

CROWD: Clean Rivers Of West Dorset

FRIDAY 5TH DECEMBER 2025 MEETING

WOOTTON FITZPAINE VILLAGE HALL, WOOTTON FITZPAINE DT6 6ND – 11:00AM-1:00PM

NOTES

Apologies: Emma Teasdale, Ian Rees, Peter Stapleton

Present:

- **R. Winniford (Winniford River Action Group):** Lee Ramsden, Paul Ramsden
- **R. Char (R. Char Community Project):** Andrew Carey
- **R. Char (R.Char Action Group & Riverfly Testing Coordinator):** John Kenward
- **R. Mangerton & R. Asker (monitor):** Chuck Willmott
- **R. Mangerton (monitor):** Margaret Morgan-Grenville
- **R. Axe (Little Axe Gp, Broadwindsor):** Sheila Hawkins
- **River Bride:** Deborah Legge
- **River Brit (Upper River):** Rosemary Rychnovsky
- **River Brit (Lower River):** Caroline Pearce
- **River Simene (Parish Councillor):** Bob Hamblett
- **West Dorset Wilding:** Dana Assinder
- **West Dorset Constituency:** Edward Morello MP
- **Wessex Water –** Julian Okoye
- **Environment Agency –** Fiona White

INTRODUCTION – We welcomed:

Debbie Legge, a researcher, writer and lecturer on environmental and animal law – in particular wildlife and water issues – representing the River Bride. She has set up and runs the Bridport Rivers Catchment Group – on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/445925756814685/>

Sheila Hawkins, who has set up The Little Axe Group in Broadwindsor (Dorset). The Little Axe runs into River Axe catchment at Clapton (Somerset). The group has recruited volunteers and set up water quality monitoring points in Broadwindsor and Drimpton and at Seaborough.

What has uplifted us?

- A cluster of young grass snakes in the compost
- The sight of cormorants
- A young adder at Cogden Beach
- Fog at sea whilst swimming
- Walking the dog – every day is different
- A mass of mayfly
- Ravens
- A mistle thrush
- The return of two barn owls
- A kingfisher sighted
- Long-tail tits and a greater spotted woodpecker
- A stag and 30 deer
- Seeing the catchment described in mist

UPDATES – WESSEX WATER – Julian Okoye

Julian responded to the following questions for Wessex Water (answers in brief below – see also Julian’s slides on the [CROWD website here](#)).

Ofwat

Q. In response to [WW’s Section 19 undertakings](#), how does WW’s undertaking to cut spills at specific overflows through new investment in AMP8 affect CROWD rivers?

A. Wessex Water will spend £1.1m (via grants and technical advice) on rainwater management at customers’ properties. It will spend £1.3m on additional flow monitoring up and downstream of its assets. It will spend an additional £8.6m on storm overflows – specifically on sealing privately owned drains against ground water infiltration. It’s much too soon to say where exactly this money will be spent.

Q. What might WW’s undertaking to help customers to sustainably manage rainwater look like in practice?

A. It’s too soon to say but it will include business customers and there is a schools’ programme.

River Bride

Q. The Bride has not previously been represented at CROWD. Can you quantify sewage spills into the River Bride from WW assets in recent years, explain what is causing the spills and tell us what actions are planned or currently being taken to reduce or stop them?

The two main offenders are the SOs at Puncknowle and Chicksbridge, which are both badly affected by groundwater infiltration. Chicksbridge SO is scheduled for improvement by 2023. (details in Julian’s slides).

Charmouth

Q. At our last meeting in September it looked as if works at Newlands Bridge, Charmouth earlier in 2025 had more or less eliminated spills. What spills have there been at Newlands EO since then?

A. There have been no spills since February 2025.

Q. If the approach taken at Newlands has worked, does WW have plans to work with other campsites / holiday parks to separate surface water at source and reduce pressure on the sewage treatment system?

A. Not really. These works are potentially complex and expensive.

Q. At a Charmouth CTAP (Coastal Transition) meeting this week we heard that there had been no positive feedback from Wessex Water about a nature-based solution at Charmouth Foreshore, despite clear signs that the pumping station at the Foreshore already cannot cope with storm water levels and despite the problem being exacerbated by rising sea levels. Would WW be willing in principle to discuss using a reedbed or other NFM approach to help protect Wessex Water assets (including the STW) and help with storm surges up river?

A. Julian will answer this separately.

Seatown/Chideock

Q. Can you update us on current work at the Chideock Sewage Treatment Works on the River Winniford?

A. The work at Chideock treatment plant is maintenance on a rising main.

Phosphate/Orthophosphate

Q. Can you tell us how many STWs in the CROWD area remove phosphate? And how many are due to be upgraded to do so in AMP8? Have you any thoughts on the fact that WW adds an estimated 300 tonnes of phosphoric acid per year for plumbosolvency control and then removes an estimated 300-500 tonnes of phosphorus – at great expense - across its estate?

A. 8 West Dorset WRCs have P permits (which require WW to remove phosphate at them). 5 more will be given permits in 2030. 22 have no permits and will remain that way. See slides for more detail – but WW has got to achieve a significant reduction in treated wastewater phosphorus loadings to meet statutory Environment Act targets: 55% reduction by 2030; 80% by 2038.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – Fiona White (Team Leader for Analysis & Reporting)

Fiona responded to the following question:

Q. As CROWD river groups start to undertake more river testing, can the EA offer any guidance on preferred/recommended approaches, e.g.

- what bacteria, chemicals, metals, pesticides, water conditions to monitor?
- what methods to use: Petrifilm, Fluidion or Membrane Filtration for bacteria; Hanna Eggs vs CSI alternatives for chemicals; sondes and gauges or manual testing, etc.?
- what modality to follow: [Friends of the River Dart](#) or [CastCo](#) or [RiverHub](#) or something else?

A. Fiona circulated The Environment Agency's '[Supporting Citizen Science - Technical Advisory Framework](#)' which sets out how citizen science should be designed and quality-assured.

She also referred to the [CaSTCo Collect Data Archive](#) and the [CaSTCo Roadmap](#), which sets out where and at what scale that kind of collaborative monitoring should go over the next decade.

She also sent details of the [CaBA Citizen Science and Volunteer Monitoring Resource Pack](#).

She also suggested that it may be useful for us to talk to Yasmin Guler about the Pineapple Laboratory and for Yasmin to join us for a separate meeting to help plan out monitoring that could be useful to undertake and to answer John's questions about testing kits for bathing waters – with reference to the Supporting Citizen Science project of which Yasmin is part.

Fiona also referenced Andy Jefferies' very useful Natural England [blog on Citizen Science](#).

WEST DORSET CONSTITUENCY – Edward Morello MP

Edward reported that a LibDem Private Member's Bill on solar power has just been adopted and that the next project is a LibDem PMB on rainwater management strategy (including rainwater harvesting).

The LibDems are also trying to make the Water Companies statutory consultees on planning applications (with the aim of passing the cost of water service provision in new builds to the developer).

The LibDems are pressing for Blue Flag status to be applied to rivers, as part of the existing Blue Flag scheme.

FUTURE PLANS AND DIRECTIONS – We discussed whether CROWD should be more public facing? (e.g. Bob's proposals to create a directory of local river groups, to make a calendar and/or film, to publish a book of local memories of our rivers). It was agreed that we don't have the resources to do that and that CROWD is generally working well with its current focus.

NEXT MEETING – Friday 6th March, 11am, Wootton Fitzpaine Village Hall