

Char Chat News

For residents and our guests in
Whitchurch Canonicorum, Wootton Fitzpaine, Morcombelake
Stanton St Gabriel, Fishpond, Ryall and Monkton Wyld

May 2023

Welcome to the Char Valley Parish Council newsletter

May 2023

Spring and Winter have been colder and wetter this year. Not only has this led to increased damage to our gardens and homes, but it hasn't helped to keep our energy bills lower. If you know someone who is struggling, or you are, then please contact Dorset Council or Citizens Advice for information on support services.

The Government have recently consulted on changes to Permitted Development which would allow more landowners to offer camping to greater numbers without the need for planning permission, even in an AONB. When this is coupled with the unprecedented increases in production costs being incurred by our farmers, and the need for more families to find supplemental income, its not surprising to see requests for permission to turn outbuildings and farm buildings into residential accommodation. Whether such an increase is good for Char Valley is difficult to assess, but it would be good to hear what you think.

Dorset Council are also consulting on a number of issues that are very relevant to us, including ways to increase the environmental qualities of buildings. This includes new builds, alterations to existing properties, and what can be done to listed buildings. From June this year, the Building Regulations become a lot stricter with far greater enforcement powers and penalties applied to both homeowners and their building contractors.

We're still asking for flood wardens, and we will shortly have a vacancy for another parish councillor. Volunteers very welcome !

We're also planning to reduce further the amount of information that we print, and would like some help from a volunteer to improve our digital communications.

Our editions of this parish newsletter will be moving on-line and we'd like your feedback on whether this will affect you, and, if so, how. Please respond through your local parish councillors.

Char Valley Parish Council (CVPC) is a group council made up of the civil parish councils of Stanton St Gabriel, Whitchurch Canonicorum (North and South), and Wootton Fitzpaine.

Because each separate council is small, we join up for meetings so we can take decisions together and achieve more.

The combined civil parish stretches from the Jurassic Coast to the Marshwood Vale, all falling within the West Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

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The Editor

Opinions expressed by individual contributors do not necessarily represent the views of CVPC as a whole.

CVPC Meetings

CVPC meets monthly except in August and December. Being a group council, our meetings are normally held in each of our village halls in rotation—James Hargreaves Hall in Morcombelake (JH), Whitchurch Canonorum village hall (WC), and Wootton Fitzpaine village hall (WF). The meeting minutes and agenda are posted on parish notice boards and website. All our meetings are open to the public and we welcome public participation.

Our meetings are generally on Monday evenings and start at 7:30pm, with the following schedule for 2023:

May 15th (JH) - This is the CVPC AGM

Jun 12th (WC) Jul 10th (WF) Sep 11th (JH) Oct 9th (WC) Nov 27th (JH)

CVPC COUNCILLORS

www.charvalley.org

Representing: WHITCHURCH CANONICORUM (NORTH)

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Tara Hansford	01297 560624	E: taz.hansford@googlemail.com
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Representing: STANTON ST. GABRIEL

Andrew Carey	01297 560057	E: acarey@charvalleypc.com
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CLERK

Tamsin Ely	07786 086038	E: charvalley@dorset-aptc.gov.uk
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Footpath Officers:	Wootton Fitzpaine	Sarah Dewe	sarahdewe@mac.com	07973 920001
	Whitchurch	Christine Peat	christine_peat15@yahoo.co.uk	
	Stanton St Gabriel	Andrew Carey	acarey@charvalleypc.com	01297 260057

Tree Officer:		Emma O'Bryen	emma@obryen.co.uk	
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Representing: DORSET COUNCIL: Councillor for Marshwood Vale ward

Simon Christopher	07798 833715	E: cllrsimon.christopher@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
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Clare Mahaddie has resigned from CVPC due to medical reasons. Clare has been an outstanding contributor to the Parish Council for many years with considerable expertise and understanding of planning matters and an extensive knowledge of environmental issues. We wish her a full and speedy recovery.

Change to Char Chat Newsletter format

To reduce costs and following feedback from residents, we are reducing the content of our newsletters. We will only print highlights and summaries of articles with a link to the full versions available on line on the Char Valley website.

Initially, this will not save on postage but will reduce our printing costs and recycled paper usage.

We are considering a move to a **fully online only** version in the future. This will consist of an email circulated to all residents with highlights only and links through to full information held on our website.

The timing of the transition to on-line only format *will depend on feedback from our residents*.

If any resident wishes to continue to receive either a full version or a highlight version in printed form, please contact your parish councillor or parish clerk.

In the meantime:

If you want to receive a full print of any article please contact our Parish Clerk or any one of your parish councillors by phone, email, or in writing and we can print a copy and send it to you.



Flood Warden

We still do not have anyone volunteering to be a Char Valley Flood Warden. As you know, there have been many areas of local flooding in the CVPC area but we are unable to notify residents, put up signage, or put in place any local mitigation. Our sand bag stores are depleted and we have nowhere to store new bags and any signs for local use.

Until we have local volunteers, we will be unable to provide any support to residents beyond helpful phone calls.

Parish Councillor vacancy

There is a vacancy for a parish councillor to represent Whitchurch South. If you know of anyone who is interested, please contact our parish clerk, Tamsin, to discuss. This is a good opportunity for someone who is unsure as, at this time, the commitment is only for one year—until the 2024 local elections.

Char Valley Parish Noticeboards

We have installed two new noticeboards—one at Felicity's Farm Shop and the other in Wootton Fitzpaine, All notice boards are now able to be opened without a key so you can read multi-page documents.

We do have a statutory requirement to display certain documents so please do not remove anything from these boards.

Other notices of public interest can also be displayed but, because we are an independent public body we cannot support or endorse local businesses nor any political displays. Notices advertising businesses or political gatherings or campaigns will have to be removed.

Dorset Council consultations

Planning for Climate Change Planning Documents: this is a very important consultation from Dorset Council on potential changes to the planning process to improve the resilience of buildings to climate change. This will cover new buildings as well as addressing issues with listed buildings. It has started and will finish on 8th June.

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-for-climate-change

Electric vehicle charging points—Dorset Council are asking for suggestions for the siting of Electric Vehicle charging points in our rural villages and hamlets.

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/parking/parking/electric-vehicle-charge-points

Dog control—Dorset Public Space Protection Orders. Dorset Council will be running a consultation from mid-June on whether to reduce the restriction on the use of leads when walking dogs on beach fronts during off-season.

Thermal Imaging Camera

There is a thermal imaging camera available locally to borrow and use to detect the main areas of heat loss for your property. It can be borrowed from your local Energy Champion. Contact your local parish councillor for details.

A35 Roadworks

Following the debacle of the A35 roadworks over winter, we managed to get National Highways to provide a much better process for diversions for local residents over the Easter holidays. We were disappointed that NH scheduled roadworks during the busy Easter holiday period and asked our MP, Chris Loder to intervene. Unfortunately he did not respond in time, so we dealt directly with NH and their contractor and successfully obtained local diversions that could be used over the closure period by our residents and visitors.

Digital Communication support needed

CVPC would like some help with our digital communications please. If anyone would like to provide advice, guidance, and support, that would be a great help. Please contact your local parish councillor or clerk.

Your Annual Parish Meetings (APM)

These are statutory meetings held annually in each parish around the country for residents to meet and discuss issues that are relevant to them with their local parish councillors. At the Whitchurch South (Morcombelake & Ryall) and Stanton St Gabriel joint APM, all the councillors but no residents turned up. At the Whitchurch North APM, four local residents came along. Your Parish Councillors are volunteers working on your behalf—it would be great if you supported them. (Wootton Fitzpaine's APM on April 26th is after our printing deadline)

20mph Speed Limits in our Villages

We have published details of how to achieve a 20 mph speed limit in our villages and hamlets if our residents want this. If you feel that a 20mph speed limit is warranted in your area, and can find a local resident, or team of residents, to lead on fulfilling the necessary steps through Dorset Council's process, then please contact your local parish councillor for assistance and guidance.



Local Crime and Police Response

We seem to be quite fortunate here in Char Valley and don't seem to have much crime locally, but when we do, we have been very disappointed with the lack of support and response from our local police force.

In particular, the failure of the police to respond in person (or at all) to reported local thefts, the lack of local patrols, and the lack of interest when we directly requested help, prompted us to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Dorset, David Sidwick, in February.



We questioned why West Dorset was so poorly served and how he could justify his request to *increase* the Police precept at a time when we didn't seem to be getting any service here—who's police support are we paying for?

Sadly, the response from his office was a standard exposition of the reasons why Dorset's precept needed to increase, with a promise, as yet unfulfilled, to have the local Chief Superintendent, Richard Bell, contact us directly to explain the lack of local response.

Although we are very happy to live in an area where

we *don't have* police cars driving round the whole time, or 'villains' driving wildly around our lanes, or residents feeling under threat, or other anti-social activities, we would like to see a response when we do actually need help.



**DORSET
POLICE**

Furthermore, there is a social benefit to have a 'local' police officer who can be seen to be around—even if it was only a couple of times a year! One of the major challenges, as reported to us by the PCC, can be the social isolation of rural living and how that can lead to abusive relationships with people feeling too far away from neighbours to escape.

Obviously, such isolation is not helped by our very poor local communication services (mobile phone signals, non-existent broadband etc), and the increasing number of buildings being converted from family homes to holiday lets, lying empty for long parts of the year—making your neighbours even further away.

One way to influence the Police response is to report *all* crimes. This may sound pointless, but the policing system works on statistics and seems to only recognise that we exist if there are crimes reported. For everyone's benefit, we need to be 'on the map'.

Whitchurch, Morcombelake & Ryall Flower & Dog Show!

28th August 2023 2:00pm to 5:00pm—call for entries—put it in your diaries now.

This local show is a traditional village show with a mix of stalls, games and music, together with a fun Dog Show and a Flower and Garden Produce competition.

The show is based at the Village Hall in Whitchurch Canonicorum, and in the field and hardstanding area behind. There will be a marquee for the Flower and Produce Competition together with a fixed area for the Dog Show.

We normally get a good mix of local people and holiday makers from around the region. The show will provide a range of on-site refreshment for visitor to purchase so we do ask our stall holders not to offer refreshments as part of their stalls.

We do ask the Stall holders to bring all the equipment they need but a table can be provided at a small charge of £5 (as we need to hire these). **The closing date for Stalls Entry is the 14th Aug.**

Contact: mark.southcott365@btinternet.com

Potholes !!

We have a few!! Of course, everywhere in the country has problems with potholes, some far worse than here. That's not an excuse though. Please report all potholes on the Dorset Council reporting system. We know that this doesn't guarantee that they will be fixed, but equally, they will never be fixed unless reported.

If you sustain damage because of a pothole, you can make a claim for costs etc. Not surprisingly, Dorset Council reject many claims, but one of the key questions is 'has Dorset Council been negligent?'. If the potholes are not reported, then it's much easier for them to deny responsibility.

Dorset has a set of targets for fixing holes—here's an extract from their website:

"We fix around 20,000 potholes every year. We aim to permanently repair potholes on our first visit."

"Potholes are prioritised for repair based on location, size, depth and the category of road it's on - a pothole on an A class road will be fixed quicker than a similar pothole on a C or D class road."

"We aim to complete repairs within 32 hours (for the highest risk) and 28 days (for minor risk) of reporting by

public or inspection team, making every effort to repair the majority of potholes within 28 days."



We wrote to Dorset Council to ask how long it takes to fix a reported pothole on our Char valley roads. We listed about 14 roads and received the following reply:

There are no potholes reported for: Gasson Lane, Green Pit Knapp, Wootton Lane, and Monkton Wyld Lane.

For Berne Lane: 5 potholes—all fixed within time; Tizards Knapp—5 fixed in time; Spence Lane—1 pothole and 1 blocked gully fixed in time; Ryall Lane—1 fixed in time; Prime Lane—1 fixed in time; Lone Lane—1 pothole and 1 gully fixed in time; Campernhayes Lane—2 potholes and 1 gully fixed in time; Cards Mill Lane—3 potholes fixed in time and 2 over time; Bluntshay Lane—3 blocked gullies fixed in time; and Goodens Hill—1 blocked gully fixed in time.

If you think that there are more potholes or blocked gullies in our roads than are showing on these reports, then report them!

Time to get walking again!

With Spring on its way we start to think about getting out to walk in the beautiful English countryside again, but where to find new and interesting walks?

Walking in Dorset <https://www.walkinginengland.co.uk/dorset> has loads of walks to download and print, free, it also has books of walks, details of all the walking groups in the county and much more. Whether you want to



walk on your own or with a group all the information is there in one place.

John Harris (who maintains the website) said "With walks from half a mile to twelve miles plus long, and a note of suitability for pushchairs and wheelchairs, everyone can find a walk to enjoy."

www.walkinginengland.co.uk john@walkinginengland.co.uk

Minutes of CVPC Meetings

In keeping with our desire to reduce costs and resource usage, and following advice on the legal status, we are considering whether to display copies of our meeting minutes online only. As we do now, we would continue to email these to residents.

If you have any concerns about this, please contact your local Parish Councillor.

Jubilee Trees and Benches for the Char Valley

For the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 the Char Valley Parish Council decided to give each village and hamlet a rowan tree to plant to commemorate the event. It took a long time to organise and get permissions but finally they are all in place.

The trees were ordered from Perrie Hale Nurseries, near Honiton and they arrived on January 13th 2023 along with stakes, tree ties, aprons to prevent weeds at ground level, circular netting for protection from animals, and

a slate name plaque. Over the following few months people from each area decided where they wanted to plant their tree.



In Ryall a green triangle near the noticeboard was chosen.

Whitchurch chose an area behind the village hall and near the children's playground



Morcombelake decided on putting their tree in the garden by the village hall

Wootton thought their tree would look good in the playing field



Both Monkton Wyld and Fishpond



planted the rowans in their relevant churchyards

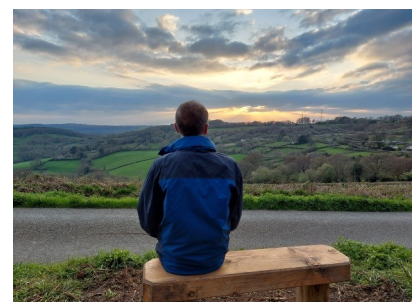
The tree for Stanton St Gabriel, which was the final one to be planted on 21st April, was put on a patch of grass close to St Gabriel's Farm House.



The villages and hamlets of the Char Valley Parish Council were also offered a walkers' bench.



Morcombelake decided to put one on Loves Lane, and Fishpond installed one near Peters Gore.



Pesticide Use by Dorset Council – Update

Through Cllr. Simon Christopher, The Parish Council was recently in touch with Dorset Council about its policy on the use of pesticides and insecticides.

This is particularly important because Char Valley Parish Council’s Climate Action Plan calls on Dorset Council to stop using neonicotinoid pesticides – responsible for serious decline in the insect population (including bees and other pollinators) AND glyphosate herbicides (like Roundup – carcinogenic and dangerous to the insect population).



Here's the response we had from Giles Nicholson, Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace at Dorset Council.

Where and how does Dorset Council (DC) use pesticides?

DC use very little insecticide, where we do almost exclusively to control brown tailed moth caterpillars on Portland. These caterpillars in some years cause health issues to those residents exposed.

DC services do not use neonicotinoid pesticides.

DC does use herbicides as they are effective and deemed safe by the National and EU authorities when used correctly. The vast majority of herbicide use by Dorset Council is on the sealed surface network of the highway i.e., road and pavements where weeds have become established. The frequency of this spot spraying has been reduced to just one treatment for 2023. Herbicide is used to protect this infrastructure from damage by weed growth which can significantly

reduce the longevity and quality of sealed surfaces.

Another area we use herbicides is within our Countryside Stewardship agreements and SSSI management with Natural England - e.g. invasive species on lowland heath such as gaultheria shallon, rhododendron, birch regrowth, etc. We are legally obliged to control these species by Natural England and do not have cost effective options other than herbicide.

DC also use herbicide to control Schedule 9 weed species of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 - such as Japanese knotweed. It is an offence to plant or cause this species to grow in the wild. Mechanical control methods can exacerbate the problem – the government recommends the herbicide glyphosate for its control.

Small amounts of herbicide are also used for amenity management across Grounds and Greenspace – the Moors Valley golf course, cricket pitches, bases of fences, school grounds, etc. This is used minimally and occasionally where there are no viable alternative control methods.

DC actively aims to reduce herbicide / pesticide use and to use mechanical control methods wherever practicable. DC will continue to follow all national policy and government best practice and review national guidance regularly.

DC currently has no plans to phase out its use of pesticides – but we will of course continue to use them sparingly, reduce where possible, regularly review their use and are open to viable alternatives.

Author: Andrew Carey

Census 2021—early reports

Analysis of the 2021 census has been released by ONS. Bridport Local Area Partnership has done some analysis of data for local parishes. Char Valley Parish population numbers has remained fairly constant since 2011, only falling by 5 to 1,024 residents.

More details on employment, education, and household data is on our website.

Age groups	0-19yrs old	20-34yrs old	65 and older
Char Valley	16%	8%	33%
Dorset	19%	13%	30%
UK	23%	20%	18%

MOTHS IN MORCOMBELAKE

(This article was missed in our winter edition)

Most people probably notice butterflies and enjoy seeing them, but moths are much less well-known, largely because they mainly fly at night. Like butterflies they belong to the family of Lepidoptera. In fact, there are far more species of moths than there are of butterflies and many of them are very beautiful.

Throughout the UK, lepidopterists have been studying moths for centuries and the study continues today with new tools. Ann, my friend and neighbour, has been interested in the insects since childhood.

At the end of August 2022 she brought her moth trap round and we set it up in my garden in the early evening. We chose a sheltered partly shaded place near my recently created pond. The Skinner trap we used is essentially a wooden box with a tubular UV bulb suspended in it and two angled sheets of glass or clear plastic to prevent escape once the moths have gone in. Eggboxes are placed inside to provide the insects with sheltered resting places for the remainder of the night. When the trap is opened, the moths can fly off unharmed though some are unwilling to be disturbed and need encouragement. We tried to make sure they were headed for safe havens among the shrubs where they would not be exposed to birds or other potential predators.

The light was switched on at dusk and next morning we opened the trap. We were delighted to see large numbers of moths sheltering on the eggboxes inside the box. Some flew away before we could look at them properly, but we estimated that there were between 130 and 150 individual moths of at least 40 different species. This abundance was very encouraging because we had been hearing a lot about the recent decline in insect life. We were reminded of how things used to be twenty or thirty years ago.

Moths have wonderful names. The ones we saw included the Mocha, the Canary-shouldered Thorn and the Flame Carpet as well as the ones shown below.

We weren't able to identify all the moths and didn't find anything particularly rare but felt that the exercise had been a great success.

I really enjoyed the occasion and wonder how many other moth-trappers there are in Char Valley. It would be good to encourage more people to take up the practice. My visiting grandchildren have been present for the opening of Ann's trap in the past and are always keen to do it again.

Anyone interested can find a lot of information by entering "Moth trapping" on Google.



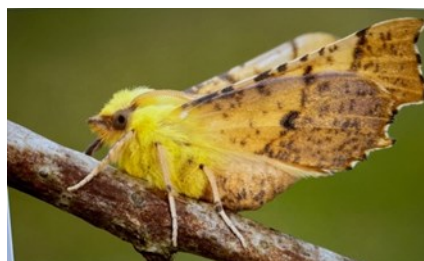
Light Emerald moth



Brimstone moth



Mocha



Canary-shouldered Thorn

Houses then and now in Whitchurch Canonorum

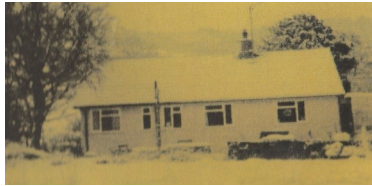
It is amazing how many houses in the immediate area around Whitchurch have changed over the years. The reasons for this vary. Some were burnt down and then rose from the ashes in a new form, some outlived their original purpose and some were allowed to just fall down. Here are a few examples.

GRIDDLESHAY, on Bluntshay Lane, has probably had the most transformations in that it was burnt down in 1962 leaving its former occupants, the Symonds family, without anything left of their belongings and



THIS was the scene of devastation which met a West Dorset couple on their return from a shopping expedition to Axminster. Their eight room farm-house was a shambled ruin. Only a few sticks of furniture were saved and these were badly burnt. The couple were left with only the clothes they were wearing.

completely homeless. On the original site was built a 2 bedroom Woolaways bungalow in



1962 which was bought by Mr & Mrs Lawes. This was later sold in 1995. The new owner then built a 2 storey house, which has grown like topsy over the years into what it is today.



VILLAGE SCHOOL/VILLAGE HALL The school was built in 1840, several decades before compulsory education was law in England. There was a dividing wall built between the two



porches to the road wall to separate the boys' and girls' playing areas. A great number of children used to attend the school from the village and outlying areas but this had dwindled by the 1940s. In the 1950s, a dynamic new headteacher, Mrs Ridout, had the dividing wall knocked down in the middle of the night as it was impossible to supervise the low number of children in the two areas. The school finally closed in



1970 and many of the children then attended Charmouth. Since that time the building has had extensive alterations and additions to bring it up to date as a modern village hall, with the road wall being demolished to allow easy access for vehicles both at the front and back of the building.

WAKELEYS was a period double farmhouse built of brick with a thatched roof. It had a long association with the Barnes family dating back at least 120 years. The last Barnes to live there was Wilf, who was considered by many to be the 'Elder Statesman of Whitchurch' who died in the early 1980s. Wilf had applied for planning permission to renovate the house and to divide it into 2 separate dwellings side by side. This was never granted and so



the building fell into disrepair. Dorset County Council was happy to grant

Wilf planning permission to build a new house, **WOODCOCKS**, across the road. So the double farm house gradually fell down and the bricks were sold off.

Eventually a new house was built on its footprint.

BERNE MANOR The original building was owned by Sir George Somers, the 'discoverer' of Bermuda.

The building was struck by lightning in 1926 and burnt to the ground.



Houses then and now in Whitchurch Canonorum...ctd

BERNE MANOR ctd A new house was built but smaller in area than the original. In 1980, during one of the



annual 'twinning' events Mr Bob Burns, a town crier from St Georges, Bermuda was given a flagstone

from the original Manor House to take back with him to Bermuda. It has since been placed in a church on the island.

BELVEDERE/APPLES TREES/MILHAMS This photo shows the house opposite the Five Bells. It was originally called Belvedere. It was then named Apple Trees. Now it has the title Milhams. The next photo shows an aerial view of the immediate area and it can

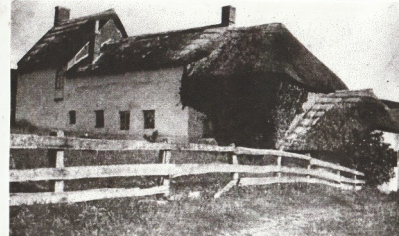


be seen that the owners ran a petrol station and had an enormous vegetable

garden in the 1960s. The whole area was divided into two and in 1988 PEAL HOUSE was built in the garden area.



WOODCOTT FARM This farm house burnt down, by an arsonist, in 1904 whilst being farmed by James Broom.



James' brother George built GENISTA in the same

year in approximately the same place.

So Whitchurch in the last 130 years has seen buildings disappear for various reasons (some very sad and others inevitable) only to be resurrected into the houses we are familiar with today and which enhance the ambiance of the village and add character to it.

Author: Sylvia Creed-Castle

Author: Andrew Carey

River Char Community Project – Update

In the last issue, we featured two community projects (one in Charmouth and ours higher up the river) working to clean up our river. On three of the key issues we have good news to report:

1. Get South West Water to clean up tiny plastic beads which are used in some sewage treatment plants and which are littering the sand at the river mouth.

✓ The water company has agreed in principle to support a clean-up project in autumn 2023 (at the time of the highest tides in the year). The project will be run by specialists at the Nurdle organisation (www.nurdle.org.uk).

2. Get Wessex Water to cut the number of downstream sewage spills each year.

✓ The water company has told us that it is working now to eliminate all sewage spills into

the river at Newlands Bridge and that Charmouth Sewage Treatment Works is a priority site for improvement works in its 2025-2030 management plan.

3. Get our MP to support our campaign.

✓ Chris Loder, MP, has been an active member of the CROWD (Clean Rivers of West Dorset) group. CROWD has been meeting regularly to identify ways to clean up our rivers, with many positive actions decided at a recent meeting in Charmouth with Wessex Water.

Inspired by Dragons



The dragon's head being created for the Festival

Planning for the **Charmouth Dragon River Festival** on 27th May is well under way. A Dragon Parade will wind its way through Charmouth and down to the sea starting at Barrs Lane recreation ground at 11am on Saturday 27th May. Back at St Andrew's Hall, from 12 noon until 5pm, there will be an exhibition with displays and performances of your river stories, songs, river artworks and photos; shared glimpses of our river lives, past and present and our dreams for the river's future.

Join us for our day of River Celebrations and meet the people we're working with (including Dorset AONB, Dorset Wildlife Trust and Wessex Water). Learn how we monitor river water quality and about the campaign to eliminate untreated sewage from the river.

The misty river dragon at Charmouth



We need all kinds of help with the festival and procession – and we will for future years too. If you're a musician, singer, baker or social media diva... If you can be a marshal for the parade, help with leafleting or setting up the village hall... if you would like to help with our campaign to reduce the amount of sewage entering the river... if you can help us raise money to cover our costs... please get in touch: acarey@charvalleypc.com – www.charvalley.org/riverchar