

Riverfly

Citizen science in action on the Torridge

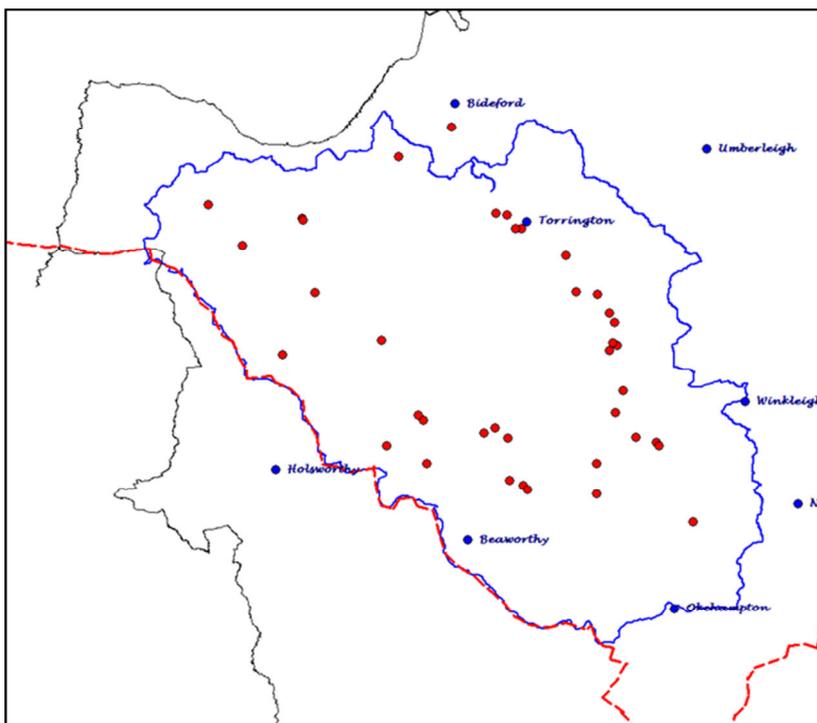


Riverfly is a national project that connects people with their local rivers; how they function and what some of the wildlife can tell us about their ecological health.

During 2014 the North Devon Biosphere's Nature Improvement Area Project recruited and trained volunteers to take part in the scheme within the Torridge River catchment.

Since July 2014 they have been providing data on stream invertebrates to help with the long term monitoring of river health. That data feeds into Environment Agency monitoring and acts as a deterrent to potential polluters.

The Network - By using the contacts and community outreach capacity within the North Devon Nature Improvement Area project (ND-NIA) volunteers were recruited and trained to take part in Riverfly. Two training days were organised, one in May and one in July 2014. Each trained volunteer has been sampling a point on the River Torridge or one of its tributaries on a monthly basis.



34 volunteers have been trained

29 separate sites in the Torridge catchment are being sampled

2 ND-NIA project staff have been accredited as Riverfly trainers.



£1962 – the amount granted by the Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) to buy invertebrate guides and the right sampling and sorting equipment for the volunteers, and venue hire for training. Torridge District Council's Biodiversity fund provided £1394.



The Data - Each volunteer samples the bottom living invertebrates at their sample site once per month from May to September, though in 2014 the training schedule meant that sampling was only possible from July.

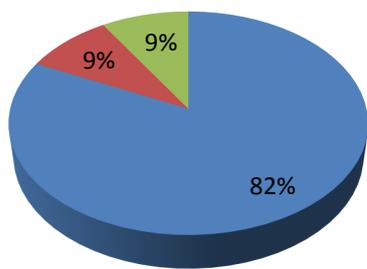
The invertebrates are separated into eight indicator groups that reflect the different degrees of tolerance the invertebrate species have to pollution. The numbers in each group counted and based on those, an index is calculated (the ARMI). The higher the ARMI score, the higher the water quality at that particular site.

The Environment Agency has set a “trigger level” score specific to each site. If an ARMI score falls below that trigger level, the Environment Agency is informed and they investigate the nature of the breach and if necessary, take the appropriate action to address the reasons for it.

Results

Comparison of 67 ARMI scores against set trigger levels

■ Above ■ Matching ■ Below



67 samples have been taken and analysed and the data submitted to the Environment Agency

3 sites have so far failed to meet the set trigger level and are being followed up by the Environment Agency

The Future - In 2015, we intend to increase number of volunteers involved and the number of sites covered. There has also been interest in setting up a Riverfly volunteer network in the Biosphere’s River Taw catchment area.

Learning and research is one of the three core functions of a Biosphere and is a key part of the journey towards more sustainable decision making. Citizen science activities such as Riverfly are part of this journey and involve as many people as possible in providing observations and data on our local environment.



The Nature Improvement Area (NIA) project is led on behalf of the Biosphere Partnership by the Devon Wildlife Trust. It is working with communities to support them in learning more about their local environment and the social and economic benefits that it brings to the area. Through active participation and engagement the project is bringing people together and increasing their awareness of and pride in their shared natural heritage and strengthening the connection between people and place.