Committee: Environment

Date: 11 November 2026

Title: Update Report

Purpose of the Report

To inform members about progress on significant environmental developments

Report

Bathing Water Quality Meeting

Please see Appendices A and B for the draft minutes of the Bathing Water Quality Meetings held on 22 July 2026 and 21 October 2026. The meetings continue to bring together representatives from Lyme Regis Town Council, Dorset Council, South West Water, the Environment Agency, River Lim Action and other stakeholders to monitor bathing water quality and coordinate actions to improve the River Lim and Lyme Regis bathing waters.

Key updates include continued monitoring of Front Beach and Church Beach water quality, progress on South West Water's Asset Delivery Storm Overflow Programme (formerly Turning the Tide), installation of new Church Beach signage, ongoing investigations into identified pollution hotspots at Mill Green, Town Mill, Jericho and Coombe Street, and collaborative work to identify and address sources of pollution affecting the River Lim catchment.

River Lim Action Update

Please see Appendix C for an update paper submitted by co-opted committee member Vicki Elcoate on behalf of River Lim Action. Key updates include the commencement of works associated with the Turning the Tide programme, continued monitoring of water quality at Front Beach and Church Beach, investigations into pollution sources at Mill Green, Town Mill, Jericho and Coombe Street, Himalayan Balsam removal by volunteers and ongoing Japanese Knotweed treatment within the catchment.

Invasive Species – Japanese Knotweed

Officers continue to treat the identified Japanese Knotweed growth at the base of the Cadet Hut bank. Larger, more mature growth has responded well to treatment and is showing signs of regression, while younger growth continues to be monitored and treated as required.

Environment Committee – Objectives

Members are asked to note the progress updates made against the committee's agreed objectives for 2026/27, as set out in Appendix D. Officers will continue to progress these workstreams and provide further updates where appropriate.

Garden Signs

The Operations Supervisor is currently leading the project to introduce plant identification signage within the Langmoor and Lister Gardens. Officers are working with the council's principal signage design company to develop signage for a few notable and distinctive plant species throughout the gardens, such as Echium pininana (Giant Viper's Bugloss), a striking large plant that is highly valued by bees and other pollinators.

The signage will provide visitors with information on each identified plant's origins, characteristics, horticultural significance and environmental benefits, helping to enhance visitor engagement, education and awareness of the gardens horticultural and biodiversity value as they move through the gardens.

Lyme Regis Town Council - Climate Action Plan

Officers are due to undertake a review of the costs associated with the remaining actions within the plan. However, this was put on hold due to the significant senior management staffing changes within the organisation. It is intended that this work will be reviewed following the appointment of the new Finance Manager, after which a further update will be provided in due course.

EcoVend Reverse Vending Recycling Machines

At its meeting held on 8 October 2025, the Environment Committee considered the proposal for EcoVend reverse vending recycling machines and subsequently recommended to Full Council that any decision on the EcoVend machine be deferred for 12 months. Members had raised concerns regarding the high cost, ongoing management requirements, maintenance implications within a coastal environment and the storage of collected materials.

Following the expiry of the 12-month deferral period, the Operations Manager will now revisit and review the proposal, considering any developments since the original presentation, together with its operational and financial suitability for Lyme Regis. A further update will be presented to the committee in due course to enable members to determine whether they wish to explore the proposal further or feasible.

Sam O’Connell
Operations manager
November 2026

APPENDIX A

Minutes of Bathing Water Quality meeting on 22 July 2026

A meeting to determine the impacts on water quality and take action to improve the bathing water quality of Front Beach and Church Beach, and to improve the water quality and ecology of the River Lim, Lyme Regis, through collaborative effort of all agencies and councils.

1. Minutes of meeting on 22 April 2026 – accepted as a true record

2. In Attendance: Philip May (LRTC - Chairman), Pete Williams (LRTC), Belinda Bawden (DC), Adam Steele (DC), Jenny Eamer (SWW), Chris Angell (EA), Rob Thomas (RLAG), Vicki Elcoate (RLAG), Sarah Sharpe (SWW), Sam O'Connell (LRTC), Jim Flory (EA), Emma Teasdale (DC), Pete Hackett (UPC), Mark Bransom (DC)

Apologies for absence – Alan Burrows (SWW), Stuart Cockerell (LRTC), Mick McMorrow (RLAG), James Radcliffe (Harbour Master)

3. Beach Bathing Water Quality

VE: Church Cliff Beach has been good all season, maybe as it hasn't rained. Front Beach has had two occasions with raised levels of e-coli.

JF: We have some concerns regarding Front Beach: it's at risk of dropping a class from Good to Sufficient. Are the Pollution Risk Forecast (PRF) signs going up; if not then these samples can't be discounted? **ACTION BB –** check whether signs have been put up when PRFs have been issued.

VE/RT - requested DC do testing to find the source of the pollution. AS advised that DC only have resources to do testing outside of the season, although subsequently advised that he had been able to arrange it to be done now and for the rest of the bathing season.

ACTION DC/EA/SWW - find source(s) of pollution and ensure they're fixed as it would be a serious matter if the beach status was downgraded.

Church Cliff Beach signage – ET had been working with BB and VE to get a sign erected that met all the signage statutory requirements. This was now to go to the sign maker and would be erected in the next few days – **ACTION ET**

There was concern that motor homes may be parking in car parks and emptying their toilets into the drains. It was agreed that signage should be erected by the drains including an explanation of the consequences of such action – **ACTION ET**

4. Review of agreed actions from the last meeting on 22 April

2026 Pollution Hotspots.

As with all pollution incidents, JE advised that SWW need to be there when it is happening.

Town Mill – JE advised that SWW contractors had attended several times in the past few weeks and that contractors were returning asap to do CCTV – **ACTION JE**

Coombe Street – Operatives have been on site but found nothing so need to keep reporting.

Jericho – SWW have CCTV'd gully and found a partial mis-connection. RT advised that this is now discharging regularly. JE said that it needs to be reported so that SWW can attend when the pollution is occurring. - **ACTION RLA/SWW**

Mill Green – RT advised that this long-standing pollution was on-going. He had been to look at it two days previously and it had produced an ammonia reading off the scale on his Hanna monitor. He had reported it to both SWW and the EA but heard nothing back from either. It was clear the pollution was on-going and serious. It had also been reported to RLA by visitors staying at no 22 Mill Green. Given Tristan had done work in the past on it, JE would speak to Catherine. - **ACTION JE**

Uplyme Garage – JE advised that a team were out today to clear the stones out of the gully. PH advised that he had been liaising with the owners of the property which was the source of the pollution and that contractors would be coming to resolve the issue by the end of the month. **- ACTION PH** VE/RT/others expressed gratitude to PH for getting this long-standing pollution resolved.

Ash Cottage – JE advised that there's a displaced joint in that area and a contractor is booked to fix it – **ACTION JE**

Talbot Road – JE advised that the repair and relining had been done and that CCTV was going to be arranged to confirm that the repair is complete – **ACTION JE**

Faulty Mill Lane CSO – VE raised RLA's frustrations with the contradictory communication to MM from SWW and that it still seems to be an issue. SS agreed to reply to MM's latest email – **ACTION SS**

RLA Requests to SWW:

- Community visit to USTW – JE advised it wasn't appropriate during the infrastructure work.
- Community visit to Gun Cliff – JE advised yes before end of year - a risk assessment is required first – **ACTION JE**
- Nijhuis data – RLA requested the Nijhuis data – **ACTION SS to follow up**
- Sonde monitor return? – **ACTION SS**

Farm Visits – CA reported that they're working on funding options for the fencing. RT enquired whether the temporary electric fencing was in place in the meantime; CA confirmed it was – **ACTION CA**

5 Other Updates from Organisations

A. EA – A walkover of the river involving at least CA/RT/someone from SWW

is being arranged for September – **ACTION CA to arrange**

B. EA – MST would be carried out on samples from Woodmead and River at Beach –

ACTION CA

C. SWW – The up-to-date position on Turning the Tide is on the website – road works would be notified for period between October-April.

D. PM reported that the on-line pollution reporting form on the SWW website wasn't working – **ACTION SS**

E. DC – Kiosk highways drainage scheme – **ACTION BB**

F. LRTC – PM thanked both the EA and SWW for their on-going efforts to help clean up the river and sea.

G. RLA – Visit with Richard Foord MP held at same time at this meeting (to brief him on river and beach issues)

Next meeting noon 21 October 2026 - Action ALL

APPENDIX B

Minutes of Bathing Water Quality meeting on 21 October 2026

A meeting to determine the impacts on water quality and take action to improve the bathing water quality of Front Beach and Church Beach, and to improve the water quality and ecology of the River Lim, Lyme Regis, through collaborative effort of all agencies and councils.

1. Minutes of meeting on 22 July 2026 – accepted as a true record
2. In Attendance: Philip May (LRTC - Chair), Pete Williams (LRTC), Belinda Bawden (DC), Rob Thomas (RLA), Vicki Elcoate (RLA), Sarah Sharpe (SWW), Sam O'Connell (LRTC), Emma Teasdale (DC), Adam Steele (DC), Pete Hackett (UPC), Mark Branson (DC)

Apologies for absence – Jim Flory (EA), Chris Angell (EA), Jenny Eamer (SWW), Stuart Cockerell (LRTC), Mick McMorrow (RLAG)

3. Beach Bathing Water Quality

VE presented the EA data for the bathing season in slide format:

Church Beach - Showed a marked improvement on previous years probably owing to the low rainfall, with failing only on a couple of occasions.

Front Beach - failed once this season in May, but after that results for both E.coli and Intestinal Enterococci (IE) were pretty good even after rain.

River Lim - showed high readings in the summer especially in the town which must be caused by leaks and misconnections.

Church Beach Signage - ET advised that the new sign was installed at the end of the September, having been delayed owing to a backlog at the printers. The old sign requires removing with just the frame for the bathing water status being retained. - **ACTION ET**

Front Beach Signage - VE advised that the fixed sign is fine but the dynamic frame was broken. ET agreed to see how much it would be to replace and if she has the funds to pay for it **- ACTION ET**

Turning the Tide - SS explained that the programme has been renamed the Asset Delivery Storm Overflow Programme. All information relating to it was still accessible on the SWW website. Work has commenced on the Uplyme Sewage Treatment Works (USTW) and Mill Lane, Middle Mill is awaiting planning permission and Jericho commences next week. A compound will be in place at Charmouth Road car park in a couple of weeks.

RT (who lives in Jericho) expressed his frustration that the notice of the work to residents had been just less than a week, with no provision made for parking for their vehicles where there was no vehicular access to the property. VE suggested that better communication would be of benefit to both the public and SWW **- ACTION SS**

SS explained, in answer to a question from MB, that the liquid that would fill the new storage tanks would be combined effluent that would be retained until it could be pumped up to USTW for treatment.

Works in Marine Parade - AS reported that samples had been taken on 27 August from four points: two on Marine Parade: one outside the toilets and one by Swim, one at the end of the groyne and one from the sea off Front Beach. The first three had shown elevated levels of both E.coli and IE. MB is going to take this forward to try to figure out where the pollution is coming from. VE observed that RLA the testing that had been done had been clear so the problem must be intermittent. **- ACTION MB**

VE asked about the area in front of Herbie's where there are on-going issues/smells. AS explained that there was a separate scheme to address this with DC Highways Team.

4. Review of Agreed Actions Pollution Hotspots

- Mill Green pollution update: SS - no further update. RT explained that this pollution was an on-going constant stream of raw sewage, that CA had said was his top priority in Lyme Regis and RT was frustrated that progress seemingly wasn't being made in getting it addressed. He offered to accompany SWW staff there (which requires waders) to show them the problem first hand **- ACTION SS**
- Town Mill: SS reported that investigation was on-going and they were awaiting a CCTV update **- ACTION SS**
- Jericho: SS reported that letters had been sent to the properties in Avenue Road that were the source of this ongoing pollution. BB offered that she could help contact the residents. ET asked what happens if there is no progress: **- ACTION SS**
- Coombe Street - monitoring to continue
- Uplyme garage - resolved; unanimous thanks were passed to PH for getting the necessary work done at the bungalow. The pipe in the gully next to the garage remained clogged up with gravel (post meeting update - it has been cleared).
- Ash Cottage - SS is waiting for contractors to complete the work and they're being chased today **- ACTION SS**
- Talbot Road (Lyme Regis) - repair completed. It needs to be checked when there's proper rain whether the repair has worked **- ACTION SS**

SS has arranged a visit to Gun Cliff pumping station which is taking place tomorrow.

Farm Pollution - VE stated that she had written to CA with photographic evidence showing that the cattle are polluting the river still/again. CA had replied to say that he had been transferred to help address a pollution incident in Exmouth but that he'd get a colleague to deal with this in his absence **- ACTION CA**

VE also said that CA had confirmed that the river walk would be arranged **- ACTION CA**

Nijhuis Data Request - VE clarified that RLA would like the data for this year. SS promised to provide it once it had been presented to the EA **- ACTION SS**

Sonde Monitor Update - SS reported that next year the monitors will be installed at the CSOs at Jericho, Horn Bridge, Mill Lane, Gosling Bridge and USTW. Then in 2030 until 2035 at the Cobb SPS and Gun Cliff **- ACTION SS**

Motor Home Waste Disposal Signage by Drains - ET had painted signs at the drains in Holmbush Car Park. She intends to erect more specific motorhome messages but needs to find the precise locations for the signs and obtain costings **- ACTION ET**

ET also reported that she had given litterpickers to the businesses on Marine Parade but that the businesses had no legal responsibility for their litter. Audits of the businesses will be repeated.

5. Other Updates from Organisations:

EA - not in attendance SWW - nothing to add DC - nothing to add LRTC - nothing to add RLA - nothing to add

Date of Next Meeting - noon on 20 January 2027 - ACTION ALL

APPPENDIX C

Update from River Lim Action for the LRTC Environment Committee, November 11th 2026

This is an update from River Lim Action about developments relating to water quality in the river and on the beaches. Information only. Please contact riverlimaction@gmail.com if any questions.

Turning the Tide

This South West Water project to significantly reduce the permitted discharges into the river has now begun. These discharges affect water quality for bathers, particularly at Church Beach whose water quality is classified as poor. As a result of regular meetings and lobbying SWW is investing up to £20m to upgrade storage along the river and separate out rainwater and sewage to reduce overflows from the system after heavy rain. Work will be disruptive in the short term and involves road closures, tree removals, parking reductions and heavy vehicle movements. The project, which should reach its target of reducing discharges by the end of March 2027, has a dedicated webpage for Lyme Regis which has updates on the proposed works: https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/about-us/what-we-do/engineering-projects/wastewater/lyme-regis

Work has started beside the river and in Uplyme to facilitate putting in increased storage at Uplyme Sewage Treatment Works and Horn Bridge and reduce sewage discharges. Details of the application for a compound next to the river and Middle Mill Farm are on the Dorset Council planning portal, application number P/FUL/2026/00175. RLA has written in to support the application but is pressing for a shorter deadline than 18 months as SWW has said it will finish the project by the end of March 2027. It is important that the improvements are made by the start of the next bathing season in mid May to give Church Beach a better chance of an upgrade in classification (currently poor).

Bathing Water Quality

The Environment Agency monitors Front Beach and Church Beach weekly during the bathing season. Water quality at Church Beach has been good over the dry summer despite high levels of pollution in the river. It only worsened with rainfall and then only failed to clear the threshold on a couple of occasions. Water quality at Front Beach has been more variable but should remain good when the new classifications are announced in November. Investigations by Dorset Council to try to uncover the reason for negative results at Front Beach showed contamination of the groyne on the beach and at each side of the rainwater drain outside Swim and the toilets. DC is further investigating to work out what the problem is.

A new sign at Church Beach put up with help from Litter Free Dorset outlines action being taken to improve water quality there.

Pollution hotspots
The RLA has identified three sites which might be contributing to the high levels of bacterial pollution in the river (see graph at the end). This was worse over the summer with low water flow and high temperatures, having a direct impact on wildlife in the river.

These sites have been discussed at the regular bathing water quality meetings, organised by LRTC, reported regularly and a request for urgent action before the end of the bathing season was sent to SWW. These are the culprits:

SWO 1410 – behind Mill Green

Two members of our team have twice waded up the river to check this pollution source which has been previously investigated by SWW. This was due to be investigated further by SWW. We discovered that the pipe which we thought was the source, which sticks out near the base of the river bank, was dry. The discharge was coming from a larger pipe which was at the base of a wall and had a grill frontage about 5 metres above the pipe by the river. Readings were off the scale indicating pure sewage.

South West Water have recently reported progress here: “This remains an active misconnection investigation. Several properties on Staples Terrace have been identified as potentially misconnected. Resident notification letters have been issued and property surveys are currently being arranged”. Both RLA and the ward member have advised SWW these are sheltered accommodation properties and enquiries are best directed to Magna Housing.





Town Mill pelt.guidebook.drones

The Town Mill issue has been raised regularly and both SWW and the EA are fully aware and have carried out investigations here. Our monitor at the Town Mill has taken samples over the summer at various locations and has had varying results. The problem seems to be intermittent and so far the source has not been traced.
South West Water says: “This area is scheduled to be surveyed by our contractors to identify any potential misconnections within the catchment”.

Jericho yesterday.thumbnail.talent

Pollution here has been reported regularly and SWW has sent out a team to investigate. The last time we spoke to them they had identified two properties suspected of being misconnected into the rainwater pipe. At the time of writing sewage is still flowing into the river periodically and we are still reporting it. This is exactly where humans and dogs enter the water.

SWW says: “Our contractors have completed surveys of the outfall catchment and identified potential misconnections affecting properties on Avenue Road. Letters to the relevant property owners are due to be issued imminently”.



Coombe Street

Re ongoing high levels of bacteria found at the Coombe Street monitoring site (and see our graph below) SWW says: “No specific activity is currently planned for this location as there is no discrete outfall identified. However, any water quality issues observed here may be linked to the upstream catchments and outfalls referenced above”.

Other issues

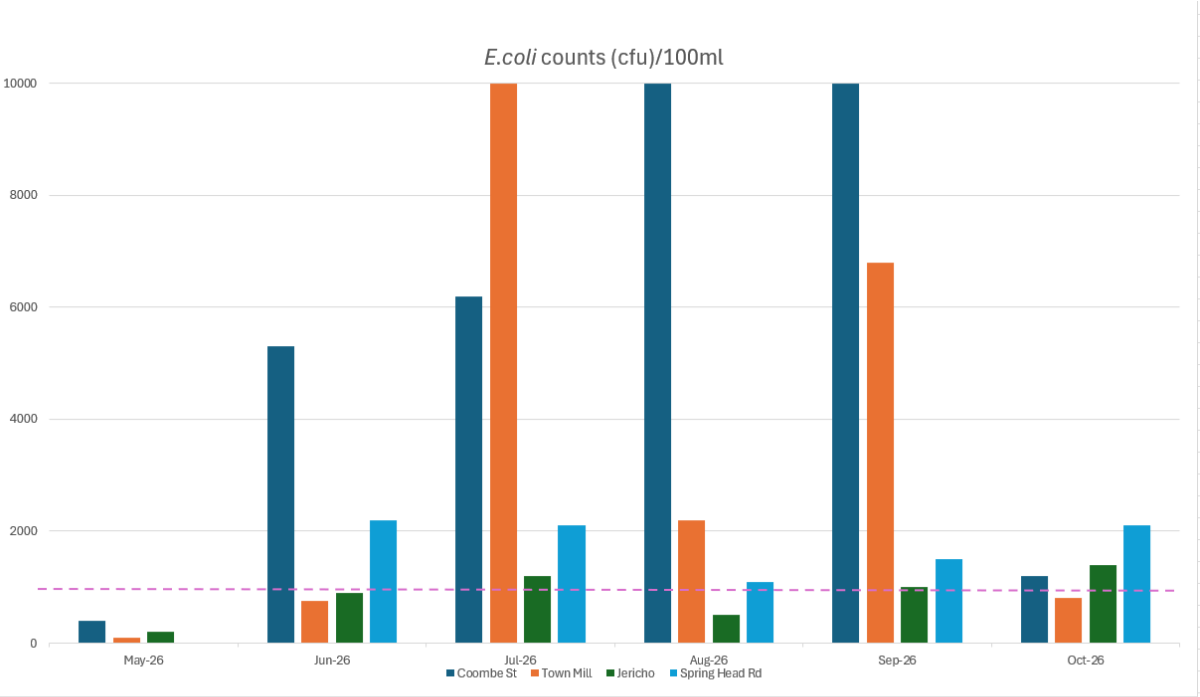
Himalayan Balsam

In total 16 sessions of Himalayan Balsam (HB) removal were carried out this season. Thanks to all the wonderful volunteers who took part. Due to the exceptionally wet spring a lot of HB earlier in the year was greatly suppressed by other plant growth. This made removal rather challenging at times. However, by the end of the season the volunteers had completely cleared large areas in the upper valley and around Bumpy Field.
A big area of concern is the large amount of HB colonising the area to the east of the catchment following the Carswell Valley. If we do not get on top of this all our efforts over the last three years will be futile as this area will carry on dispersing HB constantly downstream into the River Lim from Uplyme downwards. We do hope we can work with the respective landowners next season to stop this happening.

Japanese Knotweed

The contractor for RLA has recently been working with landowners to treat various sites in the river catchment. There remain areas of knotweed in the lower river, behind Mill Green and on the Leat (landowners unidentified) which require treatment.

River Lim Action E.coli monitoring results – thanks to LRTC for funding the RLA's monitoring. Note the improvement in levels once it started raining.



Monthly *E.coli* readings for the River Lim. The purple dashed line shows the maximum level considered sufficient for bathing in inland waters: ≤900cfu/100ml. (Environment Agency Bathing Water Classification.)

APPENDIX D

Objective (RAG Rated) Red: Not Started/Behind Schedule Amber: Started/Action Needed Green: Complete/On schedule	**Budget**	**Lead officer**	**Target completion date**	**Updates/comments**
Follow up on EPC recommendations	5	MG	Ongoing	Assessments have been undertaken for all recently refurbished or reprovisioned council buildings, and all have achieved ratings better than the government's recommended target. Discussions are ongoing with the council's tenants regarding practical changes they can implement to further improve their EPC ratings, as part of the council's continuing commitment to energy efficiency.
2026-27				
Install garden signs	5	SO	March 2027	The Operations Supervisor is currently leading the project to introduce plant identification signage within the Langmoor and Lister Gardens. Officers are working with the council's principal signage design company to develop signage for a few notable and distinctive plant species throughout the gardens, such as Echium pininana (Giant Viper's Bugloss), a striking large plant that is highly valued by bees and other pollinators. The signage will provide visitors with information on each identified plant's origins, characteristics, horticultural significance and environmental benefits, helping to enhance visitor engagement, education and awareness of the gardens horticultural and biodiversity value as they move through the gardens.

Undertake tree planting schemes	5	SO	Ongoing	Officers are currently reviewing the feasibility and suitability of tree planting along the access road from Long Entry to Church Cliff. This review includes consideration of planting locations, species selection, ongoing maintenance requirements and associated costs before any proposals are brought forward.
To progress the 2030 carbon net zero plan		SO	Ongoing	Officers are due to undertake a review of the costs associated with the remaining actions within the plan. However, this was put on hold due to the significant senior management staffing changes within the organisation. It is intended that this work will be reviewed following the appointment of the new Finance Manager, after which a further update will be provided.
Electric tools	15	SO	May 2026	The council has purchased two new lawn mowers, five new hedge trimmers.

Biodiversity in the gardens	15	SO	March 2027	The Operations Supervisor has contacted Green Council Biodiversity Solutions, a specialist consultancy that undertakes biodiversity audits, biodiversity action plans and associated environmental projects for local councils. A site meeting is currently being arranged to discuss the council's requirements and explore options for undertaking a biodiversity assessment of the Langmoor and Lister Gardens and other appropriate council-managed open spaces. The company offers biodiversity audits, habitat enhancement proposals and biodiversity action planning services, which may assist the council in identifying future opportunities for biodiversity improvements and environmental projects. Further updates will be provided following the site meeting and subsequent review of available options.