

RIPARIAN OWNERS' GROUP



Letcombe
Brook Project

NEWSLETTER No. 1 WINTER 2020

RIVERS HIT THE HEADLINES

You may have noticed coverage in the media recently of the appalling practice by water companies of discharging raw sewage directly into rivers. Present licensing laws allow water companies to discharge raw sewage in 'exceptional circumstances' but this appears to be abused by water companies and is not being policed effectively by the Environment Agency. The issue has gained a high profile and Philip Dunne, MP for Ludlow, has launched a Private Members Bill aimed at tackling the problem and cleaning up our precious rivers.

Data released by the Rivers Trust indicates that Wantage Sewage Treatment Works discharged untreated sewage into the Letcombe Brook for 194 hours (73 incidents) last year. We will be monitoring the situation in the brook carefully by carrying out more water quality testing in future.



HAVE YOU SEEN AN OTTER?



Several local residents have been excited to report sightings of otters in the Letcombe Brook, mainly in the Grove section of the river, where a female otter with cubs has also been seen over the summer months. If you'd like to install a wildlife camera to monitor your stretch of the brook and need some advice, please get in touch.

FISH PASS AT EAST HANNEY

During October, LBP was busy with a construction project at Lower Mill, East Hanney, where a fish pass has been installed. The Letcombe Brook has previously failed the Water Framework Directive because of poor fish numbers, as fish movement has been impeded by various blockages, such as mills. The new fish pass will enable wild brown trout present in the brook, as well as coarse fish such as chub and roach, to travel from the River Ock into Childrey Brook and then up the Letcombe Brook as far as Dandridges Mill, East Hanney.



WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY GARDENING

May we put out a plea for all riparian owners to consider wildlife when managing your gardens/land? Careless management can so easily cause real problems for the mammals, birds and fish that depend on the Letcombe Brook.



For example, allowing the brook to get heavily overshadowed restricts light essential for plants to photosynthesise and produce energy to support river life. This can result in a bare riverbed with limited food for invertebrates and cover for fish, birds and mammals. Constructing hard, concrete edges next to the brook prevents endangered species such as water voles, which are present in the brook, from making burrows.

If you would like advice on wildlife-friendly garden/land management, please contact LBP Project Manager, Mark Bradfield, on info@letcombebrook.org.uk

DISCOVER THE WHOLE BROOK

LBP has produced four 'easy to read' discovery trail leaflets to help people explore the whole length of the Letcombe Brook. The leaflets cover Wantage, Grove, East Hanney and Letcombe Regis/Letcombe Bassett and give maps and directions for short walks of up to three miles in each area. They highlight points of special interest in the built environment and the flora and fauna that can be seen and enjoyed along the way. Leaflets are free and can be obtained from the Vale and Downland Museum in Wantage and Parish Council offices.



JOIN US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



We now have a Facebook group (Letcombe Brook Project) with 183 members and would be delighted if you'd like to join. It's a great way of sharing photos and videos of the Letcombe Brook and its wildlife with others in the local community and keeping up with our news.



We also post regularly on Twitter (@LetcombeBP). Both social media accounts can be accessed via our website – www.letcombebrook.org.uk