



Press release – for immediate release

Local fishing club marks World Rivers Day with river restoration project

*At 11.00am on Sunday 28 September 2008, the **Wandle Piscators** fishing club will mark the international **World Rivers Day** festival - by starting work on a river restoration project in the Hackbridge area of the **River Wandle** in South London.*

The stretch of the Wandle alongside Restmor Way at Hackbridge once provided some of the best habitat for fish, birds and insects on the whole river. In recent years, however, it has become silty and over-shaded by a tunnel of trees, reducing biodiversity and its attractiveness to local people.

In partnership with the Environment Agency, Sutton Council and the Wild Trout Trust, as part of the new 5-year restoration plan for the whole river sponsored by Thames Water, the Wandle Trust and Wandle Piscators have now designed a habitat restoration plan for this stretch of the Wandle.

On Sunday 28 September, the first stage of this work will involve safely securing a naturally-fallen branch into the river as “large woody debris”, also known as a “flow deflector”.

Only the parts of the branch below the water will be fixed into position with wooden stakes and wire: most of the rest will be cut away, so debris won't catch on it when the river floods and create a flood risk.

Everyone is welcome to come and join local anglers from the Wandle Piscators as they start this project, which will also include gravel raking to remove silt and improve spawning habitat. During December 2007, native brown trout from the Wandle Trust's annual Trout in the Classroom programme were seen spawning in this area of the Wandle, probably for the first time in 100 years.

Theo Pike, Vice President of the Wandle Piscators and Chairman of the Wandle Trust, said:

“Large woody debris is important for healthy rivers because it breaks up the current and provides habitat for insects, birds and fish. It also focuses the flow of the water so that silt is scoured away to leave clean gravel for fish to spawn in, and helps the river to recreate natural meanders in artificially straightened stretches. That's exactly what this stretch of the Wandle needs!”

The Wandle Piscators already run monthly Riverfly sampling sessions to monitor the health of the river, and will now evaluate the effectiveness of this flow deflector with a view to collaborating with the Environment Agency on installing additional deflectors in coming months.

They are also proposing to “notch” one of the weirs below the bridge at Hackbridge itself, to recreate a deeper, faster-flowing stretch of river, and scour away some of the silt that has accumulated here in recent decades. This will benefit birds, insects and all species of fish.

Notes to Editors:

1. The Wandle Piscators fishing club is a mixed-method, ecologically-focused group of local anglers closely linked with the Wandle Trust charity, which runs regular community cleanups on the Wandle, on the second Sunday of every month, as well as the annual Trout in the Classroom educational project in local schools. This work is also a flagship partnership with the Wild Trout Trust's Trout in the Town initiative. For more information, please see www.wandlepiscators.net, www.wandletrust.org and www.wildtrout.org
2. World Rivers Day was launched in Canada in 2005 to encourage people worldwide to value and care for their local rivers. This year, World Rivers Day also celebrates the centenary of the birth of British-born conservationist Roderick Haig-Brown. For more information, see www.worldriversday.bcit.ca, www.riversday.bcit.ca and www.haigbrowninstitute.org
3. The River Wandle is a chalkstream that flows through South London to join the Thames at Wandsworth. In the nineteenth century, its water was so clear that local anglers invented dry fly fishing in order to catch its large, wary trout – a technique known as the “Carshalton Dodge”. In the 1960s and 1970s, the river became so polluted that it was officially classified as an open sewer. Since then, the Wandle has come back to life: it now holds trout as well as valuable populations of chub, barbel, roach, perch and dace.
4. For the location of this event, please follow this link:
[http://www.streetmap.co.uk/newmap.srf?
x=528278&y=165656&z=1&sv=528278,165656&st=4&ar=Y&mapp=newmap.srf&searchp=
=newsearch.srf](http://www.streetmap.co.uk/newmap.srf?x=528278&y=165656&z=1&sv=528278,165656&st=4&ar=Y&mapp=newmap.srf&searchp=newsearch.srf)

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