UK Rivers Network

Weekly News Update – 2/11/26

October 2026

- 31 October 2026: Glass half full shocker!: Some 25 or so years ago, when we scoured every public record we could find to track down every UK and Ireland community river group in existence, we notched up a grand total of about three dozen groups, many of them moribund or deflated. Amid the endless drip-drip (splash-splash?) of bad river news, the sewage and the outrage, the growing bills and the dirty spills, one huge truth often goes unspoken: slowly and steadily, collectively, we are turning the tide, and making a difference. Today, our informal list of community groups stands at an amazing 226! Scarcely a week goes by without an email from a new group of citizen scientists, litter pickers, natural flood "managers", upholders of river rights, and other community champions. Some things take time... but we will get there. The glass is half full!
- 31 October 2026: River Kent Litter Pickers chart massive amount of trash: The Cumbria group's Simon Raven said: "The problem of rubbish in the river and littering in general is not getting any better. It is such a shame that this country has, in general, a very bad attitude to littering as can be seen by the rubbish left in lay-bys, on grass verges, in parks and town centres."
- 31 October 2026: Beavering away on the River Ness catchment: NatureScot has approved the release of up to 15 beavers over the next three years, after concluding, despite concerns and objections, they "...could significantly boost biodiversity in the catchment, with the landscape at low risk of negative impacts".
- 31 October 2026: River Teifi artwork to be displayed at Senedd: A community artwork celebrating the River Teifi and the people who live alongside it is to be displayed at the Senedd in Cardiff. The Llais yr Afon project, led by Cardigan-based Small World Theatre, will feature in an exhibition at the Pierhead Futures Gallery from 14 November this year until 11 February next year. The project brought together schoolchildren,

artists, scientists and conservationists from communities across the Lower Teifi Valley to explore the river's natural environment, history and cultural significance. You can also browse it online by following the link above.

- 31 October 2026: Another COP out on biodiversity?: COP17 nears, but critics are stepping up pressure on the UN biodiversity summits, "as countries fail to deliver on their promises to halt the destruction of the natural world".
- 30 October 2026: Derided boss of Yorkshire Water finally throws in the towel: Nicola Shaw, the much-criticized boss of Yorkshire Water, has finally called it quits. She rode out a huge storm of criticism over her massive pay packets, and the company's dire performance, but hasn't survived the latest, appalling downgrading of its already mediocre environmental rating (more below).
- 30 October 2026: Yorkshire Water given lowest environmental rating: And here's more, from the BBC, on why Nicola Shaw hs departed: "Yorkshire Water has been given the lowest possible environmental rating by the Environment Agency (EA) after a sharp rise in pollution incidents. The regulator formally downgraded the company from two stars out of four to one, meaning it is now classed as a 'poor performing company' for its impact on the environment".
- 30 October 2026: River Action: Water company annual performance the worst on record: James Wallace, CEO of River Action, said: "It is time to build a water system that puts people and nature first. That means clean rivers, protected wildlife and a service run in the public's interest, not private profit. You can help secure that future today by telling Andy Burnham to place Thames Water into Special Administration".
- 30 October 2026: Friends of the River Dart take aim at South West Water's poor performance: A great update this week from the Friends of the River Dart highlights baffling omissions in a new water regulators' joint report, including the complete failure to mention storm overflows and spills.
- 29 October 2026: Eight of England’s nine water companies still failing on environment, report finds: There were 74 serious pollution incidents, the category that causes significant harm to the environment, in 2025, the Environment Agency report said. That was just one fewer than the previous year, despite billions of pounds of investment, bans on bosses' bonuses and a public outcry.
- 29 October 2026: Be afraid, water companies! Environment Secretary threatens to "shine a harsh light": Water company bosses are doubtless quaking in their wellies this week after news that Dame Angela Eagle is

"intending to shine a harsh light" on water pollution, "ministers will visit a number of sites to interrogate companies' responses", and "will also be looking at options" to strengthen the ban on executives' bonuses. Let's hope her "harsh light" has new batteries.

- 29 October 2026: England needs 120% of normal rainfall to come out of drought this winter: Hannah Cloke, Professor of Meteorology and Climate Science at Reading, explains just why it will take so long to move the country's water "bank account" back into the black.
- 29 October 2026: York campaigners say River Ouse bacteria levels too high: Intrepid citizen-science campaigners Ouse It or Lose It have called for action to be taken after discovering bacteria levels in a York river were "well and truly above satisfactory".
- 29 October 2026: Freshwater Habitats Trust: Why surveying the whole freshwater landscape matters: This summer, Freshwater Habitats Trust carried out the first surveys for Headstart, a major new Ofwat Water Innovation Fund project. Technical Director Penny Williams explains how the team went about gathering vital data for the project and the importance of broad surveys for future success.
- 29 October 2026: Freshwater Biological Association: New funding to support Cumbrian leeches: Don't tell Tony Hanccock, but leeches are back. As the FBA report: "Despite its spooky, bloodsucking reputation, the medicinal leech is an important part of Cumbria's freshwater ecosystems. However, populations have declined across Britain due to overharvesting, habitat loss, changes in land management and deteriorating water quality. There's still much we don't know about where medicinal leeches survive in Cumbria and what they need to thrive. Working with Freshwater Habitats Trust, Buglife and Cumbria Wildlife Trust, the FBA will begin by investigating historical records and habitat data to identify potential sites for future surveys. We'll also visit ponds and tarns to assess habitat condition and deploy light and temperature sensors to help us understand the environmental conditions that influence medicinal leech activity".
- 29 October 2026: Freshwater pearl mussels make a comeback in England's River Kent: Supported by Rewilding Europe's European Wildlife Comeback Fund, nearly 2,000 young mussels have now been released in Cumbria's River Kent, offering fresh hope for the future of this endangered species.
- 29 October 2026: Record-breaking Big Paddle Cleanup brings communities together: Building on the momentum of previous years, 2026 has been another record-breaking year for the movement, with

more than 12,000 paddibng volunteers taking part in cleaning local waterways.

- 28 October 2026: York campaigners say River Ouse bacteria levels too high: Intrepid citizen-science campaigners Ouse It or Lose It have called for action to be taken after discovering bacteria levels in a York river were "well and truly above satisfactory".
- 28 October 2026: SAS Autumn Round-Up: Taking The Fight For Clean Water Further: From Downing Street to the docks of Liverpool, from citizen scientists testing their local rivers to communities lobbying their policymakers en masse, the fight for clean water has been rapidly gathering pace, and there's plenty to celebrate, according to the last update from Surfers Against Sewage.
- 28 October 2026: Buglife responds to Lords inquiry into environmental contamination from pesticides: Another step forward in the process of tackling pet medicines gone wild. This week, Buglife considers and "welcomes the Government's recognition that pet parasite medicines can contaminate the environment and that significant improvements are needed in environmental monitoring, risk assessment and the responsible use of these products".
- 28 October 2026: Bristol RiverBlitz 2026: Citizen Science data highlights impact of drought: How does drought impact our rivers? Data collected by citizen scientists this summer tells us part of the story. For the eleventh year, Bristol Avon Rivers Trust coordinated its annual Bristol Avon RiverBlitz, a nine-day citizen science event where communities monitor water quality in the rivers and streams of the region. More than 200 volunteers collected water quality samples from 283 sites across the catchment, testing for phosphate and nitrate, two nutrients which when high indicate a river is polluted. Here's a report on what they found.
- 28 October 2026: Honouring the rivers, becks and springs of Yorkshire - with permission: Amy-Jane Beer tells us more about The Confluence of the Rivers ceremony, and why it makes another significant step forward for the growing river right movement.
- 27 October 2026: Embrace lazy autumn gardening to protect wildlife: It's official: you can happily slack on the gardening this week and do your bit your biodiversity, as Kat Hamill from Nottingham Trent University explains.
- 27 October 2026: [PDF] What your household can do to protect the River: Clean rivers begin at home, as Clean River Kent Campaign's new leaflet for households in Cumbria makes clear.

- 27 October 2026: Embrace lazy autumn gardening to protect wildlife: It's official: you can happily slack on the gardening this week and do your bit your biodiversity, as Kat Hamill from Nottingham Trent University explains.
- 27 October 2026: YDRT: From Stream to Screen: Our Stop-Motion Rivers Film: Catherine Mason of Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust updates us on an inspiring river education project: "One of the highlights of our recent Rivers4Life exhibition, which brought the environmental science of rivers to life through art, was a brilliant two-minute stop-motion film created by Years 3 and 4 at Applegarth Primary School, Northallerton entitled 'Everyone Loves Rivers'. Think Wallace and Gromit – but 2D and all about rivers!"
- 24 October 2026: In Search of the Vanishing River Mole!: Few rivers behave quite like the Mole. In some dry summers, it simply vanishes midway along its course, leaving a dry riverbed between stretches of flowing water upstream and downstream. It's one of England's most extraordinary river mysteries. This week, River Mole River Watch published a fascinating account of their investigation into "a river balanced on the edge".
- 19 October 2026: An introduction to the 'wee beasties' of the river: In a new blog for South East Rivers Trust, placement student Eilidh Vass Payne discusses riverfly monitoring and how you can get involved.
- 1 October 2026: Spotlight On: Litter Heroes Ambassador Ben Thornbury: When Ben first picked up a litter picker at the age of 15, he never imagined it would grow into a community movement that has transformed his hometown. For fellow Litter Heroes, Ben has one simple piece of advice: "Talk to people while you're out litter picking because one conversation can inspire someone else to get involved. The more people who join in, the bigger the difference we can make."

More news...

Events in November

November 2026

- 4 November 2026: Ford Water Recycling Project Webinar: Southern Water walk us through the plans for a new water recycling project in West Sussex. Wednesday 4 November between 6pm-7:30pm.
- 19 November 2026: Sustainable Water Systems: A talk by Larry Wolfe on SUDS techniques organized by Up Sewage Creek, Shrewsbury.

- Throughout November: Thames 21 events: Hands-on London activities this month include " "Back in Beck – River Restoration Project" (10/11, 11/11), "Action for Silk Stream – River Action Day" (26/11), and more.
- Throughout November: Don Catchment Rivers Trust events: Lots of hands-on practical/restoration/conservation activities.

More events...

Jobs and other opportunities

The closing dates for jobs are in brackets.

Jobs

- Evidence and Engagement Lead (Hampshire Avon): For the Love of Water (FLOW) CIC (30 November 2026)
- River Restoration Project Officer / Senior Project Officer: Norfolk Rivers Trust (22 November 2026)
- Communications Director: Freshwater Habitats Trust (20 November 2026)
- Project Coordinator (Transforming the Thames): Zoological Society of London (20 November 2026)
- River Skills Officer: Thames21 (16 November 2026)
- Environment Project Officer: Trent Rivers Trust (16 November 2026)
- Nature-based Solutions Manager: Trent Rivers Trust (16 November 2026)
- Evidence and Engagement Officer: Westcountry Rivers Trust (15 November 2026)
- Fisheries Programme Manager: Westcountry Rivers Trust (15 November 2026)
- Project Support Officer: Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust (15 November 2026)
- Environmental Team Leader: River Stewardship Company (15 November 2026)
- Part-time Project Manager: Nene Rivers Trust CIO (13 November 2026)
- Chief Operating Officer: The Wye and Usk Foundation (9 November 2026)
- Working Wetlands Advisory Officer: Devon Wildlife Trust (8 November 2026)
- Farm Advisor: Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) (8 November 2026)
- Working Wetlands Advisory Officer (Tavy): Devon Wildlife Trust (8 November 2026)
- Community Engagement Officer: Essex Waterways Navigation Trust (7 November 2026)

- Transforming the Wensum Project Manager: Norfolk Wildlife Trust (2 November 2026)
- Catchment Manager - Ure: Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust (2 November 2026)
- Destination Tweed Education and Engagement Officer (Maternity cover): Tweed Forum (2 November 2026)
- Spey Catchment Engagement Officer: Spey Catchment Initiative (1 November 2026)

Trustees and other voluntary posts

- Chairperson: Manchester Bolton and Bury Canal Society (7 January 2027)
- Trustees: Campaign for National Parks (7 December)
- Trustee (legal): Bristol Avon 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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