt a new blow... [that] creates further financial pressures... puts at further risk England's most threatened and irreplaceable farmland habitats and species... [and] makes it harder, not easier, for farmers to deliver [positive environmental] action". Equally, the NGOs are guilty of mixed messaging on nature-friendly farming and need to make their position much clearer.
- 31 March 2026: [UWE Bristol wins £1m to lead River Wye farm pollution research](#): The University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) has been awarded £1 million to lead research into agricultural pollution in the River Wye, one of the UK's most historic and ecologically significant river systems. The three-year project will identify and test the most effective, practical interventions to reduce agricultural pollution entering the River Wye, and to produce evidence that governments and farmers can act on.

- 30 March 2026: [Environment Agency claims "Largest ever enforcement workforce protecting waterways from pollution"](#): Meanwhile, the Environment Agency is officially keen to reassure us its eye is back on the ball, claiming it has "increased its water enforcement workforce almost fivefold, from 41 roles in 2023 to 195 by March 2026, with a further increase planned later in 2026. Water company environmental performance has continued to decline in recent years, and this has driven the need for stronger, more visible enforcement action". As usual for Environment Agency press releases, that last sentence gets things the wrong way around: the lack of enforcement action directly encouraged poor performance and compliance.
- 30 March 2026: [Livestock helping to restore freshwater habitats in the River Irton catchment](#): Do cows, as many people automatically suppose, wreck rivers? Not necessarily. In a new blog post, Freshwater Habitats Trust explain how cows and goats are playing a vital role in restoring some of the most important freshwater wildlife habitats in mid-Wales, including carefully chosen sites in the River Irton catchment.
- 30 March 2026: [Country diary: Taking the plunge - and marrying a river](#): The Guardian looks at how a group of creative XR activists recently pledged their allegiance to the River Tone at Hurstone nature reserve in Exmoor.
- 30 March 2026: [Community cleanup brightens the Severn](#): Dozens of eager volunteers, working with the Severn Area Rescue Association, have spring cleaned the riverfront along Upton upon Severn this week. Organiser Steve Dunwell said: "We've had a great day with between 30 and 40 volunteers working in groups, litter picking, cleaning the High Street and cleaning our Riverfront".
- 30 March 2026: [Saltmarsh restoration boosts River Wear habitats](#): Environment charity Groundwork NE and Cumbria has secured more than £1.4m funding for the restoration on the River Wear in Sunderland, in a saltmarsh restoration project that will tackle losses of natural habitats and improve water quality, as well as increase the numbers of fish, crabs and other marine life.
- 28 March 2026: [The 36 areas in the UK facing water shortages by 2035 - mapped](#): Over a quarter of England is at risk of not having enough water to meet demand by 2035, according to Lucie Heath, the I's intrepid river champion.

- 5 March 2026: [Fish Legal launches Judicial Review to protect River Wye](#): Fish Legal has launched a Judicial Review after the Environment Agency admitted that their own plan to tackle pollution in the River Wye will not work, yet declined to take decisive action to fix it. The legal challenge targets the River Wye Diffuse Water Pollution Plan, published by the Environment Agency in November 2025. In that plan, regulators accept that existing measures have failed and that even the additional steps now proposed are unlikely to reduce pollution enough to meet legally binding environmental standards.

Jobs and other opportunities

The closing dates for jobs are in brackets.

Jobs

- [Catchment Resilience Project Officer: River Waveney Trust](#) (26 April 2026)
- [Newt Conservation Partnership Biodiversity Net Gain \(BNG\) Project Officer: Freshwater Habitats Trust](#) (24 April 2026)
- [Trainee Ranger: Cotswold Lakes Trust](#) (24 April 2026)
- [Agriculture Advisor: Wyre Rivers Trust](#) (22 April 2026)
- [Volunteer Coordinator: Tyne Rivers Trust](#) (19 April 2026)
- [Partnerships Manager: Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust](#) (19 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)
- [Agri-Environment Advisor: Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust](#) (17 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)
- [Coastal Coordinator: Severn Estuary Partnership](#) (10 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)
- [Project Officer - Landowner and Farming: Aire 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)
- [Swyddog Ymgysylltu Cymunedol / Community Engagement Officer: Sea Watch Foundation](#) (5 April 2026)
- [Farm Advisor: Boyne Rivers Trust](#) (1 April 2026)
- [Seagrass Project Officer: Wester Ross Fisheries Trust](#) (31 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



River Irfon, Llangammarch Wells, Powys: The Freshwater Habitats Trust is using livestock to restore river habitats on the Irfon catchment. Photo © [Jaggery](#) originally published on [Geograph](#) under a [Creative Commons \(CC-BY-2.0\)](#) licence.

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