



Freshwater Watch

Wandle Park
Waddon Ponds
South Norwood CP
Norbury Brook

What is the Freshwater Watch?

A citizen science survey by Earthwatch - they hold the **Great UK WaterBlitz** twice a year in **Spring** and **Autumn**.

Volunteers take water samples from the river and use the tests provided to test nitrate and phosphate levels.

Anyone can take part, but Croydon Climate Action members took part in both surveys this year and share their results today.

'Our rivers are far from healthy. They're polluted with sewage, plastic, chemicals and nutrients, and just 15% of river stretches in England are in good overall health.'

To restore them, we need more information about how they're doing... which help[s] us influence policymakers and hold polluters to account.'

The Rivers Trust

<https://theriverstrust.org/take-action/the-big-river-watch>

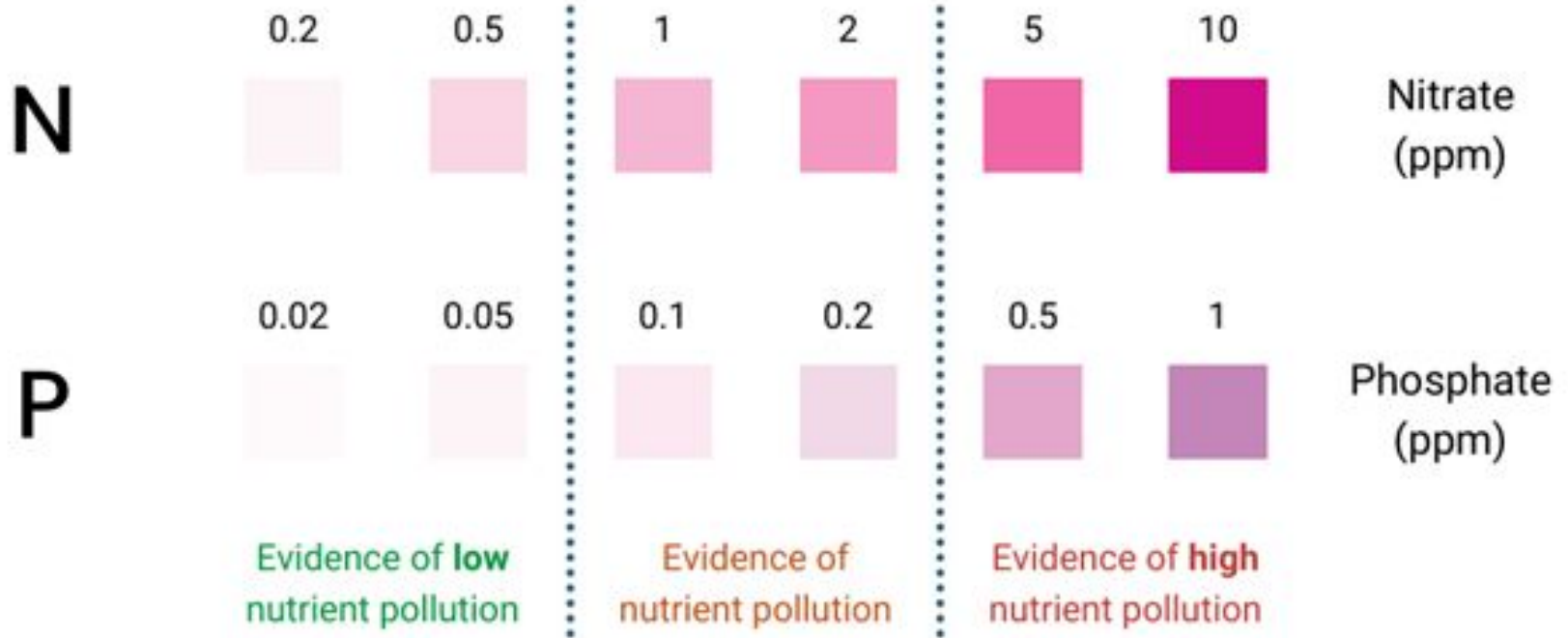


What are we testing for?

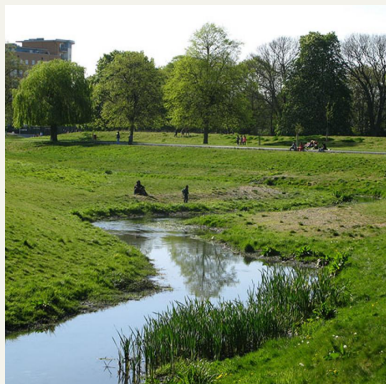
Nitrate and Phosphate levels!

What are they?	Why are they bad?	What could it mean?	What can we do?
They are nutrients. Nitrate: A naturally occurring form of nitrogen essential for plant growth. Phosphate: A salt from the element phosphorus, also vital for plant and animal life.	They may be essential nutrients for life but are also major pollutants, as high levels cause excessive algae and plant growth, leading to eutrophication in waterways. Their presence in HIGH levels can deplete oxygen, harming fish and other aquatic life.	Despite naturally occurring in nature, high levels indicate human activities like fertilizer use, agricultural runoff, wastewater, and detergents.	Take part in citizen science surveys like the Big River Watch Volunteer to help clean up our local waterways - South East Rivers Trust Campaign to hold polluters accountable - We Own It, River Action UK, CCA's River Action Croydon, Surfers Against Sewage, PAN-UK

Methodology



Where did we go?



Wandle Park

River Wandle



Waddon Ponds

River Wandle backwater ponds



South Norwood Country Park

Chaffinch Brook - residents reported sewage



Norbury Brook

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor.

Thoughts...

Are there seasonal considerations?

Yes.

Spring follows winter rains and no plant dieback. Autumn follows summer drought and abundance.

Rare Chalk Stream

The River Wandle, and presumably the brooks that surround it, are Chalk streams, a rare waterway of which there are only around 200 in the world.

Most of these rare rivers are in this part of the UK and are polluted.

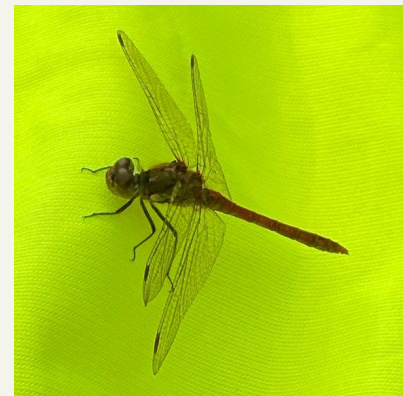
Upstream Wandle

The Croydon part of the Wandle is less affected by direct sewage and runoff than lower parts due to the Beddington Works downstream.

Croydon could be affected by upper pollution from Caterham Bourne and other local brooks.

Public interest

While out surveying in our hi-vis, we had several people stop and chat with us about what the river means to them and how disappointed they are in how poorly looked after it is by local authorities.

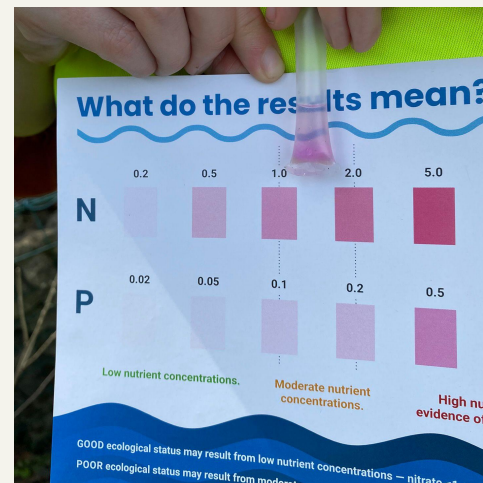
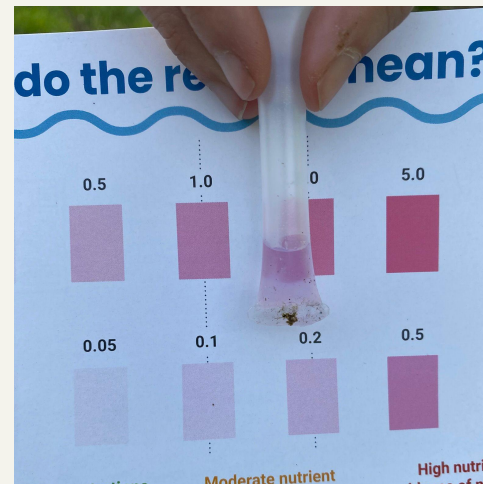


1: Wandle Park

April 2025:

Nitrate: 1.75 Phosphate: 0.2

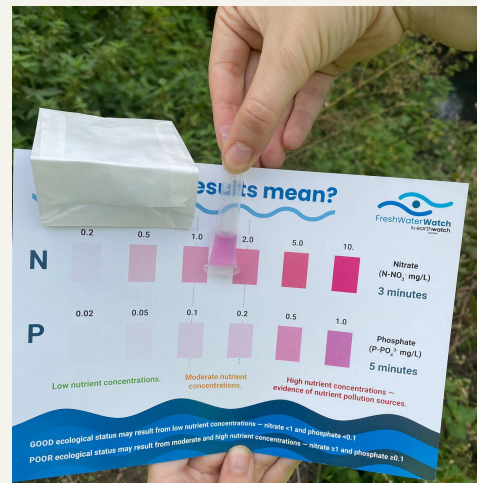
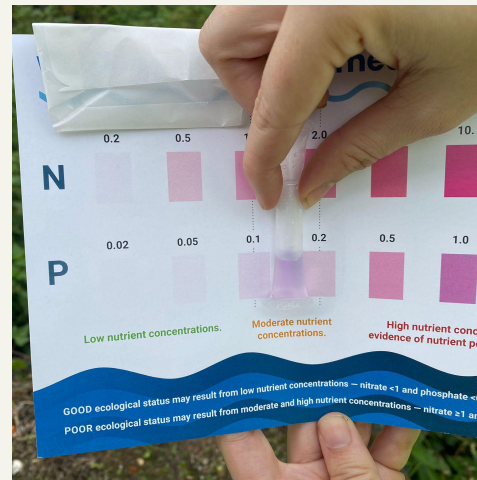
MODERATE



September 2025:

Nitrate: 1.75 Phosphate: 0.2-0.3

MODERATE

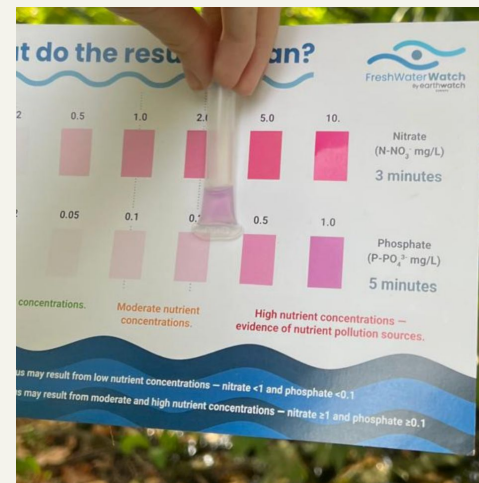
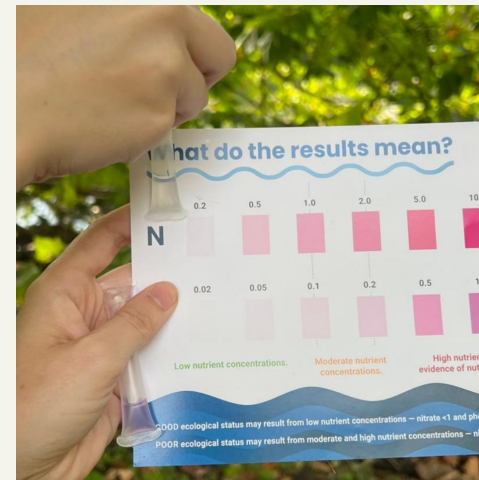


2: Waddon Ponds

September 2025:

Nitrate: 0-0.1 Phosphate: 0.2-0.3

LOW



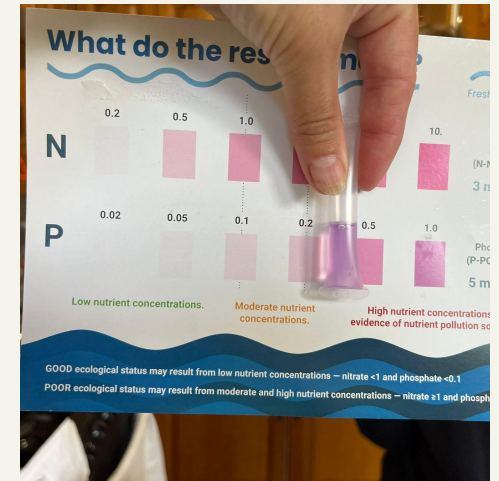
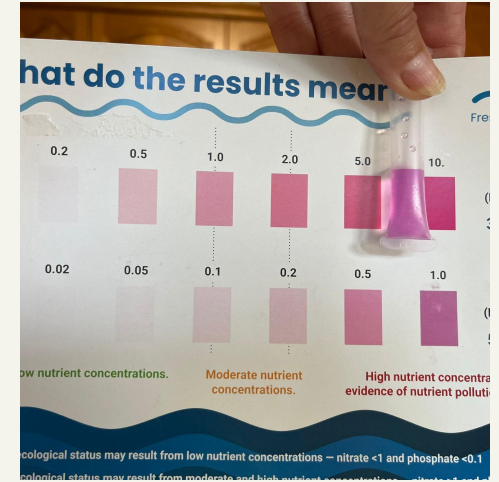
3:

Norbury Brook

September 2025:

Nitrate: 4-6 Phosphate: 0.4-0.5

HIGH



4:

Chaffinch Brook - SNCP

April 2025:

Nitrate: 7-10 Phosphate: >1

HIGH



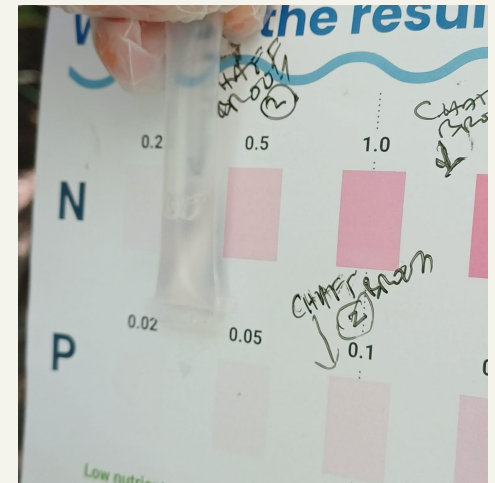
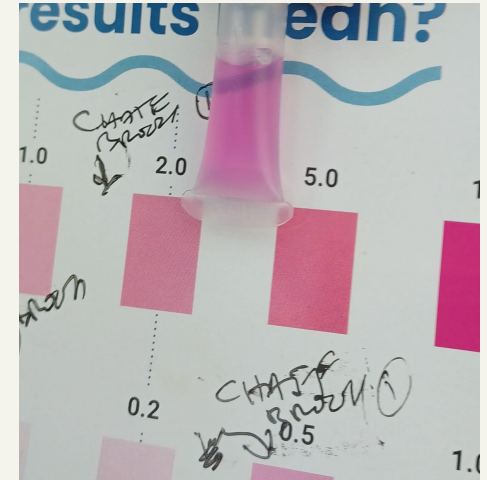
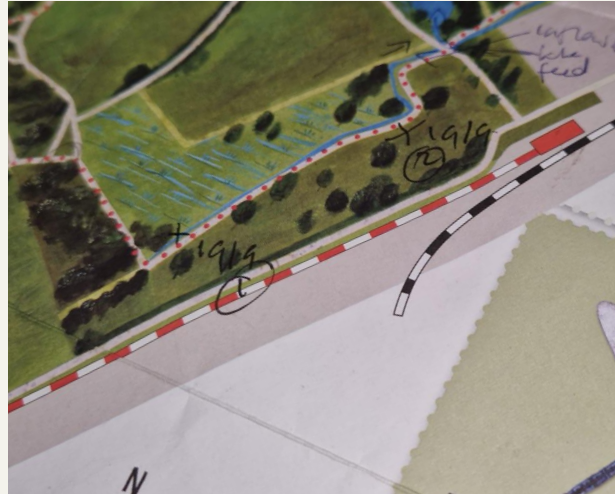
September 2025:

Nitrate: 2-5 Phosphate: 0.5

HIGH

Nitrate: 0.5 Phosphate: 0.1

LOW



What now?

Croydon River Action - a CCA campaign. We will continue monitoring our local waterways through the WaterBlitz and sharing our results with the community and local policymakers.

We spoke to lots of people in Croydon who love the green spaces and rivers here and feel that **local authorities aren't looking after them properly** - not holding polluters accountable but also not cleaning up the mess generally.

Join Great UK WaterBlitz in 2026 by signing up [here](#)

Friends of... Local friends of groups are doing the hard graft of cleaning up and maintaining our green spaces and waterways. All the parks we visited have local friends of groups and the lack of litter we saw in September is a testament to them!

