

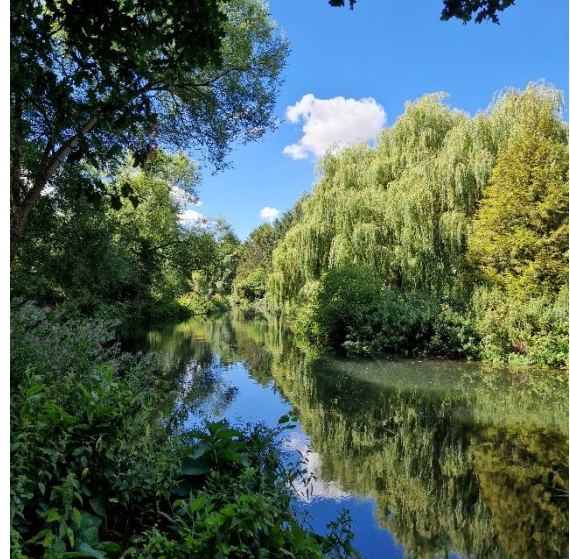
The Stort Report

Newsletter 2025

#001

Waterside Stortford is a riverside and countryside trail passing through the historic market town of Bishop's Stortford. The trail features twenty-one information boards along its length illuminating its history and ecology.

With the option to cycle or stroll through the 3.5 mile (5.6km) the public can enjoy beautiful relaxing views of the water, nature and wildlife. Waterside Stortford winds gently through the valley of a chalk stream, through to the maltings of historic Bishop's Stortford and the canal scenes of the Stort Navigation.



One can walk through the market town enjoying the views, whilst doing a spot of shopping or stopping to have a bite to eat or drink in the various restaurants, historic pubs and popular bars.

Waterside Stortford is an initiative created by Bishop's Stortford Town Council, Environment Agency, East Herts District Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Canal and River Trust and a number of other stakeholders.

Copies of the Waterside Stortford Trail Guide are available at the Tourist Information Centre located in Market Square.



Coir Rolls

20m of coir rolls were successfully installed past the Millenium Bridge towards London Road on the Stort Navigation on 9th May 2025 following a delay in the original dates due to nearby nesting swans and water voles.

The installation was achieved by working in partnership with Bishop's Stortford Town Council, Environment Agency and Canal and Rivers Trust.



The coir rolls have now fully settled into their environment and are showing excellent signs of environmental integration and is benefiting local species. The coir roll shave encouraged growth, across several different plant species, which were either pre-planted or self-seeded naturally from the seedbank.

The coir rolls are now functioning as important habitat structures within the river corridor, providing habitats for aquatic invertebrates, and offering cover and foraging areas for amphibians, birds, and small mammals.

Previous Coir Roll Installation in 2022



Coir Roll Progress in September 2025



Canal and River Trust

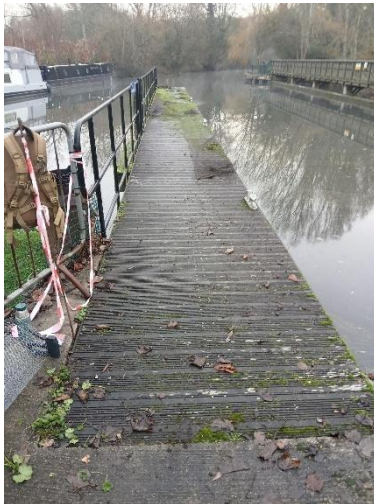
The Canal and River Trust are the UK's largest canal charity, caring for a 2,000-mile network of stunning canals and navigable rivers.

They play a significant part of providing essential spaces for wildlife and people on the River Stort.

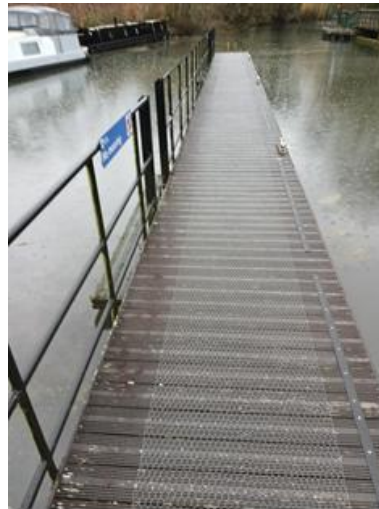
Recently the Canal and River Trust have done some vital maintenance including temporary repair at Twyford Lock Landing and the Canoe Launching Stage.

Twyford Lock Landing

Before



After



CRT Canoe Launching Stage Repairs



Handrail at London Road



Platform Repairs



Rust Fungus

Rust 4 Removal Project

(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cmlly4lwlkno>)

To control Himalayan Balsam, a rust fungus from its native range, *Puccinia Komarovii*, is being trialled in the UK as a biological control, approved by Defra.



The rust fungus was released on sites across the River Stort in June 2024, particularly at Little Hallingbury Marsh and Tednambury Farm.

Little Hallingbury Marsh



Tednambury Farm



Within two months of application, small pustules have begun to develop on the underside of the leaves and after four months there was a wide distribution of infection across the treatment area, with heavy pustule development on some of the leaves.

After the first winter, only one of the two sites showed clear signs of the rust development. Additional sites are currently being sought and seeds being tested by Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI).

Wetherspoons Port Jackson

With the agreement of the Port Jackson Wetherspoons pub, they have allowed Waterside Stortford to install a life ring with a rescue rope and safety sign by the riverside steps. In addition, two swift boxes have been installed onto the front of the pub.



Thank you to Wetherspoons for their help following a previous installation of the Green Flagpole at the pub.

Crane Tidy Up



The area around the historic crane has now been cleared following completion of the cladding works by Applaud Property Management in October 2025.

The historic crane on the River Stort in Bishop's Stortford was a wharf-side crane used for loading and unloading barges, likely to service the local malting industry.



It stood near the Orchard Maltings in Station Road and was a rare example of a riverside crane, remaining in working order until at least 1956. It was situated at the point where the Stort Navigation, completed in 1769, reached its terminus.



Andy Gee BEM

Andy Gee has been awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) in His Majesty The King's Birthday Honours List 2025, for services to Floating Pennywort Removal.

Andy is a volunteer with Whoosh Explore Canoe Club, as well as Paddle UK, The Angling Trust, and Waterside Stortford.



Photo Credit - Phil Brewin

Andy said:

"I'm beyond chuffed. I felt elated, but at the same time, this was very much on the back of terrific support from club members, who came out with me and my twin brother Stuart multiple times in all weathers."

"Wonderful to feel that your peers have valued our efforts of ridding the River Stort of floating pennywort, and moving onto the River Lea and Lee Navigation', so highly, to recommend me for this prestigious award."

"I will use this BEM as further motivation to continue ridding our waterways of floating pennywort."

Since the Award, Andy has had a page published on the Non Native Species Secretariate (NNSS) webpages, which can be viewed at:

<https://www.nonnativespecies.org/local-action-groups-lags/floating-pennywort-strategy>

Floating pennywort can spread quickly and cover whole waterways, blocking access for paddlers. Its dominating presence steals sunlight, smothers habitats and crowds out native plants. It can cause an increase in water temperatures, and create mosquito breeding areas.

When pennywort dies back in the winter, excessive nutrients can build up in the water and damage ecosystems. Floating pennywort's excessive coverage across the surface of water can impede flow, causing oxygen depletion for fish and other wildlife, which in turn impacts food webs.

Huge congratulations to Andy Gee!

200th Anniversary Plaque

The 200th Anniversary Plaque has been restored and placed on the willow tree by the Causeway.



It reads:

*TO COMMEMORATE THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE OPENING OF THE RIVER STORT
FOR NAVIGATION.*

*THIS WEEPING WILLOW TREE WAS
PRESENTED TO THE INHABITANTS OF
BISHOP'S STORTFORD BY THE URBAN
DISTRICT COUNCIL OF SAWBRIDGEWORTH
ON THE 27TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER 1969.*



Brash Berms



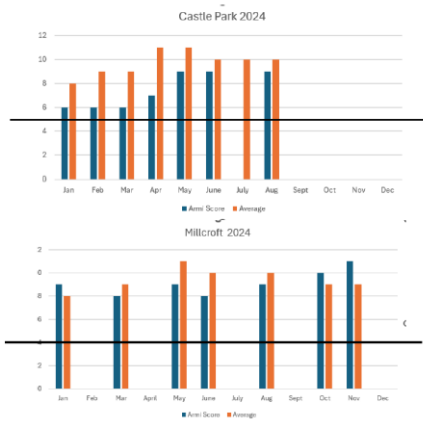
Countryside Management Services volunteers and friends installed brash berms along the River Stort in the park in March 2025.

Brash berms are natural, bank-stabilizing structures built in rivers using woody debris (brash) to create narrower, more natural channels, trap silt, promote plant growth, and improve fish habitats by enhancing water flow and creating spawning grounds.

Riverfly Project

The Riverfly Partnership is a dynamic network of organisations, representing anglers, conservationists, entomologists, scientists, water course managers and relevant authorities, working together to protect the water quality of our rivers and further the understanding of riverfly populations; and actively conserve riverfly habitats.

The project focuses on three key groups of riverflies: the up-wing flies or mayflies (Ephemeroptera), caddisflies or sedges (Trichoptera) and stoneflies (Plecoptera).



The tests show the River Stort are below average, but this is nothing to worry about at present. There was no Riverfly at the viewing platform near Sworders Field. This could be due to dogs swimming in that part of the river.

The next test will be done in April 2025 with the help of the Friends of Castle Park.

Stortford Carnival Cruise



A special array of working and pleasure boats are be moored every June for the Bishop's Stortford Carnival Cruise. The Mayor of Bishop's Stortford awards prizes Best Decorated Boat and a runner up.

This year's winner were the skipper and crew of 'The Toad' and the runners up were 'Tintagel'.

River Stort Restoration at Grange Paddocks Update

from Hertfordshire County Council and the Environment Agency

Construction Phase Programme

In our previous updates, we explained that a large water vole population has become established along the River Stort at Grange Paddocks, prompting a re-design of the bank protection proposed for some of the residential properties upstream of the weir.

Following further surveys, we anticipate that targeted mitigation measures will be necessary to protect water voles in areas where riverbank works are planned. As the re-design proposals and mitigation efforts must be carried out at certain times of the year to avoid ecological harm, we now propose to carry out the full weir removal and bank protection work in 2026.

Phase 1 - Completed January 2021

- Feasibility Study
- Review of potential options
- Weir removal found to be the most effective solution, providing improvements to ecology and flood risk

Phase 2 - 2021-2025

- Detailed Design
- Ecology surveys
- Modelling
- Engagement with adjoining householders
- Detailed proposals for upstream river restoration
- Obtain Consents

Phase 3 - 2025-2026

- Construction
- Upstream restoration of the chalk river habitat (stage 1)
- Physical removal of the weir (stage 2)
- Bank protection where required (stage 2)

PROJECT PROGRAMME

In this November 2025 newsletter, we are delighted to share some of the initial improvements now visible along the river, following the completion of works in October 2025.

Below are a series of before and after photos showing how the river has changed.

Before



After



Three notches have now been carried out on the weir, reducing its height by 30cm and further notching is planned for early next year. The full weir removal is then scheduled for Autumn 2026, to be carried out alongside targeted bank protection.

Before



After



Upstream of the weir, the previously deep and slow-flowing water has been transformed into a shallower channel featuring riffles and increased surface turbulence, characteristics typical of a healthy chalk river. As a result, we have recorded significantly improved oxygen levels in the water, which are essential for supporting fish and invertebrate populations.

Before



After



Reeds have been partially removed where they dominated the river channel. The import of gravels into the opened-up channel creates ideal fish spawning conditions.

Before



After



A gravel beach has been constructed to improve flow conditions in the channel.