



## **WTT River Habitat Workshops Case Study: Colne Catchment**

At sites on the Rivers Ver, Gade, Wraysbury and Colne in Essex and Hertfordshire, volunteers from local community groups, wildlife trusts, fishing clubs and members of EA, Thames Water and Affinity Water staff were invited to attend a series of River Habitat Workshops.

The 7 workshops engaged over 200 people from 60 different organisations and feedback has been abundant and overwhelmingly positive (some of the comments are included at the end of this document).

The workshops delivered cost-effective habitat enhancement on the day. However, the training and information provided to attendees has proved to be the most valuable outcome. Several individuals and groups have reported that the workshops have changed their perception of good river habitat and their management/maintenance regimes as a result. On the River Ver in particular, the events have kick-started a programme of further volunteer-led habitat enhancement works and many community-led habitat projects are anticipated to be undertaken as a direct result of the workshops.

The lunchtime talks by Thames and Affinity Water helped put into context the importance of household water usage, correct waste water management and the impact on our rivers.

EA Operations Delivery team members were particularly interested in techniques for reducing flood risk with woody debris, without removing it from the river.



Attendees were greeted with tea, coffee and biscuits in a marquee, and a WTT Conservation Officer introduced each day, including a risk assessment and health and safety talk with PPE and hand-tools. An initial walk-and-talk habitat assessment of the proposed work site identified existing habitat features and opportunities for enhancement;



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Volunteers were split into groups, each led in river habitat enhancement work by an experienced WTT staff member. Simple, woody debris habitat enhancements were created with all volunteers involved and lending a hand whilst WTT staff explained the purpose and function of each structure.



Lunch breaks (with food kindly provided by Thames Water Ltd) were used for talks by Affinity and Thames Water on water usage and water quality with free water-saving gadgets distributed to attendees; the FDC consenting process was explained by EA FCRM Officers, and Chilterns Chalkstreams Project Officer, Allan Beechey, gave a demonstration on Riverfly monitoring.





In the afternoon, a second session of hands-on habitat enhancement was undertaken installing structures to complement the changes in flow patterns created by the morning's work. Finally on each day, a second guided habitat assessment explained how the installed structures will benefit fish, invertebrates and plants and how the river morphology will respond over time.



Some feedback from the participants:

*Thank you so much for organising the training day today. I thoroughly enjoyed myself - I still can't get over just how quickly the river flow was changing after our cutting and building. The "trout" guys obviously know exactly what they are doing. I think I must arrange a trip to Harmondsworth for our local RSPB just to see what it looks like in a few months time.*

*It was great to spend the day in such pleasant and experienced company. I shall most certainly put the knowledge gained to good use on the stretches of river controlled by my club. It was good to hear some other sides of water management too - I'll definitely use my new shower head!*

*I hope that we'll be able to get things going at Boxmoor before long - I'm quite addicted to standing in the middle of a river - so long as it's not too cold - or wet!*



**Wild Trout Trust – Improving habitat for wild trout and all wildlife**

*I have finally dried out after Tuesday and have been down for a look. The river is looking great, and some new chub on station by upstream deflectors. Please convey my thanks to all concerned for the day and all their wet hard work.*

*I just wanted to say thanks again for yesterday's course. It was very enjoyable and informative, and it was nice to meet some of the other folks interested in the river environment and keeping it in good condition for the future.*