

WWFFG - NEWS ROUNDUP



APRIL 2023 to MAY 2023



Hurrah! The start of the trout fishing season has arrived!

OPENING DAY ON CHEW VALLEY LAKE.....

Right click....Open hyperlink

<https://vimeo.com/806020488>

Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) has been awarded a grant of £97,700 from the Government's £40 million second round of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, a multi-million pound boost for green jobs and nature recovery. The project will deliver a suite of green recovery projects and engagement, enabling local communities to adapt to a changing climate.

Ninety nature projects across England have been awarded grants from £68,100 to £1,950,000 to create and retain over 1,000 green jobs, backed by the Government's £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

Work will be carried out on over 600 sites from North Northumberland to the tip of Cornwall, and combined with the first round, almost a million trees will be planted, contributing towards the Government's commitment to treble tree planting rates across England by the end of this Parliament.

The River Chew Reconnected project will deliver a suite of work that we hope will act as a stimulus for further support, to create a healthier river for wildlife and people to enjoy. The project will deliver two river habitat enhancement schemes that have been developed through BART's feasibility work. The project will deliver 500m of riparian enhancements that will improve aquatic, marginal and terrestrial habitat. The project will include planting of approximately 2000 riparian trees and shrubs in accordance to BART's tree planting strategy and the creation of several seasonal ponds across two sites to reduce surface water runoff from agricultural fields and increase floodplain habitat diversity.

WILD & WET, WELSH 'WAL GOCH'

Wal Goch Farm (Red Wall) - is named I think after an avid attitude of nationalism, significantly in their rugby and soccer environment. Others will no doubt know far more of its origin - a hymn or anthem perhaps of a true patriot. A spirit and passion that lives on in Wales, not only in their sport. My son who is involved with rugby in Chester says the farm name, Wal Goch, is probably referring to the unofficial Welsh anthem and spirit of the national teams. (Dafydd Iwan is the charismatic exponent of the inspirational song of the same ilk - *Yma o Hyd*). Red being the famous colour of their shirts of course. I admire the honesty and unabridged combative patriotism of it all - bound up in its words. I secretly wish England could show such zeal and spirit. You know, to fire them up in big games.

To put this in context, should you get a spare moment, it would help (me) to refer to YouTube's '*Michael Sheen gives rousing speech for Wales football team*'. You'll get the stirring message I am inadequately trying to convey here from this - I assure you, you will - and encourage you to listen to its eloquence. You'll enjoy the raw passion - what a gifted orator! Knocks Mark Anthony's famous speech into a crumpled box.

So with these Welsh words in mind, humour me whilst I enlarge and depict the farm-place we met - a pretty, but cold and open, slightly wind-blown vista. A stinging edge on the raw winter wind present. A wild, deep-country spot. And an unspoken, proud Welsh atmosphere pervading, of something like 'this is my homeland!' And rightly so, let it be said - a statement of undeniable pride and ownership. This the name of the delightful hidden-away valley idyll we found in the back and beyond on that special day after Christmas festivities. A serious and no doubt challenging working farm, necessarily forged by hard graft for success. Old stone farm walls and out-buildings standing cold, roughly chiseled and dripping slowly wet. Somehow, in their very moss-lined presence, an eery testament to the endeavours of previous decades and generations. Hard lives and 'very open' farmyard industry. Out there in the stark elements. Our own mortal presence there touching this history, and indeed earlier Welsh owners and occupants' rustic lives. We were there uninvited but inadvertently touching what remained of those special lives - their hopes, their fears, their fervent aspirations. All this in as picturesque a spot as you could hope to find. Hidden away in the pretty hillside valleys of North Wales.

It was Boxing Day '22, - 26th December - you will not be surprised to hear! Resurrecting a Boxing Day tradition almost side-stepped by dreadful recent years events, we were there to continue our quest for trout on the fly. Almost a 'heathen' event - away from the religious festival you understand - truth being that we were seeking a brief traditional interlude escape from the Christmas mayhem! As I see it of course. And delightfully so as it worked out.

But enough of all this, we had all bundled (the three of us) into Mike's very efficient, both muddy and dusty four-track builder's pick-up. He also shoots, and the state of the car reflected this (I should say delightfully so) - all fishing kit thrown in the back. It immediately felt like going on a great adventure. And so it was. So 'oft we jolly well went' and headed, boys together, for the hills! Joyously so, heading for a venue arranged at the eleventh hour and new to us all - not fished before. Hopes high but admittedly dented a bit when at first we found the access farm track blocked by a pebble-dashed agricultural trailer and quad bike. So very anxious, as we were, to see the

water you understand. For 'pebble-dashed' read wet cow-pool! – but you get the picture. It is a shame that for accuracy I can't (out of decency you ken) use the 'S'- word, since the sense of smell would convey and transmit immediately – and sensually paint the scene far better! But soon resolved, we 'pootled' a short distance down the stony track, rounded a sharp corner and entered a downhill Heaven. Of course not real heaven [I imagine] but a wonderful, pretty little green valley and sloping hillsides, in the fold of which appeared two lakes fed and interlinked by a sparkling-clear feeder stream. Crunching down the hill we parked at the small, rough and jagged hard-standing base there, a spit away from the water's edge.

A privilege to be there, particularly against the backcloth of all the stress and hardship we – and the world – have undergone these last two years. It felt marvellous and simply uplifting. We got talking a little later to Phil the farmer, finding that Mike and he had many shared contacts with other farmers, businessmen, shooters and estate landowners in the locale. We used the time to also hurriedly set up the rods – pleasantly so. It was no imposition. At the open tailgate of the car. Fingers excitedly fumbling, threading the line....

A few false casts later and our flies were all in the magnificently clear water. It would be a travesty not to describe its clarity, or how the wind-blown surface ripples danced and glistened in the sunlight over a beautiful green carpet of weed on the lake-bed. Every so often, the whole of this would come momentarily into view through the waves – a snapshot moment. This particularly so when the sun broke fiercely through the clouds revealing in splendid green glimpses the unexpected and luxuriant shortish growth. This despite the time of year. It all felt so right, so vibrantly healthy. A fantastic backdrop in which the resident rainbows, and a few blue trout stocked fish could thrive and 'melt' (as they did) into the camouflage they were pleased to call home.

Despite earlier assurances of stocking in recent weeks, our exploring flies, (moved slowly, or fast) attracted no customers. Returning safely to base repeatedly through the watery layers. Then, as often happens, I stopped retrieving mid-cast to speak to my son, and Baaaaang! a take came from nowhere. The hit came like a galvanising assault on my rod and arm –hyperbole of course, but shades of an attack even – the line streaming out mid-lake towards an outlying tree-lined island. And not stopping there – far further! What the heck was this? It proceeded to run and battle for some anxious minutes, before I eventually found it was not particularly large but a pristine, fully finned rainbow of perhaps 2lb. What a superb fight. It was taking

unhealthy amounts of line off the complaining reel each time it ran. And threatened to snap the line if I had foolishly clamped down to stop its rushes. On a catch and release ticket, it was a pleasure and joy to return it safely to its home.

All the fish we were lucky enough to catch were in the two pound class, and I reluctantly concede that my son's rainbow of around 2lb.8ozs (though Mike caught similar) was perhaps the biggest of the day? (allegedly: that is- [he may read this], though I will do my damndest to keep it from him) He is very competitive.

And so the fishing was to continue (floating lines used). Not a succession of fish, but by carefully retrieving and gauging (more like guessing) the speed required to get a response from the fish, we all gradually added to our catch. But the quality of the fights from the fish was the thing - absolutely paramount - and consistently powerful. A real pleasure to experience - and I should add there were many lightning-quick takes and losses, or rainbows throwing the hook-hold in between. Many flies were tried [single fly only, on point] but a favourite preferred was a small blue-flash damsel. On the day, this was moved ultra slowly. This indicated at least that the residents may well have been feeding on the natural nymph in their protecting sanctuary of weed-growth. Whatever it was, it was keeping them superbly fit.

As perhaps further testament to the Welsh trout fighting quality I have described, I fondly recall a previous visit to Wales, at Vyrnwy Lake (please don't ask me to pronounce it) which is set amidst the remote and beautiful Berwyn mountains in Powys.



Vyrnwy Lake

So many years ago now, but we same three, accompanied by Arthur, Mike's dad. A lasting, fondly-remembered occasion, fly fishing this lovely and charismatic place - the Victorian Straining Tower standing castle-like, overshadowing and giving splendour and elegance to its shores. From the hotel boats, skirting its tree-edged margins, we caught some delightful brown trout, many of which were authentically wild native stock. Almost certainly from the half a dozen feeder streams which were diverted (circa 1880s) to help fill the lake. But in addition to this, when the dam was built, the Victorians stocked it with 40,000 Loch Leven brown trout to create - at the time, and maybe still - the largest wild trout fishery in England and Wales. Built to supply Liverpool with drinking water, some 62 miles away! Vyrnwy is said to be over four and a half miles in length and half a mile wide (a recorded max. depth of 216 feet). Quite a generous back-garden then.... That's 10,000 million gallons of lake water for the brownies to hide and actively thrive in!

A good rule for fishing the lake, recommended by locals, is 'When in doubt, go for black!' Vyrnwy trout tend to be found close to the shore where most of their food (insects and the like; it being so deep) falls from the overhanging trees and bushes. Although we caught some elsewhere - whilst exploring the lake - the key is to get your flies as near to the stones and pebbles of the shore as possible. Never miss an opportunity to cast under over-hanging trees if they are between you (boat) and the bank.

Following this advice we found ourselves that day armed with small black/blue nymphs - surprise, surprise! Blae & Black, Black Pennell, Connemara Black, Mallard & Claret, Black Gnat (both nymphs and dries), Bibios and Zulus were all given a swim, mostly with success. With endeavour, we were lifting into superb fighting residents.

Though we had a few of the recently stocked rainbows, to perhaps one and a half pounds, the most impressive memory is of the huge takes and runs of the brown trout there. Out of nowhere would come exhilarating, electric takes and the line would disappear off the screeching reel. Same thought process - the adversary still unseen - what on Earth is this? The absolute power and rush of it all, the rod tip plunging into the wind-blown surface water. Result? I do not lie - beautiful sparkling brownies spotted in their armoury of red, vermillion, and buttery hues of between 4ozs and just under a pound - at most! Superb, spirited specimens. Which I now today christen, with much due respect, as God's 'Wal Goch -strain' sub-species! Phenominal power indeed.

Back to Boxing Day (Flintshire) base, we thoroughly enjoyed the day, its weather vagaries, the intermittent Spring-like sunshine, the conveyor belt of spectacular nimbus cloud-cover billowing overhead. And of course the

opportunity to fish a few hours in the peaceful and beautiful countryside of Wales. If I were to eulogise, I would rate it as a 'sublime' adventure of a day. But I have promised not to eulogise - at least further - (I find it difficult enough to spell already!).



Wal Goch Lake

We none of us emptied the lake - and far, far, far from it, but we all caught some beautiful fit fish. Including at least one or two blue trout with their fantastic metallic-blue sheen and big broad tails. All fish were returned safely to the aquamarine depths from which they had come, save one which went back with us for supper. We repaired to the local 'Fox' pub on the way back for a very pleasant celebratory drink - grateful to say, on my son! He did after all get the big fish! Lastly, if he ever gets to read this guff, 'Thanks Mike' for a great day! Truly indebted.

It needs to be said, that amid the barely tangible but real pace, and maybe confusion of our everyday lives, it feels even more important just to pause now and then. Take in and analyse the situation in a quiet moment. Fishing can and does permit us to share such stolen moments. The moments where Ma Nature slows us down and invites us to share and take in her wonders. Mayfly hatching on a quiet river glide; the exploits of our days described above; the dimple of a trout's rise, even the electrifying whorl left in the water to a narrowly-missed follow - somehow (just somehow) compensation for a missed fish! Maybe the flash and flight of a beautiful kingfisher speeding by at close quarters. Halcyon moments to the eye, and definitely food for soothing contemplation.

If you think I am going all 'hippy-ish' on you, I can assure you I am not. I have not got the hips, or the time, I'm afraid! But I am confident in what I experienced and what we all found that lovely day in Wales. A bit of time to

relax and forget all else; any nagging worries that might be around. I find personally that I do not think of anything else when absorbed in my fishing - it's a fact. Before you say it - "Don't want to upset the one brain-cell and make my brain hurt" etc! But seriously, I am wise and ugly enough to know, and appreciate, that we all felt a lot better, re-charged and refreshed for our efforts and space at the end of the day. A great day at that.

Amen to that.

Courteney (Fish)

December 2022

Fishing tip.....

Retrieves - Mix It Up!

Don't fall into the trap of repetitive 2ft long pulls when retrieving. Get in the habit of mixing up the retrieve by using a figure-of-eight then some short, jerky tweaks and of course 1ft to 3ft long pulls occasionally

Overall though remember to slow the retrieve down as cold water makes early season trout that bit more lethargic when they aren't always prepared to chase after a fly whizzing past their snouts!

Sewage Discharges - Pollution....

The Environment Agency's executive director, John Leyland, said: "The decrease in spills in 2022 is largely down to dry weather, not water company action. "We want to see quicker progress from water companies on reducing spills and acting on monitoring data. We expect them to be fully across the detail of their networks and to maintain and invest in them to the high standard that the public expect and the regulator demands."

Feargal Sharkey, the pop star turned river campaigner, questioned why the EA was still blaming water companies.

"You are responsible for regulating that industry," he told i, "Defra blames the regulators, Ofwat and the EA blame the industry, the industry blames the

Government. At some point, somebody somewhere is going to have to take responsibility."

Mr Sharkey also questioned how, in one of Britain's driest years on record, there continued to be hundreds of thousands of sewage spills.

"We were a nation in drought last year. Devon and Cornwall and East Anglia are still in drought right now. Customers [in Cornwall] are being asked not to use water, being put under hosepipe bans, but South West Water are still dumping sewage. That's a clever trick to pull off," he said.

Sewage discharges are, usually, entirely legal. Britain's sewage system is designed to overflow into rivers if too much water is passing through the system to prevent it backing up and flooding homes and businesses.

Such discharges are, usually, legal. Britain's sewage system is designed to overflow into rivers if too much water is passing through the system to prevent it backing up and flooding homes and businesses.

These "storm overflows" are only meant to happen, as the name suggests, in extraordinary circumstances. However, ageing infrastructure, the concreting over of more and more of the country and a changing climate mean that discharges are now a regular occurrence.

Illegal sewage discharges, often the result of blockages or broken infrastructure, also take place. The number of reported illegal discharges rose last year, from 273 to 554.

The 2021 figures have been disputed by Dr Peter Hammond, an independent expert, whose independent analysis showed that in 2021 there were likely several thousand illegal spills.

Jim McMahon, the shadow environment secretary, said that the latest data showed: "[The Tories] have no respect for British communities.

(Taken from the i newspaper, March 31st)

AN OLD MYTH

"Behold the fisherman

He riseth up early and disturbeth the whole household.

MIGHTY ARE HIS PREPARATIONS!

He goeth forth full of hope and when the day is far spent he returneth

Smelling of strong drink, and the truth is not in him".

APRIL

A local Stillwater we know harbours some delightful surprises, and recently we were fortunate to meet two of that 'company' on the very same March day! Robert caught his first of all, on a home-tied size 12 cul de canard, fished static. Dries on a chilly March day! On point of initial contact, 'something' hit hard and powered off into deeper water. He instantly knew from its movement it was large. Proceeding to take a frightening amount of line.... and then the backing, he found he had no choice in the matter at all - in controlling this fish! His rod kicked into an extended test curve and held that shape for immeasurable minutes (the accompanying and recurring panic of several more long runs) before he could even attempt to bring it safely to his net. A lovely, spotted brown which appeared to be a very young fish for its hefty size, but more to the point delivering a golden moment to savour. A fish of a lifetime as they say. Sounds stupid I know, but I am wholly convinced it also possessed magical, chameleon qualities - for as it looked at me through the lens of the camera I went quietly green?



Some while later, not hours; admittedly a little dejected, I was letting my fly - on a long leader - examine the depths further down in the body of the lake. Letting it sink a long way down, static, just keeping in touch, hoping for a response. Nothing happened of course - drifting in a stiff breeze. A Mallard & Claret on the end. Usually swims quite realistically but often requires a little, repeated movement. So, although not at the end of the retrieve and still in deepish water, I raised the rod quickly to bring the fly towards the surface and Poww! It felt as though I had hooked the bottom. I obviously hadn't because of the depth I know to be there, and I was raising it swiftly upwards! Solid scary resistance; sudden mayhem and heart palpitating runs. It had taken on the lift of course - a hatching nymph, size12, urgently surface-bound.

The pictures tell the rest. Both browns went quickly back - our resulting smiles took a lot, lot longer. Those who notice the blood in one photo should note it is

mine -not at all from the fish. The tenderness shown to its safe return was not reciprocated - as I eased the hook free, it bit and gashed my errant thumb! It drew blood (plenty) - I call that a draw?

Courteney

oOoOoOoOo

A FAVOURITE FLY

The Diawl Bach is a suggestive pattern, similar to all sorts of aquatic insect life especially the midge. The secret to the The Diawl Bach success is its sparse, nymph like profile making it a fly for all seasons and waters and I believe the movement of peacock herl really helps the Diawl Bach as a deadly fishing fly.

OoOoOoOoO

19th April 2023 - Guild's 'Chew Cup' Competition

Members enjoying breakfast at Woodford Lodge



It was great to meet up and start the day with a good chat over breakfast.

WELL, it has to be said.....

It was our toughest day and worst result in all our Chew boat days!!

There was a chilly N/E wind blowing 14 to 16mph as we scrambled into our motor boats and headed to some shelter ploughing through some large waves trying to spot an odd shoal of fish.

Our 14 Members spread round the lake looking for fish and sheltering in one of the bays. The odd fish were found at Wick Green and Herons Green.

Due to the cold wind moving the surface water, there was hardly any fly hatches (but black buzzers were spotted in the Woodford Lodge car park and the window sill of the gents toilet) and large flocks of House Martins and a few swallows were seen flying high up in the sky showing us that no flies were coming off the reservoir's surface. We were back at the jetty by 5:00pm.

There were at least three pike caught, one in particular a 20 pounder plus caught by Robin. It took 15 minutes to land the fish. (the reason being why he was late back at the jetty!)

Can anybody definitely guarantee a really nice weather fishing-day next year so that we can all catch some fish?

Many Thanks to Jon for arranging the day and we had a great breakfast.

Fish Landed

Robert Eadie..... 2lbs 4oz, 2lbs 2oz (Tiddlers)

Colin Burbedge4lbs 7oz

Andy Greatwood4lbs 4oz

David Edwards 3lbs 2oz

Robin Sewell..... 3lbs 6oz

Gerry Barnes..... 3lbs 8oz

Hearty Congratulations go to **Colin Burbedge** who won the Chew Boat Cup and the bottle of wine to **Andy Greatwood** for catching the second largest Trout. (The rules say that Colin can't be awarded the wine as well as winning the Cup).

Colin with his winning 4lb.7oz. Rainbow.



There's more photos and reports from Competition Day.....

ROBIN'S BEAST..... *A Note from Robin on our Chew Competition Day*



Here with picture taken by Simon on that windswept day this Wednesday. Caught near the reeds just after the Yacht club into Walley Bank. The fly anchored just half way along the jaw line. This was the very last cast at just before a quarter to five and the weigh-in with everyone at 5:00pm. It took about 15 minutes to land, Simon was very expert with the net which was half to a third the length of the pike!

When Simon and I finally got to the weigh-in, you Jon, looked so annoyed at us being late and following my excuse that we were held by a big fish, your face changed to - don't give me all that boloney!

p.s. the 'beast' refers to the pike not me.

On Blagdon and Chew this is the lure I use when all else fails. Last hour of the day one trout and two pike.

Gold Head Black Mylar Zonka-- From - My Fishing Flies £1.40

OoOoOoOoOoO

Photo of Andy with his 'wine winning' rainbow, a fine fish of 4lbs. 4ozs.
'piscator non solum piscator' - fine words, but I wish I'd caught it!!



So it wasn't all doom and gloom, indeed there were some fine big trout caught. We just caught Chew in an angry mood in which she didn't relent!

OoOoOoOoO

We're still looking for more help organising activities - if you would be willing to organise a bank social fishing day for us at Bushyleaze, Lechlade or help on our coarse fishing week in July please get in touch with Jon Jonik - jfjonik@fgmail.com or reply to this email.

NB - Our next meeting, Wednesday 10th May will be at **Mill Farm fishery**, Worton, Nr Devizes, **NOT** at Leigh Park Hotel BonA.

Beaver in Wiltshire & Somerset - report by Natural England.

At our Guild Meeting in April, Roger gave the main findings of a detailed report published in March this year.

A total of 13 lodges and four burrows were recorded. All but one of

the 20 dams recorded were found in the Somerset Frome sub-catchment (i.e. south of the town of Frome). Natural England estimate that there are 50 mature beaver in the area. A more detailed summary of the report in the Guild's next News Round-up.

New membership applications

Membership applications by Jonathan Woolfrey and Quentin Lillis were both approved unanimously by this meeting.

OoOoOoOoOoOoO

WWFFG Concerns Raised with The Environment Agency About The Somerset Frome

In February 2023 the Guild Committee submitted five questions to the environment Agency under The Freedom of Information Act. By doing this through the EAs Wessex Enquiry Team our concerns will have been formally noted and logged, which could help prompt further action – some follow-up, mentioned below, has already been triggered.

Below in **RED** are the five questions submitted, followed by the EAs responses.

West Wilts Fly Fishers Guild fishes the Somerset Frome from Tellisford Packhorse bridge downstream to Snarlton weir – maps attached.
When we took on the stretch approx. 25 years ago the river was notable for the clarity of the water, with members describing it as 'sparkling'.
Since then it has declined. Below are concerns raised by members seeking an answer to this and hopefully, a solution.

The EA forwarded our queries to three of their specialist teams who provided the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the associated Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

NB: To comply with The Freedom of Information Act we are required to state that this article:
Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0

WWFFG Question 1.

The EA takes water samples e.g. at Tellisford Packhorse bridge - What does the water sample analysis tell us about The Somerset Frome.

EA response:

The Water Quality is assessed at two other sites in the Frome catchment one downstream and one upstream.

Both classification points show the same pattern of results as the data collected from Tellisford.

Tellisford has a large number of samples taken to compare with sites nationally, this is an intermittent study but will be undertaken this year 2023

Specific substances: Are mostly heavy metals and phenol. The result are classified as High the best water quality Classification. (Lead, Zinc, Arsenic etc and phenol are at low levels)

Priority Substances: A large range of complex chemicals are measured at Tellisford for a national program, the data is available on the EA Data Explorer. [Somerset Frome conf with Mells to conf B. Avo | Catchment Data Explorer | Catchment Data Explorer](#) . The results indicate the vast majority of the chemicals are at a good classification. This includes some heavy metals (Cadmium), pesticides and their breakdown products, dioxin and plasticisers. However two sets of chemicals have failed, not just at Tellisford but every river in the country. Mercury and its compounds and PBDE (a multiuse, forever chemical, fire retardant) have failed. This is not due to samples taken at Tellisford but from a set of samples taken from aquatic organisms around the country. All the samples taken showed high levels, it was therefore decided to classify all waterbodies in England as failing for these chemicals.

Biological quality elements: Fish and invertebrates are classified as High both these are indicators of water quality. However aquatic plants (Macrophytes) area classed as Moderate. Plants are good indicators of the presence of nutrients, an excess of plant nutrients leads to a process called eutrophication, growth in algae and diatoms that can colour the river and cause drops in dissolved oxygen killing other river organisms.

Physico-chemical quality elements: These are the major water quality indicators such as, dissolved oxygen, temperature, pH and ammonia. There were all classified as High. Ammonia is useful as it indicate the presence of sewage or farm runoff. Phosphate however is Moderate, this indicates fertilizer runoff and possible presence of sewage, as a plant nutrient this is most probably the cause of the moderate classification for plants., and is also linked to sediment in the channel.

The water samples are generally good but failing for Phosphate. I believe a major issue is Sediment, as you noted with Wilts Fly Fishers. I feel sediment is an underestimated issue, it is linked to Phosphate and is linked to channel modification. The vast majority of rivers are modified, from farmers straightening and dredging sections to major flood works around towns. Obstructions deposit sediment, causing the river downstream to become more erosive. Deepening drains / channels, not allowing flooding onto a floodplain increases in-channel erosion. Flood defence often increases the flow resulting in a very erosive river downstream of the engineered area. Sediment also has a biological element due to plant growth.

WWFFG Question 2.

An impact report on the hydro power station at Tellisford was last done in 2013 (front page attached). The report acknowledged that the hydro power station had only just commenced operation so a longer-term study would be necessary. Is a follow-up study planned to assess the environmental impact over the past 10 years?

The 2013 Report CONCLUSION 6.1.1 stated:

‘The 2009 report concluded that a longer term data set would provide a clearer picture of the impact of reduced flow at Tellisford and to a degree this has been the case. The reduced flow in the depleted reach has resulted in changes to the aquatic ecology in terms of community dynamics.’

A visual assessment in summer 2022 from Tellisford Packhorse bridge over the depleted stretch would suggest a very marked change in river habitat compared to the control stretch downstream.

EA response:

There has been no further specific ecological monitoring associated with the operation of Tellisford hydropower scheme since the 2013 report. We are looking at the current ecological condition of the catchment upstream of Frome in 2023/24. We will also look to review the previous report at Tellisford and consider the inclusion for further investigations in 2024/25.

WWFFG Question 3.

We have been informed by people living south of Frome, that the river is “virtually dead” immediately downstream of a new housing development – is it that bad?

EA response:

It is difficult to answer this question as it needs more information, are there factors affecting water quality (from the new build) or is it the lack of habitat in a modified channel, or climate change. Look for a source (more housing) a pathway to the river (spilling CSO) and quantify the receptor, excessive algae growth downstream, presence of sewage, dead fish, repeat this throughout the year before making an assessment. Rivers can be under stress in the summer low flow period, but do recover, 2022 was exceptionally hot and dry, this will impact the ecology.

Classification upstream and down indicate the water quality is good except for Phosphate, the ecology is good except for plants.

I have conducted an investigation into your comment that the “Frome is dead” down stream of the new housing development next to ASDA. The site is showing some extremely poor results. If you see any signs of pollution, please call it in to the Hotline 0800 807060. I shall raise this with the monitoring team and Wessex water.

WWFFG Question 4.

CSOs (Combined Sewage Outlets), we are told, are still ‘gushing’ untreated sewage into the Somerset Frome. Is the EA monitoring the effect on the water quality and whether Wessex Water is meeting ‘its target (originally 2020) to monitor all CSOs on the Somerset Frome?

EA response:

The Environment agency does monitor CSO’s especially poor performing ones. This happens when specific issues have been highlighted such as excessive spill rates or complaints of gross pollution, it is a limited program. If you see a CSO discharging and there has not been substantial rainfall this could be an unpermitted discharge and would be categorised as a pollution incident. Phone the Environment agency pollution hotline 0800 807060 if it does constitute an unpermitted discharge, it will be investigated.

As you are aware, the Water Company that owns the CSO is designated by government as the organisation that reports data related to CSOs. This process is referred to as self-assessment, in practice the only requirement is to record the number of times the CSO spills and for how long, this is called event duration monitoring EDM. I believe Wessex Water do tie in water quality sampling to poor performing CSOs.

The Frequently spilling CSO’s are listed through negotiation by the EA with Wessex Water and they do monitor these, but these will not be all the CSOs on the Frome. The catchup of the sewerage infrastructure often lags behind house building.

WWFFG Question 5

The Somerset Frome always has a grey/milky tinge - it never runs as crystal clear as it did when West Wilts Fly Fishers first fished it. Is the cause of this known because it greatly diminishes the river as an amenity for all members of the community – walkers, canoeists, swimmers as well as anglers, to benefit from for physical and mental relaxation?

EA response:

The upper River Frome is predominantly a heavy clay soils catchment with a flashy fast draining nature. As such I believe small entrained colloidal clay particles do contribute to cause a greyish tinge and reduced visual clarity. These clay particles don't settle out as they are too small and are kept afloat (entrained) by interaction of electrical charges within the water column. The sources of sediment run off within the Upper Frome are various and are strongly influenced by the intensive agriculture i.e., dairy farming. A lot of existing sediment within the river is mobilised during periods of higher flow. Poor land management practises – e.g. maize stubbles, livestock poaching, lack of adequate field margins etc. soil runoff from local road network (Local Authority remit), permitted discharges from quarries i.e. upstream of Chantry Lake on the Mells River. I'm aware Bristol Avon Rivers Trust and FWAG have undertaken studies in the past on sources of sediment runoff entering the upper River Frome catchment.

Guild Footnote:

We have thanked the EA for the detail in their reply and indeed for collating responses from the three relevant teams involved. The EA is underfunded and undermanned for the demands of their task: -

The Times Feb 13th 2023 - *'The EA has been hit hard by austerity. Its government grant for environmental protection, including sewage spills, fell from £120 million in 2010 to £40million in 2020. Water quality testing by the agency has "declined drastically" over the past five years, with many rivers that were sampled monthly now only checked quarterly.'*

River Action UK, a charity, says there are now at least 300 groups across the country in a growing clamour for action to clean-up rivers by an army of ordinary people.

Thanks Roger, full of scientific detail and analysis - a fascinating read.



Pomeroy Wood Wed 3rd May 2023 – a carpet of bluebells and wild garlic

Have you noticed the potholes in our roads are getting quite serious, deep and dangerous?.....but this is ridiculous!



Tight lines!