

Working Together To Ensure Our Rivers Thrive

Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust

NEWSLETTER | AUTUMN 2021



IN THIS ISSUE:

| New Staff Welcome | Members Day 2021 | Rivers2U education video | Rishi Sunak Visit | iWharfe update - eDNA testing begins | External News | Coming Up |

Welcome to your Autumn Newsletter!

A wet day in Pateley Bridge seems an appropriate one on which to write a welcome to our autumn newsletter.

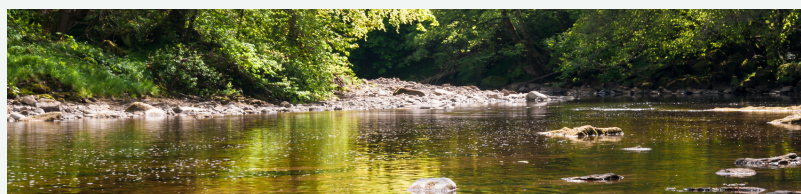
Much needed rain for anglers, albeit too late for some, but weather which also raises the spectre of river levels our natural flood management seeks to address.

This quarter we're delighted to be able to update you on what has been a busy summer for YDRT. We're also pleased to be able to let the new members of our growing team introduce themselves and their work in their own words.

The Rivers Trust report, the State of Our Rivers, released this autumn underlines the importance of the focused, diligent and effective work our team is actively engaged in and we thank you for your continued support to enable it.

Have a great autumn!

David Middlemiss
CEO



Welcome to our new staff members!

This Autumn, we are welcoming three new staff members onto the team. Firstly, a very warm welcome to Tim, who joins us from the River Thame Conservation Trust . Tim will be filling the role of Tees-Swale Metal Mines Project Manager.

Tim says:

"I am excited to have started work with the YDRT and have spent the first couple of weeks starting to get to grips with the complexities of the metal mines diffuse pollution project.

This is part of the wider HLF Tees-Swale Naturally Connected Project and I have met, or will soon meet, various key partners in this great project.

Last week I visited several of the project sites in both upper-Teesdale and Swaledale with the Environment Agency, Coal Authority and Tees Rivers Trust. This allowed me to see for myself the diffuse heavy metal pollution issues resulting from old metal mine workings and to start understanding the sort of measures we might put in place to reduce these issues.



Upper Teesdale and Swaledale are spectacular places to work and the historic metal mining landscape is fascinating. It is great to be part of the next chapter of the rich metal mining heritage in the area. Our work aims to both reduce diffuse heavy metal pollution and improve river water quality while maintaining the integrity of the mine sites.

I look forward to sharing updates of our work in future editions of this newsletter! "



Welcome to our new staff

Abigail joined us in August as our new Farming & Conservation Officer. She has a background as a Pesticide Usage Surveyor, and has already been active on site visits around the Dales

Abigail Says:

"It was a pleasure to start my new role at YDRT by accompanying our Ops Director Marie Taylor to the Swaledale Farmers Facilitation group farm walk and meeting. Hosted on a beautiful farm overlooking the River Swale and led by the group facilitator Carol Moffat, the meeting focused on woodland creation and tree planting.

A particularly topical conversation now with drive for tree planting in appropriate locations ever on the rise and shifts in Direct Payments and agri-environment schemes coming into motion.

The informal event included an update on tree planting schemes from Tarja Wilson of the Yorkshire Dales National Trust and carried on to a tree focused farm walk looking both at historical and future plantings.



Whilst YDRT were there primarily to provide knowledge on the Natural Flood Management benefits of trees, the opportunity for me to listen to the local knowledge and experience of those who farmed the area was invaluable.

Hearing about the impacts of the 2019 floods and the benefits and challenges of adopting various environmental schemes for farm business models were particularly important conversations for me and ones that I will definitely be taking forward in my role as I start to work more with farming communities across the Yorkshire Dales river catchments."



Welcome to our new staff



Finally, welcome aboard to Fern, who joins us as our new Assistant Project Officer. Before COVID, Fern worked abroad, helping to train scientific divers.

Fern says:

"The first few weeks at YDRT have been a whirlwind! I have really enjoyed getting to know my new role, which is varied and very different from anything I have done before. As well as learning about all our various projects and taking control of our social media presence, I have also been getting to grips with the work of the DVRN, assisting with the recent CaBA reporting and boosting our internet presence. There's a lot to learn!

As I'll be assisting on a variety of projects across the YDRT and the DVRN, I've been able to go on some really interesting site visits, and see firsthand how our projects are developing.

I particularly enjoyed attending the Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum in Ingleborough last month. Hearing from members of the National Park Authority, Natural England, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and many others was fascinating, and gave me a chance to be brought up to speed on current matters by the experts.

The transition to ELMS and the development of Biodiversity Net Gain schemes in the Dales were hot topics, as were the recent developments to the Environment Bill. I left with a lot to think about!

The learning curve is certainly steep, but I'm loving the process, and can't wait to get more stuck into the projects with guidance from my fantastically supportive colleagues."



Members Day 2021

July saw our annual Supporters Day held in blazing sunshine hosted by YDRT co-chairman Robert Brown and his wife Helen at their beautiful Howesyke Farm, part of the recently completed Bishopdale NFM project



It was great after so long in lockdown to be able to meet, in careful fashion, with supporters again and showcase some of our work, and to do so in such glorious surroundings. Our thanks go to all those involved in making the day a success, and we look forward to seeing more of you to talk about our expanding programme in 2022.

Supporters were able to learn more about our work through a series of activities hosted by staff and trustees, with food and refreshments kindly provided by Robert and Helen and our friends at Heck Food.

A series of presentations on current projects was delivered by Operations Director Marie Taylor and Senior Catchment Partnership Officers Charlotte Simons and Sarah Clarke. On hand to deliver a field demonstration were Neale Hall and Wesley Wilcox of Dales Land Net who explained how their technology is adding value to our monitoring work on the ground. Attendees were also given a tour of the NFM interventions delivered at Howesyke, from tree planting to leaky dams.

Catherine Mason, our Education and Engagement Officer, was able to provide a demonstration of our Rivers 2U mobile classroom, not to mention some very welcome shade!



Rivers2U has a new education video!

September saw the launch of our new video which explains all about our Rivers2U project and what we can offer to schools and community groups. You can view the video, which was funded by our National Lottery Heritage Fund grant, thanks to players of the National Lottery, on the Education page of our website:

<https://www.ydrt.org.uk/what-we-do/education/>

Thanks to Ian Paine Creative for the video production, and to Crayke CE Primary School, who kindly agreed to being filmed – a dynamic school in a beautiful location with some budding David Attenborroughs in the making!

Since June it's been great to be out and about visiting schools again, with more interest than ever shown in learning about rivers, flooding issues, climate change and connecting with nature, giving lots of opportunities to tailor our school visits and meet the National Curriculum programmes of study. Through visiting our rivers and streams to investigate the wildlife that lives there, or having a visit from our Rivers2U van with the interactive river table along with identifying invertebrates from a local stream sample, there's lots to inspire the next generation to help care for our amazing rivers.



To find out more, or to make a booking, please email our Education and Engagement Officer, Cathering Mason, at education@ydrt.co.uk

Chancellor visits Bishopdale NFM project

In August we were pleased to welcome the Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak, MP for Richmond (Yorks), to review the accomplishments of our recently completed Bishopdale NFM project.

Commenced in 2018, this three-year Natural Flood Management (NFM) project is based in the 41km² catchment of Bishopdale Beck.

The upstream part of the catchment is sparsely populated while the lower catchment includes the three settlements of Thoraby, Newbiggin and West Burton. The valley has steep sides and is mainly pastoral farmland. Bishopdale Beck regularly experiences flooding in heavy rainfall events, often affecting the main road through the dale, isolating the local communities.



Mr Sunak was given a tour of the works by some of our trustees and staff at Ribba Hall Farm where farmer Andy Whitell conveyed his enthusiasm for the project and noted the early signs of improvements. "We have already seen the impact of the leaky dams and the scrapes on our farm. The yard used to flood regularly at times of heavy rain but that has lessened considerably".

The benefits of the project beyond direct NFM measures were also explained to Mr Sunak by YDRT's Operations Director Marie Taylor, as well as the many other local landowners in attendance on the day.

The noted increase in owls, wading birds (Curlew have raised broods in the scrapes this year), kingfishers, otters and spawning salmon in the project area talk to the wider biodiversity gains of our work.

The project started in 2018, with funding from the Environment Agency totalling £267,000 in the three years of the project. Over the lifetime of the project engagement with 10 farms in the dale resulted in the planting of 28,000 trees, including 4.5km of hedges, and the installation of 12 leaky dams and 17 shallow scrapes.

Thank you to Dales Land Net who joined us on the day to provide further details about the technology they are using to monitor the NFM features installed.

Mr Sunak congratulated the team noting *"we have seen the devastating impact of flooding in the Dales very recently and I applaud initiatives like the Bishopdale project which will contribute to lessening the risk to land, property and livelihoods from future flood events. It is also good to know that slowing the flow in the Upper Dales has benefits here but also much lower down the catchment in York. Improving biodiversity is a very welcome bonus."*

iWharfe update

"It's August – must be time to check the health of the whole of the R.Wharfe!" – and so on the 23rd August 2021, the teams of iWharfe volunteers set out to collect their samples of water ready for submitting to ALS laboratories for testing. This year further samples were taken by Sheffield University for eDNA testing – which will identify if the source of the bacteria is animal or human.

Last year's health check showed a problem on the Wharfe – none of its popular recreational sites were safe for recreation. Levels of harmful bacteria meant that sites popular for swimming, paddling, and playing would all fail to meet designated bathing water standards.



Isabel Doutero Soler from The University of Sheffield Collecting her sample at Addingham



Sampling team from Otley Angling Club

High concentrations of faecal bacteria in the Wharfe downstream of the sewage treatment works in Ilkley at Beanlands Island were expected, based on the results from an earlier citizen science study, but high levels in popular upstream spots in Upper Wharfedale such as Linton Falls came as a surprise, suggesting that bacterial pollution is a more widespread problem than initially realised.

A lot has happened on the Wharfe since last years Health check. Ilkley Clean River Group made a successful application to Defra for Bathing Water Status on the Wharfe – the first ever UK bathing water designation on a river. The investigations on the Wharfe have grown in number. Both the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water have installed multiparameter water quality Sondes along the designated stretch of the Wharfe along with regular water samples

iWharfe update

Volunteers from Addingham Environment Group, Ilkley Clean River Group and YDRT have also been very busy with :

- taking further samples in the upper parts of the River Wharfe to gain a greater understanding of the water quality between Hubberholme to Cavendish Pavillion, funded by the Swinden Quarry Fund via the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
- Taking weekly samples in the same location as Yorkshire Waters Multiparameter Water Quality Sondes – with the samples being tested by Yorkshire Water – to monitor the bacterial levels across the bathing season.
- eDNA sampling to assess the use of eDNA kits and the information that can be gathered from them – these kits are being used to check invertebrate levels and presence of crayfish

And that's not all. Within the iWharfe project there is now funding from the EA to create a meta data hub for all the results from this water testing along the river – not just by the iWharfe volunteers but by anyone collecting data on the water quality. A web based approach, using maps, to show who is collecting what data and who you would need to approach to be able to use the data.

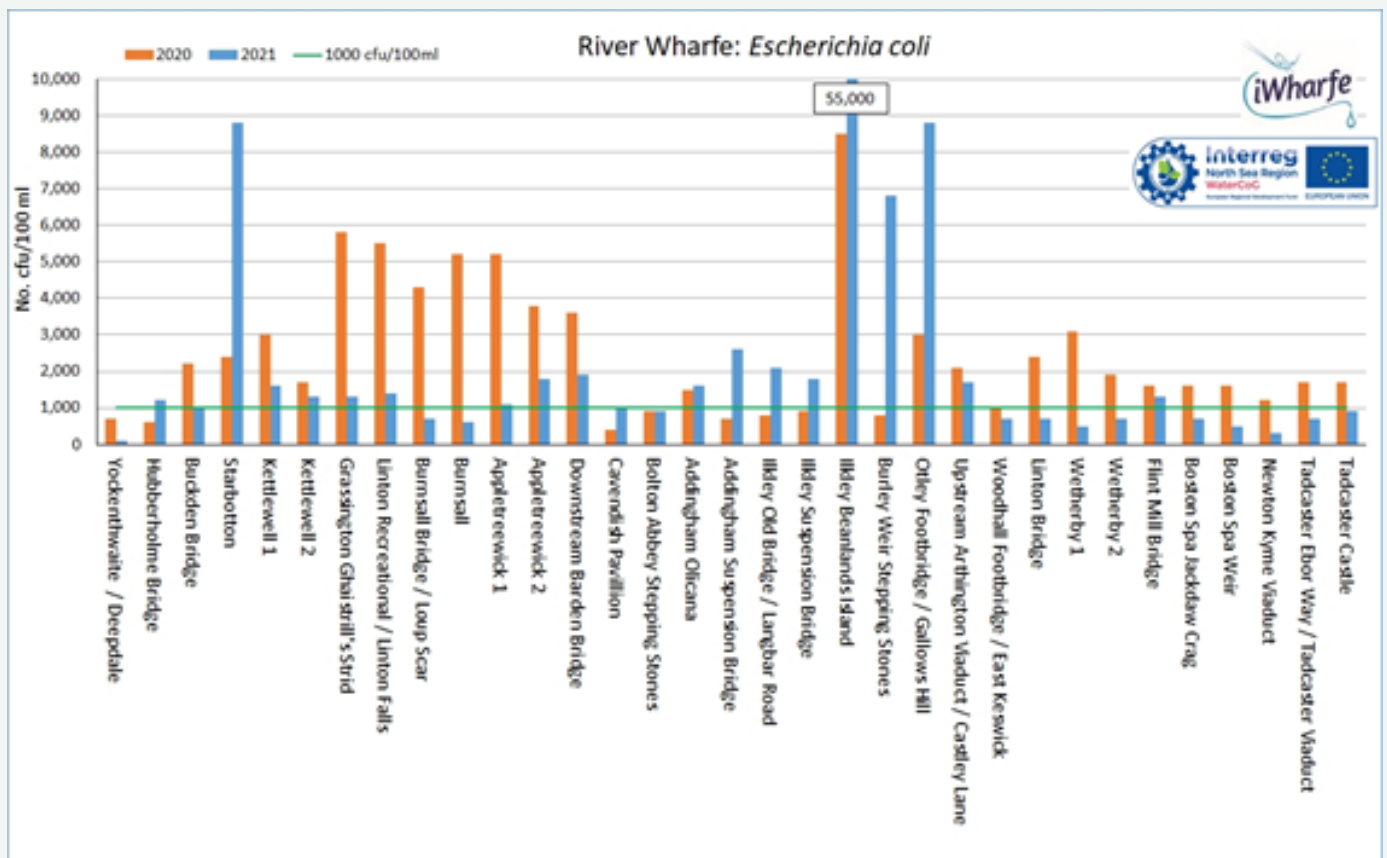


eDNA testing training at Ilkley

The gathering of all this data is giving us a clearer picture of the issues and where we need to focus our work within iWharfe to improve the water quality.

For example, the bacterial levels show a pollution source, the eDNA sampling of the bacteria gives us information on where the bacteria are coming from and from there we can pinpoint where to do walkovers and what sort of items we need to be looking out for. From there we can work to improve the water quality by addressing the cause of the pollution. Which will in turn lead to more sampling to check that water quality is improving.

So what is the data from 2020 and 2021 telling us?



Graph courtesy of Malcolm Secrett - Addingham Environment Group

Although E. coli values varied along the river and between the two sampling dates, the 2021 data confirmed the findings of 2020 – that few if any of the popular recreational sites would meet the standards required for safe swimming under the Bathing Waters Directive

So what are the next steps?

Bringing the different data sources together to narrow down the types of pollution (human vs animal), sources of pollution and areas to do walkovers on and then working up the solutions that will reduce the pollution and improve the Wharfe – a watch this space moment for you as readers!

External News

The State Of Our Rivers

Last week saw the launch of The State of Our Rivers report from The Rivers Trust – and the tone was far from celebratory.

The report compiled evidence from rivers up and down the country, and showcases the main issues facing our rivers today: Agriculture, which affects 60% of our waterways, and wastewater discharge, which affects around 50%. Pharmaceutical waste, microplastics and urban runoff also play a part in all of England's rivers failing to reach "good health" status.



The State of Our Rivers

It's in our hands >>>

In a climate that is changing quickly, and with extreme weather events and flooding becoming more common, rivers can act as buffers between our homes, businesses and the elements. But only if they are taken care of. The report issues tentative congratulations for the work being done on our rivers, but also makes it clear that it is not enough to reverse our downward trend.

By working with farmers, landowners and water companies, us here at YDRT know that there is plenty of appetite for change. We also see first hand the multiple benefits that river stewardship can bring.

Strategic impact assessment, coordinated investment and adoption of nature based solutions are the cornerstones of our work, and these are exactly what is called for by the report. Our hope is that this report, combined with the latest amendments to the Environment Bill (see below) will kickstart a change towards a greater appreciation for our rivers.

The Environment Bill: Latest Updates

On the 13th of September, several amendments were passed in the House of Lords – including one which aims to reduce the discharge raw sewage into rivers.

The amendments were proposed by four members: the Duke of Wellington, Baroness Altmann, Lord Oates and Baroness Quin. They also have a high level of support from the public – over 91,000 people signed a petition in favour of the amendment.

The changes put a duty onto both water companies and the government to ensure untreated sewage is prevented from entering British rivers, as occurred 400,000 times in 2020 alone. Companies must also reduce the harm done by discharges, and must report discharges within an hour of them occurring.

There is hope that the amendment will ensure higher levels of enforcement of fines and disciplinarys where breaches do occur. This amendment comes alongside clauses to place charges on single-use items, and a clause that would prevent pesticides being authorized for use unless proved not to cause significant harm to pollinators.

What's on this Autumn at YDRT!

Our AGM will be going ahead on Wednesday the 17th of November

The YDRT AGM will be held on Wednesday 17th November. As part of this we'll be presenting an update on our work virtually at 18:30. More information and a link to this event will follow.

Richmond Climate and Environment Festival

Coinciding with the month-long COP26, Richmondshire Climate Action Partnership are running a month of events promoting greener living. YDRT was delighted to be invited to participate, and are planning to hold two events. The first, on the 21st of October, will be held at our Bishopdale site, showcasing the NFM work carried out there with a guided walk and Q&A session.

Our Rivers2U van will also be heading to Richmond on November the 6th.

Check out [Richmondclimateaction.org](https://richmondclimateaction.org) for more information!

Return of volunteering opportunities

With cooler weather setting in, it will soon be tree planting season. This, along with litter picks, tree guard gathering and general tidying up will kickstart our volunteering season

If you are interested in getting involved in volunteering, drop us an email at enquiries@ydrt.co.uk

Christmas Auction

After the success of last year's auction, we are pleased to announce that we plan to run a repeat event this year.

Keep your eyes peeled on your inbox for information on this year's event, which will be held at the end of November.

Just in time to get your hands on goodies and experiences which will make excellent presents!

Winter Newsletter

The next installment of our newsletter will be released in January 2022. In the meantime, to sign up for our volunteering opportunities, or to find out more about anything featured in this newsletter, drop us an email at enquiries@ydrt.co.uk

