

CROWD: Clean Rivers of West Dorset

Notes and action points from the meeting of 18th April 2024 in Wootton Fitzpaine.

Attending:

- **River Char (River Char Community Project, RCCP):** Andrew Carey
River Char (Lower Char Community Project, LCCP): Dana Assinder
- **River Winniford (Winniford River Action Group, WRAG):** Lee Ramsden, Paul Ramsden
- **River Asker (Riverfly Testing Coordinator):** Howard Atkinson
- **River Mangerton and River Asker (River Monitor):** Chuck Willmott
- **River Brit (Upper River):** Rosemary Rychnovsky
River Brit (Lower River): Caroline Pearce
- **West Dorset Rivers and Coastal Streams (Catchment Officer):** Ian Rees
- **Litter Free Dorset:** Emma Teasdale
- **Westminster:** Chris Loder MP and **(Constituency Assistant)** Harry Coutts
- **Wessex Water:** Andy Mears, Wastewater Engagement Manager

- Apologies: **River Mangerton (River monitor):** Margaret Morgan-Grenville; **River Asker (River Asker Project):** Geoff May;
River Char (Riverfly Testing Coordinator): John Kenward

News from the rivers:

- **Mangerton / Asker** – there have been elevated levels of sediment following high rainfall.
- Chuck is hopeful of starting water vole monitoring.
- Howard has submitted a funding bid to DNL for a water vole project and for mink rafts.
- **Winniford** – Paul reported a 23,000 *E. coli* count in the lagoon. But EA have said this is ‘typical of a semi-urban stream’. WRAG’s testing is sent to Simplex Health - £70 a test. They will do this monthly now. (Andy cautioned that *E. coli* counts typically jump exponentially like this.)
- Emma reported that a permanent sign has gone at Seatown to advise against swimming in the beach lagoon. In discussion WRAG said they would like to have been consulted and would like the sign to promote health impacts more clearly. Emma explained the compromise needed to get landowner agreement.

News from Wessex Water (Andy Mears):

- Annual SO statistics were submitted at the end of February. A summary is on the Wessex Water website now.
- The real-time spills map will be live by the end of April. The ‘AutoQA’ check for false alarms will follow later, probably in late summer. WW will look at how they interact with Surfers Against Sewage.
- The [SO Improvement dashboard](#) is now on the WW website to see when overflows are scheduled for improvement.
- People can also sign up to a storm overflow newsletter.
- Golden Cap Caravan Park: WW fixed the pipe temporarily and are meeting soon to arrange a permanent repair.
- Screen at Newlands Bridge: photos shared, and site visit a possibility.
- Surface water separation at Newlands Holiday Park: project manager is Lucy George. Some quick wins possible.
- Broadwindsor developments. Andy has sent an email with details We can contact him for more details required.
- **AMP8:** 128 overflows scheduled (not finally confirmed) for improvement to reduce to <10 spills p.a. (cost £400m.
- 18 of Dorset’s 77 SOs are still scheduled for improvement in 2025-30. Chris offered to support WW on this.
- The WW contact to talk continuous river water quality monitors, which WW will be installing at SOs from 2025, is Cobus Compion: cobus.compion@wessexwater.co.uk

News from WDR&CS (Ian Rees):

- From 2025 WW will be putting Water Quality monitors upstream and downstream of all SOs. Possibly not picking up flow. They will measure pH, ammonia (sewage), temperature.
- Andy asked for CROWD and WW **[ACTION: AC and AM]** to submit a letter of support for the Pineapple Estate's partnership application to Dorset Council's Communities and Place Fund for the establishment of a community laboratory for West Dorset.
- The Brit Catchment NFM funding will provide 3 years' investment for the Simene, Brit, Asker and Mangerton. It will use sondes to monitor water quality on those rivers.

News from Westminster:

- Chris mentioned the visit by the PUSS for DEFRA, Robbie Moore, to Charmouth to discuss the lagoons on the Char and Winniford, and the Landscape Recovery and Natural Flood Management grants for the Brit Catchment.
- Chris talked about the £11 million Water Restoration Fund launched on 9th April by the RPA. This hypothecated from fines paid by four WASCs (not Wessex Water). The deadline for development awards is 7th June. Chris believed that bids could be accepted from outside the areas where the WASCS which had been fined were operating. He offered to attach a letter to any funding bid submitted by CROWD. **ACTION: ideas from anyone on this possible bid to be sent to Andrew by 1st May.**
- Chris reported that the EA had responded to CROWD's query about pathogens in beach sand. They have no remit to address the issue. Chris is pushing back on their response.
- Chris mentioned the Southwest Water roadshow in Lyme Regis on the same day as the meeting.
- Chris has a meeting with the EA's Ian Withers later in April. **ACTION: anyone with an issue for Chris to raise with him to contact Chris asap.**

RIVER CHAR Water Quality Monitoring:

- Howard and John have determined best approach to bacteriological monitoring.
- DNL have purchased the equipment they need. [Thank you Ian.] John has an incubator and fridge.
- Howard reported on sampling they have undertaken already at Stockham Bridge and just upstream of Charmouth lagoon. They have further questions about agar plates, the 'half-life' of *E. coli* bacteria, etc.
- WW have agreed to undertake some monitoring on the River Char and there will be a meeting on 25th April with Will Kirby and others from Wessex Water to discuss this. Ian said that DNL funding might be available to cover some of these costs. WW will provide testing strips to corroborate with lab-based analysis.
- Proposal: Andy suggested that we get a bacteriological expert (from the EA?) to talk to us. Someone involved in compliance / policy / practical. **ACTION: Andrew**

Plastics/Microplastics

- Dana said Nurdle have undertaken successful second visit – removing 1.5million nurdles (half were biobeads). Waste was removed with help from Dorset Council [Thank you Emma] and we should co-ordinate with Emma on plastic disposal in future.
- Recent storms have pushed more micro and macro-plastics on shore. Possibly linked to a shipping spill off the coast of Spain and/or the N. Atlantic Gyre. This has been discouraging but a beach clean was organised immediately with good levels of public support. **[ACTION Dana/Andrew: Put photos on the CROWD website]**
- Swanage Town Council recently passed a Motion for the Ocean. This *“seeks to help all local governments to identify ways they can support a more ecologically healthy sea and to rethink how the ocean is taken into account in their planning and decision making. Key actions can include working with partners to improve water quality, working with the fishing industry to improve sustainability, taking measures to reduce litter getting into the sea, giving children the chance to experience the ocean first hand, and lobbying the UK Government on the issues it can influence like strengthening regulations around single use plastics.”*

Other business:

- Next meeting (incl. Chris Loder if not in purdah) Friday 21st June, 1.30-3pm, Wootton Fitzpaine Village Hall.

27th April 2024