



West Dorset Rivers & Coastal Streams:
catchment issues appraisal appendices

22/06/2015



RIVER CHAR

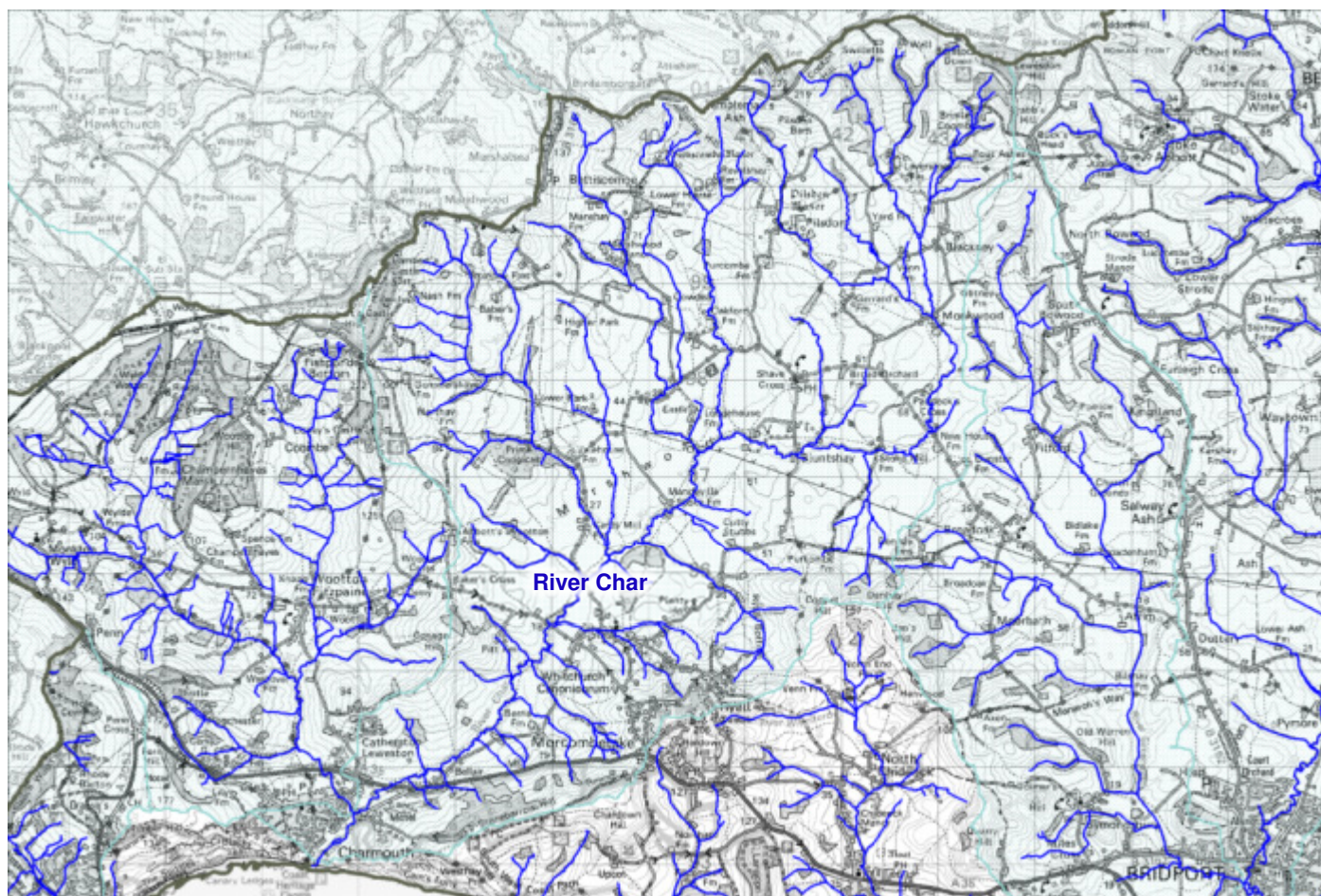
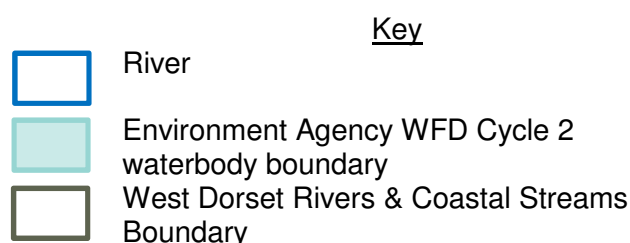


Figure 16: Map of the River Char sub-catchment



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Description

The source of the Char is said to be on the flanks of Lewesdon Hill but other tributaries run down from Bettiscombe and Marshwood village. Its valley quickly broadens to become the Marshwood Vale which, as its name suggests, is characterised by clay soils and lies wet for much of the year. It is a 'flashy' catchment with rapid run-off, and the river itself is widely acknowledged to be a natural, unadulterated water course. The Char is approximately 16 km long. The entire catchment is in the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the coastal strip, known as the Jurassic coast, has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Medium to large dairy units dominate much of the area with agricultural land use in the catchment being nearly all permanent and temporary grassland. The exception to this is maize cultivation, the extent of which varies from year to year. It is a renowned pastoral landscape with bountiful hedges and hedgerow trees, and the catchment is rimmed with characterful hill forts. The river is not formally fished and, it is believed, has never been stocked resulting in an unusually 'natural' brown trout population of high conservation value.

River length	16.91 km
Catchment area	38.15 km ²
Geology	It rises on clay and flows through mudstone for the majority of its course.

Land use	Intensive dairy dominates land use
Principle towns and villages	Pilsden, Bettiscombe, Marshwood, Fishpond Bottom, Whitchurch Canonorum, Morecombelake, Charmouth

Environment Agency status assessment

Using the best available data, the Environment Agency have classified the river using their WFD hierarchy. It is a 'one out – all out' approach, so the classification is based on the lowest classification of the 10 individual elements.

Key

Classifications

High status
Good status
Moderate status
Poor status
Bad status
Does not require assessment
No data

Ecological	Chemical	Invertebrates
Fish	Phytobenthos	Macrophytes
Phosphates	Ammonia	Dissolved oxygen
pH	Other	

OVERALL STATUS:

AMBITION FOR 2021:

POOR STATUS
MODERATE STATUS

Identified threats

Interviews with 34 organisations over the winter of 2014 were held to gauge the perceived threats to the water environment within the West Dorset Rivers & Coastal Streams Catchment. The summarised anecdotal information is listed below:

Threats	Location
Flooding [due to clay soils]	Throughout catchment
Point source pollution [phosphates]	Whitchurch Canonorum
Point source pollution [agriculture]	Throughout catchment
Low flows	Whitchurch Canonorum
Diffuse agricultural pollution	Throughout catchment
Sedimentation	Throughout catchment
Complex rural run-off issues	Pilsdon & Bettiscombe
Sediment runoff	Throughout catchment
Stream blockages	Lower catchment
Bank erosion	Charmouth
Habitat degradation	Charmouth
Invasive species [Himalayan balsam & giant hogweed]	Throughout catchment
Shading	Throughout catchment
Lack of awareness	Lower catchment

Existing management action

Information on existing measures was also gathered during the interviewing of 34 organisations. A summary of the actions are listed below:

Environment Agency respond to pollution incidence
Char Valley Parish Plan: 'keep streams free from domestic pollution' including local volunteer monitors
Project specific walkover surveys
Char Valley Parish Plan: press Dorset County Council and West Dorset District Council for improved highway maintenance
Pasture pumps installed (x 4) by Dorset Wildlife Trust to remove need for livestock to drink from river, near Whitchurch Canonorum
On-farm capital projects coordinated by Dorset Wildlife Trust, implemented & funded to reduce sediment,

e.g. gateway renewal
Dorset Wildlife Trust partnership with Natural England / Catchment Sensitive Farming offering advice, events, small scale funding throughout catchment, 2011-15
Dorset Wildlife Trust have undertaken in-river large woody debris redistribution to relieve erosion and create habitat, 2012 - 2015
Bankside coppicing and in-river habitat restoration 2012-15 undertaken by Dorset Wildlife Trust (on-going)
Himalayan balsam pulling parties run by Dorset Wildlife Trust and local volunteers (on-going)
Dorset Wildlife Trust giant hogweed control project on Wootton Fitzpaine tributary (on-going)
Dorset Wildlife Trust ran a river wildlife 'celebration' / education event in 2014 aimed at landowners
Dorset Wildlife Trust river fly surveys 2012 - 2014 – kick sampling on gravel sections