



## Newsletter July 2025

Dear friends,

The River Mole River Watch (RMRW) team has been hard at work on multiple projects, with each month bringing new and exciting challenges. Alongside our practical work, we've also focused on important behind-the-scenes admin to secure the charity's future.

The biggest milestone is that we're now a fully registered charity thanks to Sue Bond, who dedicated many hours to the detailed application process. This status allows us to receive over £5,000 in donations and grants annually, which is crucial as we continue to grow. Huge thanks to Sue for making it happen!

At our AGM, Chris Budleigh was officially elected treasurer and immediately tasked with setting up a new bank account. This was no small feat—banks aren't always friendly to small charities—but we now have a functioning account, thanks to Chris's persistence.

We also switched from JustGiving to LocalGiving, a more user-friendly platform that better supports small charities. Caroline took on this project and after a few hiccups, successfully set up our donation page. [Click here](#) should you wish to try it out – you can give a 'one-off' donation or set up a monthly direct debit – a small regular donation is very helpful for our budgeting (says Chris!).

***Thank you to everyone involved in these vital steps. With these foundations in place, we're now even better equipped to continue our work for the River Mole!***

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 17th May 2025

Our 2nd **Annual General Meeting** was held on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May, at the fantastic venue of Leatherhead Football Club. The main business, apart from the chair's reports and electing the trustees, was to wind up our original (unincorporated) charity Mole River Watch, and to transfer its membership and assets to our "new" charity, River Mole River Watch CIO. In order to do this, the meeting was asked to agree the following resolution:-

"We, the members and trustees of the unincorporated association known as River Mole River Watch and founded in April 2023, agree to wind up and close the association and to transfer all assets, including money, equipment and membership to River Mole River Watch CIO **Registered Charity No 1212153**. In doing so we are following the advice of the Charity Commission. This decision to be made on Saturday May 17th by at least two thirds of the people attending the meeting today in accordance with our governing document (Small Charity Constitution). The transfer of assets is to the newly founded River Mole River Watch CIO which has identical objects and will continue the work started by the association. This is also in accordance with our governing document. The transfer will take place on or before 30th June using a General Vesting Declaration."

We are delighted to report that 100% of the attendees agreed to the resolution, and that we are now a fully registered charity.

Nigel Bond, our chairperson, gave a very comprehensive PPT presentation of everything we have achieved in the last year. Please [click here](#) to read his report.





Chris Budleigh presented the [Treasurer's Annual Accounts and Report 2024/25](#)

**The Trustees were duly elected**, to see their biographies [click here](#).

Nigel Bond (chairperson) - technical chemistry advisor, representative on River Mole Catchment Partnership, water tester, outreach speaker for schools and groups.

Sue Bond (secretary) - lead for the School Outreach Programme; lead for sub-groups - Legal Rights for the River Mole and Pet Flea Treatment impact on rivers.

Chris Budleigh (treasurer) - grant applications, anything financial, citizen scientist volunteer, testing at Norbury Park.

Caroline Cardew-Smith (marketing/PR) - artwork, events, website.

Simon Collins (project lead Water Testing Programme) – monthly data analysis, writing technical blogs on all aspects of the River Mole, Lead on sub-group Flooding and NFM.

Jess Neumann (technical advice) – works closely with Simon on hydrological issues.

Kristen Fitzgerald-Pull (social media) and all round useful.



**SPEAKERS** We were incredibly lucky that all our speakers agreed to give up their precious Saturday and present a talk at the AGM.

**Erica Popplewell** delivered an inspiring keynote address, highlighting the importance of collaboration and support that **Friends of the Thames** and **River Action** can offer to community groups like ours. <https://riveractionuk.com/our-mission/>

**Ria Woodfield** provided an update on our partnership with **SESW** regarding the two-year nitrate study, which our data supports. <https://seswater.co.uk/your-environment/where-your-water-comes-from>



Erica Popplewell - River Action

**Lewis Campbell** from South East Rivers Trust (SERT) shared intriguing insights from the Gatwick Stream study, including eDNA data revealing a diverse range of species interacting with the stream including eels and brown trout. <https://www.southeastriverstrust.org/river-mole/>

**Jess Neumann** informed us about the results from Reading University, where two outstanding students were sponsored to gather river quality data on the River Mole last summer. We are continuing to work with PhD students, who are now investigating the Mole Gap and the chalk river bed, and finding out where the water disappears into swallow holes and re-emerges in the many springs along this stretch of the river.

Simon has written a fascinating article which is like a good detective story, 'Will the River Mole Dry Up This Summer? Decoding Past River Vanishings and what Data is telling us for July-August 2025' [click here for the full article](#)



**After the meeting, we led a guided walk** from the Leatherhead Football clubhouse to Thorncroft bridge, and along the footpath to Town Bridge. It is a fascinating stretch of the River Mole, everyone enjoyed learning about the history, geography and geology of the Mole Gap through Leatherhead. We stopped halfway and had a picnic lunch perched along a log! There were many fascinating discussions, including what IS the foam on the weir?



Why and where are the swallow holes? Could we do eDNA to see if there is any evidence of otters on this stretch? And how can we protect the Rights for the River Mole?



**The feedback** from our guests was that it was a highly enjoyable and inspirational AGM. What we found incredibly exciting is that within our membership there is a wealth of knowledge and expertise. There are a number of new sub groups including:

- **Legal protections for the Rights of the River Mole.**
- **Pet Flea Treatment**, we want to engage with vets and the public to highlight the issue. MILLIONS of doses of pet flea and tick treatments containing imidacloprid and fipronil are sold without prescription in the UK every year. These powerful insecticides — which have been restricted in farming for the past 7 years — are freely available in supermarkets and online to use on pets and are contaminating our rivers, harming wildlife - and us. Recent studies show they're found in 100% of tested UK urban streams, harming the very species our ecosystems rely on — mayflies, dragonflies, beetles, and the birds and fish that depend on them. Please sign and share this petition:



[https://www.change.org/p/stop-pet-pesticides-polluting-our-rivers?recruited\\_by\\_id=db8ad640-5eeb-11f0-8876-47fa840fab80&utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_campaign=psf\\_promote\\_or\\_share&utm\\_term=psf&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.change.org/p/stop-pet-pesticides-polluting-our-rivers?recruited_by_id=db8ad640-5eeb-11f0-8876-47fa840fab80&utm_source=share_petition&utm_campaign=psf_promote_or_share&utm_term=psf&utm_medium=email)

*If you have skills in either of these areas and would like to help please contact [rivermoleriverwatch@gmail.com](mailto:rivermoleriverwatch@gmail.com).*

### OTHER NEWS



**The Outreach Programme** is one of our key charitable aims. Over the last year we have given numerous talks to local groups including the WI, U3A, Local History Societies, and Residents Associations. We have also worked with both primary and secondary schools; the latter is our focus for 25/26. Working with older children is a different challenge, but what RMRW do covers so much of the curriculum – science, geography, geology, ecology, chemistry and even art, that we think our expertise could be very inspiring to students.



**Natural Flood Management (NFM).** Simon has been touring the catchment to identify potential sites for NFM in partnership with South East Rivers Trust (SERT) and Surrey County Council (SCC). We hope that lots of exciting initiatives will happen, including the creation of new Wet woodlands which are a Priority Habitat. Wet woodland is characterised by a few water-loving tree species, animal and flora species include the secretive water rail, willow warblers, rare moths, and mosses.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/habitats/wet-woodland/>



**Collaboration.** Simon organised a corporate day for a wonderful team from Crawley Thales. They spent the morning at Gatwick on a site visit focused on learning about water quality management and flood control at the airport. In the afternoon, they participated in a riverside activity to remove Himalayan Balsam along the Horley section of the River Mole.



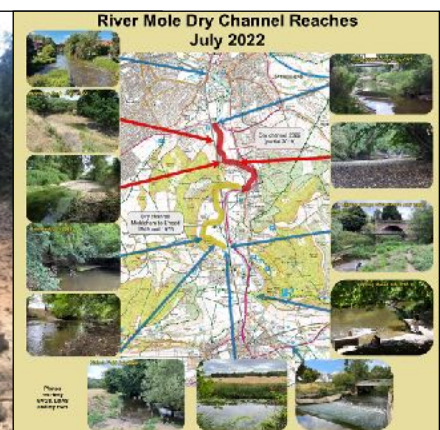
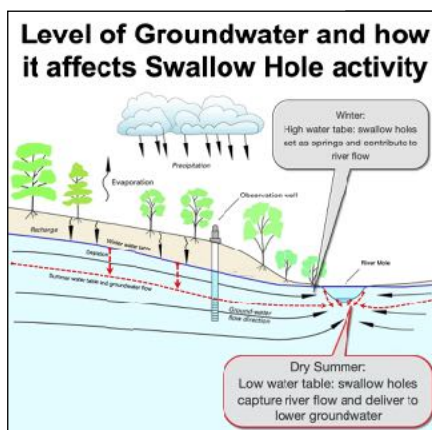




**Water Testing Programme.** In the Spring of 2023, our citizen scientists began monthly data collection at designated sites on the River Mole. Initially, they measured phosphate concentrations. A year later, we expanded the tests to include nitrate, ammonia, conductivity, and temperature. Due to our stringent methods, personalised volunteer training, and high testing standards, we have developed a comprehensive database of pollution levels throughout the River Mole catchment, acknowledged by the EA and other stakeholders. Simon has published a bog: 'Two Years of Citizen Science Data on the River Mole: what are the main headlines?' [Click here to read](#)



**Where does the River Mole Go?** Every so often—perhaps once in a generation—the River Mole performs a remarkable vanishing act, silently vanishing underground through the chalk swallow holes of the Mole Gap. In the driest and hottest years, long stretches of the riverbed fall dry, before the water mysteriously resurfaces kilometres downstream. Simon has written a fascinating article which reads like a detective story!



[Will the River Mole Dry Up This Summer? Decoding Past River Vanishings and what Data is telling us for July-August 2025](#)



**River of the Month!** We are delighted that River Action featured the River Mole as the first River of the Month in their June 2025 newsletter. Thank you to River Action for the welcome support and spotlight. [Click here](#)



Thank you for reading, if you want to get in touch about anything in this issue, please email us [rivermoleriverwatch@gmail.com](mailto:rivermoleriverwatch@gmail.com)