

Hi everyone,

We wanted to provide a brief update to you all on activities from the Otter Valley Association. This email comprises two parts – a quick one-page overview, and then more detailed information on each point for reading at your leisure. We know that some of you are on Facebook and may have seen some of these items, but we know that not everyone is on Facebook.



This email update contains the following items:

OVA Talks

- Our first OVA talk of the winter is taking place on Wednesday 23rd October. Please do mark your diaries for what promises to be a very informative talk on the subject of “Climate Change” by OVA member and RSPB expert Mr. Olly Watts. Climate Change is often seen as a big far-off global issue ... but Olly will bring it down to earth and look at how each of us can live with Climate change - from our gardening to our holidays to our workplaces.

Walks Update:

- We are still recruiting a new walks co-ordinator. Jane Connick is standing down from the role, and we need a replacement. Can you help?
- We have a great line-up of 5 walks for October. Details below – why not come out and enjoy the scenery, meet friends and learn about our local surroundings? Everyone is welcome.

Initiative Updates:

- **Water Quality group.** Excellent meetings have been held to discuss the five major initiatives within this group - Testing processes & results, Agricultural runoff mitigation, South West Water discharges and engagement, Partnerships of agencies, citizen scientists and others, Planning & it's impact on the river.
- **Natural History (Flora & Fauna).** The inaugural meeting is taking place at the Kings Arms pub in Otterton on Tuesday 1st October at 7pm. All welcome if you would like to attend. Charter published below.

Photographic Competition - extended by one week

- It has come to light that several submissions to the OVA photographic competition were sent to an incorrect email address. Hence, we are extending the last date by one week in case others have done the same thing.

Social media update:

- Our Facebook group continues to grow. We now have over 750 members – many of whom have been posting amazing updates to the community. Please do login to Facebook and engage, or simply view what is going on.

Publications:

- We are working on publishing updates to the famous “12 walks” booklet and the “History of the Lower Otter Valley” (in collaboration with the Fairlynch Museum). We are also looking at new leaflets relating to the Flora & Fauna and other topics.

External Programmes:

- A busy week at the end of September. We were interviewed by a Cambridge student writing a thesis on the ‘people aspects’ of the LORP scheme. We attended the “Heaths to Sea” advisory group, and the East Devon National Landscape Stakeholder Workshop. We have also been invited to participate in two programmes by the Pebblebed Heaths team and by East Devon District Council.

Deadline Approaching on East Devon District Council plans for new building work

- We wanted to remind everyone to have your say for two options for a new community in East Devon, before the deadline of 5pm on Monday 7th October.

Sidmouth Science Festival: 4th to 13th October.

- A wide range of events and talks are on offer to suit all ages and interests. The purpose of the festival is to inform, inspire, promote and advance public education in scientific disciplines, showing how they impact on our everyday lives.

Walk for Water - London on October 26th:

- The Otter Valley Association wanted to bring to your attention an event taking place in London relating to the issue of water quality. This event is a march called “The March for clean water” which will be taking place on Saturday, October 26 2024. It finishes in Parliament Square. Details can be found below.

Planning Applications:

- We wanted to draw to your attention two applications in Budleigh Salterton that we think may be of interest to some of you.

Village Reps, Talks and Volunteering

- We are looking for additional volunteers to help the OVA. Specifically, an OVA representative for Newton Poppleford, as well as a walks-coordinator (to replace Jane Connick) and an event's organizer. Can you help?

==== End of Email Summary (September 2024) ====

1. OVA Talk: Are We Doing Enough to Help Nature in the Climate Crisis?

As mentioned in our last printed newsletter, we are delighted that the OVA talks are coming back. Our first talk is on Wednesday 23rd October and is on the subject of "Climate Change". This will be a personal account from Mr. Olly Watts of developing climate policy and action at the RSPB for more than twenty years - from the early climate and nature impact modelling studies, to developing approaches for how nature conservation needs to move forward in this era of change.

Olly has been at the forefront of adaptation for nature at national and international levels, working with NGOs and governments. His talk will ask 'are we doing enough, and what can we do better to help nature thrive as it faces its greatest long-term threat?'

Climate change is often seen as a big far-off global issue ... but Olly will bring it down to earth and look at how each of us can live with Climate change - from our gardening to our holidays to our workplaces.

Please do join us if you can - it will be an informative and interesting talk with Q&A at the end.

Location: Peter Hall by St. Peters Church
Doors open: 7:00pm. Talk starts at 7:30pm.
Cost: £4 per person, payable at door.
 Drinks and snacks will be available.

This is the first of our winter series of talks. Our complete programme is:

- Talk 1: Wed 23rd October. Title: Are We Doing Enough to Help Nature in the Climate Crisis?
- Talk 2: Wed 20th November. Title: London's New River.
- Talk 3: Wed 22nd January. Title: Farming Practices - How They Affect River Quality
- Talk 4: Wed 19th February. Title: Otters - Coming to a River Near You
- Talk 5: Wed 26th March. Title: Wildlife from David R. White

You can find full details of all the talks here: <https://www.ova.org.uk/ova-diary/category/talks>

2. Walks Update: Help needed plus 5 walks for October.

Sadly, Jane Connick is standing down from the role of walks co-ordinator at the end of 2024 and we are looking to replace her! If you would enjoy a voluntary role which you can fit in at a time to suit you and enjoy co-ordinating, liaising and planning this could be for you. The walks co-ordinator works with the walks committee of 4 members. 3 of these are experienced walk leaders who offer invaluable pragmatic, useful advice when needed.

The walks committee usually meet once per year (over coffee obviously) and everything else is usually sorted either by email or chatting on a walk. It is a dynamic and active team who are also involved in the current project to update and re-launch the booklet '12 walks in the Otter Valley'

Tasks Jane is involved in:

- Produce 4 walk programmes per annum (to fit in with the OVA newsletter deadlines)
- Liaise with the walk leaders, by email, on walks / dates etc
- Upload the programme to the OVA website (others can help do this if required)

Jane has always found support from the walk team, leaders, and IT whizz Martin. They will all support and advise the new co-ordinator if necessary. If you would like more details of the role – email Jane at: walks@ova.org.uk

Meanwhile, we have 5 amazing walks scheduled for October. Why not come out and enjoy the scenery, meet friends and learn about our local surroundings? Everyone is welcome

Tuesday 1 October – 10.00am sharp – 7 miles. 4 hours plus lunch
'Around Kilmington'

Meet: Kilmington Village Hall car park (OS 116, SY 273 981) [what3words:///unlimited.unsettled.perch](https://www.what3words.com/unlimited.unsettled.perch).
 Post code EX13 7RF

Kilmington - taking in Shute Hill, Shute Barton, Yarty and Axe Flood Plain. The morning walk is a circular 3.5 miles passing through woods and Shute Barton, mainly on forest tracks and quiet rural roads, short section through farmland. Good underfoot but muddy in a few places. Bring a packed lunch to eat at Kilmington Green (some seating). In the afternoon the walk is over the Yarty and Axe floodplains, interesting wildlife and river meanders. Very flat 3.5 miles which can easily be shortened.

Start at Kilmington Village Hall at 10am. SY273981. Bring Lunch.

Walk Leader: Iain Ure Mobile on the day 07597 921007

Tuesday 8 October - 10.00 am. 6 miles about 3 hours
'Ottery's River'

Meet : Canaan Way long stay car park, Ottery St Mary (SY 0959 55). EX11 1EQ
 (pay the extra 50p for all-day parking and stay on afterwards to explore Ottery, have a pub lunch, or both).

We will walk on the east side of the river southwards as far as possible (part of path has been closed for some years due to river erosion) then divert uphill to look at Wiggaton and join minor roads and tracks, have a coffee stop, and rejoin the river at Tipton Mill. Cross the footbridge and return to Ottery along the west side of the river. Some rocky tracks and mud after rain, so wear stout footwear..

Walk Leader: Haylor Lass tel 01395 568786 / 07709 214089 mobile on the day

Thursday 17 October 10.00 am – 7.5 miles – 4 hours.
'The Hunter's Path and Teign Gorge'

Meet: Fingle Bridge roadside parking. (OL 28, SX 7375 8980) what3words ///risky.called.subsystem.
 Contact the walk leader if you wish to car-share.

We walk the classic Hunter's path from Fingle Bridge with fine views towards Chagford and Dartmoor beyond. Passing just below Castle Drogo we descend to the River Teign and follow it upstream towards Dogmarsh Bridge before looping back to the gorge where we walk downstream along the riverside path to the start. Optional lunch at the pub.

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway 01395 488739 / 07887936280

Saturday 26 October 10.00 am – 8.3 miles.
'Killerton, Columb John and Ratsloe'

Meet: Broadclyst village car park. (OS SX 983 972) what3words:///topics.sleepy.scrambles

Visit some well-known places but also some lesser known on this lovely area of rolling Devon countryside. The walk will visit Killerton Estate, Columb John, Ratsloe and Poltimore. Coffee and lunch stops.

Walk Leader: Sarah Westacott 0770 6078143

w/c 28 October (date to be confirmed). 10:00am – 5.5 miles – 3 hours (check OVA web nearer date)
'From Valley to Beacon'

Meet: Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground car park, Back Lane, Newton Poppleford. (OS115, SY 088 899)
 what3words: /// wisely.amazed.configure

A walk from Newton Poppleford to Tipton and then up towards Fire Beacon Hill returning via Harpford Woods. This is a moderate walk, with one significant ascent. Some sections may be wet and/or muddy after rain. There will be a coffee stop part way round (so bring a flask).

Walk Leader: Ross Hussey rdandamhussey22@gmail.com or 01395 227991
 Mobile for contact on the day only: 07902 255915

3. Initiative Update: Water Quality

The water quality group met last week (our first meeting since the summer holidays). We discussed the five major initiatives within this group:

Group 1 Feedback: Water testing

Background: We will look to build on current water quality testing on the River Otter undertaken by the Environment Agency and Westcountry Rivers Trust Citizen Scientists. Investigate the means of funding the purchase of up-to-date monitoring equipment.

Outcomes from meeting:

- We have identified four sources of data for further analysis (SWW, DWT, Citizen Scientists, EA).
- We want to obtain the raw data to allow us to identify actual details and cross-reference across sources.
- DWT are giving us two Eggs to test phosphates at places to be selected by us. Suggestions made during the meeting include under the new white bridge (to look at reserve water) and the old white bridge (to look at the river).
- We believe testing should take place at relevant SWW points of interest (e.g.: Honiton sewage works).

- We want to engage with Clinton Devon Estates to request that water quality is included in the new “Heaths to Sea” project.

Group 2 Feedback: Agricultural runoff

Background: We will consider how best to encourage good farm practices by liaising with Clinton Devon Estates, Westcountry Rivers Trust, the Environment Agency, National Farmers Union, Bicton Agricultural College and other relevant organisations.

Outcomes from meeting:

- Iorwerth (Yog) Watkins from the Devon Wildlife Trust has agreed to give a talk on “Farming Practices” for the OVA in February 2025.
- We discussed the role this group can have to raise awareness of this cause of pollution to the river.
- The fate of farmers is influenced by this topic – and ultimately needs parliament to engage and mandate approaches. Hence, we need to talk to our MP’s (E.g.: David Reed).

Group 3 Feedback: South West Water and EA

Background: We will challenge and hold SWW to account for pollution in the River Otter catchment and neighbouring coastline that they are directly responsible for. We will monitor the Environment Agency to ensure they are fulfilling their legal responsibilities.

Outcomes from meeting:

- We want to support other groups who are also campaigning for cleaner water.
- We want to analyse the data on sewage discharges from SWW at relevant points up the river Otter.
- We want to understand how sewage discharged into Budleigh Bay comes back up the river and into the Nature Reserve when moving from low tide to high tide? To this end, a “Citizen Scientist” project was suggested to investigate this – we are looking for volunteers to help us with this project.
- We want to understand (and influence?) plans for new housing developments – e.g. : where is the sewage going, and how will it be handled, from the new town being planned just south of Exeter airport? Are there plans to build new sewage processing plants, or to move it through new pipes to the coast? We would like to understand and share.

Group 4 Feedback: Partnerships

Background: We will identify and engage with any individuals or organisations that are relevant to the goals of this group.

Outcomes from meeting:

- We will create a simple database of all organizations we want to be affiliated to, plus any contacts that we know of or want to engage with. For example: Citizen Scientists, Westcountry Rivers Trust, Environment Agency, River Otter Fisheries Association, East Devon Catchment Partnership.

Group 5 Feedback: Planning

Background: We will review and contribute to local and national planning policies to understand and influence how additional building will impact on the management of sewage and other pollution sources.

Outcomes from meeting:

- We want to use the planning expertise of the OVA to understand plans from SWW, and others, for infrastructure and sewage capabilities for new development works.
- We want to ensure that any new development has sewage and other infrastructure requirements implemented before development work occurs.

4. Initiative Update: Flora & Fauna

Our inaugural meeting will be taking place at the Kings Arms pub in Otterton at 7pm on Tuesday 1st October. Everyone is welcome to attend. Our initial charter for this group is as follows:

- To document the range of flora and fauna in the valley - focusing perhaps on residents, aliens, rare or unusual species.
- To produce and publicise materials to help with the well-being of insects, birds, animals and plants (e.g.: leaflets, booklets, web-pages Etc).
- To encourage participation of adults and children in enjoying the flora and fauna (walks, talks, school efforts, photography competitions etc).
- To help protect and enhance our flora and fauna where necessary - planting trees, protecting hedgerows, protecting rare examples, Etc.
- To work with partners to help protect the habitat (working with farmers on run-off, or to identify and help remove invasive species etc).
- To understand and highlight the impact of climate change on our environment in the valley.

5. Photographic Competition – extended by one week

It has come to light that several submissions to the OVA photographic competition were sent to an incorrect email address. Hence, we are extending the last date by one week in case others have done the same thing.

So, if you have submitted any photographs and have NOT received an acknowledgement, please ensure they are sent to "editor@ova.org.uk" or "info@ova.org.uk". The good news from this is that you still have a week to get in any photographs!

6. Social Media Update

Our Facebook group continues to grow. We now have over 750 members – many of whom have been posting amazing updates to the community. Please do login to Facebook and engage or simply view what is going on.

Some examples of updates attracting interest **recently** are:

- David White local sightings (20th Sept): 310 viewings, 38 likes, 2 comments, 1 share
- Chris Boorman local Osprey sighting (20th Sept): 499 views, 55 likes, 14 comments, 1 share
- Lynn Jones sunrise over the Otter (20th Sept): 136 views, 29 likes, 1 share.
- Lorraine Read asking a question about Shelducks on LORP (17th Sept): 152 views, 7 comments including answers from Rick Lockwood and David White.
- John Burnett pictures of the moon (18th Sept): 385 views, 32 likes, 1 comment, 1 share.
- Ian Simpson drone picture across the valley (18th Sept): 563 views, 62 likes, 5 comments, 1 share.

7. Publications

We are working on two new publications ...

- The famous "12 walks of the Otter valley".
- The "History of the Lower Otter Valley" with the Fairlynch Museum.

We are also looking at new leaflets relating to the Flora & Fauna and other topics.

If you have any suggestions for new leaflets, or would like to help with the editing or publishing process, please do contact us – we would love to hear from you.

8. External Programmes

A busy week at the end of September:

- Your chair was interviewed on-line by a Cambridge student writing a thesis on the 'people aspects' of the LORP scheme.
- Then environmental member Geoff Porter attended (and the chair joined on-line) a meeting of the "Heaths to Sea" advisory group of Clinton Devon Estates (CDE). This has become one of several pilot schemes nationally looking at how land can be better used for both agriculture and nature. Having been successful in the initial bidding process, CDE have commissioned 3 groups of consultants whose task is to survey and evaluate their land in and around the Lower Otter Valley. They are evaluating the quality of grasslands, arable land, woodlands, hedgerows, hydrological assessments of ditches, streams and the River Otter and identifying heritage and archaeological sites within the estate. Future decisions about how and where improvements can best be made will be based on these detailed surveys. Proposals will be made to Government in 18 month's time.
- The following day the chair attended, on behalf of the OVA, the East Devon National Landscape Stakeholder Workshop - set up by the new manager Dan Wynn as a brain-storming exercise by all the various stakeholders to help him shape the next 5-year landscape management plan. Lots of ideas shared on everything from planning to climate to river water quality, and with the emphasis on community involvement. Most ideas fitting well with the OVA's objectives. We wait with interest to see how the plan emerges.
- And just for 'light(!)' bedtime reading we are trying to digest the multi-page Civic Trust's response to the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework). This is part of a nationwide consultation which has generated thousands of responses and looks like it will run and run.

We have also been invited to participate in two programmes by the Pebblebed Heaths team and by East Devon District Council – the first is the Wetlands Weekend (18th to 20th October), and the second is a program looking at the wild and changing estuaries of the Exe, Otter & Axe.

Wetlands Weekend – 18th to 20th October

- The OVA has been invited to host a display and have a presence at the upcoming wetlands weekend. We will be there but are looking for a few volunteers to help man the stand. If you can help, please do let us know in the usual manner.

EDDC Request for engagement

- The Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) will work with three East Devon Coastal Museums (Exmouth, Fairlynch and Axe Valley) to unlock collections of natural science and biodiversity. Digitisation of photographs, cartography and paintings capturing the wild and changing estuaries of the Exe, Otter & Axe will improve access to collections. Reinterpretation of these collections via engagement with local secondary schools (Exmouth Community College and the Deaf Academy) will engage new audiences in national conversations about the climate crisis. This group has reached out to the OVA asking for support and involvement. We are working with them to determine the scope and capability to be offered.

Our participation in these two programs is dependent upon volunteers. We are asking for people to help man the stand at the Wetlands Weekend, as well as engaging with EDDC and the local museums on their program. IF you have time and the inclination to help – please do reach out and contact us.

9. Deadline Approaching for EDDC Building Plans

Have your say for two options for a new community in East Devon, before the deadline of 5pm on Monday 7 October 2024. Click here for more details:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/.../UKEDDC/bulletins/3b6013d>

- A new self-sufficient and dynamic community will be created for up to 8,000 homes by 2050, alongside employment space. It will also be home to a wide range of facilities, from schools and shops to parks and playing pitches, along with transport and sewage infrastructure improvements.
- Discover more East Devon District Council consultations on the Commonplace website.

10. Sidmouth Science Festival: 4th to 13th October.

A wide range of events and talks on offer to suit all ages and interests. Their purpose is to inform, inspire, promote and advance public education in scientific disciplines, showing how they impact on our everyday lives.

They have events suitable for all but aim to attract those who would not normally engage with science subjects. And it's not all about learning! There's plenty of fun and entertainment packed into the programme.

Checkout the agenda and programme here: <https://www.sidmouthsciencefestival.org/>

11. ~~The March for Clean Water, London – October 26th.~~

We, the Otter Valley Association, wanted to bring to your attention an event taking place in London relating to the issue of water quality. This event is a march called “The March for clean water” which will be taking place on Saturday, October 26th 2024. It finishes in Parliament Square.

STOP PRESS: According to sources, the date has changed from October 26th to November 3rd. Please do check the relevant websites since this is not an OVA event.

- You can find more information about this march by visiting the following link: <https://riveractionuk.com/feargal-sharkey-leads-a-call.../>.

Water quality on the river Otter is a major initiative for the OVA. Farm runoff, sewage discharges and other pollutants are the major causes of the degradation we see in our river water quality. These are also affecting many of our waterways, rivers and oceans to such an extent that many members have told us that they want their voices heard. We are also aware that a number of OVA members are planning to attend in their **personal** capacity

We also wanted to share with you all a few specific organisations who are campaigning to drive improvements and accountability into the water industry. Several of our members are involved and support these groups. We wanted to share information about these groups for you to be aware of. These include:

1. ESCAPE (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/exmouthescape/>) that is campaigning for improved water quality in Exmouth and surrounding towns.
2. River Action UK (<https://riveractionuk.com>) is a small and agile campaigning organisation on a mission to rescue Britain's rivers from a cocktail of agricultural, sewage and industrial pollution.
3. Surfers against sewage (<https://www.sas.org.uk>) is a charity that campaigns for a clean ocean, rivers and lakes for wildlife and people. They demand an end to sewage discharge into UK bathing waters by 2030.
4. The rivers trust (<https://theriverstrust.org/>) is a charity that work with their member trusts to make their shared vision a reality: wild, healthy, natural rivers, valued by all.
5. Wildfish (<https://wildfish.org>) is a charity whose mission is to reverse the decline of wild fish populations and their habitats.

6. River Otter Fisheries Association (<https://www.riverotterfisheriesassociation.org/>) represents anglers, riparian and fishing right owners on the River Otter in Devon, working to protect and improve the river's environment, wild fish stocks and fishing.

12. Planning Applications

The OVA Executive Committee monitors and comments on some planning applications. We are particularly interested in applications that may affect the character and heritage of the valley. While we may support or object to various applications, there is nothing to stop anyone else from adding their own voice to the discussion. The EDDC planning officer will review any comments made and take them into consideration when applications are determined.

We wanted to draw to your attention two applications in Budleigh Salterton that may be of interest:

- The replacement of an existing single family dwelling and creation of 4 apartments at 10 Marine Parade in Budleigh Salterton (reference: 24/1832/FUL)
- The retrospective application for cladding to be placed on the historical longboat building on Marine Parade. Both applications are within defined conservation areas (reference: 24/1635/FUL).

13. Village Reps, Talks and Volunteering

We are looking for additional volunteers to help the OVA. Specifically, an OVA representative for Newton Popleford, as well as a walks-coordinator and an events organizer. Can you help?

Here are our current village representatives:

- Budleigh Salterton: Bob Wiltshire (01395 444395)
- East Budleigh: Olly Watts (07837 861354)
- Colaton Raleigh: Michaela Manning (07718 287480)
- Otterton: Dee Woods (01395 568822) and Geoff Porter (01395 567055)
- Newton Popleford: (position open for a new volunteer)

==== End of Email Update (September 2024) ====