

UK Rivers Network

Weekly News Update – 20/9/26

September 2026

- 18 September 2026: [The world's rivers are at breaking point. Can we save them before it is too late?](#): Bibi van der Zee introduces "Our rivers", a new project that launches this week, in which The Guardian will spend the next year taking a closer look at the world's rivers, in good health and bad.
- 18 September 2026: [Working toward a chemical-free Charmouth](#): It was great to see this week's update from West Dorset's River Char Action Group on efforts to identify and tackle the things polluting their river. One of their potential new projects is Chemical Free Charmouth: "... a local scheme to help gardeners, homeowners, pet owners and landowners reduce and then eliminate their use of toxic chemical pesticides and herbicides - so these chemicals don't get into our river. We're planning a talk about the subject in Charmouth on Wednesday 25th November". They need a bit of help, so if you're in the West Dorset/Devon border area, do get in touch.
- 18 September 2026: [Thames Water must be temporarily nationalised and its debt rescue plan blocked, MPs say](#): A selection of MPs from across the political spectrum are pushing for Thames Water's debt rescue plan to be blocked. A report by the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA) said Thames Water had reached the 'end of the road' and should be temporarily placed into state ownership, with talks over a £10billion takeover halted.
- 18 September 2026: [River Action: "Thames Water: the Government has run out of excuses"](#): A comment piece from River Action underlines the need to shift Thames Water into Special Administration: "Thames Water has endured years of financial distress, environmental failure and regulatory intervention. Its customers and our rivers are paying the price while creditors extract and control the company's future. Special Administration creates the opportunity for a fundamental reset, not simply another change of hands. The objective must be to build a

Thames Water that serves its customers, protects our rivers and is financially and operationally resilient for the long term".

- 18 September 2026: [Big River Watch calls on public to monitor river health following record dry summer](#): As a summer of record-breaking dry weather and prolonged heat begins to come to a close, thousands of citizen scientists are preparing to take part in the Big River Watch to help monitor the impacts of extreme weather and pollution on river health and inform vital conservation work by The Rivers Trust. From 18th-24th September 2026, the public are invited to record observations of pollution, wildlife, and river conditions through The Rivers Trust's free Big River Watch app. Surveys take just 15 minutes to complete and key results are published in near-real time on the Big River Watch online dashboard, allowing anyone to see and help build a national picture of river health across one week.
- 17 September 2026: [Flour grinding moves closer after River Itchen mill's work](#): A river under one of the country's oldest watermills has been dammed as part of work that is hoped will see flour being ground once again. The River Itchen has been temporarily blocked so that a new sluice gate can be installed at the National Trust's Winchester City Mill.
- 17 September 2026: [Birmingham Community Paddlesports: How to create sustainable relationships with local waterways](#): The Birmingham Community Paddlesports Project is led by Olympic canoeist Andy Train and supported by Paddle UK, StreetGames, and the Canal and River Trust. Over the years it has introduced more than 1,400 young people to paddlesport.
- 17 September 2026: [New government unveils plans to "unlock" over 15,000 new homes](#): A controversial new plan to permit housebuilding schemes with a bigger quid-pro-quo for the environment was announced by Defra this week: "Rather than paying for piecemeal and costly nature mitigations as required under previous regimes, the scheme in Norfolk will see developers fund large scale improvements to rivers and wetlands across the county, which are home to species such as otters, water voles and wetland birds, and visited by millions of people each year... The area earmarked for new homes and nature restoration includes the River Wensum, Bure Broads and Marshes, and Yare Broads and Marshes catchments, covering a substantial part of central and eastern Norfolk".
- 17 September 2026: [WildFish: Battling Barriers: An Interview with Friends of the Ems](#): In an interview with Sandy Galloway, founding member of Friends of the Ems and SmartRivers group lead, WildFish journeyed down

this rare and diverse chalkstream, unpicking the threats and discovering why it, like so many across the country, urgently needs better protection.

- 17 September 2026: [2025 was among driest years on record for world's rivers, study finds](#): Rivers across the world experienced one of their driest years in more than three decades in 2025, a comprehensive study of global water resources has found. The assessment of the global water cycle by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reveals a depletion in the world's water savings bank: the amount of freshwater held on or under the ground, including groundwater, lakes, rivers, snow, ice moisture in the soil and inside plants and trees, was 42% below normal across the world last year.
- 17 September 2026: [Warning over water leak's impact on New Forest Beaulieu River](#): A large water leak in the New Forest could have a "severe" impact on sensitive habitats, conservationists have warned. A burst main near the A35 outside Lyndhurst on Wednesday sent tens of thousands of litres of chlorinated water into the headwaters of the Beaulieu River.
- 16 September 2026: [Salmon numbers in England hit lowest level on record](#): New research from the Environment Agency (EA), Cefas and Natural Resources Wales confirms salmon stocks in England are at their lowest level since records began. The Atlantic Salmon Stock Assessment for 2025 shows 95% of principal salmon rivers are now below the level needed to sustain their populations. This is up from 88% in last year's assessment, and the highest level recorded to date.
- 16 September 2026: [Feargal Sharkey: "Salmon are now on the endangered species list. We should hang our heads in shame"](#): The Telegraph has a follow-up on the EA's salmon story, with quotes from Feargal Sharkey, Mark Owen of the Angling Trust, and others.
- 16 September 2026: [Feargal Sharkey: "You have to change the ownership. That's the issue at the heart of it"](#): Plans to give mayors powers to oversee water companies will not save England's rivers from sewage pollution, campaign groups are warning. Feargal Sharkey describes the latest plan as a kind of musical chairs: "We're simply replacing one committee with another committee. It will not work. It cannot work. It needs to be dropped today".
- 16 September 2026: [Don't back down on pledge to put water firms under public control, Burnham told](#): Meanwhile, the PM's plan to give mayors powers of local water supplies has also come under fire from some of his closest policy advisors.
- 16 September 2026: [El Niño - How farmers can prepare](#): After a summer of unprecedented heatwaves and drought, Britain could face another

barrage of extreme weather over the coming months - this time with El Niño potentially making the impacts of climate change even more pronounced. Scientists and climate experts are raising concerns over the weather pattern brewing in the Pacific Ocean. NFFN have taken a look at why this is the case, what it could mean for UK farmers, and what they can do to prepare and increase their farms' resilience.

- 16 September 2026: [Britain's most artificial landscape may not survive climate change](#): Two climate scientists from the University of East Anglia explain why East Anglia is under particular threat: "The Fens face several climate threats that reinforce one another. Rising sea levels, heavier downpours, hotter summers, longer droughts and biodiversity loss are all expected to intensify over the coming decades. These are all serious challenges, and in the Fens they will play out within one tightly interconnected system".
- 16 September 2026: [The areas of the UK facing drought and water shortages until next spring](#): New research by the Environment Agency shows the country will need above average-rainfall throughout autumn and winter for most areas to be out of drought by April 2027. There is a one in four chance that six regions of England will still have drought status by this date, if the country receives 80 per cent of typical rainfall.
- 15 September 2026: [You might have dreamed of visiting the once-perfect River Spey. Now it's on the brink](#): In the I paper, Patrick Cockburn argues the story of the Spey is a wake-up call to save our natural world: "The fate of the Spey - 107 miles long, running north from its source in Loch Spey in the Monadhliath mountains to the Moray Firth east of Inverness - is so important because it is symptomatic of the destructive impact of warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers on the Highlands as a whole".
- 15 September 2026: [Hands up who's bashed most balsam this summer?:](#) Eden Rivers Trust estimated they'd tackled two million plants; now West Cumbria Rivers Trust are claiming to have gone one better with an extraordinary 2.9 million of the pesky blighters removed.
- 14 September 2026: ["Tidal wave" of PFAS being launched to satisfy AI industry, campaigners warn](#): Already in the firing line for excessive water use, big-tech data centres are now coming under scrutiny for the "forever" chemicals needed in their cooling systems.
- 14 September 2026: [MPs: "The failures of the past cannot continue"... but you can be pretty sure they will](#): Last Monday, 14 September, MPs debated Ash Smith's proposal for a referendum on public ownership of the water industry - and you can read a transcript of the debate here. Minister Emma Hardy trotted out the usual mix of waffle, clichés, and empty

promises: "... fundamental questions about ownership... customers and communities pay the price... infrastructure is crumbling... move towards a better system... significant reform... challenge around ageing infrastructure... major investment... a system that protects customers, improves the environment and secures reliable water services for the future... no single easy fix... the failures of the past cannot continue... look at all possible solutions... make the sector work for people and places again... I will not pretend that there is one simple answer..." But still no concrete action whatsoever on what most everyone, outside government, agrees is critical: the fundamental ownership model.

- 14 September 2026: [Will Andy Act? Another child ill after swimming in Windermere](#): The Save Windermere campaign explain why people swimming in the lake are still falling ill, how bathing water designation fails, and what needs to be done.
- 14 September 2026: [WSRT: £680,000 funding boost for our chalk streams](#): Western Sussex Rivers announce they're "extremely grateful to have secured £680,000 from the Community Infrastructure Levy and the Wildlife Rich Habitat Fund for projects to improve the resilience of the River Ems and Lavant" - and explain here what they'll be doing with all that cash.
- 14 September 2026: [Thames21: Five-year action plan launched to improve the River Thames and its tributaries from Maidenhead to Teddington](#): Environmental charity Thames21 and its partners have launched the Maidenhead to Teddington Catchment Action Plan 2026-2031, a collaborative plan setting out an ambitious vision to restore the Thames and its tributaries between Maidenhead and Teddington.

[More news...](#)

Events in September

- September 2026: [Love Your Countryside Month](#): Celebrate all things country with rural champions CPRE.
- 18-24 September: [The Big River Watch](#): From The Rivers Trust: "Twice a year, we call on everyone to spend 15 minutes observing their local river, answering a few questions about what you can see (from wildlife and water colour to signs of pollution) using the free Big River Watch survey app. All of this data helps us to get a clearer picture of river health across the UK and Ireland, identify issues and support our fight for cleaner waters. So far over 9,000 people have taken part in a Big River Watch

- 19-27 September: [Join the Riverlution this September and celebrate the Sussex Ouse](#): The community festival taking place 19 - 27th September will be a series of events for local people to come together for a shared vision and collective action. Voices of the Ouse opens the festival bringing together key organisations and communities who represent, work alongside, and feel a deep connection to its waters. A very special Council of All Beings workshop in the Lewes Town Hall Council Chamber will bring the voices of the eel and kingfisher into our democratic spaces.
- Saturday 26 September 2026: [Melksham River and Food Festival](#): The Melksham Food and River Festival is a vibrant, free community event held annually on the last weekend in August at King George V Playing Field and along the River Avon. Organised by the Festival Committee with support from the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust and Wiltshire Youth Canoe Club, the festival celebrates local culture, community spirit, and riverside heritage.
- Various events until 27 September 2026: [CARP Bewdley River Festival 2026](#): The Bewdley River Festival runs from 7 June to World Rivers Day on 27 September, a summer-long programme put on by Communities Against River Pollution, the local citizen science group working for a cleaner, healthier River Severn.
- Throughout September: [Thames 21 events](#): Hands-on London activities this month include " Action for Silk Stream: River Action Day " (24/9) and "Oxleas Woods – Slowing the Flow " (29/9 until 1/10), and more.
- Until 27 September: [Rivers4Life Exhibition](#): Join the Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust for their Rivers4Life exhibition at the Dales Countryside Museum, Hawes. Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Rivers4Life runs daily from 6 June to 27 September 2026, open 10am–4pm, seven days a week.
- September 2026 (TBC): [Great Stour Riverfest](#): Lots of things to see and do on the Great Stour in Canterbury.
- Friday 18-Sunday 27 September 2026: [MCS Great British Beach Clean](#): Every September thousands of people across the UK head to the coast to take part in the Great British Beach Clean. Find out how you can get involved and how it helps.
- Sunday 27 September 2026: [World Rivers Day 2026](#): Lots of events planned worldwide.
- Sunday 27 September 2026: [RiverKids: Create, Paint, Explore](#): Organised by Friends of the River Tyne, will be held on from 2pm to 4pm at the Trinity Centre in Haddington, East Lothian. Friends of the River Tyne will also be showcasing its new education boxes, which are set to be

introduced into local schools to help pupils learn more about river environments, conservation and biodiversity.

- Sunday 27 September 2026: [Friends of the River Wye: Ranunculus Project Launch](#): A fun afternoon of talks, workshops, stalls and stories to launch Friends of the River Wye's Ranunculus Project at The Lost ARC, Rhayader, Wales.

[More events...](#)

Jobs and other opportunities

The closing dates for jobs are in brackets.

Jobs

- [Community Engagement Trainee: Eden Rivers Trust](#) (5 October 2026)
- [Projects and Technical Manager: South Cumbria Rivers Trust](#) (4 October 2026)
- [SmartRivers Analysts and Trainers: WildFish](#) (Closing date unspecified)
- [Head of Improvements: Thames21](#) (2 October 2026)
- [River Educator: Wessex Rivers Trust](#) (1 October 2026)
- [Brent Catchment Partnerships Officer: Thames21](#) (2 October 2026)
- [Project Officer: Dee Trust](#) (30 September 2026)
- [Project Delivery Officer: Tyne Rivers Trust](#) (30 September 2026)
- [Field Surveyors \(Humber Beaver Partnership\): Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust](#) (24 September 2026)
- [Senior Project Officer: Forth Rivers Trust](#) (24 September 2026)
- [Project Coordinator \(Humber Beaver Partnership\): Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust](#) (24 September 2026)
- [Ebdon Farm Site Manager: Avon Wildlife Trust](#) (22 September 2026)
- [Project Manager \(Technical\): Aire Rivers Trust](#) (22 September 2026)

Trustees and other voluntary posts

- [Trustees: Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust](#) (10 October)
- [Trustees: Severn Rivers Trust](#) (10 October)
- [Volunteer crayfish surveyor \(North Yorkshire\): Yorkshire Wildlife Trust](#)
- [Trustee \(accounting skills\): Aire Rivers Trust](#) (N/A)
- [Volunteer Educational Activities Assistant: WWT Martin Mere](#) (Burscough, Lancashire, N/A)
- [Trustees × 2: Costwolds 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.

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