

UK Rivers Network

Weekly News Update –20/4/26

April 2026

[The Big River Watch is NEARLY here!](#) Are you ready for The Rivers Trust's next Big River Watch, which happens at the end of next week, between 24th and 30th April? 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.

- 17 April 2026: [Keighley artists celebrate rivers with "Beyond the Banks"](#): A new art exhibition is celebrating the rivers that flow through the Keighley area. Beyond the Banks is the result of a collaboration between Keighley Healthy Living's Art4All groups and the Aire Rivers Trust.
- 16 April 2026: [Emerging approaches for freshwater science: FBA ASM on 11 June](#): Building on the success of last year's Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM), the Freshwater Biological Association has announced that its 2026 ASM, in partnership with Edinburgh Napier University, will be shining a light on "Emerging approaches for freshwater science", including bio/hydro acoustics, eDNA, citizen science, drones and the emerging role of machine learning for pattern recognition.
- 16 April 2026: [Ammonia pollution hotspots found around factory farms](#): A new map for the first time reveals the most severe concentrations of ammonia emissions are clustered in Lincolnshire, Herefordshire and Norfolk. These regions all have a high density of intensive poultry and pig units that drive dangerous levels of ammonia, according to researchers from Compassion in World Farming (CiWF) and Sustain. The research

comes as the government attempts to rewrite planning rules to make it easier to build intensive livestock farms despite concerns about water pollution, air quality and local opposition, the Guardian revealed earlier this month.

- 16 April 2026: [Sheffield singers celebrate their river despite "horrific" sewage spill](#): About 20 members of Sheffield Climate Choir set out last Sunday for a singing river walk, stopping in strategic spots to sing songs warning of water pollution.
- 16 April 2026: [Paddle UK backs calls to change definition of "bather"](#): Paddle UK is backing calls to expand the definition of bather to include ALL recreational water users. Under current regulations a bather is defined as a "swimmer" when designating new bathing waters, and that excludes paddlers and surfers. Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) is leading the campaign to change the definition to include other water users in order to protect public health when accessing blue space.
- 16 April 2026: [Government call for evidence launches on pet flea and tick treatments in UK waterways](#): A new call for evidence to address the presence of chemicals from flea and tick treatments in rivers and streams across the UK has just launched. Monitoring by the Environment Agency has found concentrations of these chemicals in surface water that frequently exceed toxicity thresholds for aquatic insects. Residues have also been found in river sediments, fish tissue, wild bird nests and coastal waters, suggesting multiple pathways by which contamination may occur. The call for evidence is seeking views on the data on environmental contamination, and information on how any potential changes to their supply routes might affect animal welfare, pet owners, businesses, and access to these medicines.
- 16 April 2026: [Do polluted rivers have hidden health impacts?:](#) Most certainly yes, according to this opinion piece by environmental waters chemist Brian Morgan: "We must build larger sewage works so that we can stop dumping raw sewage into our rivers and seas. If we do not, the complexity of diseases and mortality rates will continue to worsen until, at some point, our antibiotic armoury fails. Then, serious trouble will follow".
- 16 April 2026: [Anglers asked to help protect UK rivers as concerns grow:](#) The Angling Times put out a welcome call this week inviting anglers to join in The Big River Watch.

- 16 April 2026: [Anger as Ayrshire potential SSSI sand dunes are destroyed](#): From Buglife: "Wildlife experts have been left devastated by the continued intentional destruction of dune habitat on the Ardeer Peninsula in Ayrshire by its landowners, despite the dunes being earmarked as part of a potential Site of Special Scientific Interest. Roger Hissett from the Ardeer Action Group said, 'After more than a decade of campaigning by local naturalists it is tragic to see a developer determined to destroy the special and rare habitats and wildlife of this part of the Ardeer Peninsula. It is so sad that this attitude still persists into the 21st century just when the area is being considered for protection for the benefit of future generations!'"
- 16 April 2026: [Is there something fishy about the MSC blue tick?](#): The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), which operates a "blue tick" scheme to indicate the sustainability of fish, has been accused of creating an "illusion" of ethical sourcing, after a study reported that widespread labour abuses have taken place on the fishing vessels it approves.
- 16 April 2026: [Hundreds turn out to celebrate River Brue - and discuss its future](#): The Somerset Leveller celebrates a successful community event in Glastonbury last month, attended by over 170 people and featuring river-legal-eagle-activist Paul Powlesland.
- 16 April 2026: [Impressive progress on single-use plastics... but not in Britain](#): An uplifting press release from the European Commission this week shows that Belgium, Denmark and Germany are among the Member States to have already met the 2025 single-use plastic (SUP) collection target of 77%, far ahead of what we manage in the UK. (The last time I looked, the figure here was nearer to 40%.)
- 16 April 2026: [Worldview: Rusting Rivers: Alarm Grows Over Uptick in Acidic Arctic Waters](#): We've featured this fascinating story before, but it's worth another visit. From Yale's Environment 360 magazine: "Climate change has thawed permafrost and increased rainfall in the Far North, producing sulfuric acid that is turning rivers and lakes yellow or rusty orange. Scientists are scrambling to parse the impacts on wildlife, fish, and the drinking water of Indigenous communities".
- 15 April 2026: [UK scientists unite for seabed survey off the south-west coast](#): A four-week seabed mapping survey will bring together scientists from 11 organisations to improve understanding of the marine environment. The UK Centre for Seabed Mapping (UK CSM), a group of

over 30 public sector organisations with a shared commitment to collect and share high-quality marine data, will undertake a seabed mapping survey (CSM2026) to explore and map the seabed along the UK's south-west coastline.

- 15 April 2026: [Science: The surprising, pollution-busting power of seashells](#): New research from Trinity College Dublin explores an interesting connection between discarded seafood waste and the critically needed rare earth elements. TCD scientists found that common seashells, particularly oyster shells, can capture and trap rare earth elements from water. In doing so, the seashells transform from waste into a potential tool for cleaning up pollution linked to the green energy transition.
- 15 April 2026: [Fish behind the scenes at the Natural History Museum](#): Behind the scenes at the Natural History Museum, a team of dedicated curators look after more than 8 million specimens and objects spanning the history of life on Earth. In the latest in a new series of blog posts, ichthyologist (fish scientist) Dr Diego Vaz dives into some of the extraordinary species in the NHM collection.
- 15 April 2026: [Are Environment Agency's £8.5 million in "environmental improvements" any such thing?](#): Money is flooding into "environmental improvement" projects almost as fast as sewage is flooding into rivers, thanks to "enforcement undertakings" by polluting water companies. According to the Environment Agency, this money is "part of a record £8.5 million paid by water companies into environmental restoration projects across the country as part of a strengthened crackdown on pollution and poor performance across the sector". Well it sounds great, but let's consider it a bit further. First, although many of these projects will certainly improve inland waters and their biodiversity, overall, the money is still "compensation" for damage: it would be better not to have the damage, which means much more fundamental reform. Second, having said that, the "improvements" today are not necessarily direct compensation for unquantifiable damage in the past, and perhaps in entirely different places: water vole recovery projects in one town don't make up for continued pumping and dumping in another. Third, there's a real risk that river groups might come to rely on this "dirty business" money as a key source of funding. It's dangerous for green groups to have a "business model" based on (and, arguably, legitimizing) ongoing environmental damage. Finally, let's remember that the promise from

Defra was "more than £100 million" in fines and penalties would be reinvested in projects to clean up water. Maybe the other £91.5 million has been spent beefing up Environment Agency enforcement or something similarly useful... but we do need to know exactly where's it's gone.

- 15 April 2026: [Science: A bucket of New York City river water contains a world of information](#): Scientists scooping eDNA from buckets of East River water discovered a powerful new tool for monitoring cities - one that costs far less than the alternatives, and misses very little. According to researcher Mark Stoeckle from The Rockefeller University: "Environmental DNA doesn't just tell us what lives in the water, it reveals insights into the entire ecosystem surrounding it, including the city itself".
- 15 April 2026: [River diesel pollution costs firm more than £4m](#): A long-running diesel pollution incident, which damaged a nature reserve near Southampton and provoked the ire of campaigners Paul Whitehouse and Feargal Sharkey, among others, has cost Watson Fuels £4m in improvements and sanctions.
- 14 April 2026: [Basingstoke marchers call for better chalk stream protection](#): Over 100 campaigners marched alongside a rare chalk stream, calling for action to protect it from pollution. The Old Basing and Lychpit Environmental Campaign highlighted Thames Water's storm overflow figures showing that raw sewage has flowed into the River Loddon near Basingstoke for 650 hours already this year.
- 13 April 2026: [WASP campaigners launch petition calling for public water ownership](#): Ash Smith and colleagues from Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (WASP), recently featured in Channel 4's Dirty Business, have launched a petition calling for a referendum on water company ownership. Ash said: "I think people are sick of being told they can't have healthy rivers and seas, just because powerful financiers want to keep making money from our water bills".
- 13 April 2026: [Eels are making a welcome return to our waterways](#): The magically mysterious European eel is critically endangered, but it's now being reintroduced across the country in a bid to boost numbers and restore balance to ecosystems. In this BBC article, Dr Emily Best, who's working with Action for the River Kennet (ARK) on the eel reintroduction project, describes her work.
- 13 April 2026: [Wildlife Trusts: Government must accelerate policies for nature recovery](#): A group of MPs gathered in Parliament this week to

support calls on the UK Government to expand and accelerate policies for nature recovery.

- 12 April 2026: [Finally, water firms in sewage scandal hit by record 96 criminal investigations](#): Lucie Heath, the I's river campaigner, celebrates a rise in "enforcement activity" by the Environment Agency.
- 10 April 2026: [Welsh Elections 2026: What Are Parties Promising on Sewage and Plastic Pollution?](#): As the 2026 Senedd Election inches nearer, Surfers Against Sewage explores the environmental promises of the rival parties.

Jobs and other opportunities

The closing dates for jobs are in brackets.

Jobs

- [Advocacy and Parliamentary Officer: Angling Trust](#) (17 May 2026)
- [Freshwater Ecologist: Severn Rivers Trust](#) (12 May 2026)
- [Project Delivery Manager: Tyne Rivers Trust](#) (10 May 2026)
- [Hampshire Avon Citizen Science Coordinator: For the Love of Water \(FLOW\) CIC](#) (8 May 2026)
- [Freshwater Adviser: NatureScot](#) (30 April 2026)
- [Policy and Campaigns Officer \(Scotland\): WildFish](#) (28 April 2026)
- [Catchment Resilience Project Officer: River Waveney Trust](#) (26 April 2026)
- [Visitor Engagement Assistant: WWT \(London\)](#) (26 April 2026)
- [Policy and Advocacy Manager - Forever Chemicals: Marine Conservation Society](#) (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)
- [Community Fundraising Coordinator: Surfers Against Sewage](#) (22 April 2026)
- [Project Officer - Landowner and Farming: Aire Rivers Trust](#) (20 April 2026)
- [Volunteer Coordinator: Tyne Rivers Trust](#) (19 April 2026)
- [Engagement Officer: WWT \(Caerlaverock, Dumfriesshire\)](#) (19 April 2026)
- [Catchment Restoration Development Officer: Sustaining Dunbar](#) (19 April 2026)
- [Partnerships Manager: Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust](#) (19 April 2026)

Trustees and other voluntary posts

- [Trustee Director: The Open Spaces Society](#) (17 May 2026)
- [Trustee - Honorary Treasurer: Worcestershire Wildlife Trust](#) (4 May 2026)
- [Trustee: Legal Expertise \(Bristol Avon Rivers Trust\)](#) (30 April 2026)

- [Paddle England Assembly \(12 members\)](#) (20 April 2026)
- [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)

Other opportunities

The Rivers Trust has a useful page of [current vacancies](#) with the various trusts, including voluntary posts and openings for trustees.

River of the week

Porter Brook, Sheffield, has had a troubled time recently. After being dogged by a sewage spill just 48 hours before the local community's Easter Duck Race, it was celebrated this week by the Sheffield Climate Choir. Photo © [Graham Hogg](#) originally published on [Geograph](#) under a [Creative Commons \(CC-BY-2.0\)](#) licence.



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