

Press release River health gets £1.6 million boost

Organisations: [Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs](#)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs>)+ 2 others

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Policy: [Improving water quality](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-water-quality>)

Minister: [Richard Benyon MP](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/richard-benyon>)

A new £1.6 million project to improve river health and water quality in England has been launched by the government today.



The new partnership scheme, called the Catchment Based Approach, will encourage local communities and environmental groups to take on more responsibility for improving the health of their local rivers, as well as the surrounding natural environment and wildlife.

This follows a series of successful regional pilots which took place across the country including the Norfolk Coast, Bristol Avon and Poole. In Bristol, local authorities worked together to introduce new measures to reduce the need for dredging the River Avon and save taxpayers' money.

Natural Environment Minister Richard Benyon attended the launch at Singlers Marsh in Welwyn today. He said:

Rivers are the lifeblood of our country. They give us the water we need for our daily lives, and sustain our wildlife. That is why this new scheme is so incredibly important.

Our pilot programme achieved great results and this new funding will help more people take action to improve the health of their local rivers.

Ensuring we have enough water, not just for us, but for future generations is an issue of huge importance. Everyone has a part to play and can make a real difference.

Input from the Environment Agency, the River's Trust and water companies like Yorkshire Water have been vital in shaping the scheme.

There will be just over 80 of these Catchments across England, supported by local, voluntary Partnerships.

Miles Foulger, Environment Strategy Manager at Yorkshire Water who was involved with a pilot project said:

Yorkshire Water is proud to have had the opportunity to pilot the government's new Catchment Based Approach as part of our ambition to achieve excellent catchments, rivers and coasts. Through the Don Network initiative we have built lasting partnerships with a range of stakeholders across South Yorkshire, and as a result we are already starting to see new projects to improve water quality come to life.

The scheme has been designed with flexibility for local communities in mind. It will ensure that local projects are targeted to address the specific water and natural environment needs in each catchment. The creation of these catchment groups will be helped by the initial funding.

At Singlers Marsh, work has been undertaken to improve the flow of the River Mimram, as well as removing accumulated silt from the river bed so that fish and invertebrates can access the river bed. This is exactly the type of approach the government would like to see.

Debbie Jones, Environment Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

We are delighted to be part of this joined-up approach to restore our rivers. Some excellent work has been carried out on the Mimram and the Beane already, and we would like to thank all partners, organisations and volunteers involved for the great work that has been done so far.

It is a great thing to be in the position to say that our rivers are the healthiest they have been for two decades, but we are doing even more to further improve water quality and local biodiversity.

Schemes like this, as well as the Love Your River initiative, are vital to help tackle low flows and pollution on our rivers but everyone has a part to play in this. Local people can help their rivers by being careful about their water usage and by installing water meters, then we can continue to work with water companies and communities to reduce the impact of

abstraction on our chalk streams. Farmers, businesses and water companies can also still do more to reduce pollution to our rivers.

The Love Your River initiative, supported by Richard Benyon and rower James Cracknell is not just about educating people about the difficulties that many rivers face. It is also recognises the great work local groups already do to look after their rivers - honouring the community spirit and the inspirational individuals who give up their time and energy to improve their local environment. A new Love Your River blog has launched online today, highlighting why taking action to improve river health is so important.

The Environment Agency will work with local groups to ensure the lead for each Catchment Partnership is agreed collaboratively. More details on this will be available on the Agency's website later this month.

More information on the [Catchment Based Approach: Improving the quality of our water environment](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/catchment-based-approach-improving-the-quality-of-our-water-environment) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/catchment-based-approach-improving-the-quality-of-our-water-environment>)

For more information on Love Your River see the [Love Your River blog](http://loveyourriver.tumblr.com/) (<http://loveyourriver.tumblr.com/>) and [Love Your River website](http://www.defra.gov.uk/loveyourriver) (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/loveyourriver>).