



ACTION FOR THE RIVER KENNET

PRESS RELEASE

10 July 2013

River Kennet continues to suffer as officials investigate pollution source

Ten days after the pesticide Chlorpyrifos entered the River Kennet at Marlborough, the river is continuing to decline.

Yesterday, Public Health England and the Food Standards Agency lifted their advice to keep out of the water and declared that fish caught in the Kennet are safe to eat, however life in the river is far from back to normal.

The layer of dead freshwater shrimps and mayfly is providing an excellent food source for algae, which is now a brown scum plastering the bottom of the river and smothering the oxygenating plants. Usually fresh water shrimp graze the river bed, helping it to stay clear, but the balance has been upset, and the river is deteriorating by the day.

Local residents have reported finding dead crayfish, but there is no evidence of fish deaths yet. 'Fish will be looking hard for alternative food' said Charlotte Hitchmough, Director of Action for the River Kennet, the group whose volunteers discovered the pollution. 'They can be quite adaptable and will be altering their diet to include bugs which fall into the river from trees, and even smaller fish, but we are expecting to see some fish deaths caused by starvation.'

Officials from the Environment Agency and Thames Water are investigating the sewer network to discover at what point in the system the pesticide entered, in an attempt to identify the culprit.

ARK's chairman, Geoffrey Findlay said 'This is indeed a disaster for the Kennet and its wildlife. It is vital that we find out how it happened, and how it can be prevented from ever happening again.'

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More information: Charlotte Hitchmough (Action for the River Kennet) 07880 515859 or 01672 513672

Action for the River Kennet is the River Trust for the River Kennet and its tributaries. Their team of volunteers surveys 40 sites every month to check on the health of the river. The Kennet is one of

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Committee

Geoffrey Findlay, Hope Cottage, Ramsbury, Wiltshire, SN8 1PA
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Sir Nigel Thompson.

Director **Charlotte Hitchmough, PO Box 2919, Manton, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 4WE**

England's finest chalk streams and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It flows from Silbury Hill in Wiltshire, through Berkshire and joins the River Thames at Reading.

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