

Your river needs you!

Become a water quality citizen scientist for our iconic river Wensum

Are you concerned about the decline of our rivers and freshwater environment and motivated to make a difference? Norfolk Rivers Trust and the Wensum Catchment Partnership (WCP) need your help with an exciting citizen science project to test river water quality, thereby providing valuable information that will support the development of restoration plans that are based on evidence.

The Wensum Catchment Partnership (WCP) is a partnership hosted by Norfolk Rivers Trust which comprises a range of organisations including the Environment Agency, Natural England, Anglian Water, Norfolk Highways, Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Wildlife Trust and various other local groups. Together with local people, the WCP works to restore the Wensum catchment as a whole for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Sadly, the river is currently classified as 'moderate' and 'poor' for its water quality (WFD, 2019). In order to improve on this, and to ensure we maximise the impact of our interventions, we need to understand water quality along stretches on the river.

Accordingly, this year the WCP are trialling a consistent method to regularly measure the chemistry and flow of the Wensum's headwaters – with sampling locations identified on the River Tat (a tributary of the Wensum) and on the main river channel between South Raynham and Fakenham. The data collected will be fed back to the WCP to help shape our plans to restore the health of the Wensum.

The WCP hopes to build on this trial by expanding the approach to cover the whole of the Wensum catchment.

What does being a citizen scientist involve?

You don't have to be a scientist to make a meaningful contribution to our collective knowledge. We're simply looking for people who live near the Tat and/or the Wensum in the areas around South Raynham and Fakenham, to join our team of committed citizen scientists between June and December 2022.

We have two types of voluntary roles available:

Field surveyors:

We ask that citizen scientists are able to conduct water quality tests once a week across 1-3 sites (testing at each site takes about 30 minutes). You would be required to commit at most 2 hours per week of your time.

- Use of a vehicle is not necessary, but may be helpful for sites at a distance from your location.
- Access to a smartphone or computer will be essential for submitting data through an app (training will be provided).
- You may need to walk short distances on uneven ground while carrying a light testing pack.
- You will be paired-up with another citizen scientist to ensure safety.

Additionally, occasional 'river blitz' days may be organised to check water quality along a small stretch of river. This will be optional.

Citizen Scientist Leader:

If field testing doesn't appeal, we're also looking for someone interested in coordinating the citizen scientist tasks, while working closely with the water quality testing project coordinator. This would involve:

- Being a local 'go-to' person, answering volunteer enquiries and dealing with equipment checks.
- Storing water testing waste (in a provided small 5L drum) for collection by a waste water company.
- Checking the data on a weekly basis using Microsoft Excel to identify any unusual readings – these would need to be shared with the project coordinator.

Am I the right person?

If you enjoy being out in nature, spending time by the river and making a real contribution towards restoring the Wensum, this is the place for you! We'll be hosting a training workshop in June/July 2022 to provide all the necessary information so that you can feel confident in what you're doing. This will include the water sampling process, how to take care of your equipment and biosecurity best practice.

Travel expenses will be covered.

Who do I contact to find out more?

If this sounds like something you'd like to get involved with, please contact Sarah Gelpke, Norfolk Rivers Trust, at sarah@norfolkriverstrust.org

We would be extremely grateful to anyone willing to commit some time and effort to assist us with this important project.