



Cleaning Up Your River

7-9pm 13th May – Zoom. Notes from the Breakout Rooms.

Breakout Room 1

How can we engage families and children in events?

- Join a group or a day-event doing river monitoring.
- Organise a flash fiction competition on invasive species.

How can we find out what local groups there are?

- Get Dorset CAN to create a map.

How can we encourage people to treat their river with respect?

Breakout Room 2

How can we get more volunteers to organise, publicise, monitor and remove Himalayan Balsam.

- Public events (e.g. Charmouth Dragon River Festival) attract volunteers of all ages.

What general help can we get?

- Work with Town / Parish Council, which can give initial funding for a community project.
- Work with Dorset National Landscape, which can offer info, money and equipment in some areas.
- Join forces with people/organisations you might feel are to blame for the poor state of a river, such as Wessex Water, landowners and farmers (via FWAG/FIPL).

Gaps in knowledge: We need to know what our river is, its unique nature and the causes of damage.

- Think of the river's catchment not just the course of the river itself and do not focus too narrowly on the obvious cause of pollution such as sewage and farming practices.

How can we engage with young people?

The River Axe group...

- has set up 7 trout hatcheries in primary schools – these attract younger people.
- is making animated films introducing rivers and river life for 3-6 year-olds.
- runs river-based activities for all age groups via Magdalene Farms.
- uses Citizen Science as a programme for all ages and there are plans to use DofE participants to do beneficial volunteering with river-centred work.
- finds the River Ranger in one catchment is central to successfully engaging youngsters.
- plans to teach teachers of the new environmental GCSE and is making walking and cycling cool!

Breakout Room 3

Concerned that the EA is not interested.

We need to keep pressure on parliament.

The drive for clean rivers needs to challenge legislation. How can we do that?

- The Chris Packham movement Wild Justice was highlighted as a group to join.

Breakout Room 4

We'd like help/support making sense of the complexities of it all, particularly the regulatory side of things, and help to gather data and make sense of it all and use it to direct action.

We'd like knowledge on strategies that give nature and rivers a chance! Local designations, charters, etc.

We're struggling to open the right doors. We'd like help finding the right way in. And help to know whether the information we are being fed by statutory agencies is a load of rubbish.

Breakout Room 5

We need to avoid duplication. How do we make sure everyone knows what is going on across their area?

We know the knowledge and information is there, but it is unclear how we access it.

- CROWD has been a significant help in Bridport.

New action groups want to start, but all initiatives lead towards Ian, whose time is finite.

Difficult to network across areas and projects. We need a hub to speak through.

- River Lim uses coordinators to oversee the distinct groups with monthly meetings. Stakeholders include South West Water, the EA, Town Council, Dorset Council – all contribute to the action plan, so everyone knows the direction which increases efficiency. Town Council facilitates the meetings, which encourages other stakeholders (e.g. EA) to send representation.
- Stour and Allen rivers have some involvement from XR due to the amount of sewage in the Stour. Planet Wimborne is another group operating in the catchments – they are less confrontational. Riverfly is recognised as an exemplar for long-term monitoring and is rewarding for volunteers.
- River Lydden: Volunteers have run a water blitz and monitor water quality up and downstream of sewage treatment works.
- North Dorset (particularly Blackmore Vale) is not in a national landscape so does not receive support from the NLS, but FWAG Southwest, Dorset Wildlife Trust and Wessex Rivers Trust are helpful and they hope to secure funding from both Southwest Water and Wessex Water to improve the Stour Headwaters.
- River Axe: it helps to join a bigger group. But partnerships can be complicated (e.g. crossing county boundaries)
- Request for Dorset CAN to create a map of river groups.
- Request for Dorset CAN to produce a guide for the actions you can take for measuring water quality.
- Create a pollution report with local data, regulator data (EA) and water company data.
- Possible funding sources: town / parish councils, Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL).

Breakout Room 6

Hard to know who is doing what.

- Would be good to have a list of groups and organisations. Could Dorset CAN do this ?
- The Rivers Trust is setting up a map / directory of all groups so we could link to this maybe?
- It would be good to involve all sea related groups.

Difficulty in knowing how to approach landowners and who owns what land.

- (Simon Browning): Tier 1 monitoring is not confrontational so you can approach landowners with a general "we are just interested in the overall health of the river". Also Tier 0 /1 monitoring is about understanding all factors affecting a river and is less confrontational to landowners. Try contacting one landowner – get credibility and then ask that farmer for the intro to others, etc.

Concern that we could do harm to fish and mayfly populations through riverfly testing.

- (Simon Browning): it *can* be damaging / disruptive so it should be used regularly but sparingly.

Is there any point in campaigning for the EA to monitor our rivers?

- (Simon Browning): this is already happening and he has seen the EA start to review its monitoring systems. Definitely a good idea to keep the pressure up.