

The Teme Catchment Partnership

*"The pools and rivers wash so clean
The trees and clouds and air,
The like on earth was never seen,
And oh that I were there..."*



*In the valleys of spring of rivers
By Ony and Teme and Clun,
The country for easy livers
The quietest under the sun..."*

Extracts from 'A Shropshire Lad' by A E Housman, 1896.
By kind permission of The Society of Authors, as the literary representative on the Estates of A E Housman.

The Teme Catchment Plan

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Introduction

The River Teme is the second largest tributary of the River Severn. It rises in the Kerry Hills in Mid-Wales from a small spring on Cilfaesty Hill. The Teme is a rural river, passing through the market towns of Knighton, Ludlow and Tenbury before it joins the River Severn, just south of Worcester, some 122 kilometres further on. The 1,648 square kilometres of the Teme Catchment cover part of the counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Powys. Tributaries include the rivers Clun, Onny, Corve and Rea, and larger brooks, such as the Ledwyche, Kyre, Sapey, Leigh and Laughern.

The Teme Catchment landscape is characterised by rolling hills and attractive valleys, with the sheep-grazed Welsh border uplands in the west giving way to the softer, more fertile countryside of the English Midlands in the east. The unspoilt countryside is widely regarded as some of the most attractive in Britain, with the river flowing through Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Shropshire Hills and Malvern Hills.

The rural nature of the area is reflected by high quality rivers supporting high-class fisheries and providing a variety of habitats for a wide range of flora and fauna. It is a river of national importance, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of the rare, precious plants and animals that live in the river and on its banks. Part of the River Clun is of international importance, a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to a very rare and special population of Fresh water pearl mussels.

The Teme is locally renowned for its beauty and history, which have been the inspiration of many stories passed down through generations. Over one hundred years have passed since Housman was so inspired by the River Teme that he wrote those well-known lines. However, in recent times, pollution has taken its toll and pressures exist that are in danger of impacting on those magical qualities of the river and streams in the Teme Catchment.

The Teme Catchment Partnership is working to bring a wide range of partners together to try to solve some of the problems. A lot of work is already being done to try to improve water quality and wildlife habitats in and around the river and we now want you to get involved to help us identify what needs to be done and to help to make a difference. This draft plan sets out what some of the issues are, what is already happening and what more could be done. This plan is just the start of a process to involve individuals, communities, organisations, companies and farmers in working together to improve the river. We want you to join the partnership and to help in any way to make:

*‘The Teme teeming with wildlife,
The river running clean,
Everyone working closely,
Enjoying the rivers and streams. ‘*

Teme Catchment vision

The Vision for the Teme Catchment is for:

“Healthy functioning rivers flowing through a balanced living landscape, cherished by all in the Teme Catchment”

High level objectives include:

- Water bodies with high ecological status
- A healthy and recruiting population of Freshwater pearl mussels
- Wildlife returning to the river and the catchment, including rare fish, such as shad and formerly common birds such as the cuckoo.
- Healthy and connected trees and woodlands
- River sediment reduced to natural levels through improved practices, such as sustainable urban and rural drainage and good buffer strips along river banks on cultivated land and fewer livestock accessing the river.
- Sustainable levels of water in the streams and rivers
- No need for pesticide removal from drinking water

Our vision will only be realised if all kinds of users of the Teme area work together. The Teme Catchment Partnership will work with everyone who wants to help realise this vision. This includes individuals, land managers, local communities, businesses, voluntary bodies, local authorities, and government agencies.

By working together towards common goals, we will all understand the importance of the river to life and our wellbeing and aspire to the Teme Catchment having a balance of productive but sustainable farming and healthy ecosystems side by side.

A healthy river means that we have a healthy environment!

Water Framework Directive

The Water Framework Directive¹ is the most substantial piece of European legislation ever produced concerning our waters and will provide the major driver for achieving sustainable management of water in the UK for many years to come. It requires that all inland and coastal waters within defined river basin districts must reach at least *good status* by 2027 and defines how this should be achieved through the establishment of environmental objectives and ecological targets for surface waters. The result will be a healthy water environment achieved by taking due account of environmental, economic and social considerations.

The Environment Agency has assessed all rivers in England and Wales for fish, plants, insects, algae and other indicators, including phosphate and oxygen levels, to support the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. This characterises our rivers in terms of ecology and water quality. There are five levels for a river's ecological status: High, Good, Moderate, Poor or Bad. Only rivers reaching 'Good' status or above are said to be meeting the required Water Framework Directive standards. A waterbody that is at High status is considered to be in almost natural condition.

The findings of the first assessment in 2009 showed us that many stretches of the River Teme and its tributaries are not in good health and are failing to meet the required standard. Nearly 42% of the rivers and streams in the Teme Catchment have either been classified as poor or moderate (See Appendix Map).

The current status of Teme and its tributaries is:

- Good - 58% of water bodies
- Moderate - 25% of water bodies
- Poor - 17% of water bodies

The findings of the 2016 assessment show a significant decrease in the health of the Teme and its catchments.

- Good – 12% of water bodies
- Moderate – 61% of water bodies
- Poor – 27% of water bodies

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32000L0060>

The Teme Catchment Partnership

To achieve the vision for the Teme, the Teme Catchment Partnership was established at the beginning of 2012 with support from a number of organisations. The Partnership has developed over time and comprise a broad membership of organisations and individuals representing a range of interests throughout the Teme catchment. We are currently reviewing our ways of working and in 2019 agreed to create a three tiered approach to the partnership:

- Catchment Steering Group – to meet quarterly, a steering group comprising Severn Rivers Trust, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust & Shropshire Wildlife Trust (representing all other Wildlife Trusts), Shropshire Hills AONB (representing Malvern Hills AONB), Natural England (representing Natural Resources Wales), Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water (representing Dŵr Cymru/Welsh Water) and NFU. This group ensure, through the Partnership Coordinator (Severn Rivers Trust) shall keep other partners informed of relevant information and involve other partners in consultations, funding and development opportunities
- Full Catchment Partnership – to meet once a year, the full partnership will discuss wide ranging topics impacting the catchment. The meeting will involve a morning discussion and a site visit
- Field Operators Group – to meet once a year after the Full Catchment Partnership, this group is made up of any individuals working on the ground in the catchment to enable best practice discussions to take place regarding practical interventions.

This arrangement shall be reviewed on an annual basis by the Full Catchment Partnership to ensure inclusion.

Current Projects

A range of the current projects being undertaken by the Partnership include:

- **Unmuddying the Waters:** A partnership between the Environment Agency, Shropshire Hills AONB, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Severn Rivers Trust to improve water quality in the Clun catchment. Recent activity has focussed on integrated catchment management and in particular seeking to achieve favourable condition for the River Clun SAC and its threatened population of Fresh Water Pearl Mussels. <https://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/our-work/projects/unmuddying-the-waters>
- **Clun Catchment Partnership:** Lead by the Shropshire Hills AONB, the River Clun Partnership brings all interested parties together within the catchment. The Clun is one of only three rivers in England designated as a European Special Area of Conservation for freshwater pearl mussel. Their population, however, has experienced a dramatic decline in recent decades. The Clun Catchment is a Priority Area for Action in the Shropshire Biodiversity Plan

- **Catchment Sensitive Farming:** Lead by Natural England, CSF aims to improve water quality in the Teme and enhance associated river corridor habitats by supporting sustainable land use within the catchment, minimising the impact of agricultural practices on the environment and advising 'Best Farming Practices' that benefit the farmer and the environment.
- **STEPS –** Severn Trent Water is working with partners across the catchment through their Severn Trent Environmental Protection Scheme to protect our plant, soil, biodiversity and water environment. At the same time supporting the productive sustainable use of these valuable resources. Part of STW's Farming 4 Water, STEPS allows farmers to apply for suitable funding. <https://www.stwater.co.uk/about-us/environment/catchment-management/steps1/>
- **Unlocking the Severn:** A partnership between the Canal & River Trust, Severn Rivers Trust, Natural England and Environment Agency to restore the population of *Alosa fallax* (Twaite shad) population associated with the Severn Estuary SAC to its historic spawning range. The Environment Agency have removed the two lower most barriers in the catchment at Powick and Knightsford Bridge to allow fish migration
- **Springs of Rivers:** An overall programme of works undertaken by the Severn Rivers Trust across the catchment. This includes fish passage projects in collaboration with Shropshire Wildlife Trust through Freshwater First to improve fish passage at Ashford Mill, Mill Street and Linney weirs in the catchment, Afonydd Cymru at Knighton, the Environment Agency and Natural England at Leintwardine; working with farmers alongside Shropshire Hills AONB on the Teme, Onny, Clun (TOC) Water Environment Grant project working with the Wye Usk Foundation under the Wye, Irfon, Severn Environment (WISE) project in the upper Teme
- **Natural Flood Management:** The Shropshire Council lead Slow the Flow project undertaken by Shropshire Wildlife Trust in the Corvedale; and the Herefordshire Council lead project with Severn Rivers Trust in the Brimfield Brook looking to reduce the impact of flooding through natural management.
- **Stepping Stones:** Lead by the National Trust with a range of partners, this project is working with landowners to link the Stiperstones NNR and The Long Mynd in the north of the catchment.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Catchment Partnership will develop a systematic, evidence based approach to management of the catchment. It will be implemented via the sub catchments, at both project and landscape scheme level.

The Catchment Partnership will contribute to the national CaBA reports and evaluation annually. Individual projects will be measured by their specific outputs, and the delivery methods used will be recorded and evaluated.

Baseline data will be collected prior where possible to any project activity and the source of the data used, whether from field monitoring or extrapolation from existing information, will be stated to validate its relevance. Part of this will be the newly (in 2019 by Severn Rivers Trust in partnership with the Environment Agency) installed fish counter at Ashford Mill. Appropriate and relevant methods of monitoring and evaluation will be used on various aspects of projects, including community engagement in addition to ecological enhancements.

Each project will collect relevant evidence to quantify measures of success and record and share outcomes across the Catchment and nationally. Data from surveys and monitoring will be used to inform current projects and in planning future projects. A catchment wide overview of condition will be taken annually by the partnership. Monitoring needs to be targeted and at a sufficient scale across the catchment / sub catchment areas to be effective.

The level of evaluation will be matched to the scale of project and impact and to resources and capacity available. A variety of mechanisms will be employed for monitoring as relevant to each project. Each of these will be standard, consistent methodology and will be repeatable to measure longer term impact.

Scientific, citizen science and volunteer monitoring will be used as appropriate to measure success of projects, particularly in engaging local people.

The engagement of people and organisations will be monitored per project regarding local involvement and understanding. Wider engagement will be measured via the partnership events, via responses to consultations on the Catchment Plan, and development of new projects.

- Ecological survey and evaluation methods may include sampling water quality, habitat condition and fauna sampling. □
- Walkover surveys by skilled volunteers and staff of partner organisations will be undertaken to evaluate catchment wide and sub-catchment condition and to identify issues and opportunities for solutions. Information gathered will inform development of next phase restoration projects. □
- Fixed-point photography and drone flyovers where applicable will be used to record the situation before project work and to demonstrate differences during and after each project
- Mapping results onto GIS layers will be undertaken per project whenever capacity allows. Capacity for this will be built into new project funding bids. □
- Use the extensive open-access resources available to support condition assessment across the catchment and planning future target areas. This will include Environment Agency hydrological, LiDAR and ecological data, and mapping from Natural England regarding active agri environment schemes.
- Specialist contractors will be engaged per project where necessary to deliver high quality/extensive data generation to record detailed outcomes. □

- Each project will identify appropriate time frames for survey prior to project initiation and for monitoring and evaluation during and after project implementation. These should fit within overall catchment agreed monitoring measures □
- Share information amongst catchment partners on methodologies and hold events to inform and train people in survey and evaluation methods. Use CaBA resources and external input as relevant.

The Future

Much has already been achieved for the Teme but there is still a great deal more to do if we are to reverse the continuing decline in river quality and habitat seen over the last few years. We will consider and investigate other issues as the Partnership progresses, looking at the entire catchment and focussing on the Teme SSSI, Clun SAC and other conservation sites.

Current projects will be prioritised to secure long term funding. The Partnership shall engage in the Environment Agency's FCRM refresh in 2020 and will determine the possible impact of the new Environmental Land Management Scheme. In addition, the loss of funding through European Grants i.e. European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and European Regional Development Fund shall be considered with regards future funding streams for the catchment.