

Wessex Rivers Trust 'Our Healthy Headwaters' Project

Together with our Communities Protecting the Source of The Hampshire Avon

Wessex Rivers Trust is very excited to announce a new project on the headwaters of The Hampshire Avon. The 5-year 'Our Healthy Headwaters' project, made possible through Wessex Water's Partner's Programme, is an exciting and innovative community engagement initiative to help residents, schools and businesses learn about the different issues which affect river health and how they can play an important role in contributing to improvements to these delicate chalk stream ecosystems.

There are 200 Chalk streams in the world, almost all of which are in England (85%). Chalk rivers emerge from the chalk aquifer; the water is rich in minerals and remains a fairly constant temperature all year. These conditions enable them to be one of the most biodiverse of freshwater habitats in the world, but many of them are in poor condition. The 'Our Healthy Headwaters' project aims to communicate with communities about domestic sources of pollution and household water consumption, and the impact this has on the health of the headwaters and consequently the whole of the river. The project has four core areas of focus:

1. **Septic Smart** - Awareness raising campaign about how to use and maintain septic tanks in ways that minimise pollution to rivers and groundwater. [Revamp Your Tank: Septic Tank Upgrade Initiative - Wiltshire Council](#)
2. **Save Every Drop** – Deepening people's understanding that the water we use has been taken from the river and how we can change habits around water at home, at school and at work.
3. **Pet Medications** - The impact of topical pet medications (particularly dog flea spot-on treatments) on aquatic life and the alternatives available.
4. **What's Going Down Your Plughole?** Raising awareness of the risk to river health in the chemicals we use in and around our homes through domestic cleaning, personal care, in the garden and through flushing medications.

The focus areas will raise awareness of the issues facing the headwaters but importantly give communities the skills and support to take positive and lasting action. The anticipated outcome of these actions is to see and measure improvements in biodiversity; for the rivers and streams in the headwaters to become healthier and more resilient. Communities will be able to participate in a range of interesting and informative activities and events. These will include free school education sessions, attendance at community events, community talks and meetings, citizen science days, and a touring display of the project.

If you'd like Wessex Rivers Trust to attend an event you are organising, visit your community, or arrange an education session with a school or youth group, please get in touch. We are also looking for people who would like to volunteer on the 'Our Healthy Headwaters' Project. This could be supporting education sessions with children, attending events to promote the project, as well as citizen scientists who would like to help with monitoring. For any enquiries about the project just email info@wessexrt.org.uk.

Wessex Rivers Trust is an environmental charity dedicated to the conservation of chalk streams and rivers in Wessex, working towards healthy rivers for wildlife and people. <https://wessexrt.org.uk>

