

Dartington  
Open House 02

# River Dart Charter at Dartington Workshop

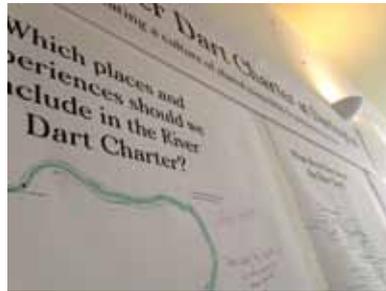
Land Use Review 2

2 Nov 2018, High Cross House

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Do we want the Dart to be drinkable,  
swimmable, fishable, paddle-able and  
to be there in all its beauty  
for future generations?

Harriet Bell from Dartington Hall Trust, Isabel Carlisle and Jane Brady  
from the Bioregional Learning Centre and Nick Paling from Westcountry Rivers Trust.



Thanks to everyone who participated.

# Creating a culture of shared stewardship by putting the river first.

The River Dart Charter at Dartington is about fresh water on the Dartington Hall Estate, as represented by the iconic stretch of the river that wraps around it.

This pilot project is a first step in trying out ways in which communities along the river could be involved in a joined-up plan of resilience for the River Dart. Underlying the project are two fundamental questions:

**Do we want the Dart to be drinkable, swimmable, fishable, paddle-able and to be there in all its beauty for future generations?**

**How do we identify as a community what are the most important factors to take into consideration when looking at future water management?**

The estate places many demands on the river, for example: agriculture, visitors, conservation and water abstraction. The river is also an area where the estate is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which is likely to increase the frequency of both droughts and flooding.

Although the Dart is in better shape than many of the UK's rivers, we know that salmon, eels and sea trout are vanishing year on year; swimmers are getting sick from being in the water; and more house-building means more water extraction. We also know that we probably have more microplastics, pollutants and toxins in the water than we are currently aware of.

The Dart Charter project is an open invitation; an opportunity for those with an interest in the river between Staverton and the Totnes Weir to:

- agree together a shared vision for the river,
- name significant experiences and places, and
- take shared responsibility for preserving those assets into the future.

At the workshop, the top assets proposed for inclusion in the charter were:

- the trees along the river bank
- healthy water
- the river as a wildlife corridor
- respectful access
- water as 'commons'
- sense of the river's own rights/agency

What do you think?

# The River Dart Charter, The Story So Far



**DRAFT**

## Water Charter for the River Dart Catchment

Water is a resource that we all share and benefit from. Although the banks and river bed are owned, the health of living water is entrusted to us all. The movement of water through its cycle of rain, rivers, seas and clouds is essential for the maintenance of life. Use the people who live, work and play here; name ourselves as stewards of the water in our catchment. We therefore uphold the rights of this river:

- To give life and enjoyment to all
- Not to be polluted
- To flow freely from source to sea
- To be part of a healthy eco-system
- To enable biodiversity to flourish

In this place (for example Dartmouth, Spitchwick, Buckholt, Stanniton, Dartington, Totnes) (Stoke Gabriel, Critchham, Kingwood, Dartmouth) we especially value and name as our assets:

[These are examples to inspire your thinking. Each community names its own assets]

- The Old Oaks and the stability of their roots that ensure firm banks
- The healthy salmon that provide a living to local people
- The pleasure of swimming in a natural, clean, peaceful place
- The harmonious relationship between all those who use the river
- The unpolluted water that we use for our drinking supply
- Our cultural and built heritage that has been shaped by water

If the wellbeing of water is infringed, or our assets harmed, or there is conflict around use of the water our River Council will be a place of resolution. [This may be the existing South Devon Catchments Partnership at which civil society would have a voice]

To report an incident in this stretch of the river from (eg the source of the East and West Dart Rivers to Dartmouth) the River Keepers can be contacted via Dartwatch? Phone nos. [What do you think a River Keeper might do?]

This Charter for the River Dart is supported by ..... How we can put the names of agencies and organisations of all kinds that would like to be named.

What should the Charter look like? How will people see it? How will it be used?



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# Thoughts About the River Dart



The geology and geography that created the Dart catchment.  
Detail of the South West from Wilson Bentley's 1851 geological map of England, Wales and Scotland. From an exhibition at Tower House.

An imagined Dart Valley 100,000 years ago.  
Source: Research Study Centre



Ancient industry: pre-Roman tin mining.  
Photo: Series of open-cast workings near the mouth of the Tor in South Devonian, UK. UCL



We are still seeing the effects of acid rain from long ago.

Garage jug from the 1950s.  
Dartmouth Museum



The Thoburns' butcher with a salmon caught in the Dart at Lody, Devon.  
© Dartmouth Museum



Cold, clear water up on Dartmoor. Visitor numbers continue to increase and with it the value of tourism. The Dart gets 800 starts on TripAdvisor and Google.



Abaco-Britann Harbour

Eight Ghazally 8 million tonnes of plastic enters the sea from land every year.



Chemicals, paint, weedkiller going down the drain...



Pioneers of the Brixton Show. Families have been farming here for generations.



Water we command: we expect it to flow from the tap.



These types of foam on the river, do you know the cause?

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All the water that will ever be is, right now.

— National Geographic, October 1993

# About this particular bend in the river

- Fishing hut
- Possible Folly Pool location, tbc
- Popular area with wildlife: Goosander, dippers, kingfisher, otters and Grey wagtail

- Knotweed problem on islands.
- Favourite swim spot for many

- Steep banks

- Floristically rich - orchids, ladies mantle

- When river low cows can walk across here

- Heritage features include Deer Park Wall and river groynes

- Low fields prone to flooding

- Dog poo

- Top swimming spot and Dynamic Adventures canoe launch location (other do use but aren't supposed to) - a lot of erosion.

- Otter sanctuary area. Lamprey found. Two black polar trees.

- Dog poo

- Pump house, flood levels from previous years marked on walls

- Erosion, muddy footpaths, improvements made using natural materials

- Knotweed

- Shady pools good for fishing

- Flushing Meadow - old sewage works turned into wildlife area

- Underpants found in hedge

- Flooding

- Walker took video of otter pup in shrubbery around here

- Popular hang out spot - party/rave/nudists, items found include whole picnic bench, old cans, BBQs and bag of cocaine. One cow dead.

- Path being extensively eroded underneath, limited life span

- Dog poo

- Otter crossing road seen by security

- Bat fly way

- Frogs and toads crossing roads to breed at risk from being squished

- Wet grassland, two black poplars, floristically rich, slow worms, grass snake, caddis fly, ponds suitable for water voles

- Dog poo

- Tributaries for River Dart important feeding areas for otter and kingfisher, also known to breed up tributaries

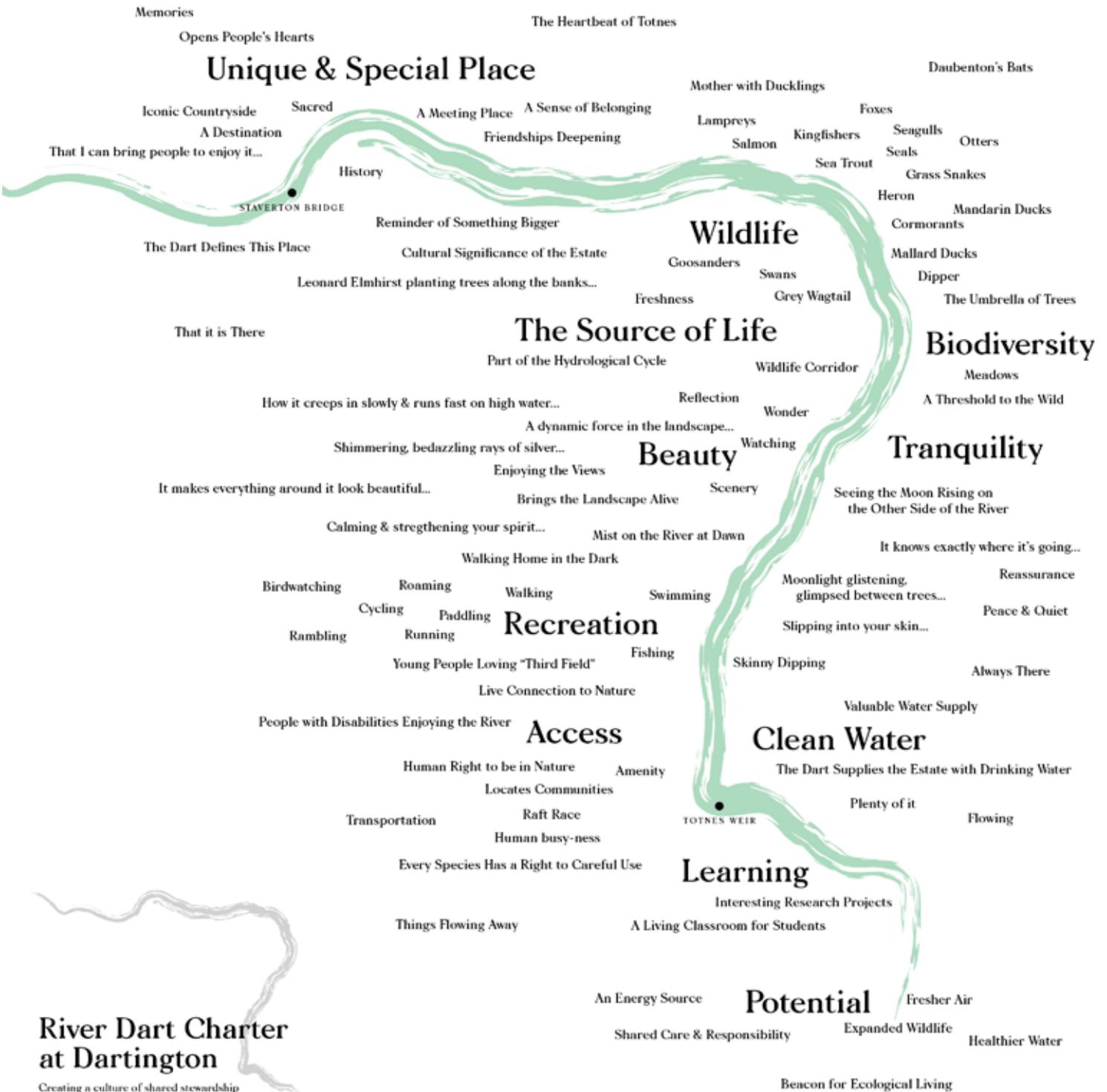
- Canoe launch point.
- Tree planting been taking place to reduce erosion but trees keep being pulled up

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# What do we love about the River Dart?



## River Dart Charter at Dartington

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# Which places and experiences should we include in the River Dart Charter?



“Trees along the banks”

“Health of water”

“Wildlife corridor”

“Places exclusively for wildlife”

“Respectful access”

“Water as commons”

“Sense of river’s own rights/agency”

“Canoe access retained”

“Natural benches for quiet reflection”

“Retain wild swimming opportunities (secluded) – fosters respect for, and connection with, waterways”

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# As a river steward what would I do?

**“Are we stewards, guardians, advocates  
or voices for the water?”**

“Engage community in keeping it clean  
(and education based on river water)”

“Prioritise the health of the river and wildlife”

“Respect areas dedicated to wildlife!”

“Beavers?”

“I think you should do water pollution exhibition” - Charlie

**“Be a citizen scientist”**

“I think you should do a fossil exhibition about dinosaurs” - Charlotte

**“Walk it and look at it regularly”**

“Education, education, education!”

**“Know more about its complexity”**

“Talk about the source, the watershed and the mouth”

**“Gather plastic as I go”**

“Understand how man depends on the river for water supply and as a means of disposing of waste”

**“Art exhibition”**

“Walking meditations, walking yoga rubbish  
clearing with mindfulness, with schools, people  
with mental health issues etc” - Steph

**“Clear Water Art Trail”**

“River Dart footpath running the entire length of the Dart?”

**“Join up with others”**

**“I work in nature, I'd like to collaborate”**

**“Create the charter & enact it with others”**

“This is not just swimming, it is taking in the atmosphere of the forest/meadow  
through all the senses – increasing appreciation of our place as part of nature,  
observation, peace and wellbeing”

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# Next Steps

Please let us know:

What do you love about the River Dart  
at Dartington?

Which places and experiences  
should we include in the  
River Dart Charter?

As a river steward, what would  
would you do?



Would you like to volunteer to join the working group which will be steering the project forward over the next six months and designing a series of public engagement activities from which the charter will be made?

You are also invited to put forward suggestions about managing water on the estate.

[www.dartington.org/rivercharter](http://www.dartington.org/rivercharter)

[www.bioregion.org.uk](http://www.bioregion.org.uk)