



# Stour Catchment Initiative

## Stour Catchment Initiative – Catchment Plan Summary

**The Stour Catchment Initiative (SCI) is a partnership involving a range of groups and organisations that share the common aim of improving the water environment of the Stour. The partners work collaboratively to ensure that the Stour catchment meets the needs of people for water, food, industry and recreation whilst supporting the wildlife that depends on it.**

This is a brief summary of the SCI Catchment Plan, which can be explored in full at [www.stourcatchment.co.uk](http://www.stourcatchment.co.uk). The Catchment Plan outlines the issues in the catchment and how we will improve the river for people and wildlife. It will also help us to meet objectives under the Water Framework Directive (WFD), a European Union Directive aiming to protect and improve all water environments, including surface water and groundwater.

### The Partnership

The Dorset Wildlife Trust and Wessex Water were appointed as co-hosts of the Stour Catchment Initiative (SCI) in October 2013. The SCI will help to support the development of a locally informed River Basin Management Plan for the South West and the sustainable management of water resources and rivers of the Stour catchment.

Anyone who affects, enjoys or benefits from the Stour, Christchurch Harbour and the nearby coast is a 'stakeholder' in the catchment partnership. Their interests are represented to date by a number of groups and organisations who reflect their interests in the catchment such as fishing clubs, Local Authorities, environmental charitable trusts and industry. The partners have identified the key issues in the catchment and have developed an action plan to help guide delivery of the partnership's vision and aims.

### Vision

The SCI aims to ensure that the Stour meets the needs of society for water, food, industry and recreation whilst supporting the wildlife that depends on it. The water environment will:

- Support more diverse habitats and a wider population and species of wildlife.
- Have near natural flows.
- Have excellent water quality.
- Continue to provide and improve the river for people to use and enjoy.
- Be managed sensitively by all whose activities affect it.
- Meet the needs of businesses and water suppliers.

### Aims

The catchment partnership aims to:

- Collectively identify the key issues within the catchment relating to the water environment.
- Agree the relevant actions to resolve issues and coordinate delivery through the SCI.
- Ensure that work to improve the water environment in the area is well informed by local evidence.
- Coordinate and integrate all relevant plans, strategies and activities of partner organisations to ensure more effective working.
- Maximise the use of existing resources and seek additional funding, to support the agreed outcomes of the Action Plan.
- Identify knowledge gaps, highlight uncertainties and promote further research where necessary.
- Share findings and best practice with DEFRA and surrounding catchments.





## About the Stour Catchment

The Stour catchment is one of three sub catchments in Dorset, located in the South West of England. Most of the Stour lies within Dorset, with smaller areas in the northern part of the catchment in Somerset and Wiltshire. The catchment drains an area of 1,240km<sup>2</sup>. The River Stour flows from its source near Stourhead in Wiltshire, descending 230 metres over a distance of 96 km to the coast at Christchurch Harbour where its water discharges into the English Channel.

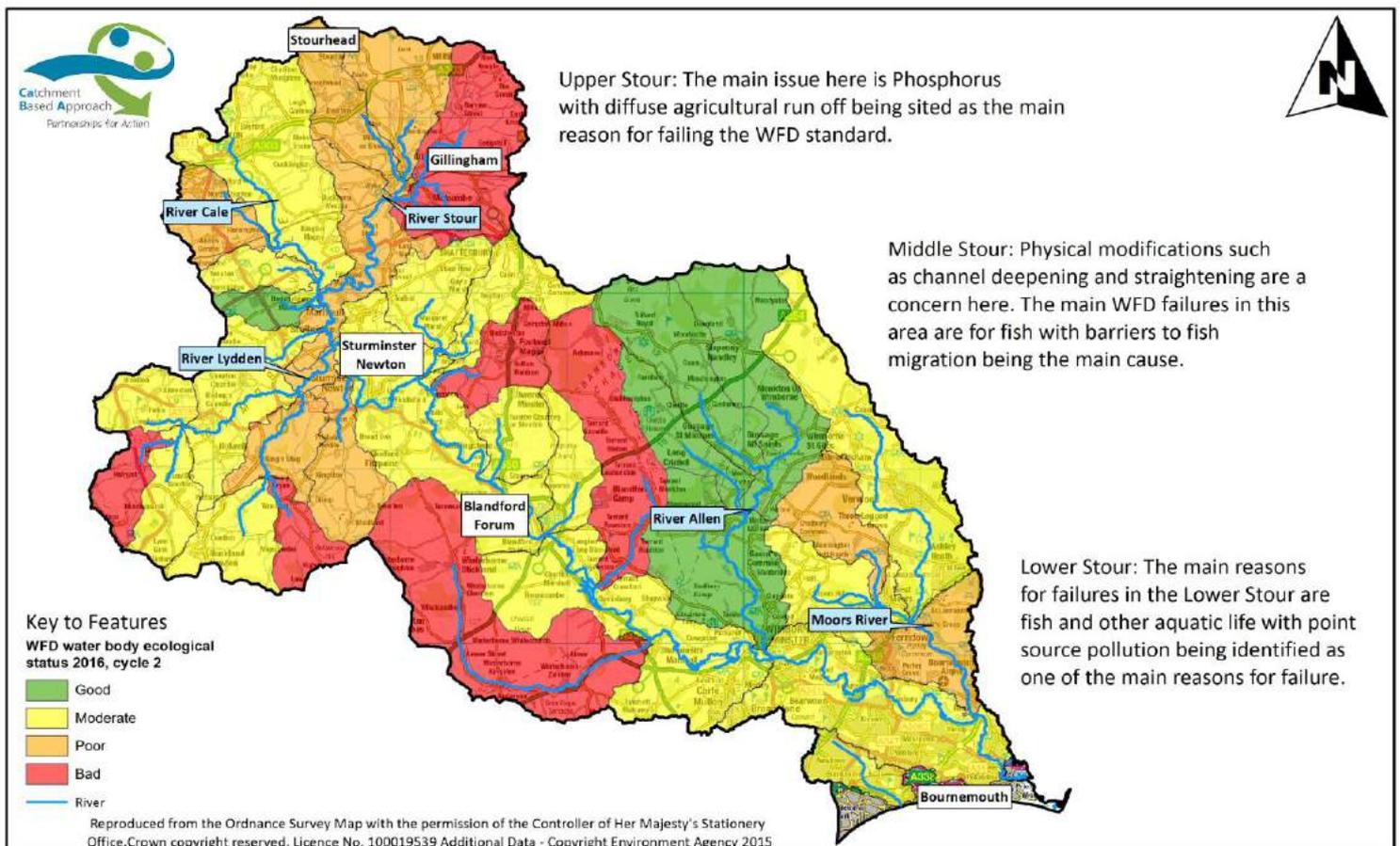
The geology in the north and west of the catchment is predominantly impermeable clay and limestone. As a result this area has many tributary rivers including the Cale, which flows through Wincanton, the Lydden, running from Buckland Newton to Sturminster Newton as well as the source tributaries of the river Stour which runs through Gillingham.

The middle part of the catchment is chalk downland and has few rivers. One of the most significant is the Allen which joins the Stour near Wimborne.

In the Lower Stour the geology moves to clay and sandstone with the tributaries of the Moors river system draining the east side of the catchment from Cranborne down to the edge of Bournemouth. Bournemouth is the major urban area within the catchment with a population of approximately 168,000.

The Stour catchment contains several types of designations that recognise and protect important landscapes, heritage, wildlife habitats and species and the water environment. Some are statutory designations made under international or national legislation, whilst others are local designations endorsed by local councils.

The map below shows the Stour Catchment, the main rivers, the water bodies that make up the catchment and their status under WFD as classified under 2014 cycle 2 data. A brief description of the three main sections of the catchment and the issues and reasons for failures is also featured.





Habitats: Himalayan Balsam, S. Williams



People: Volunteers, N. Hoar



Water Quality: Sediment, T. Stoner



Water Quantity: Flooding

## How our activities impact on the catchment

Throughout the catchment, human activities can affect the water quality and quantity and therefore what the river can be used for and the wildlife it can sustain. For example, fertilisers spread on the land can be washed off in a rainfall event into a watercourse. Or in urban areas, chemicals and substances that accumulate on roads and pavements can be washed off into the river through the surface water drainage system, and can then affect the river and bathing water quality downstream.

Flooding or low flows, such as from over abstraction, can also be a problem if we don't fully consider the impacts of how we manage the land in the catchment. By building on the floodplain the storage of flood water would be reduced, or by straightening rivers and streams the risk of flooding could be relieved in that area. However, both could increase the likelihood of flooding downstream as more water would reach it quicker.

In addition activity within the catchment needs to consider the wildlife that depends on the water and people. For example work to reduce flooding by installing weirs or straightening the channel can prevent fish from migrating and destroy habitats and make people feel disconnect from nature and the water environment due to reduced access for safety reasons.

This is why it is so important to consider the whole picture and adopt a Catchment Based Approach rather than focusing just on local issues.

### Key themes

All issues identified and agreed by the steering group, and therefore projects delivered, can be organised into four key themes:

1. **Habitats** – This includes habitats degradation, invasive non-native species and barriers to fish.
2. **People** – Issues and projects designed to engage people through education and engagement and improving access to rivers and coastal areas.
3. **Water Quality** – This covers diffuse and point source pollution of all type, including nutrient, sediment and chemical, as well as understanding more about background inputs.
4. **Water Quantity** – Issues and projects surrounding high and low flows and their impacts.

## The Projects

From the issues identified, the partnership has developed an action plan which is reviewed annually. This informs the projects lists and what is delivered. Although the projects often deliver multiple benefits, projects are categorised into the four sections described previously: Habitats, People, Water Quality and Water Quantity. On the following page is a map of all the potential, current and completed projects in the Stour Catchment coloured by the category, inserted is a screen shot of the interactive project map which can be explored in full at: <https://gis-services.wessexwater.co.uk/Storymaps/Environment/Stour/>.

Below and on the following page are two case studies of projects delivered through the partnership.

### Case Study: Julian's Bridge

This project was funded by the Environment Agency's Catchment Partnership Action Fund and delivered by the Wessex Chalk Stream and Rivers Trust (WCSRT) in partnership with Dorset Wild Rivers. It aimed to improve fish populations and fry habitats through the creation of low velocity habitat. This will provide refuge, especially during high flow and flood events, as well as improving anglers' access.

A partially blocked ditch was excavated to create a new shallow channel with a gentle gradient to the river edge, providing shelter for fry in fast flows. Dense vegetation was removed, easing the movement of water and fry in and out of the channel and the reduced shade will encourage the growth of bank side herbs, grasses and sedges, creating new water vole habitat. The WCSRT will undertake post-project monitoring within the fry bay.



Photo by Jan Bass



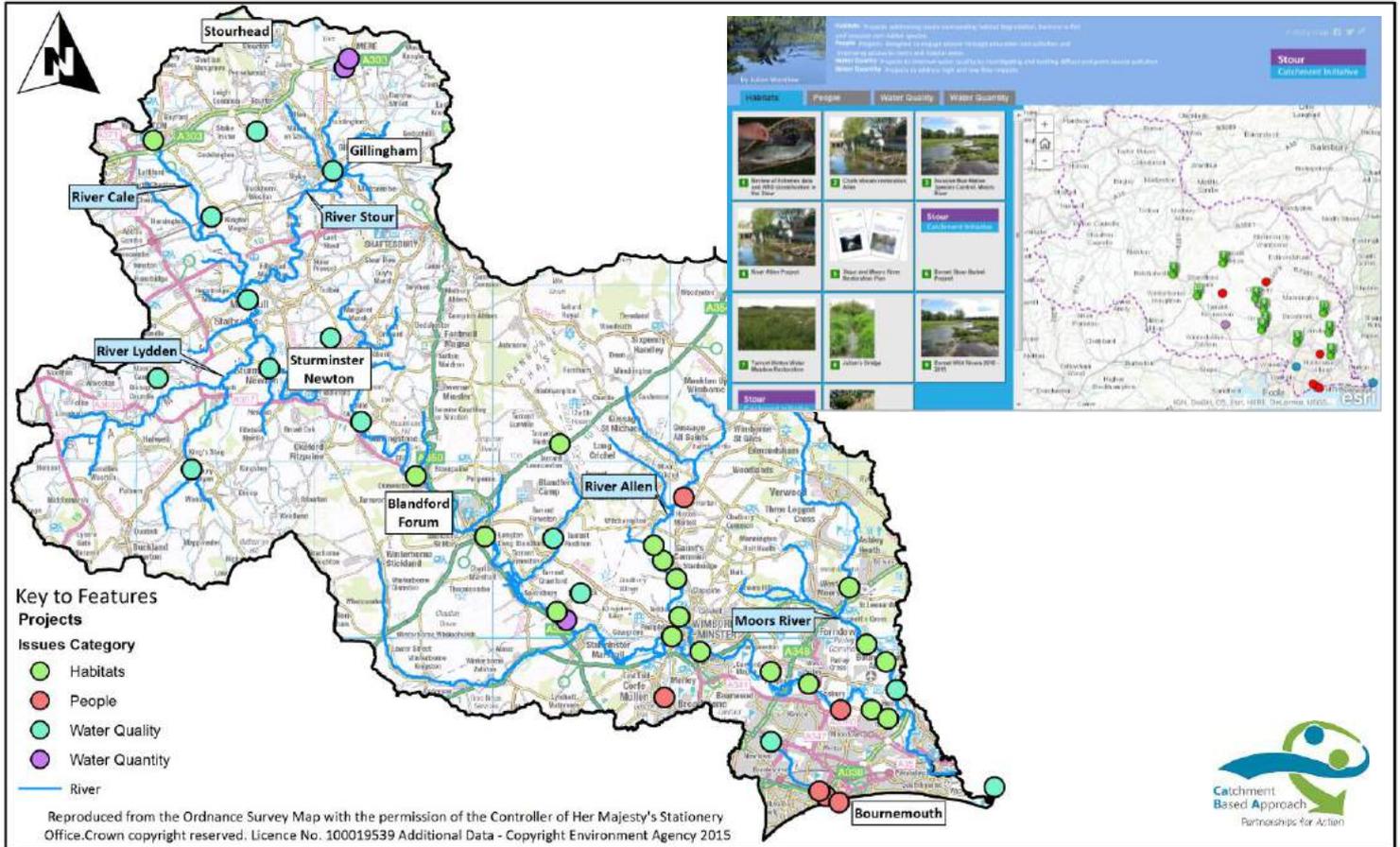
Volunteering, A. Broom



Land owner engagement, T. Stoner



Community engagement, A. Broom



## Case Study: Bournemouth Food outlet and accommodation provider accreditation scheme

This accreditation scheme was funded through CPAF and delivered by the Litter Free Coast and Sea project. It aims to raise awareness of urban diffuse pollution and how to prevent it by recognising and encouraging food outlets and accommodation providers to reduce their impact on urban diffuse pollution and bathing water quality. This project works with businesses to tackle six key issues surrounding urban diffuse pollution:

- Bird faeces
- Misconnections
- Misuse of sinks and toilets
- Litter reduction
- The use of water butts
- Misuse of surface water drains

This scheme will also provide the businesses with the tools to encourage the public to do what they can to reduce pollution, as the businesses are perfectly placed to do so.



Photo by Matilda Manley

## Contact information

If you would like to learn more about the SCI or how you can help please visit: [www.stourcatchment.co.uk](http://www.stourcatchment.co.uk)

Or contact:

Catchment Coordinator: [info@stourcatchment.co.uk](mailto:info@stourcatchment.co.uk)

Or Dorset Wildlife Trust: [Enquiries@dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:Enquiries@dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk)