

DEMONSTRATING
**STRATEGIC
 RESTORATION
 AND
 MANAGEMENT OF
 THE RIVER AVON SAC**



July 07

NEWSLETTER

Steve Day (Wiltshire Slide Library)

Introduction

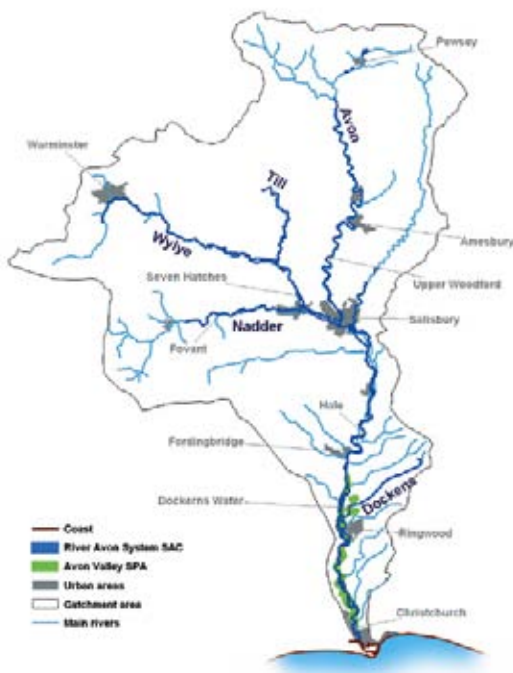
In the last year STREAM has restored and monitored 1.5 kilometres of river; started tackling conflicts between river and valley management, and launched our website. We are currently planning another 2.5 kilometres of restoration work.

This second newsletter contains an update on the restoration done so far and further work planned for this year. We also invite you to join us on the river bank at our first workshop - see back page for details.

STREAM is a £1 million conservation project centred on the River Avon and the Avon Valley in Wiltshire and Hampshire. The project began in September 2005 and in the next three years will:

- ~ Demonstrate and monitor river restoration at six sites, covering 7km
- ~ Link management of the lower reaches of the river with the floodplain
- ~ Share best practice with UK & European river managers and specialists
- ~ Hold public open days to raise awareness of the river system and the project in the local community

The project is supported financially by the European Commission's LIFE-Nature fund. Project partners Natural England, the Environment Agency, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Wessex Water have also committed funding and support.



River Restoration

Parts of the River Avon system were damaged by past engineering and land drainage work which resulted in channels that are too wide and deep for natural river flows. River restoration aims to restore channels to a more natural size and shaped, improving their ability to support aquatic habitats and species.

Restoration will be carried out by the Environment Agency at Woodgreen on the Avon and at Chilhampton on the Wylye in September/October 2007 - see overleaf for details. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust will restore a small stretch of the Dockens Water at Blashford in 2007/8. The final restoration project will be built in 2008 at Amesbury.

UPDATE ON 2006 RESTORATION

Restoration work was carried out in 2006 at Fovant on the Nadder and Upper Woodford on the Avon. The work was subjected to high flows for much of the winter – happily they stood up to this well and are becoming well established.

At **Upper Woodford** islands, flow deflectors and a causeway were built to demonstrate a range of techniques that increase flow and substrate diversity, providing a toolkit of techniques that fishing clubs can use. The islands and brushwood structures are collecting silt effectively and have been rapidly colonised by vegetation.

The River Nadder at **Fovant** is oversized compared to flow and hatches had to be used to maintain water levels, leading to slow flows and heavy siltation. Trees were selectively felled and used to build large current deflectors, some of which were then planted up. The hatches can now be kept open, improving flow speed and variety through the reach. The deflectors started to clean up the river bed almost immediately and they are beginning to grow vegetation, helping them to look more natural.



To learn more about the work and how it has matured since construction, come to our open day in September - details on back page.



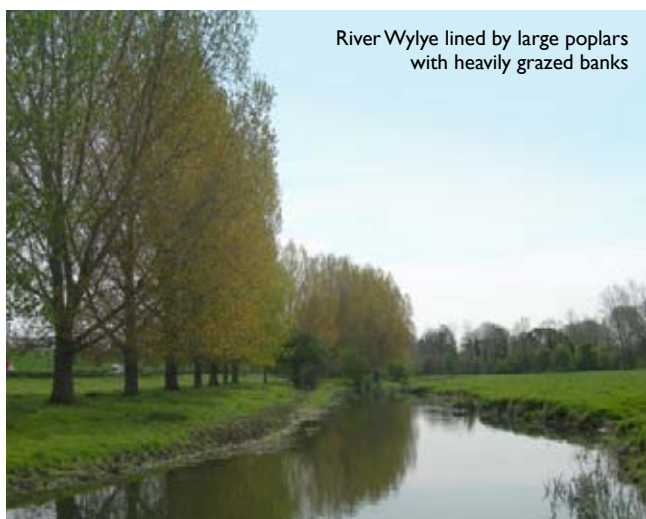
RESTORATION WORK 2007

Seven Hatches, Chilhampton

Restoration of the River Wylde at Seven Hatches near Chilhampton is taking place in September/October 2007. Restoration is needed because the River Wylde has been heavily dredged in the past damaging habitat for fish and other wildlife. We now have an opportunity to work with the Wilton Estate and the Wilton Fly Fishing Club to reverse that decline. The river restoration will involve:

- ~ re-instating parts of the gravel river bed
- ~ pinning tree limbs into the river to vary flow
- ~ selectively felling and pruning trees
- ~ planting riverside shrubs, and fencing the river banks

The River Wylde is currently lined by large poplar trees, hidden within which are a number of mature willow and ash trees. The felling of a small number of the poplars, and careful pruning of others will create slim gaps in the wall of trees. This will reveal lovely views across the Wylde valley, allow more light into the river (helping vegetation growth), and highlight the fantastic willow and ash trees. Groups of shrubs will also be planted next to the river, reinforcing the typical character of the valley.



River Wylde lined by large poplars with heavily grazed banks



The River Avon at Hale in high flow

Hale/Woodgreen

Restoration work to restore the River Avon near Woodgreen in September/October 2007 will help bring back healthy populations of Atlantic salmon, rare sea lamprey, and river plants. The River Avon has been heavily dredged in the past here and is now missing the gravel beds that salmon need for spawning. The restoration will involve:

- ~ re-instating the gravel shallows in two places
- ~ using deflectors to vary flow and clean the gravel bed
- ~ coppicing some willows and planting riverside shrubs

The historic water meadows in this area are an important landscape feature and protecting them during the works is a key consideration. The restoration work will be done by the Environment Agency operations delivery team, who usually do weed cutting and respond to flood emergencies on the Avon. This is a great opportunity to use their experience to improve the river for wildlife.

Both restoration sites may look a little bare when the work is completed at the end of October, but will quickly recover. Spring will see an explosion of greenery as the new structures and river banks grow vegetation, and the planted shrubs mature, and after a year or so you may struggle to see that we were ever there.

Linking River and Floodplain

The management of the lower River Avon is intimately linked with the management of the grazing marshes of the Avon Valley. STREAM will contribute to linking management of water levels in the Valley, and the needs of migrating fish populations in the River Avon by;

- ~ Identifying ways to stop fish species getting trapped in the valley ditch networks
- ~ Developing a strategic programme of ditch restoration
- ~ Developing and trialling operating regimes for key sluices in the river and valley

As part of STREAM, studies to identify ways to prevent fish entrapment and to identify and prioritise ditch restoration works are underway. The results will feed into the Environment Agency's Water Level Management Plans & the development of operating protocols for hatches & sluices at key sites in the river system.



Avon side channel
flowing across the Valley

How can I get more information?

For detailed information about STREAM visit:
www.streamlife.org.uk

If you would like a project leaflet or be added to our mailing list - contact Elaine Swiffen on 01380 737003 or email:
elaine.swiffen@naturalengland.org.uk

If you have any questions about STREAM, contact Jenny Wheeldon on 01380 737023 or by email:
jenny.wheeldon@naturalengland.org.uk

Join us on the river bank

We would like to invite landowners, river and fishery managers to a restoration workshop on September 14th 2007. The day will start with a short talk at 9:00am at Langford Lakes Nature Reserve followed by a visit to the Upper Woodford site. After lunch, we will visit the Fovant site, ending the day by 16:30pm at Langford lakes.

The day is free, but places are limited & will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. **For more details and to reserve a place please contact Chris Patrick by August 24th on t: 01380 737022, e: christopher.patrick@naturalengland.org.uk or download a booking form from our website.**

We will be running many more events for landowners, river managers and local communities in 2008 and 2009, so there will be opportunities to see all the restoration sites as they progress.

Living River project launched

The STREAM project joined Living River staff and local communities in Salisbury on Friday 8th June to launch the Living River project. This Heritage Lottery funded project aims to increase awareness and appreciation of the River Avon and its tributaries, and will involve people who live and work in the River Avon catchment in the conservation of its natural heritage.

The launch included a performance of 'The River is Revolting!', a comic theatre piece developed especially for the Salisbury International Arts Festival to highlight issues that the river faces. The project also produced an audio river archive, REverbAVON, for the festival and worked with schools and apprentice mechanics from QinetiQ's Boscombe Down training facility to produce sculptures inspired by the river. Look out for the 'Dragonfly' (made from a Gazelle helicopter) as you head south on the A303 by Amesbury!

The Living River is running events, resources and offering training opportunities to help people get more involved in the river system. For more information, visit the website www.livingriver.org.uk or contact the Living River project team on **01722 334856**

