

UK Rivers Network

Weekly News Update –25/5/26

May 2026

- **23 May 2026: [Join The Big Paddle Cleanup 2026!](#)** The Big Paddle Cleanup 2026 is here! Paddle UK's annual national campaign encourages and equips paddlers to remove plastic pollution and litter from UK waterways. The 2026 event which runs until June 7 focuses on accessing hard-to-reach areas to protect blue spaces.
- **23 May 2026: [Celebrate London Rivers Week \(23 May-31 May 2026\)!](#)** London Rivers Week (LRW) is back for the 10th time... and Thames21 has a handy calendar of all the walks, talks, and other events happening over the next few days.



Photo: Thames21 mural in Catford painted by Steven Ball. Photo © Copyright [Glyn Baker](#) published on [Geograph](#) under a [Creative Commons \(CC BY-SA 2.0\) licence](#).

- **23 May 2026: [Staying Cool: Helping Rivers and Wildlife in Hot Weather:](#)** Ribble Rivers Trust explain the importance of riverside trees and woodlands for keeping rivers cool by creating a canopy over the water, which slows down warming and helps maintain oxygen levels.
- **21 May 2026: [River Action campaigner cautious on using new bathing site:](#)** A campaigner for clean waterways has said there is a risk of pollution, despite part of the River Thames being granted bathing status by the government. James Wallace from River Action said the safety levels depends on factors including how polluted the River Pang has been, which feeds in further upstream: "The River Pang suffers from very high

levels of pollution and if there's been a discharge (there) in the last few days that might affect people's health," he said.

- 21 May 2026: [Tales from the dambusters of Europe](#): National Geographic reports on the "growing movement to remove old and unnecessary dams to improve river health and save species. It comes as pressure on Europe's water resources strengthens". It's worth remembering that Europe's dam removing, free-flowing river campaigns, promoted by ERN, WWF, International Rivers, and others, go back decades.
- 21 May 2026: [An eye-opening journey along Devon's River Dart](#): Wicked Leeks talks to Julian Carnell, author of a new book on the River Dart, Chair of the Wild Dart Partnership, and Director of The Sharpham Trust.
- 21 May 2026: [Powys County Council adopts Charter for the Rights of the River Wye](#): Powys County Council has approved the adoption of the Charter for the Rights of the River Wye, marking a significant step in protecting and restoring one of the UK's most iconic rivers. The Charter recognises the intrinsic rights of the River Wye and establishes a framework for action to improve the river's ecological condition: the right to flow and perform natural functions; the right to biodiversity; the right to be free from pollution; the right to be supported by a healthy catchment; the right to regenerate; and the right to representation.
- 20 May 2026: [The English community that brought its river back from the brink](#): The Guardian explores the Trent Rivers Trust's 13-year campaign to restore the Mease, culminating in its winning the UK River prize.
- 20 May 2026: [Edisford Bridge: Bathing Water Status and What It Means for You](#): What does "Designated Bathing Water Status" mean in practice? Ribble Rivers Trust successfully campaigned for designation of Edisford Bridge in Clitheroe and were successful in 2024. In this blog post, they explain what bathing water designation means and how it helps in the grand plan to make rivers cleaner and safer.
- 20 May 2026: [AI app could alert swimmers to river sewage levels: Yorkshire Water](#): People wanting to swim, paddle or play in Yorkshire's rivers are being promised a new app that will use artificial intelligence (AI) and real-time data to provide regular updates about pollution in the water. The information gathered from 20 popular river swimming locations across the region will be refreshed every 15 minutes, Yorkshire Water said, describing the tool as "the holy grail that people have waited

years for". Critics might argue it's another example of "normalizing pollution" instead of doing something about it.

- 20 May 2026: [The UK's worst official bathing spots for getting sick from sewage](#): Surfers Against Sewage have been keeping a database of sewage-related sickness for decades now; this week, they turned their latest figures over to The I Paper.
- 20 May 2026: [Can science tackle Windermere's pollution?](#): New research from the Environment Agency argues steps already being taken to reduce pollution in Windermere will help protect the lake's water quality from algae growth, even as the climate changes.
- 20 May 2026: [More than 40 arrests after Greenpeace activists target "bee-killing" pesticides](#): Greenpeace has accused Syngenta of driving wildlife decline and threatening UK food security by making and selling pesticides that poison British wildlife. A recent report by the NGO found that just one teaspoon of the Syngenta-made pesticide, Hallmark, was enough to kill 13 million bees.
- 20 May 2026: [China is cutting emissions even faster than promised and may already have peaked, study shows](#): Hardly covered in the news this week, a highly significant finding about China's progress to sustainability that will affect every river on the planet.
- 20 May 2026: [WildFish update on chalk-stream salmon classification](#): Research by Dr Andrew King and colleagues represents a major step forward in securing the future of chalk stream salmon, providing compelling evidence that the populations inhabiting the globally rare chalk rivers, including the River Test and River Itchen, are not simply local variants of Atlantic salmon, but a distinct and highly specialised evolutionary component shaped by adaptation to the unique, stable conditions of chalk stream environments.
- 19 May 2026: [£7.7m initiative targets pollution at source in England's overlooked headwaters](#): A major new project will tackle water pollution and environmental decline by focusing on one of the most neglected parts of England's river network: headwater streams, ponds and small wetlands. The programme "Headstart: unlocking the value of headwater catchments" is Led by Anglian Water and Freshwater Habitats Trust.
- 19 May 2026: [Stacey Dooley joins a paddle cleanup for new BBC programme](#): TV presenter Stacey Dooley has joined volunteers for a cleanup on Rochdale Canal as part of a new documentary series about

the UK's litter problems. The filming was timely as the Big Paddle Cleanup begins on 23 May for two weeks of action on our waterways.

- 18 May 2026: [Academics argue "low carbon" projects are fossil fuel greenwash](#): An interesting new article in The Conservation argues "that fossil fuel companies' deployment of renewable energy, biofuels, carbon capture and storage (CCS), green hydrogen and carbon offsetting isn't designed to oppose decarbonisation, but to manage the conversation around renewables. False solutions signal compliance while helping to mute calls for a systemic transformation".
- 18 May 2026: ['Our river is unsafe despite bathing status - but I'm optimistic'](#): In May 2024, more than two years of campaigning paid off for the Nidd Action Group (NAG) in Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, after part of the town's river known as the Lido was given designated bathing status - but two years on, the water quality at the Lido officially remains "poor".
- 18 May 2026: [Charity buys meadow to protect rare river wildlife](#): Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust said it had acquired Court House Meadows alongside the River Meon, one of only 220 chalk rivers in existence. It said the site will be managed to support wildlife and restore the river's natural floodplain to help reduce flood risk downstream and improve water quality.
- 17 May 2026: ["I used to swim in our rivers – now it might kill me"](#): William Sitwell, the restaurant critic and a columnist for The Telegraph, remarks that it's "utterly, deeply depressing that this week, those bodies of water which have been given the utilitarian moniker of Official Inland River Bathing Sites were deemed unsafe to swim in". On one level, obviously yes; on another, more pragmatic level, campaigners know that even if the glass is half full of "s--t and p--s", as Sitwell claims, this is progress of a sort... and the start of a long journey to put things right.
- 16 May 2026: [SAS protesters paddle out for action on sewage pollution](#): A nationwide Paddle Out Protest was organised this week by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS): "Saturday's Paddle-Out Protests were nothing short of historic. Thousands of people took to beaches, rivers and coastlines in 56 locations across the UK to demand an end to sewage pollution – making this our biggest number of Paddle-Out Protests on record".

- 16 May 2026: [Welsh river devoid of life following sewage leak, say residents](#): More on a story we brought you last week of a particularly nasty sewage spill in the Afon Kenfig.
- 15 May 2026: [Science: Rivers losing oxygen as climate change kicks in](#): A newly published study of 21,439 world rivers, examined between 1985 and 2023, has found "sustained deoxygenation... with 78.8% experiencing fluvial deoxygenation".
- 15 May 2026: [Major survey of London tap water shows "forever chemicals" within safe limits](#): A large study of London's tap water has revealed that trace amounts of PFAS "forever chemicals" are present, but their levels are within UK and EU safety limits. The analysis, led by researchers at Imperial College London in 2024, is the largest study of its kind to look at levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water in a UK city.
- 11 May 2026: [Wildlife Trusts offer an alternative King's Speech for Nature](#): The Wildlife Trusts have just published a list of eight Bills to fast-track nature recovery, improve national security and bolster people's health. According to the Trusts: "They are an invitation to the UK Government to do better. The proposed legislation demonstrates the level of ambition UK Ministers should aim for if delivery is to match warm words about wildlife, and to meet the rising public demand for nature action".

Jobs and other opportunities

The closing dates for jobs are in brackets.

Jobs

- [Senior Farm Advisor: Lune Rivers Trust](#) (28 June 2026)
- [Project Officer – Woodlands: Lune Rivers Trust](#) (28 June 2026)
- [Aquatic Species Officer: Lune Rivers Trust](#) (28 June 2026)
- [Head of Operations: Bristol Avon Rivers Trust \(BART\)](#) (19 June 2026)
- [Catchment Restoration Officer: Bristol Avon Rivers Trust \(BART\)](#) (19 June 2026)
- [Senior Project Officer: Freshwater Habitats Trust](#) (12 June 2026)
- [Administration and Communications Officer: Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust](#) (12 June 2026)
- [Trust Administrator: Wessex Rivers Trust](#) (10 June 2026)
- [Communications Officer : Wessex Rivers Trust](#) (10 June 2026)

- [Administration Assistant: West Wales Rivers Trust](#) (8 June 2026)
- [River Restoration Officer : West Wales Rivers Trust](#) (8 June 2026)
- [Project Officer: Ribble Rivers Trust](#) (8 June 2026)
- [Catchment Conservation Worker: Ribble Rivers Trust](#) (8 June 2026)
- [Water Team Project Officer \(Maternity Cover\): Wiltshire Wildlife Trust](#) (8 June 2026)
- [Senior Catchment Restoration Officer - Upper Teme: Severn Rivers Trust](#) (31 May 2026)
- [Catchment Coordinator: Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust](#) (30 May 2026)
- [River Restoration Manager: Thames21](#) (29 May 2026)
- [Learning and Engagement Manager: Thames Estuary Partnership](#) (Closing date variable)
- [Head of Engagement, Education and Partnerships: Ribble Rivers Trust](#) (25 May 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)

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

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