



E-NEWSLETTER

No 3, WINTER 2024

Claire's Roundup as of January 2024

There has been so much going on, it's hard to know where to start, but here seems a good spot!

Together with the water-testing crew, we have cultivated a great contact in Simon Browning from the Rivers Trust (Simon is one of the authors of the brilliant Rivers Trust 'state of the rivers' report -- <https://theriverstrust.org/key-issues/state-of-our-rivers> -- culminating in a meeting with him just before Christmas. Simon confirmed that the privatised water companies are the biggest polluter of Britain's rivers, directly causing 53% of this massive problem. Contrary to what Severn Trent say, they do have a worse impact than farming. Shockingly, the treated effluent is far more significant in damaging rivers than the sewage outfalls. Much of this is phosphate pollution from sewage. Simon made my year by saying that he has been perusing citizen-science data via the Anglers Trust database and had noticed a peak in Shrewsbury – that's us, guys! It was so exciting to hear that what we are doing is being noticed by people who can use our information (along with other citizen-scientists' data) to the good. This data is now accruing and includes Up Sewage Creek data. WOW! This is such a long way already from the situation when we attended the Shropshire Wildlife Trust's water-testing day back in July 2022.

There has been (and still is) so much going on nationally that I can't keep up. Few could have missed what's happening with Thames Water, whose debt has become so unsustainable that they may well be back in public ownership soon! STW is similarly very heavily burdened with debt.

There is a lot going on legally too. Leigh Day have just announced legal claims in the Competition Appeal Tribunal against Northumbrian Water, United Utilities, Anglian Water and Yorkshire Water, having made a similar claim to STW in August last year. There are legal challenges to water companies in Windemere and Manchester and probably others – watch this space.

Meanwhile, the water companies have submitted their five-year plans for Ofwat to approve, and I'm sure they will. I have had a brief look at STW's version, which proposes that they spend £12.9 billion between 2025 and 2030. This sounds like a lot, but who is going to pay? Us! They need Ofwat to approve a 40% hike in our bills to cover their expenses. Our bill has gone up by nearly £100 in the last 12 months already (although, of course, we're only paying 52% of it!).

Dr Becky Maltby and the Ilkley Bathing Waters folk have scrutinised Yorkshire Water's five-year plan. Amongst other things, they have suggested customers of other water companies ascertain:

- How much of the planned 'investment' is through loans? This will come with attendant interest serviced by the increase in users' bills rather than investing in the system.
- How much of the five-year plan is 'base' and how much is 'enhancement'? If it's classified as enhancement then the customer pays, if as base then the company pays. 'Base' is basic compliance with the law, and we shouldn't have to pay as we have already paid. However, the company hasn't complied but rather paid the money to their shareholders. In Ilkley, Yorkshire Water classified 'base' work that the company has to do as 'enhancement -- meaning the customer pays twice.

I'm sure there are many other holes we can pick in STW's five-year plan. Check it out! <https://www.severntrent.com/content/dam/stw-plc/investors-02/business-plan-2025-2030/investor-presentation.pdf> .

It has taken me a long time to tease apart what is going on in the rivers and who is responsible. Although the water companies are the biggest polluters of our waterways, the buck stops with Government. It is an election year and this is a big election issue. Our Green parliamentary candidate, Julian Dean, is very powerful on this issue. So too is our Labour Party parliamentary candidate, Julia Buckley. Alex Wagner of the Liberal Democrats is also an enthusiastic ally. All of them and their representatives turn up regularly at Up Sewage Creek events with one notable exception – our MP, Daniel K. Lets keep up the pressure!

World Rivers Day 2023: We celebrated World Rivers Day on 24 September by ceremonially declaring the rights of the River Severn. This took the form of a parade from Benbow Quay to the Quarry, where we held a rally. There were performances by the Severn Sisters (*pictured*) and a subset of Roxane's Choir; then we danced a serpentine farandole and set an intent to work towards bestowing legal rights on our river.



Subsequent to this event, Sara Mai attended a 'rights of the river' conference in Lewes, East Sussex. Lewes Council and other interested parties are engaged in bringing legal rights to the River Ouse. Sara came back super-excited and full of energy, and has written an account of the conference for this newsletter: [The three keys to a healthy river are the adoption of.docx](#) . If anyone would like to join us in taking this forward, please get in touch.

Pig Trough: The problem (regular incidences of raw sewage on a footpath and park in central Shrewsbury) has been going on for years. STW know about it, the EA know about it, and our MP knows about it, and nothing has been done. Meanwhile, raw sewage is still turning up with alarming regularity.



January 2024

However, I gleaned through attendees of the Clean Rivers Working Group that STW have plans to spend money on sorting it out. This money is to be taken from a buffer fund they have and in advance of their 2025 five-year spending plan. Apparently, SWT are looking at putting a storage tank under Coton Hill, which should deal with the problem. This progress has to be a direct result of Up Sewage Creek, my friends. Take a pat on the back!

As an aside, the Clean Rivers Working Group was set up after the Town Council open meeting in March 2023 and is comprised of town councillors, river user groups, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Bathing Waters and STW representatives. It meets every quarter. We hadn't been invited to attend so I asked Labour Councillor Rosemary Darnell, who chairs the group, and I will be attending the next meeting on 24th January.

Opportunities for getting more involved – Up Sewage Creek is recruiting!

Taking forward the rights of the river. If anyone would like to join us on this, please get in touch.

Shropshire Council's commitments to the Nature Recovery Strategy from the Environment Act. Details here: <https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/environment/ecology-and-biodiversity/shropshire-and-telford-wrekin-local-nature-recovery-strategy/>.

Write to Suzanne.Wykes@shropshire.gov.uk to see what the Council are actually doing on this: [SuzanneLetter.docx](#) . See: [C:\Users\agreg\OneDrive\Desktop\Ecology and Biodiversity Team within Shropshire Council.docx](#) .

Attend Town and full Council meetings.

Poometer. We need volunteer poometer operatives!

Join a team to scrutinise STW's 5-year plan.

Volunteer to keep abreast on what's going on nationally, and write a focus piece on this for each Newsletter...

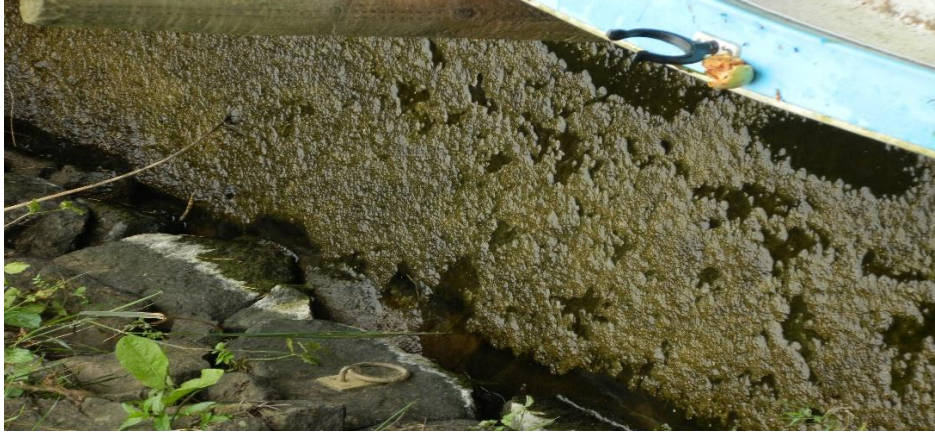
Claire Kirby



Water Quality Update

Warren Hastings made three detailed explorations of water quality along the Severn between August and September 2023. Here are his reports:

<C:\Users\agreg\OneDrive\Desktop\Fourth Summary of investigation of Severn tributaries on 16th August.docx> ; <C:\Users\agreg\OneDrive\Desktop\Fifth Summary of investigation of Severn tributaries on 15th September.docx> ; <C:\Users\agreg\OneDrive\Desktop\Summary No 6.docx> .



Duckweed die-off on the River Perry at Ruyton XI-Towns



3 Applications for Bathing Water Designation Submitted

A great team of volunteers has worked together across Ludlow, Shrewsbury and Ironbridge to enlist the support of local businesses, the Council and the public, and we were finally able to submit applications for Bathing Water Designation to DEFRA at the end of October 2023. All of the cases are strong as we feel we have met all of the criteria, but DEFRA are now looking in great detail into the applications and seeking clarification about the sites and the extent of support that we've been able to gather. A decision on whether DEFRA will take any or all of the applications forward will be given in April 2024. Meanwhile, volunteers are still testing the water quality and working with Severn Rivers Trust, and swimmers continue litter-picking to keep their swim spots clean.

Fingers crossed for April.

Alison Biddulph



Next meeting: To be announced!

And a date for your diary:

****Shropshire Rivers Hub Conference, 12th March 2024****

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