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Geography Southwest Newsbites September 2025



Welcome to the September 2025 Newsbites! This is the first newsletter of the new academic year and features new topical resources, news stories and forthcoming CPD courses and events.

The 2026 South West Geography Conference will be on **Monday 22 June** at the University of West of England (UWE), Bristol. 100 delegates attended the 2025 conference and planning is already underway for 2026. The provisional programme will be announced later this term.

In October, we are launching a “where in the world” competition in our monthly Newsbites, sponsored by Discover

Ltd. There will be a prize of a travel book for the first correct entry. The competition will only be open to those who have signed up to receive the e-newsletter by email. Please encourage friends and colleagues to sign up so they do not miss the chance to enter. **https://www.geographysouthwest.co.uk/newsletter-signup/**

Do read our guest blogs! The latest is on rewilding, innovative approaches to fieldwork and outdoor education in Devon by Adrian Ferraro of Bioasis. **https://www.geographysouthwest.co.uk/guest-blog/rewilding-business-education-and-the-next-generation/**

We have a new set of downloadable GCSE resources focusing on the coastal management. **https://www.geographysouthwest.co.uk/secondary/gcse-articles/coastal-management-pevensey-and-eastbourne/** Read more in Geography Resources.

Looking for an exciting geography walk on Exmoor? Do look at Paul Berry's new Places to Walk featuring Lynmouth and the catastrophic 1952 flash flood, accompanied by his wonderful sketch maps. **https://www.geographysouthwest.co.uk/visit-sw/places-to-walk/lynmouth-1952-flood-walk/**



Geography in the News



Summer 2025 ends with downpours, localised flash floods and depleted reservoirs.

As the long hot summer with four heat waves drew to a close, the South West experienced dramatic weather events, with the arrival of several low-pressure systems bringing wind and rain. Despite the rainfall, the parched ground in many areas prevented effective infiltration, resulting in flash flooding in

parts of Plymouth and other places. Reservoirs have been depleted by the prolonged dry spell, with Chew Valley at 39% capacity, Blagdon Lake at 38%, Wimbleball Lake at 39% full, and Clatworthy Reservoir at just 37% capacity. Additionally, rockfalls and local landslides have been reported, which may be linked to the wet weather following the long dry spell. Meanwhile local apple orchards are enjoying a bumper harvest, and companies making cider have increased production.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cd72eenz252o

Warmer seas around the West Country attract new species.
The seas around the South West have recently experienced notable environmental changes, making headlines in both regional and national news.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c62nk284j5po.amp
A marine heat wave has warmed the seas around the West Country by up to three degrees over the past two to three years, resulting in increased energy input during the day and less cooling at night. This warming has significantly impacted local marine ecosystems, with changes observed throughout the food chain. Reports this year highlighted an abundance of octopus, alongside larger numbers of jellyfish, and increased sightings of Tuna and Blue Sharks along the coast. Research by Plymouth Marine Laboratory provided evidence for these findings. **https://pml.ac.uk/news/update-from-the-lab-marine-heatwaves-continue-to-escalate-in-uk-waters/**

Isle of Wight rockfall mitigation work begins
In March, a significant rockfall occurred on Belgrave Road in Ventnor, resulting in the road being blocked by rocks and debris. This incident highlighted the ongoing geological challenges faced by the area. Ventnor is particularly susceptible to rockfalls due to its geology, where chalk layers lie above clays. The steep slopes in this region further complicate efforts to manage and mitigate these risks. Measures are now underway to address the aftermath of the

rockfall. Once the debris has been removed from the site, a mesh of rock netting will be installed along the affected slopes. This netting is designed to reduce the risk of further rockfalls and provide added safety for the community and road users.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/czxnjdx8lqko
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cly1jn132qpo

Waterways at risk in the Southern England
The Water in the Park report, from the South Downs National Park reviewed water quality in all bodies of water across Hampshire, Sussex and Surrey and found only 10% were in "good" ecological status under UK regulation. It also found that water quality had declined overall from 2014 to 2022. The report covered the river catchment partnerships of the Test and Itchen, East Hampshire, Wey Landscape, Arun and Western Streams, Adur and Ouse, and the Cuckmere and Pevensey. Southern Water is addressing some of the issues by upgrading wastewater treatment works to boost capacity and remove 35% more nitrogen from the environment.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c864321n155o

Exeter plan for riverside area wins Royal Town Planning Institute award.
Exeter City Council won a RTPI award for its Liveable Water Lane Supplementary Planning Document. The 150-page booklet provides a vision for a sustainable urban development on brownfield sites for the 21st Century. It shows good practice from other regenerated areas in the UK and elsewhere with relevant images, and indicates how 2000 new homes, sustainable travel, community facilities and new employment can be developed while keeping the landscape elements of the riverside area. The document could form the basis for an A level case study on sustainable urban development, a possible fieldwork visit as the majority of the planned development is accessible on foot, and also provide topics for NEAs.
https://exeter.gov.uk/media/4nylmkn3/liveable-water-lane-spd-web.pdf



New geography resources



Teaching a case study on river floods? The Environment Agency have published an update on the **enhanced Exeter flood warning system.** The Exeter Flood Defence scheme protects for more than 3,000 homes and businesses with 14 flood gates, barriers and associated infrastructure. Further details on the Exeter Flood Scheme and a video can be found **here**.

Looking for a topical case study on coastal management? Simon Ross has worked with Laura Stronge (Senior Advisor, Pevensey Bay to Eastbourne Coastal Management Scheme) at the Environment Agency to create a brand-new set of downloadable GCSE resources focusing on the coastal management. The resources comprise a PowerPoint presentation, student worksheet, OS map activities, GIS activities and Teacher Notes. A student resource pack for A level will be available soon. **https://www.geographysouthwest.co.uk/secondary/gcse-articles/coastal-management-pevensey-and-eastbourne/**

Introducing the ideas of nature-based solutions in your GCSE and A level lessons? The **Environment Agency position statement** published in July 2025 provides a useful summary with examples of nature-based solutions such as restoring peatlands and saltmarsh, installing leaky woody dams, creating vegetated walls in cities and planting woodland. Case studies include combatting peat erosion in Derbyshire, increasing flood resilience in Oxfordshire and the Mayfield Park inner city development in Manchester which includes **"daylighting" the River Medlock**. Useful links are provided to other sites.

Massolit lectures on Geography
Does your school have a **subscription** to the Massolit lectures? These short lectures aimed at A level geographers are provided by leading academics and cover key topics such as Oceans and Climate, Global Governance, Natural Hazard Management and Changing Places.
https://massolit.io/courses/changing-places

Teaching about nature-friendly farming?
UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology report on **Nature-friendly farming** shows how it can boost biodiversity and increase yields but may require new subsidies. The report summarises

research on 17 farms, looking at enhanced ecological farming systems (agroecology) such as planting wildflower field margins to provide habitat for beneficial insects and sowing overwinter cover crops to capture carbon and retain nutrients in the soil. Image -wildflower field or strip.



Forthcoming events for geography teachers

Discover the Magic of Morocco: https://www.discover-the-world.com/study-trips/destinations/morocco/
Discover the World have launched their new fieldwork destination of Morocco based at Marrakech.
Whether you are exploring urban development in ancient Marrakech, the iron-oxide-rich canyons of the High Atlas Mountains, or the semi-arid agricultural plains, students will be fully absorbed into the country's distinctive geography.
Geography trips to Morocco also offer a wonderful opportunity to engage with local communities and people from different backgrounds, helping shape students' future perspectives,

inspiring them to appreciate cultural diversity and make global connections. More details and itineraries can be found on their website.

Royal Geographical Society (RGS) events: https://www.rgs.org/events
Wednesday 1 October, 5 pm to 6pm, London-in person: **Inequality: the next crisis and children** – Danny Dorling lecture for School Members**.**
Thursday 2 October, 5 pm to 6 pm, Online, Free: **Supporting geography candidates for interviews and Oxbridge.**
Tuesday 14 October, 2 pm to 4.30 pm, London, in person, Free. The RGS is continuing with its free **Digimap courses**, with support and classroom ideas.
The RGS also has a collection of recorded lectures available to watch **here.**

Geographical Association (GA) events:
Thursday 16 October, Tuesday 25 November and Thursday 17 December, 4 pm to 5.20 pm, online: **Quality secondary geography for non-specialists**. This course consists of three sessions aimed at developing a better understand what it means to teach geography effectively using enquiry, fieldwork, maps and GIS. Sessions will be available live online with discussions and also recorded for viewing later.

Save the dates!
Slapton Ley FSC research seminar day: Saturday 15 November.10 am to 4 pm. Free. This annual Research Seminar at Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve, Devon includes talks from researchers, academics and volunteers and a 'marketplace of ideas' about wider projects taking place in South Devon.

South West Coastal Monitoring annual meeting, Teignmouth, Devon. Wednesday 19 November. More details to follow in October.

Look out for our next Newsletter in October 2025.
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