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Geography Southwest Newsbites March 2026



Welcome to the March 2026 Newsbites. The **2026 Geography Southwest Conference** opens for booking on 1st April. The **free** Geography Conference on **Monday 22 June** at the University of West of England (UWE), Bristol. We are using a larger venue this year due to demand, but please secure your place early as it may become fully booked. The programme is **here**.

This year also sees the launch of the Geography South East conference at Royal Holloway, Egham. Bookings open in April and further details will be posted in the next newsbites.

Do read out latest **guest blog on the Isle of Arran** and its fieldwork potential by Bethan Beddow. (Image courtesy of Rayburn tours)



Geography in the News



King Charles III Coast Path opens

King Charles has inaugurated a new footpath stretching around the entire coast of England. At 2,689 miles long, it is the longest managed coastal walking route in the world, according to Natural England, the government body which created it.

To complete the route, more than 1,000 miles of new paths have been created, and many other sections upgraded, including a 22-mile section between Portsmouth and Hayling

Island along the scenic south coast in Hampshire including a 400 metre board walk across salt marshes rich in wildlife.
In South West England the coast path is already a major attraction to visitors and contributes significantly to the local economy. However, one stretch in south Devon is particularly challenging. At the River Erme, there is no bridge or ferry, and the land further upstream is privately owned and inaccessible. Walkers must therefore roll up their trousers and wade across the river within an hour either side of low tide.
Recent weeks have shown how dynamic the route can be. A large section of path on the cliffs at **Stonebarrow near Charmouth** was lost in early February 2026 after heavy winter rains caused a landslip. However the local management team quickly arranged a 15-metre rollback with the landowner, and within weeks the path was open again.

Leonardo UK selected for £1 billion contract for new medium helicopters to support defence operations around the globe alongside **uncrewed aircraft pioneered by Leonardo.** The deal makes Yeovil the global centre for Leonardo's military helicopter production and exports, and sets up the UK as a leader for uncrewed and autonomous systems, a key frontier technology in the government's Defence Industrial Strategy. International orders for Leonardo's military helicopters built in Yeovil could see over £15 billion in exports over the next 10 years. The deal provides work for over 2500 people in the Yeovil area and is a significant boost to the local economy.

New £1 million sea defence scheme for Minehead

The Environment Agency has announced plans to extend coastal flood defences at Minehead seafront this spring, bringing greater protection to the town's 355 properties and businesses. The project, worth just under £1 million, will extend existing rock armour put in place in 2023 to the east of the town, near Butlins and Minehead Golf Course. More than 5,000 tonnes of rock armour will be used to strengthen defences across 100 metres of a vulnerable shingle ridge at

the Warren. Materials will be transported by road, requiring approximately 250 lorry movements during the construction period.

Significant coastal damage in recent storms
Beach chalets and their decking have partially collapsed at **Branscombe** in East Devon following winter storms which undermined the base of the cliff causing landslides. The route of the South West Coast path was also damaged and has had to be diverted.

A major report Coastal report ***Erosion of trust: the impact of coastal erosion on communities*** was published by the Government on 20 March 2026 looking at the future of coastal communities. The 30 page report looks at on-going concerns about coasts under threat and makes recommendations about policy and future shoreline management plans.

On the North Devon Coast at **Westward Ho!** A local businessman is building his own 57 metre section of concrete sea wall to protect his amusement arcade, bar, restaurant and car park from coastal erosion and flooding from high seas.



New geography resources

New resources for teaching depositional coastal landforms at Key Stage 3

A set of teaching resources and case studies has just been added to the Geography Southwest website, structured around 4 lessons with supporting PowerPoints and worksheets.
Lesson 1: Students begin by exploring the formation and importance of sand dunes.
Lesson 2: They will investigate changing beach environments at Par Sands.
Lesson 3: Focuses on Gwithian Towans, where students explore how physical processes and human activity.
Lesson 4: Uses a case study at Penhale to develop critical thinking and decision-making skills

Written by Simon Ross in collaboration with the Making Space for Sands project, these resources are the first of three sets, with GCSE and A level to follow later in 2026

Teachng about China?

Do look at the latest **StoryMap resource** aimed at Key Stage 3 and exploring China's history, landscapes, development, and environmental challenges.

Looking for topical articles to enrich your teaching from KS3 to A level? Check out the RGS *Geography in the News*. Recent additions include an in depth study of the **multi-hazard event Storm Goretti**, and **Building new communities in England** looking at the new towns that are currently being created.

Teaching about coastal management or visiting Dorset for fieldwork this Easter?

Dorset Coast Forum have a detailed summary of **storm damage to the Dorset coast** during the winter of 2025/6

including images and videos. It features West Bay, Weymouth, Charmouth, Studland and Swanage.

Looking at work experience for your students? Check out the RGS new innovative **virtual work experience platform** complete with quizzes and interactive activities. Students who finish the programme gain a certificate to boost their CV and show future employers.

Teaching weather hazards? A press release from the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology looks at new ways to **predict thunderstorms** which can be a major hazard affecting people and property and causing flash floods and soil erosion.



Forthcoming events for geography teachers

Fancy a weekend geography retreat in rural coastal Devon? An opportunity just to step away for the weekend and get immersed in the woods, wildflower meadows and salt marshes of The Bioasis, from 15 - 17 May 2026. Price: £240 pp, Max group size 24.

Check out Discover the World's new **Morocco itineraries for GCSE Geography** and related subjects.

Geographical Association (GA) events:
Teaching A level geography: encouraging synoptic knowledge. This online course starts on Tuesday 5 May and continues until June.

Teaching KS3 geography: sequencing high-quality concepts. This online course starts on Friday 8 May and continues into June. It aims to support teachers in teaching common geographical themes and topics at key stage 3.

Starting teaching with fieldwork confidence. These GA courses from the GA and Field Studies Council aimed at teachers who have recently joined the profession will take place at various locations in 2026. The next is in Greenwich Park on Wednesday 20 May.

Details of **RGS events** including CPD and Lectures can be found on their website.

Look out for our April Newsletter to be published at the start of the summer term.
If you have not already signed up to receive this newsletter direct to you by email, please click on the **Sign-Up box** and complete the short form below.

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John Davidson 31/3/26
Co-Director and Newsbites editor, Geography Southwest

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Geography Southwest
Snows Cottage, Wrangway, Wellington, TA21 9QG
john@geographysouthwest.co.uk

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