

River Asker Project

As part of the River Asker Project volunteers were active in January and February on five occasions under the leadership of Ian Rees (Dorset AONB Countryside Officer) and Nick Gray (West Dorset Conservation Officer). We started at Uploders, North of the Chapel, where we created a more open space to allow in light and installed two mattresses in the river to provide habitats for aquatic animals and safe places for juvenile fish.



We then moved upstream to a tributary at the end of New Street Lane. Here we cleared more areas but then laid hazel branches into the water to create mini dams/drag to hold back flood water.



Lastly we had two sessions at Lodersland. More mini dams and clearance but an emphasis on spreading water out when it comes off fields to give it a chance to drop its sediment and improve water quality.



We are likely to have one more session on the Happy Valley tributary which meets the Asker at the Old Mill. Today I was informed that a small silver fish, (salmon or sea trout?) had tried to get up the mini-weir adjacent to New Street Lane and brown trout were often seen in the main weir pool. This, along with sightings of an otter last year, spraint at Wellplot and a kingfisher in January shows the river to be one worth saving and improving.

April sees the start of the river fly monitoring again. This gives a good indication of the water and habitat quality. There are currently three sites but more volunteers would be welcome to cover more along the river. There will also be an opportunity to get Himalayan Balsam under control later in the summer.