

# Holbeton News Climate Change & Environment

## Tip of The Month: No ifs or buts - water butts are what you need!

We will all remember last summer's drought with scorching hot weather, the dreaded hosepipe ban and watching our precious plants wilt and wither in the heat. A water butt will give you a welcome store of free water, while plants and pond dwellers actually prefer rainwater because it has a lower pH range than tap water so it's especially beneficial to acid loving plants.

Things are only set to get worse as climate change bites. Globally, last year was the hottest for 2,000 years according to the UN's climate body.

From an environmental perspective, reducing the amount of drinking water we use in our gardens also helps alleviate the pressure on local rivers, the aquatic creatures that live in them, and the host of birds and animals that depend on them. The last public water supply reservoirs in the South West were built in the 1980s before the private water companies were established. They have since found it more cost effective to take water from the rivers, endangering river dwellers and wildlife, rather than invest in the storage infrastructure necessary in a dangerously changing climate. Your water butt will also save the energy and chemicals needed to purify water making it safe to drink.



### Water Butt Tips

Widely available in DIY stores and on the web, water butts come in all shapes, sizes and prices, or you can make your own from old barrels. It hasn't been entirely unknown for local councils to provide them free of charge or at discounted costs.

You will need to place your butt on a strong, flat surface near a drainpipe so you get maximum runoff from the roof of your house, greenhouse, garage or shed. You'll probably also need a rain diverter kit which connects your butt to your gutter or downpipe. If you are thinking of joining a few butts together to increase storage capacity there are connector kits to do this too. Water butts generally have a tap at the bottom, so to get your watering can underneath you'll need to lift it off the ground – specially made stands are available or just build up your own with a few layers of brick.

Finally, to stop wildlife and debris falling in, and mosquitoes breeding in there, always keep a lid on the butt.

***So this year, when we get another torrential downpour, imagine how good it'll feel to know your water butt is filling up all ready for the hot, dry weather to come!***

Chris Bray

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## Roundup of (mostly) environmental good news

### Bathing Water designation for Coastguards Beach

Many congratulations to all those who put in such a sterling effort! Achieving Bathing Water designation means the Environment Agency will start weekly water quality testing during the bathing water season from May of this year, resulting in Coastguards Beach being awarded a water quality rating of Excellent, Good, Sufficient or Poor. Should the water quality fall below the accepted standard, the EA will then begin to take steps to identify and address any issues.

### [WATER Annual Meeting](#)

#### Wild About The Erme River

#### Annual Public Meeting

[Progress to date](#) · [New and Ongoing Projects](#) · [How to get involved](#)

June 18<sup>th</sup> 7-9.15pm

The Watermark – Ivybridge PL21 0SZ



To register, click on the link or go to:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/water-public-meeting-tickets-888228042987?aff=oddtcreator>

**Devon's first, new tree and woodland Strategy** has been adopted by the [Devon Local Nature Partnership](#) to enhance and protect trees and woodlands in the county.

The strategy which includes Plymouth and Torbay, sets out ambitions for our precious trees, hedges and woodlands from now until 2050.

It plans for the delivery of an additional 3,000 hectares of woodland and trees in Devon by 2030, to help achieve an increase in the county's tree cover from 14 per cent to 16.5 per cent by 2050, meeting the UK's national target.

Read the full story [on the news page of the website.](#)

**Rise of rewilding:** Rewilding in the UK has experienced a surge of growth in the last three years, according to new figures from [the charity Rewilding Britain](#). The charity launched the Rewilding Network, a network of rewilding practitioners, in 2021, with the aim of supporting the regeneration of at least 121,406 hectares of land, plus marine areas, within three years. The latest figures show it is ahead of target, with 155,248 hectares of land, plus 506km<sup>2</sup> of seabed, returning to nature. *Times Environment*

**Tree Planting in Scotland:** About 6,000 years ago, most of southern [Scotland](#) was covered by broadleaf woodland, interspersed with patches of rich scrub, heath and bog. In stark contrast, the landscape today is dominated by close-cropped, severely nature-depleted hills, punctuated by sharp-edged blocks of non-native spruce plantation. Now, thanks to the [Carrifran Wildwood](#), one of the UK's first community-led rewilding projects, patches of habitat resembling Scotland's primeval forest are staging a comeback.



Ben Martynoga said that on 1 January 2000, when he was then a local biology student, he broke the thin soil and planted the first 100 saplings. On the high ground, peatbogs are healing and rare arctic-montane scrub and heath are thriving. The whole place now echoes with birdsong, and golden eagles can often be seen wheeling above the crags.

*Down to Earth*

**Elm Trees:** An ancient elm tree that has stood alone in a remote location in the Highlands for hundreds of years has been joined by dozens of seedlings [as part of efforts to help save the species](#).

The wych elm — known as the Last Ent of Affric in homage to the tree-shepherds from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* — has been chosen to help in the fight against Dutch elm disease, a fungal infection that can wither and kill healthy trees. *The Times*

[Another project](#) to try and produce disease resistant field elms is having some success. In the last 10 years in Kent 2 amateur nature lovers, Fergus Poncia, together with the late David Herling, have been working to create a disease resistant elm hybrid. By 2018 they had 4 saplings that were disease free as well as having the traditional shape, and these are being multiplied by a number of growers. *The Guardian*

Nearer home there is a small avenue of 8 disease resistant elms at Filham Park, planted in 2021.

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**Renewable energy:** England could produce 13 times more renewable energy than it does now, while using less than 3% of its land, analysis has found. Onshore wind and solar projects could provide enough electricity to power all the households in England two and a half times over, the [research](#) by Exeter University, commissioned by Friends of the Earth (FoE), suggested. In response to “what about agriculture” – more land is taken up by golf courses than solar farms. *The Guardian*

### **Repurposing Brown Bins: Train the Trainer Course**



Sustainable South Hams are holding a [masterclass](#) in Ivybridge on Saturday the 8<sup>th</sup> June between 10am and 3pm. Join us to learn how to repurpose redundant brown bins into wormeries, rainwater butts and compost bins. You will leave the course with the knowledge and equipment necessary to convert brown bins in your own community.

Ideally they would like 2 or 3 people from each parish to support each other. It costs £5 a head. Booking is essential.

### **Lastly, news from the Verto Homes development**

Last month we expected Church Hill to be closed from the 29<sup>th</sup> April to install an electricity cable and creating the new path from Church Hill to the new road for the houses to be built.

Then we learnt that Church Hill was to be closed from the 13<sup>th</sup> May until the 31<sup>st</sup> May. That date has now passed & a new notice with “28/5-31/5” is in place: 4 days. The permission for road closure runs out on Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> June.

The intention is also to create the link with the mains water supply for the village for the new development and the allotments at the same time. Verto Homes also wish for at least part of the road to be opened for residents up Church Hill out of working hours.

Our next online meeting with representatives from Verto Homes and South West Water is on the 24<sup>th</sup> May, so too late for any clarification or update on the plans for road closure in June’s Holbeton News.

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