



## Essex RiverWatch

# NEWSLETTER 2024

Thank-you for our  
first half year!



Welcome to our first newsletter for the Essex RiverWatch! We would like to start off with a huge thank-you to our pioneering early volunteers. Those of you who joined in 2024 are the earliest adopters of what will become a large, county-wide project. This newsletter celebrates what we have achieved together and serves as a marker by which our progress in 2025 can be measured.



## Our Journey so far and the Future

At the start of 2024, the Essex RiverWatch was just completing its initial pilot stage with help from the Hadleigh Environmental Action Team. Development continued until our soft launch in July of 2024, volunteers signing up soon after.

2024 was a year of first, tentative steps and explorations. From building and launching the webpage to putting together the educational materials

and the logistics of delivering equipment, this has been a year of steady progress.

In 2025 we look forward to working in partnership with more organisations in and out of the Essex Rivers Hub (ERH) partnership, to recruit more RiverWatchers and to build up data that can be used to identify the chemical health of our rivers.

Thank-you again and we are thrilled to have all of you on board!



# ESSEX RIVERWATCH 2024 IN NUMBERS

As of the Start of December 2024  
we have achieved:

**32**

**Surveys**

And more added every  
week

**8**

**Recording Hours**

Over 1 working day's  
recording

**19**

**Surveyors**

This time last year  
there were 0

**13**

**Sites**

Each site averages  
around 1½ trained  
surveyors

**6**

**Waterbodies**

That's 9% of the  
main waterbodies in  
Combined Essex

**2**

**Groups**

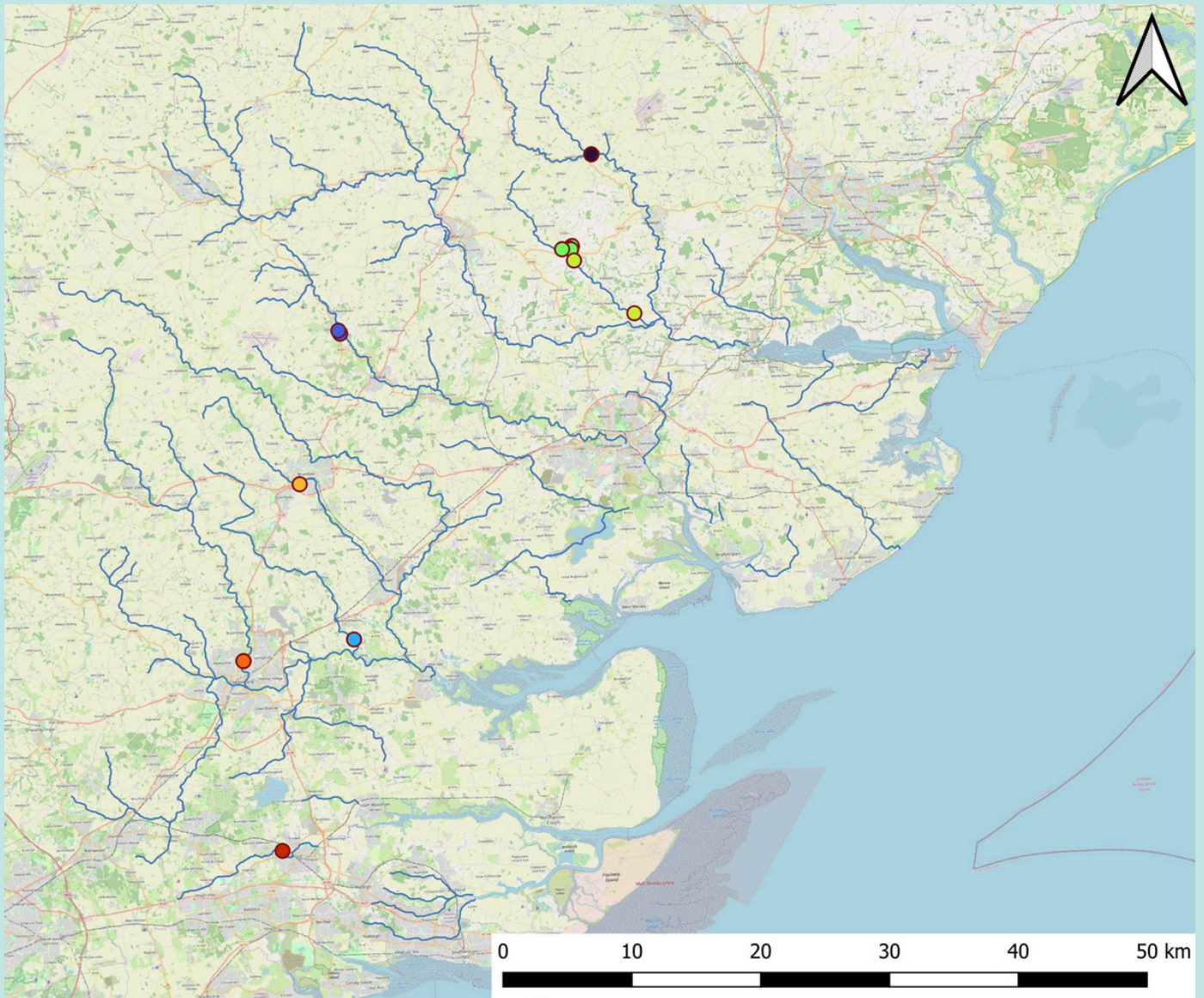
With more joining  
soon and plenty of  
independent surveyors

We can't wait to compare this to our 2025 figures!





# The Data You've Collected



The records made in 2024. The colour represents the person who recorded the data. This is a great start, but we know there is a lot more information to collect before we can make full use of the data. Remember to keep recording each month (circumstances permitting) to help build up a larger database.

## New RiverWatchers

We are keen to have new groups and independent RiverWatchers join the project in 2025. If you know of anyone you think would be interested who is based within the gaps on the map above, please do put them in touch with us, we'd love to hear from them! As of early December, we have 5 more independent watchers awaiting training and interest from over 5 new groups. We cannot wait to welcome even more surveyors.





# Your Experience



## We'd Love to Hear From You

2024 was a year of learning for us. We are proud of our achievements so far, but know there is always room for improvement. We're always interested in hearing feedback so feel free to drop us a line with any comments you have. During 2025 there will also be more formal feedback survey's sent out.



If you would like to write an article or short quote or send us photos and updates, we'd love to hear from you for inclusion in the next newsletter. You can email us at:

[RiverWatch@essexsuffolkrivertrust.org](mailto:RiverWatch@essexsuffolkrivertrust.org)

## Meet the Surveyors

**Name:** Luke Farnish  
**River:** Brett  
**Group:** N/A  
**Joined the RiverWatch:** 01/24



Luke Farnish is a project officer with the Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust. He joined the ESRT in January 2024 and soon volunteered to assist in the development of the Essex RiverWatch and has now taken over co-ordination of the project, being the point of contact for groups and independent surveyors.

His love of citizen science and science communication began at university where this topic became one of his specialisms. He is thrilled to be able to help people learn more about their local river.

Luke is lucky to have the river Brett at the end of his garden which he stands beside most days, looking for wildlife. He was once even visited by a playful otter after his garden had flooded.





# Interested in More?



## Other Volunteer Opportunities

We hope you are enjoying being a part of the Essex RiverWatch, but perhaps you want to do more? Here are other opportunities to check out:

- Keep your eye on the volunteer page on the Essex River Hub [website](#) for the latest opportunities across Essex from a range of organisations.
- Essex Wildlife Trust run a project called [River Champions](#), a group of like-minded people who want to get involved in work on their local rivers including tree planting, litter picks and citizen science.
- You may wish to get involved in the Riverfly citizen science project which, like the RiverWatch, uses the cartographer system to track species of riverflies. Find out more [here](#).
- For other types of river-based volunteering such as 'balsam bashing' you can [email the ESRT](#) to be added to our volunteer mail list.

## Reporting Environmental Incidents

The Essex RiverWatch is primarily about recording chemical and physical characteristics of rivers, which generally change slowly over time. However, while by a river, you may spot a more urgent and serious environmental incident. This could include gasping or dead fish, flooding, collapsed banks or any other serious change in the river environment. You can make a report via the Environment Agency's 24-hour hotline on:

**0800 80 70 60**