



## People

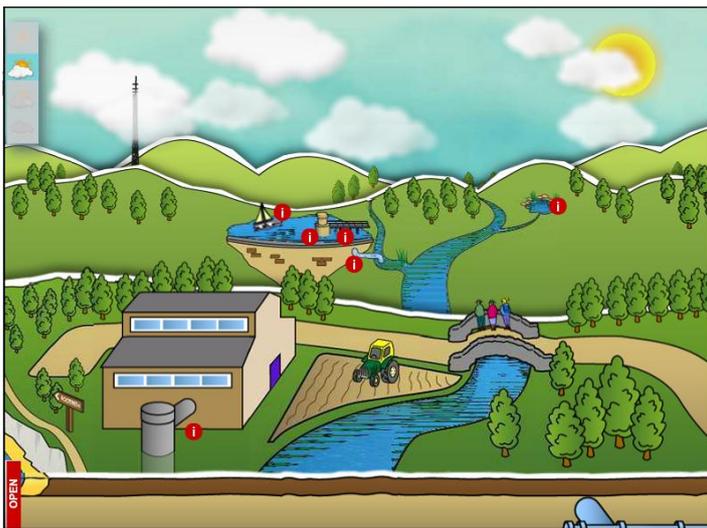
Humans have interacted with the water environment for thousands of years, being influenced by the river and influencing it in return. However the impact of the water environment on people and our lives extend below the physical into our health and well-being.

### The Water Cycle

Water is essential for people and our everyday lives however we often take for granted clean water and waste management. Consequently it is important to raise awareness of the water cycle so that people have a greater understanding and appreciation of how we can impact it, how it is managed and how we can protect and improve it.

The water cycle is the journey water takes from when it falls as rain on the ground until it evaporates back into the sky. This includes all the different routes water can take, such as; rain percolating through the soil into groundwater supplies or running off land into rivers, how our drinking water is produced and our waste water is treated to return to the water environment.

Please visit: <http://watercycle.wessexwater.co.uk/> to find out more and explore the interactive water cycle.

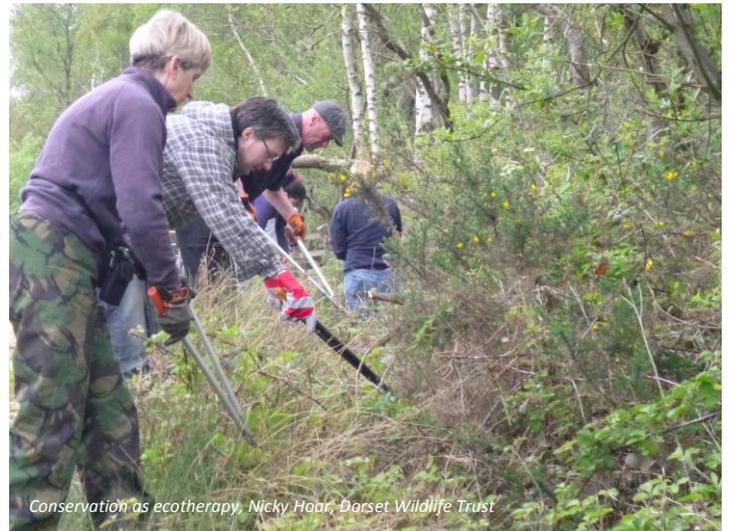


### Health and well-being

Encountering wildlife is very important for people's health and happiness. We put great value, both tangible and intangible, on the presence and use of open green spaces and access to the water environment. This can be seen in property prices for example, often elevated in areas close to green spaces and

water. There is also great interest not just in the quantity of green and blue spaces, such as ponds, rivers and streams, in our lives but also the quality of those areas, to ensure they provide environmental, social and economic benefits.

Urban green and blue spaces have the ability to contribute positively to some of the key issues in urban areas including social inclusion, health, sustainability and urban renewal. Peoples' engagement with the natural environment has been monitored by sample surveys ([www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results)). This has revealed the importance of outdoor visits in England; respondents to the survey consistently agreed that being outdoors made them feel 'calm and relaxed'. The survey found that the English adult population made approximately 2.93 billion visits to natural environments between March 2013 and February 2014 – the highest number for 5 years ([www.gov.uk/government/policies/access-to-the-countryside](http://www.gov.uk/government/policies/access-to-the-countryside)).



Not only is the natural environment important in our everyday lives, but there is strong evidence showing how engaging with the natural environment can have huge benefits on our health, both mentally and physically. This can be seen in the growing use and support of ecotherapy, or green exercise, as an alternative to traditional medicines and treatment by leading mental health charities such as Mind, local councils such Dorset County Council and GPs. Ecotherapy promote good mental and physical well being through outdoor activity in the natural environment such as gardening, food growing or environmental conservation and has been shown to be effective in treating mental illnesses as well as helping to rehabilitate and re-educate.