

PRESS RELEASE: River Avon Rights Charter to be publicly signed in Bath

Immediate release — August 2026

Public signing: Sunday 27 September, 11am–1pm
Parade Gardens, Bath
What3Words: ///sunk.fuel.firms

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A new chapter for the River Avon: public invited to sign Charter recognising the river's rights

Members of the public, councillors, River Guardians and organisations from across the Bristol Avon catchment will gather in Bath on **Sunday 27 September** for a public signing of the [Avon Bioregional Charter of River Rights](#) — a landmark declaration recognising the River Avon and its wider catchment as having inherent value and rights to flourish.

The event, at Parade Gardens from **11am–1pm**, will bring together people who live, work and care for the river, alongside representatives from local government, academia and environmental organisations.

The Charter has already been formally adopted by **five councils across the Avon bioregion**, with further councils considering adoption. The public signing is an opportunity for everyone — from elected representatives to individual river lovers — to add their name to a growing declaration of collective responsibility for the river from source to sea.

The Charter is a **declaratory instrument rather than a new source of enforceable law**. It does not replace the statutory responsibilities of bodies such as the Environment Agency, nor does it itself create new legal enforcement powers. Instead, it represents a shared statement of values and intent, and a call for a different approach to the protection and governance of rivers.



From polluted river to powerful river community

The Bristol Avon is one of the UK's most polluted rivers, but it is also home to one of the country's most active and engaged river communities.

Through **We Are Avon**, hundreds of 'River Guardians' are already taking action to care for and advocate for their local waterways. The Charter seeks to connect this grassroots movement with local government and

other institutions, creating a shared framework for putting the health and flourishing of the river at the heart of decision-making.

The Avon Charter follows growing momentum around the idea of river rights in the UK. In May, the River Wye became the first UK river to gain cross-council recognition through a Charter of River Rights.

The Bath signing is open to everyone. People are invited to come along, hear from speakers, meet others working for the river and sign the Charter themselves.

The Charter is being co-hosted by **We Are Avon, the University of the West of England and Bath & North East Somerset Council.**

Quotes

"I expect all councils — unitary, town and parish — to adopt this Charter from the source to the sea."

Andy Waite, Councillor and River Advocate, Bath & North East Somerset Council

"I married the river ceremonially three years ago and have been working non-stop to obtain rights for my river ever since. My aim is to shift cultural perspectives towards legal and moral recognition of rivers as subjects, not objects."

Meg Avon, River Representative for the UK River Rights Network and the UK's first 'river bride'

"We want the River to be recognised as a legal entity, deserving of rights, like any corporation or business can be. A public signing of this Charter shows the strength of community support for the river — and that people believe it deserves better care from the authorities."

Hamish Evans, Founder, We Are Avon

"It is true that the Charter alone will not stop pollution incidents, and it will not substitute for the enforcement powers that sit with the Environment Agency or for the investment decisions of water companies. But it will establish a new framework for thinking about rivers — not as resources, but as living entities whose flourishing is inseparable from our own."

Elena Blanco, Associate Professor of Law, Bristol Law School, UWE

The invitation

The Avon belongs to everyone — and everyone has a role in protecting it.

The public signing is an opportunity for residents, river lovers, community groups, councillors, businesses, campaigners and anyone who cares about the Avon to stand alongside one another and make a public commitment to our future.

Come and sign the Charter.

Sunday 27 September, 11am–1pm

Parade Gardens, Bath

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Further information and previous coverage

Bristol 24/7 — July 2026:

[Council formally recognises rights of the River Avon](#)

BBC News — July 2026:

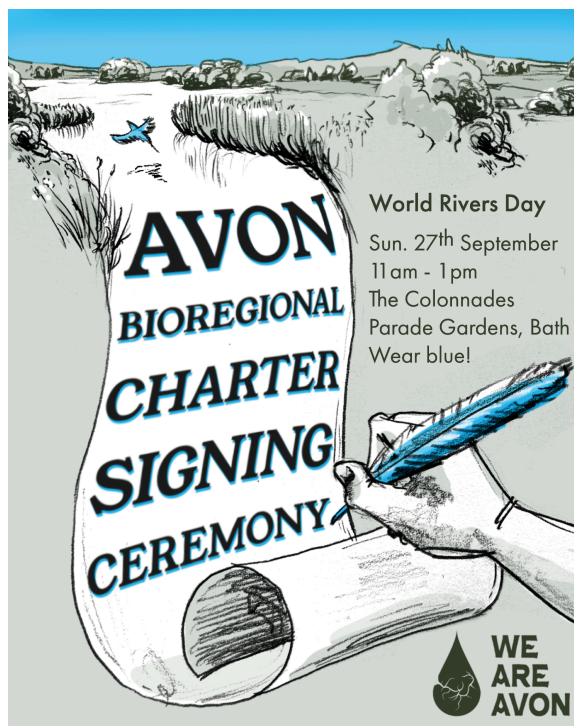
[‘Wife’ of River persuades councillors to protect it](#)

BBC News — May 2026:

[New charter gives River Wye the right to be free from pollution](#)

About We Are Avon:

We Are Avon is a bioregional movement bringing together communities, organisations and River Guardians to care for, celebrate and advocate for the Bristol Avon and the wider landscape through which it flows.



More info and Contact

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