

2017 UK River Prize Finalist

River Avon - Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset Catchment Project

The River Avon Restoration Programme (RARP) was set up to restore the River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to a naturally functioning river system to meet the government's obligations under the Water Framework and Habitats Directives

The implementation of RARP is an ambitious project as it aims to restore the River Avon to a naturally functioning river that supports characteristic chalk stream habitats and wildlife. The objective is to strategically deliver natural-process based schemes that restore reaches of river that have been most damaged by past physical modifications.

In many places the channel has been straightened or moved to the edge of the floodplain to work mills or water meadows and there are now some 150 weirs and sluices on the river. It has also more recently been dredged for land drainage resulting in an over-wide and deepened channel and has been embanked in places.

A range of restoration methods have been used to restore the rivers natural geomorphology and processes. These include the removal, modification and bypassing of structures; re-alignment of the river through the centre of the floodplain; re-meandering the channel within its existing plan-form and much more.

The completion of Phase 1 is not the end point but a springboard for the next phases of restoration using the knowledge, experience and goodwill built up over the past ten years. A further programme of work is needed on the remaining 185km of river to fully realise a more naturally functioning river catchment, able to respond and adapt to climate change.

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Case Study](#)



Project partners

- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
- Wessex Chalk Streams and Rivers Trust
- Wessex Water
- Wiltshire Fishery Association
- National Farmer Union
- Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

Photo:
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