



september 06

# NEWSLETTER



## Introducing the STREAM team

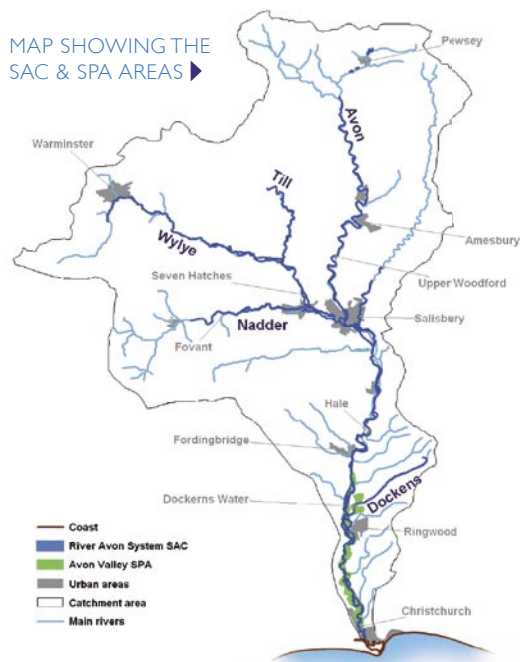
The project manager is Jenny Wheeldon (shown in middle), who may be a familiar face from her previous incarnations as the Wessex Chalk Streams project officer and the LIFE in UK Rivers officer.

The project finance and administration officers are Christopher Patrick and Elaine Swiffen, who previously worked on the successful Salisbury Plain LIFE project.

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 and 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.



## What is so special about the River Avon & Avon Valley?

The River Avon and its major tributaries are some of the finest chalk rivers in Europe and support a wide range of fish, bird, mammal and plant species. The river system is protected as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for the river habitat as characterised by water crowfoot, and populations of Atlantic salmon, bullhead, brook and sea lamprey, and Desmoulin's whorl snail. It also supports important biodiversity action plan species and habitats such as otter, water vole, wet woodland and reed beds.

The Avon Valley includes one of the largest expanses of unimproved floodplain grazing marsh in Britain and is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) for gadwall and Bewick's swan. The floodplain grazing marsh supports a complex mosaic of wetland habitats, breeding waders and wintering wildfowl.

# What is STREAM doing in 2006?

## 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 shape, improving their ability to support aquatic habitats and species.

River restoration work will be carried out at Upper Woodford on the Avon and at Fovant on the Nadder in September/October 2006. The Environment Agency has designed the projects and will be building them with help from their approved contractors. Restoration work at Amesbury, Hale, Blashford and just north of Wilton will take place in 2007 and 2008.



### Upper Woodford – The Broads

At Woodford, the River Avon is extremely wide with a heavily silted bed and little in-channel vegetation. The object of the restoration is to demonstrate a range of techniques that increase flow and substrate diversity, providing a 'tool-kit' of techniques that fishing clubs could use. The work will involve:

- ~ use of brushwood, flint and chestnut stakes to create vegetated islands
- ~ construction of a vegetated causeway just above water level to narrow the channel and create a stillwater area
- ~ building log weirs to encourage variation in flow depth and speed
- ~ creation of "d-shape" deflectors made of brushwood to prevent bank erosion and to vary flow
- ~ 3 large submerged deflectors to improve the quality of in-channel gravel and extend the river margins

### Fovant – Iron hatches

The River Nadder at Fovant was historically dredged and is over sized compared to flow. As a result, hatches have to be used to maintain water levels, leading to slow flows and heavy siltation. The object of the work is to modify the channel to a more appropriate width and shape, allowing the impoundment to be reduced, improving in-channel and marginal habitats. The works involve:

- ~ selective coppicing of trees on the adjacent south river bank to allow light to reach the channel and enhance bankside vegetation
- ~ use of felled trunks to create groynes to narrow the river by up to 1/3rd of its width, filled with brash and topped with turves of wetland vegetation sourced by undertaking ecologically beneficial ditch maintenance locally
- ~ redistribution of silt laden gravel from the right bank to the centre of the channel bed to improve substrate quality

### Managing environmental impacts

In order to avoid damaging environmental effects during the restoration work, specific measures are in place to minimise silt release and transport, disturbance to protected species and to ensure use of local materials.

The high density of water vole burrows combined with very soft banks has had a major influence on what (and how) we can build at Woodford. The woods in the Fovant area are known to be important for bats so the tree works have been designed to ensure their protection.

### Monitoring

We have employed consultants Haskoning UK to carry out a programme of detailed monitoring to evaluate how successful the river restoration has been and to identify any problems. The UK River Restoration Centre is also working with us, piloting a rapid assessment method for restoration projects.



## How can I get more information?

A detailed project leaflet has been produced. If you would like a paper or electronic copy, please contact Elaine Swiffen on **01380 737003** or e-mail: [elaine.swiffen@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:elaine.swiffen@naturalengland.org.uk)

We will be holding a series of open days and events, and will also be working closely with the Heritage Lottery funded Living River Project, which will provide opportunities for volunteers to improve habitats for wildlife. Details will be given in our website and annual newsletter.

The project website [www.streamlife.org.uk](http://www.streamlife.org.uk) is under construction and will go live in Autumn 2006.

If you have any questions about STREAM, please contact Jenny Wheeldon on **01380 737023** or by e-mail: [jenny.wheeldon@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:jenny.wheeldon@naturalengland.org.uk)