



## AGM 2017

The AGM of the Friends of the Somerset River Frome will take place on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2017, at Frome Canoe Club, starting at 7:30pm.

This year's guest speaker is Mike Blackmore. Mike has wide experience of river conservation (he is the Conservation Officer of the Wild Trout Trust), and was the prime mover for the 2016 project to install "berms" to modify the flow of the river through the town. He gave a talk at the Frome River Festival in July.

## Agenda

- Introduction and apologies
- Chairman's Report
- Treasurer's report
- Activities report
- Election of officers
- Interval (tea, coffee and biscuits)
- Talk by Mike Blackmore

As reported in our last newsletter, Nick Ray is retiring from the chair at this meeting and it is important that we find a replacement. The committee has re-allocated many tasks previously done by the chair, and the responsibilities of the post are now essentially:

- To chair committee meetings (about six per year)
- To be a point of contact for the outside world
- To maintain an overview of the activities of the River Friends.

## Waterlife declaration

Friends of the River Frome has signed up to the Waterlife declaration. This is an international initiative aiming to encourage sustainable use of and protection for the world's rivers and other freshwaters.



## We need your eyes

The condition of our river is very dependent on what goes into it. You can help by help by keeping your eyes open when out and about.

### 1. Slurry and manure spreading

As members will be aware, there was a major fish kill on the river this spring as a result of slurry entering the river. There are rules on slurry and manure spreading which all farmers are required to comply with. They include a requirement to leave a 10-metre no-spread buffer zone from watercourses (rivers and streams) and 50-metre buffer zone around springs. If anyone sees manure or slurry being applied within the buffer zone areas, then please report immediately to the Environment Agency Pollution Hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Please also send the details to [improvethesomersetfrome@gmail.com](mailto:improvethesomersetfrome@gmail.com).

### 2. Raining hard? Get out and about to help our river

Over the next year, a project is underway to identify pollution pathways to the river and your help is needed. It's best to go out during or just after heavy rain, when water is running off fields and down the roads. If that water is brown or black, then it contains soil, and possibly agricultural chemicals and slurry leachate too. That's what we want to spot. If you see this happening, please tell us where it starts and ends up - take photos, plot on a map and give us grid references, location details and dates. The project is being managed by the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) which will be also be organising specific wet weather walkovers of land south of Frome, and will use other data sets and tools including LIDAR images.

Finding the sources and pathways for diffuse pollution will be just the start. BART will then aim to work with businesses and farmers to identify and put in place solutions.

Please send your observations to [jess@bristolavonriverstrust.org](mailto:jess@bristolavonriverstrust.org) using POLLUTION in the subject header and we will forward to BART.

## Sewage overflows in Frome

Friends of the River Frome, supported by Frome Town Council, has been pressing Wessex Water (WW) to investigate the problem of raw sewage entering the river at various points in the town, including between the two pedestrian bridges in the town centre. The sewage enters the river largely because of an old sewerage system which means, at times of high rainfall, foul and cleaner surface water get mixed up together and enter 'combined' sewers which have overflow/outfall pipes directly to the river.

Investigation of polluted water entering the Dippy has also been asked for. We are pleased to report that WW now has monitors on the Combined Sewer Overflows that discharge to the River in Frome and its Streamclean Team has been investigating problems in the Dippy, (see the note below) where some misconnections from private properties and other problems have been identified.

Monitoring is fine, but we have also asked that solutions are identified, costed and put forward for implementation in WWs next five year business plan that starts in 2020. Frome will be fighting for this investment in competition with other towns and cities in the WW area. However, we believe Frome has a strong case for investment as the CSOs impact on the river in town which is regularly used by canoeists and anglers, plus the fact that we are all fed up of seeing litter put down toilets hanging across the outfall in a prime town centre location.

## The Dippy, and Elsewhere - Connected Right?

A significant source of polluted water entering the Dippy has been found to be private properties which have had plumbing work done badly, where the plumber has connected waste water to the clean, surface water pipework leading from the property. Surface water is rainwater collected from gutters and takes water along down pipes then into a public surface water drainage pipe that usually ends up discharging into a stream or river.

Misconnections happen when a new bathroom is put in, and the waste from a new toilet, bath and/or sink is connected to the surface water system. Waste water from kitchen sinks, washing machines and dishwashers should also be connected to the foul sewer. However, investigations into pollution in the Dippy by Wessex water found misconnections from both kitchen and bathroom sources.

## We can all help!

This is a plea for everyone to bin and bag sanitary items, cotton buds, wet wipes and to only throw toilet paper down the toilet. Wet wipes are not flushable. These and other items can block your own sewer, public sewers and may end up in our river and out to sea. Wessex Water is calling for a ban on 'so-called' wet wipes, because they are not flushable; it and other water companies spends millions of pounds having to get them out of the sewage system.

Another headache for those who maintain our drains is the "fatberg". This is a solid lump of fat (which might weigh several tons) in which are embedded all those other things, including wet wipes, which we should not have poured down the drain or flushed down the loo.

So, if you are cooking one of the ten million turkeys that will be served up in the UK this Christmas, please dispose of the fat responsibly. (The photo from Cascade News was taken in the London sewer system)



## FROGS – Frome Recreation and Open Grounds Supporters

I highly recommend that you read FROGS latest newsletter, full of interesting stuff. You can get a copy from [lizhutchinson01@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lizhutchinson01@yahoo.co.uk), or else contact me.

## Finally

The members of the River Friends committee wish you a very happy Christmas, and hope to see you all in, on or around the river next year.

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