

CROWD: Clean Rivers of West Dorset

Notes and action points from the meeting of 25th January 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 Asker (River Asker Project): Geoff May
- **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 Simene (Parish Councillor):** Steve Evans; **Winniford River (Winniford River Action Group, WRAG):** Peter Stapleton; **River Mangerton (River monitor):** Margaret Morgan-Grenville

Introduction:

Andrew confirmed an online meeting with Ruth Barden and Will Kirby at Wessex Water on 30th January to discuss their offer of support with 'Length of River' testing on the River Char.

News from Wessex Water (Andy Mears):

- Andy reported 2023 spills figures for the River Char as follows:
Charmouth LSO – 100 (normally c. 70). Charmouth STW – 7 (normally c. 3). The Street CSO – 0.
Newlands Bridge Pumping Station – 19 (normally c. 13)
He stressed the abnormally high rainfall in late 2023. This increase in spills will probably be seen all across the region. WW will send full 2023 data to the EA by end Feb, for publication (on the WW website) in March.
- There are delays with the live map of realtime spills data. All remaining WASCs are aiming to go live in March. Defra aims to have its combined national spills data available in May. Andy has QA concerns, as WW hasn't yet been able to get the reporting system to make adjustments for technical anomalies (i.e. faulty readings that look like spills but aren't).
- The promised fine-meshed (6mm) screen has been installed at Newlands Bridge PS, Charmouth (25th Jan).
- WW has completed its survey of Newlands Holiday Park and identified places where significant amounts of surface water are entering the sewer. WW will need to build a new surface water sewer to deal with this. There is no timescale for this yet.
- Chris pressed Andy Mears on WW's Rainsavers projects in Chippenham and Bridport, to find out what can be done to 'turn up the dial' and extend such projects. Andy said they first needed to be reported and written up in detail so costs and benefits could be understood.
- WW has been consulted on moving the sampling spot at Charmouth Beach and had no objection to the change. So this may happen before the next bathing season.
- 18 of Dorset's 77 SOs are still scheduled for improvement in 2025-30. Looking likely that this number will be confirmed. Chris offered to support WW on this.

News from WDR&CS (Ian Rees):

- Peter Stone has been looking at changing land use and will advise on flooding at Chideock.
- Ian has coordinated a £600,000 Natural Flood Management bid to Defra covering 33 sites in the Asker Catchment. Outcome awaited. **ACTION: Ian to send bid details to Chris Loder.** (Chris has spoken to EA's Rachel Jacobs on the money needed to fund all these NFM bids/measures and says he wants this work to be prioritised. He is happy to champion the NFM bid if that is helpful.)
- Ian is also looking at the [Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund](#) – looking to access private funding for public goods via a joint bid with Blackdown Hills and E. Devon National Landscape.
- Ian reported the successful [14th Dec public meeting](#) with CaSTCo's Simon Browning in Bridport.
- Ian is putting together a funding bid to kit out the Laboratory carcass currently at Pineapple Estate.

News from the rivers:

- **Dana** reported the successful Lower Char Community Project (LCCP) social event at Charmouth in January, with 85 people attending to see the film the group is making and hear about the nurdle clean-up.
- A pioneering not-for-profit company called Nurdle is [visiting Charmouth for two separate weeks](#) in January and March to conduct a clean-up of microplastics on the beach. The work is funded by South West Water (SWW) and initiated and coordinated by LCCP. There will be a community event on 10th March.
- Andrew reported SWW's concerns about staff safety at events like this and **ACTION: Andrew to send Chris details of the 10th March public event** (part of the second Nurdle visit to Charmouth).
- **Paul** reported on Winniford water testing – pollution levels are <10% of those in dry weather. Both tributaries polluted with *E coli*. Winniford River Action Group (WRAG) has been refused a meeting with Dorset Council on nitrate pollution because it is outside their remit. **ACTION: Paul to email Chris details of Winniford test results in a form that Chris can forward to the EA.**
- **Emma**: Permanent signage is going up at Seatown to advise against swimming in the beach lagoon.

News from Westminster:

- Chris offered help/support to ensure the Brit Catchment Landscape Recovery Bid “get over the line”.
- Chris asked for any points we would like him to take up with Natural England. (He is meeting Tony Juniper and Marian Spain of NE in February). **ACTION: anyone with an axe to grind.**
- Chris reported a recent meeting with Colin Skellett of WW where he had pressed WW to start reporting the volume as well as frequency of SO sewage spills.
- It won't be appropriate for Chris to attend CROWD meetings during the 2-month pre-General Election period.

CROWD Aims and Focus:

The new aims and focus provisionally agreed in November were approved by CROWD members (all present excluding Andy Mears who was confirmed as a guest of the group). Andy asked for it to be noted that WW think it highly unlikely that bathing water status is achievable for the river lagoons at Charmouth and Seatown.

Intertidal Zone Pollution:

Howard's draft resolution was discussed. It was agreed that we must first check who is responsible for Blue Flag / Bathing Water Standards and that Chris would first ask the EA if they are reviewing the issue and if they are concerned about CFAs in foam. **ACTION: Howard to draft a preliminary question for Chris to forward to the EA.**

Measuring Bacterial Populations in CROWD Rivers:

Ian offered to find a source of funding for the necessary materials. Item to be discussed at the next CROWD meeting, after discussions with WW on 30th January

Other business:

- Next Zoom meeting – early March 2024 (**ACTION: Andrew to send poll to choose dates**)
- Next face-to-face meeting (incl. Chris Loder) Friday 12th April, 11.30-1pm, Wootton Fitzpaine Village Hall.