



E-NEWSLETTER

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No 2's News as of September 2023



The Pig Trough, July 2023

In the hot dry weather in July, the river looked awful. It had a greasy film on top. I'd been wondering what was going on; then the rain came and the river looked better. But was she? It's like when there is enough rain the river looks like it can take it, but in the dry weather, given the combination of sewage load, farming runoff, road runoff, over-abstraction and all the other threats, the river becomes toxic. On the bright side, a neighbour saw an otter just the other day on the launch slope opposite Daniel Kawczynski's place on Coton Hill.

When it has rained, the outfalls have been out-falling. There were excrement and 'rags' (as the industry call them) on the Pig Trough three times in the last month or so. Meanwhile an ill-maintained sewer in Coton Hill collapsed and there was sewage running down the hill. Closely followed by traffic chaos as the road was closed; the whole town was disrupted.

Up Sewage Creek meeting on 18 May

The meeting was attended by 20+ people including Green, Lib Dem and Labour representatives. Whilst river pollution is a massive election issue, I don't think they were electioneering; rather, they care! We talked about the Universal Declaration of the Rivers and whether we wanted to align ourselves to get Up Sewage Creek more in the national

picture; see <https://wildfish.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Public-Declaration-for-Rivers-and-Seas-160223.pdf> When emailed after the meeting, everyone who responded was in favour. Jane Asterley Berry has been talking to the Ilkley bathing-waters folk who spearheaded this initiative. Watch this space for updates!

We also talked about taking water companies back into public ownership. This was more controversial than I thought it would be, mainly amongst those aligned to political parties.

We decided to pursue the idea of celebrating World Rivers Day on 24 September. We now have permission to use the Quarry. You, your family and friends are invited to celebrate the Severn: The Amazon of Britain! At 10.30 am we'll assemble for 11.00 am Riverside Celebration Parade; dressing up is encouraged. The parade will start at Benbow Quay, SY1 2D, and will go to the Quarry. We hope to be joined by a flotilla of swimmers, paddlers and rowers. Between 12.00 noon and 1.00 pm celebrations in the Quarry will include music, dancing, speeches, information points and a ritual; bring a flower to cast into the river as an offering. At 3.00 pm the film 'The Invisible Hand', a Rights of Nature Documentary, will be shown at The Hive, 5 Belmont, Shrewsbury SY1 1TE; £5.00 **cash** on the door.

One of the ideas that came out of the May meeting was to write to Severn Trent to ask about investment plans for Shrewsbury. I duly wrote to Liv Garfield and got a load of the usual guff and untruths back. However, she promised that they would answer our questions. These mostly related to what their investment plan is for Shrewsbury (after the 'apology' from Water UK and the announcement of large sums for investment), as well as asking for data from their monitoring of the CSO's and what's going on with the Pig Trough. Despite promising to supply the information within 10 days, we have still heard nothing and it's now more like 10 weeks! The plan is to keep up the pressure until the election.

Claire Kirby



USC recently labelled some of the 28 combined sewage outfalls through Shrewsbury. Many were quickly taken down, but a few remain. Enjoy them while you can!



Water Quality Update as of 1 September 2023

Over the summer, **Warren Hastings** made three detailed explorations of water quality along the Severn. Here are his reports:

<https://d.docs.live.net/ed9e16d6d2f76080/Desktop/Summary%20of%20investigation%20of%20Severn%20tributaries%20on%2017%20July.docx>

<https://d.docs.live.net/ed9e16d6d2f76080/Desktop/Second%20Summary%20of%20investigation%20of%20Severn%20tributaries%20on%201st%20August.docx>

<https://d.docs.live.net/ed9e16d6d2f76080/Desktop/Third%20Summary%20of%20investigation%20of%20Severn%20tributaries%20on%2016th%20August.docx>



'It's not just water under the bridge... There's a lot more in it': The upper Rea Brook as it goes under a bridge at Hinton



National Trends and News

1. Thames Water nearly collapses

Sarah Bentley, Thames Water's CEO for less than three years, recently resigned. One of the reasons is TW's crushing £14.3bn debt burden at a time when interest rates are high and ageing infrastructure needs upgrading. OFWAT recommends maintaining a ratio of debt to capital value of 60%. So how could TW's 80% gearing have happened? Why wasn't OFWAT involved earlier? Is OFWAT fit for purpose? For a short-term turn-around, TW shareholders need to raise £1bn but so far have raised only £750m. Discussions are ongoing, with the Government considering taking TW into temporary public ownership.

2. 12 July: Commons Combined Select Committee scrutinises the near collapse of TW

Evidence from: TW Joint Interim CEO's & Chair; OFWAT CEO & Chair; Rebecca Pow, DEFRA Minister for Environmental Quality & Resilience. Committee members Darren Jones (Labour Chair of Business and Trade Select Committee) and Barry Gardiner (Labour) were persistent

and detailed in their questioning. They challenged dissembling responses and laid bare the role of Cathryn Ross (currently Joint Interim CEO of TW) and her record as CEO of OFWAT (2013-17) when OFWAT allowed the water industry to borrow heavily. Ross refused to apologise for her record at OFWAT and warned that TW bills would rise.

3. Revolving doors

The *Observer's* analysis of 1.7.23 found that 27 former OFWAT directors, managers and consultants now work in the industry they regulated, many in senior positions. For example, Severn Trent hired 11 senior OFWAT workers, while nine moved from STW to OFWAT.

4. Ashley Smith of Windrush Against Sewage Pollution's latest blog, 'Corruption Control or turning a blind eye?', investigates conflicts of interest between England's water companies, OFWAT and the Environment Agency

Former Detective Superintendent and founder of WASP Ash Smith has discovered that the EA allowed its staff to have shares and even directorships in water companies and to develop associated businesses! (See [Home | windrushwasp](#): Corruption Control pts 1-4) His investigation helps to explain how the under-regulation of water companies has led to anomalies such as eyewatering CEO bonuses; billions borrowed for shareholder dividends rather than infrastructure improvement; the TW collapse; five other companies under scrutiny; and fragile water resilience in some areas and, of course, pollution.

5. For a running press log on latest sewage pollution see [West England Bylines – Powerful Citizen Journalism](#)

Jane Asterley Berry



Applying for Bathing Water Designation across Shropshire Is Going Well

Shropshire Bathing Waters are a group of swimmers applying for Bathing Water Status in the Severn in Shrewsbury and Ironbridge, and the Teme in Ludlow. We are supported in Shrewsbury by Shropshire Council's Clean River Working Group led by Cllr Rosemary Dartnall, and also by the Shropshire County Council River Water Quality Task & Finish Group, which is very positive.

DEFRA has published more specific criteria for the application, which is very helpful in focussing attention in the right areas, and in Shrewsbury progress is good:

- Monitoring of river users is on track to report the necessary numbers of swimmers as defined by DEFRA
- The consultation phase will start soon and be open for 6 weeks to allow us to report local stakeholders' response to the application
- Shrewsbury Town Council are helping to engage relevant landowners, which will enable us to finalise the specific locations of the Bathing Water sites

Shropshire Bathing Waters have engaged existing River Ranger volunteers to collect samples for laboratory testing of water quality funded by Surfers Against Sewage in Shrewsbury. This supplements the chemical testing that the Anglers have been doing regularly along the River

Severn for over a year. Collecting samples in Ironbridge and Ludlow is being done by volunteers from the swimming communities, and in Ludlow is funded by the Rivers Trust. We are almost at the point of having statistically significant data which will be comparable to what the Environment Agency will do if we get Bathing Water Status. It's not a required part of the application but has helped with engagement. Bathing Season ends on 30 September, and our applications will go in by 31 October for a decision in April 2024.

Alison Biddulph



Next meeting: To be announced!



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