

# Press

## Media Advisory Template (for you to send out in advance of your event)

You can either open the Google doc, make a copy and then edit it from there, or copy the text template below.

### Press Release Template (Google doc)

Edit anything between the square brackets [---], and where possible include some personal quotes about why you're taking action. At the bottom of the Google doc and the text template, we've included examples of personal quotes.

### Copy below

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Meet the activists who will marry [insert name of water body] as part of Extinction Rebellion's Dirty Water Campaign

On [insert date], activists are gathering at [insert location] to [insert brief description of the action: e.g. ceremony, occupation...].

From the 24th August to 24th September, Extinction Rebellion's Dirty Water Campaign is launching the World Water Wedding with a range of actions intended for people to pledge their troth to protect rivers and water bodies across the country.

The campaign will build up into next year to a global day of action on World Water Day, 22nd March 2026, where people around the world will commit to safeguard water by 'marrying' their local water source in mass weddings and commit to its care for life.

[Insert 2-3 paragraphs describing the action or ceremony in more detail, with as much colour as possible.]

This campaign is inspired by writer and campaigner Meg Avon from Bristol, who married the River Avon and took its name in 2023 to raise awareness of the gruesome condition of the river [1], which, like most water bodies in the UK, is choked with sewage, chemicals, and other pollution, making it unsafe for swimmers, watersports, and wildlife [2].

England has some of the filthiest rivers in Europe [3]. Since Meg's wedding, the state of the UK's waterways has remained dire: an estimated 994,499 sewage discharges into rivers and other water

bodies occurred in 2024: almost one discharge every 30 seconds [4]. The amount of sewage entering the water has been increasing year after year [5], and rose 60% in 2024, reaching the point of crisis [6].

[Insert 1-2 paragraphs of facts about the local water body and its condition.]

Water companies are legally allowed to discharge untreated wastewater through sewer overflows during periods of heavy rain, but they have started to do so with alarming frequency [7] and not only when raining. A 2025 study found that England's major water and sewage companies have been misleading the public and Government by using duplicitous greenwashing and disinformation strategies which mirror those of the tobacco and fossil fuel industries [8].

Thousands of people fall sick in the UK each year after swimming, watersports, or other contact with polluted water [9]. The broken water system has also resulted in contaminated drinking water [10]. Moreover, polluted and ecologically barren water bodies are a significant cause of the biodiversity crisis, failing to provide a healthy habitat for invertebrates, fish, birds, and mammals [11].

The water weddings symbolise peoples' love for and lifelong commitment to protect their local water bodies, and they can be seen as part of the wider movement of campaigning for the rights of nature and shifting the dial towards a more equal partnership with our ecosystems.

The River Ouse made history this year as the first river in the UK to be granted legal rights as a living entity with an intrinsic right to exist [12], and last year co-founder of Lawyers for Nature, Paul Powlesland, became the first juror to swear an oath on a vial of river water in court, declaring the river to be sacred [13].

[Insert name of activist taking part], said "[insert quote here.]" [Insert name of activist taking part], said "[insert quote here.]"

Notes to editors

[1] 'I married the River Avon - it has changed my life'  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgq22y97n58o>

[2] Water pollution: facts & figures - Surfers Against Sewage  
<https://www.sas.org.uk/water-quality/water-quality-facts-and-figures/>

[3] England has some of the filthiest rivers in Europe - and these maps prove it  
<https://inews.co.uk/news/england-filthiest-rivers-europe-maps-3514835>

[4] Water pollution: facts & figures - Surfers Against Sewage  
<https://www.sas.org.uk/water-quality/water-quality-facts-and-figures/>

[5] Environment Agency storm overflow spill data for 2024 - GOV.UK  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/environment-agency-storm-overflow-spill-data-for-2024>

[6] Serious water pollution in England up 60%, government says

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cg5zl75dmm0o>

[7] Water pollution: facts & figures - Surfers Against Sewage

<https://www.sas.org.uk/water-quality/water-quality-facts-and-figures/>

[8] Water industry using deception tactics to deflect blame for sewage pollution

<https://www.manchester.ac.uk/about/news/water-industry-using-deception-tactics/>

[9] Water pollution: facts & figures - Surfers Against Sewage

<https://www.sas.org.uk/water-quality/water-quality-facts-and-figures/>

[10] Should we be worried about our drinking water? | Science, Climate & Tech News | Sky News

<https://news.sky.com/story/should-we-be-worried-about-our-drinking-water-13270874>

[11] New study finds that sewage release is worse for rivers than agriculture | University of Oxford

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2023-09-22-new-study-finds-sewage-release-worse-rivers-agriculture#:~:text=These%20new%20findings%20come%20at,protected%20habitats%20are%20threatened?>

[12] England's River Ouse makes history as first to gain legal rights - Oceanographic

<https://oceanographicmagazine.com/news/englands-river-ouse-makes-history-as-first-to-gain-legal-rights/>

[13] Environmentalist becomes first juror to swear oath on river water | Rivers | The Guardian  
About Extinction Rebellion

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/aug/02/environmentalist-becomes-first-juror-to-swear-oath-on-river-water>

Extinction Rebellion (XR) is a decentralised, international and politically non-partisan movement using nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience to persuade governments to act justly on the Climate and Ecological Emergency.

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What Emergency? | Read about the true scale of the climate crisis

<https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/the-emergency/>

Why Citizens' Assemblies? | Breaking the political deadlock

<https://extinctionrebellion.uk/decide-together/citizens-assembly/>

XR UK Local Groups | View a map of all local groups

<https://extinctionrebellion.uk/act-now/local-groups/>

XR UK website | Find out more about XR UK

<https://extinctionrebellion.uk/>

XR Global website | Discover what's going on in XR around the globe

<https://rebellion.global/>

Time has almost entirely run out to address the climate and ecological crisis which is upon us, including the sixth mass species extinction, global pollution, and increasingly rapid climate change. If urgent and radical action isn't taken, we're heading towards 4°C warming, leading to societal collapse and mass loss of life. The younger generation, racially marginalised communities and the Global South are on the frontline. No one will escape the devastating impacts.

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## Examples of personal quotes

**Meg Avon, who married the River Avon in 2023**, said, "As the UK's first known river bride, I am so excited to no longer be alone in my role of unconventional wedding bliss! Having a wedding and becoming married to water is such a beautiful way of stepping forward as a guardian - it can be as public or personal as you want it to be. I believe that every ceremony is a story, and many ceremonies of similar intention have the power to change the law. We are becoming kin with our landscape and natural entities once again and the timing has never been more perfect."

**Denise Ashurst, from Cwmcarn in the Welsh Valleys, 61 years old and unemployed**, said "I am regularly charmed by rain and dew, whenever walking with my dog in local woods. My face brushing dew from leaves, or listening to rain drumming my body as I walk below the trees make me feel open-hearted and full of love, so I'm committing to learning more about what makes this relationship work."

**Ned Evans, a 60 year old teacher from Holmfirth**, said "I have the most beautiful reservoirs near me in West Yorkshire which serve as vital water sources and are important for overwintering bird populations, including the protected red kite species. The reservoir levels are at a historic low for August, standing at 42.2% capacity, significantly below the usual range of 65% to 80% for this time of year, due to a prolonged drought and the driest spring and summer on record. As far as I know, this recent lack of rainfall is due to the climate emergency and increasing temperatures disrupting weather patterns, which likely means the levels will get lower each year and that leads to higher concentrations of impurities as the volume of water decreases. Water for me means life and I find it heartbreaking to see how much our pollution is damaging water and wildlife so I've decided to join the World Water Wedding campaign and commit to protect water. I'm going to hold a quiet personal ceremony by the edge of my nearest local reservoir, Winscar, on the 24th August and then send out my wedding invites to everyone I know to get dressed up and join me on World Water Day, Sunday 22nd March 2026, for a fun and joyous celebration of water.

**Steve Conlon, 70, a retired IT Manager from Twickenham**, said "I have lived in a boat on the tidal Thames for nearly thirty years now and I love it, but discovering sewage pollution locally was very distressing. Becoming aware of the real scale of what was happening was heart-breaking. I have learned that critical water issues, from conservation, ecology, pollution, flooding and drought as well as corrupt utilities and ideology-fixated politicians, are interlinked. We need to pay attention

to all of them together. This interdependence was addressed by Mark Lloyd, the chief executive of the Rivers Trust, who was quoted in the Guardian [14] this week about our current water shortages, 'We need to build more resilience into our rivers and their catchment areas with nature-based solutions at scale, such as healthy soils that allow water to filter into the ground and not rush off taking the soil with it; riverside tree planting to provide shade and further slow the flow of water; wetlands to store and slowly release water, and rewiggling streams to raise the water table and purify pollutants.' If we attend properly to water throughout our environment, that is a true collective act of love, and an affirmation of life."

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