SUSTAINABLE WOOTTON COURTENAY

Newsletter No 25 November 2026

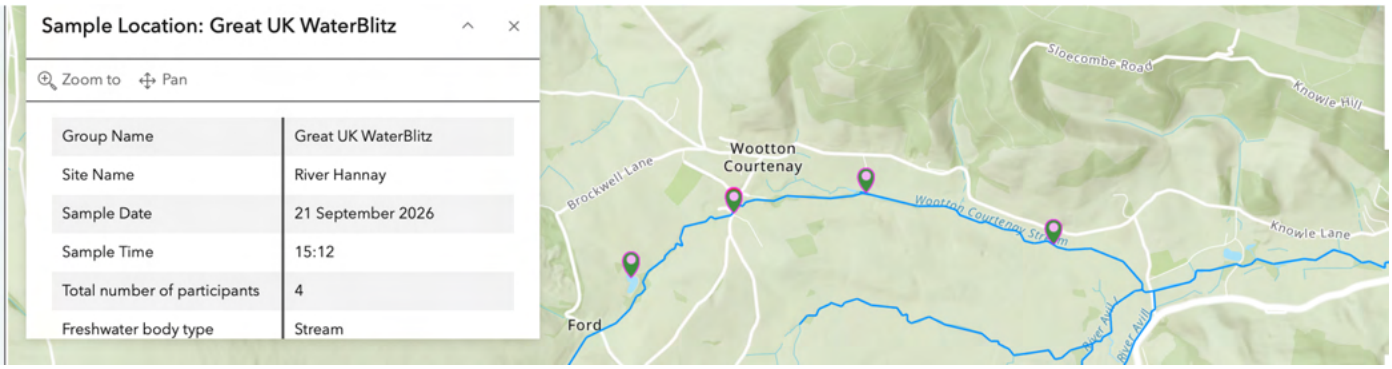
Good News: The River Hannay Pollution Test Results





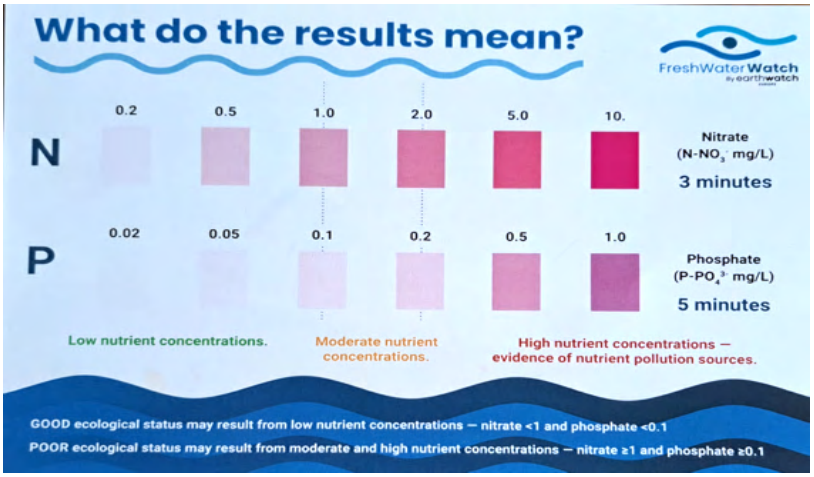


In September, Sustainable Wootton Courtenay took part in the Great UK Waterblitz 2026 which is a Citizen Science project involved in testing the water quality of freshwater rivers, lakes and streams. Thousands of communities across the UK surveyed freshwater sites and the full UK report is published on earthwatch.org.uk



We were provided with test kits, detailed instructions and a video explaining how to carry out the survey. The River Hannay was tested for **nitrates** and **phosphates** at 4 locations in the village:

a) Annicombe b) Ford Farm lake c) The stream at Crockford e) The river near the Hunt Kennels



Many thanks to James and Rose Wilmoth, Veronica Clegg and Marion Jay and Bill Hodgson for granting permission to carry out testing on their premises.

Excessive amounts of nitrates and phosphates can lead to water pollution, affecting both aquatic life and human health. Water samples were taken at each location.

We are really pleased to report that the River Hannay samples recorded very low concentrations, from 0.2 mg/l of nitrates and 0.02 mg/l of phosphates.

Porlock's Youth-led Quench Project



The Quench Project is a youth-led initiative in Porlock aiming to make the village the first in the UK to completely eliminate the sale of single-use plastic water bottles.



The organisers are the youth group **While We Still Can** in collaboration with the performance arts group, **Stacked Wonky.**

Goal: To stop shops selling bottled water and replace them with a network of free public refill stations.

Community Adoption: Roughly 85% of village businesses have joined the scheme, featuring 17 high street refill points alongside a 24/7 facility at the local church.

Partners and Support: Chilly's (a water bottle company) donated £1250 worth of reuseable products and Doulton provided a water filter system.

The campaign started in response to a group of teenagers becoming aware of the massive amounts of plastic bottle waste being dumped in their village, along the rivers and beaches. They decided to take matters into their own hands.



Imogen, aged 14, who is leading the project said the sight of plastic water bottles was "sad and disappointing. Everywhere you look was plastic. Why do you need to buy water anyway? What's the point of buying it when you can get it from a tap. It's insane. It ends up in our oceans and kills our animals. It's sad to see what our planet has turned into."

Helen Buller, the manager of Whortleberry Tea Room in Porlock said she signed up in the belief the young people need a better future.

Refrigeration Upgrades at Tescos in Minehead



- Tesco has rolled out eco-friendly innovations across its supermarket fridges, including those in Minehead, to reduce cold air spill, lower energy use, and manage store temperatures.

- The chain has also trialled AI-driven management systems across distribution centres and upgraded cabinet units in refitted stores. Let's hope they have control of them!

Help Needed to Solve Mystery of Starling Murmurations



Observe a Starling Murmuration and Help Scientists

University of Gloucestershire researchers are inviting the public to take part in a nationwide study of Starling murmurations, a decade after thousands of people helped uncover important clues about why these spectacular displays occur.

The new project, supported by Starling Bank, will allow researchers to investigate whether murmurations have changed over the past decade and, if so, explore what the causes for that might be.

The original study found the average reported murmuration contained around 30,000 birds, while the largest was over 750,000. Birds of prey were recorded at almost 30% of murmurations, and their presence was associated with larger and longer murmuration displays.

The research supported the idea that murmurations are primarily an anti-predator behaviour, with gathering in huge, rapidly moving flocks helping Starlings reduce the threat posed by predators such as Peregrine Falcons and Sparrowhawks.

How we can help

For the new study, members of the public are invited to report murmurations they see during the autumn and winter . For more information and a link to the survey, see Starling Murmuration Survey(opens in new tab).





Endangered Curlew Chicks Saved

Curlew chicks are being saved from agricultural mowers by a thermal drone. Curlew Recovery South Lakes, a charity in Cumbria, uses the drone to locate nests in farmers' fields so that they can be fenced off before workers cut round them. So far, the method has been used to save 6 nests of this endangered bird species.

Group making flat-pack community hall from plywood



Volunteers are hard at work creating a so-called flat-pack community hall made with an entirely plywood frame.

The Ford Park Community Group in Ulverston want a new environmentally friendly community room for hosting local groups, events and classes in the charity-run park.

The building will take just four and a half weeks to create because the project uses specially made pieces of plywood, cut by local manufacturer Digital Woodoo, which then all slot together easily.

The director at Digital Woodoo, James Robinson, said it the "unconventional design" means anyone can be part of the build, creating a "very democratic approach to construction".

He said: "As many local companies as possible are being employed for the project to ensure this investment best benefits the economy here.

"When the building is complete it really will be testament to the skill and effort of Ulverston and the North West."

Volunteers have been creating the structural frame which will then be out up by local builders.

The community group and Digital Woodoo worked with Manchester-based architects Architecture Unknown to come up with the building design.

Director of the architect firm Daniel Kelso said they have worked "hand-in-hand" with the community to understand what they wanted and needed from the space.

"The innovative construction process will empower them to be a truly community-led centre, built by and for local people," he said.

It is hoped the project will be fully finished by spring 2027.