



**Arun & Western
Streams Partnership**

A healthier future for our catchment



**Western
Sussex
Rivers Trust**

Minutes of the Arun and Western Streams Catchment Partnership quarterly meeting held Thursday 24th September 2026.

Attendees: Eloise Phillips (WSRT), Gareth Williams (WSRT), Chloe Clarke (WSRT), Sam Frith (WSRT), Louise Barnetson (WSRT), Tracy Thurlow (WSRT), Becky Hiorns (NT), Pete Crawford (HDC), Roy Briscoe (CDC), Rosie Pyper (EA), Holger Schiller (WSCC), Chris Need (Need Consulting), Fay Pisani (RSPB), Jill Sutcliffe (Manhood Heritage Group), Gabby Crisp (NT), Keir Smith (SW), Eleanor Read (WSCC), Olivia Robinson (OART), Vivianne Doussy, Fraser Wheeler (Greener Amberley).

1. River Guardians Update – Sam Frith (Volunteer and Citizen Science Coordinator)

Sam opened by thanking the more than 200 River Guardian volunteers who collect water-quality and observational data across the catchment. The catchment has been divided into smaller areas to make monitoring and management more practical. River Guardians generally monitor the same site each month, enabling them to identify changes in colour, flow, wildlife, pollution incidents and other unusual conditions.

Monitoring currently includes:

- Phosphate and nitrate
- Water temperature
- Turbidity/water clarity
- River levels and flow
- Wildlife observations
- Litter
- Invasive species
- Other observations and hydrological data

The data is increasingly being used to identify problems, report incidents to the Environment Agency, inform projects and demonstrate the impact of restoration work.

Uses of the data:

- Identifying areas for clean-up and invasive-species projects.
- Informing river restoration.
- Establishing baseline conditions before projects begin.
- Demonstrating project impact and supporting future funding applications.
- Providing evidence for media and advocacy.
- Supporting community engagement.
- Helping identify pollution issues and potential sources.

Data gaps and additional monitoring:

Despite the substantial amount of data already collected, there are gaps, particularly around known permanent pollution sources such as sewage treatment works.

Additional funding of £5,000 has been received for monitoring equipment. At approximately £200 per kit, this will provide around 20 additional kits. The intention is to establish citizen-science monitoring upstream and downstream of selected sites, using Event Duration Monitoring (EDM) data to identify priority locations.

The resulting data could be used to support advocacy for tighter permits and/or infrastructure improvements to reduce groundwater infiltration and sewage spills.

2. Keir Smith – Southern Water Catchment Partnership Specialist Update

Keir Smith provided an update on his new role with Southern Water.

Key objectives of the role:

- Improving Southern Water's partnership working.
 - Acting as a link between Southern Water, catchment partnerships and other partners.
 - Increasing collaboration across Southern Water's internal teams.
 - Bringing opportunities and learning from other catchments into the Arun and Western Streams partnership.
 - Supporting greater use of nature-based solutions and catchment-based approaches.
 - Helping improve transparency around data, investment and planned activity.
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- **Future Investment:** Southern Water is beginning to plan for the 2030–2035 investment period, providing an opportunity to influence funding for catchment-scale projects, nature-based solutions, river restoration, biodiversity and measures to reduce pressure on wastewater systems.
 - **WINEP:** The Water Industry National Environment Programme provides information on environmental investment and regulatory activity. Southern Water is working to make this information more accessible to catchment partnerships.

- **Data and Monitoring:** Work is underway to improve environmental data sharing, including potential regional data hubs and monitoring forums.
- **Climate Resilience:** A project with Mott MacDonald is assessing future climate risks and opportunities for nature-based solutions, with potential projects being developed for future investment.
- **Environmental Investigations:** Investigations are ongoing into nutrients and ammonia in the Arun catchment, alongside monitoring of PFAS and potential sources of contamination.
- **Partnership Working:** Southern Water highlighted the need for earlier engagement, better data sharing and coordination, stronger use of citizen science, and more ambitious catchment-scale and nature-based projects.

3. Eleanor Read and Holger Schiller, West Sussex County Council – Flood Risk Management Update

The meeting received an update on West Sussex County Council's role in managing flood risk and ordinary watercourses.

The team is responsible for a range of statutory duties, including:

- Reviewing drainage and flood implications associated with major housing developments.
- Investigating significant flooding incidents where the relevant criteria are met.
- Managing flood risk from sources other than sewer flooding.
- Providing consents for works affecting ordinary watercourses.
- Managing and maintaining relevant highway drainage and flood-risk assets.
- Supporting community resilience and flood-risk awareness.

The Council's recently adopted flood risk management strategy takes a **catchment-based approach**, reflecting the Environment Agency's wider approach to managing flood risk. The strategy considers flooding as part of the wider water environment rather than treating it solely as a flood-management issue.

- **Flood Risk Management:** WSCC outlined its statutory flood-risk responsibilities, including development drainage, flood investigations, ordinary watercourses, highway drainage and community resilience. Its new catchment-based strategy sets priorities for the next 5–15 years.
- **Catchment Planning:** Catchment management plans are being developed to identify flood-risk priorities, guide investment and support practical solutions.
- **Development and Drainage:** The Council is promoting resilient development and greater use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).
- **Watercourses and Highways:** Work is underway to improve mapping and maintenance of ordinary watercourses. Joint working with landowners and highways teams has helped address flooding issues.
- **Community Resilience and Funding:** Greater emphasis is being placed on public awareness and community resilience.

- **Climate Action:** The Council provided updates on climate adaptation, mitigation and its Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Action Plan, which is currently out for consultation.
- **Protecting the Environment Fund:** Over £700,000 is being made available for projects supporting the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, with grants expected to be around £50,000–£100,000 and partnership/match funding encouraged. Contact Holger Schiller (Holger.Schiller@westsussex.gov.uk).