

National Picture: Public Concerns:

- Continuing concerns / worry / anger about UK clean and waste water systems
- Failure to provide good quality water in rivers, for leisure and for ecological diversity
- Focus on Water Companies (WCs)
 - excessive illegal storm water overflows. 'exceptional'
 - excessive pay, bonuses, borrowing
 - Sheer volume of human sewage (treated and untreated) dumped in rivers
 - Illness among those wild swimming.
- Lack of Awareness of impacts of agriculture, urban pollution
- Unresponsiveness, lack of meaningful communication with the public about WQ and what is being done /planned and what can we do
- lack of trust in government and organizations
- lack of perceived investment in improvements, timely progress

Background:

Environmental Audit Committee report (2021) 'WQ in rivers'. 378 paragraphs and 82 expert recommendations. Some elements taken into law.

- Major contributors to poor water quality are **agriculture, sewage and urban pollution**, but the percentage of each will vary from place to place (mostly unknown, not agreed, not coherently acted upon)
- Increasing concern about pollutants not monitored or mitigated by STWs. E.g. E.coli(!), pharmaceuticals, 'forever chemicals', microplastics

WCs failure to monitor/ maintain / replace /develop sewerage systems in line with population, requirements

Government and agencies OFWAT, DEFRA, OEP, EA, Regional and Local Authorities – Overcomplex, strategic level, ineffective implementation, lack of local collaboration

Environment Agency (EA)

- Inadequate monitoring of WQ, reactive not proactive.
- focus on collecting evidence for eventual prosecution (and prosecution is 'within house'?)
- Permits legally rigid, rely on cooperation of WCs
- Impact on agricultural practices uncertain (ELMS, countryside stewardship..)

Nidd Action Group

Focus on the locations identified by NAG in 2023 as high in E.coli, phosphates etc.	Work with stakeholders for detailed understanding of habitat, biology and chemistry impacts	e.g. Bilton Beck survey April 2024 proposed surveys including the use of microbial source tracking to determine sewage source (human, animal)
Gain better understanding of drainage and sewerage networks linked to 'hotspots'	Work with YW, EA and others to establish likely sources and mitigations	Requires access to YW technical personnel and network maps and modelling
Monitor the implementation of YW 2025-230 plans, and its effectiveness on river and human health	Citizen science surveys and collaborate with a variety of stakeholders	
Monitor the status of local areas of the Nidd Catchment	Citizen scientists to identify and report issues and their resolution	e.g. SAS / NAG survey July 28 – August 3 rd of Lido bathing water. Includes pharmaceuticals and identifying sewage source
Engage citizens in the beauty and amenities of the Nidd		Collaborative project YDRT, NAG, WTT on Harrogate Becks Hello Lampost project Longlands Common projects
Campaign and influence stakeholders to improve the riparian environment of the Nidd and its tributaries		

How Can You Help?

Support nationally and regionally keeping the focus on, and commitment to Healthy Rivers

Review and support the Changes proposed by Angling Trust and Surfers against Sewage (attached)

Engage with local and regional projects to enhance the Nidd and the amenities it offers

Work with Parliamentary colleagues in local constituencies on shared environmental issues

Influence and support the actions needed to deliver regional environmental change in stakeholders such as YW, EA, North Yorkshire Council, National Landscapes etc.

Facilitate increased collaboration of stakeholders with citizen science groups and environmental organizations

Keep environmental issues in your constituency a priority, and continue to engage with the local groups active in supporting improvements.

Proposals for Change to Improve our Rivers

Angling Trust Blog by Martin Salter : <https://fightingforfishing.anglingtrust.net/2024/06/20/its-the-water-stupid-the-big-challenge-for-any-new-government/>

- Recognize that there is no such thing as cheap water
- Tackle the investment backlog
- Abolish OFWAT
- Accept that Underfunding leads to Failure and Underperformance
- End the Casino Economy in the water industry
- Give the Environment Agency the power and the resources to do its job
- Treat water as national infrastructure priority
- New legislation to reduce abstraction and improve water security.
- Re-use wastewater
- Overhaul the Environmental Permitting Regime
- Worry more about major system failure
- Embrace citizen science and involve stakeholders in the management of rivers

Surfers Against Sewage: End-Sewage-Pollution_Priorities-for-a-New-Government-V1.pdf (sas.org.uk)

- Ensure that regulators enforce legislation, preventing illegal discharges occurring outside of exceptional circumstances.
- Ensure regulators are sufficiently resourced to carry out the monitoring, enforcement and prosecution that will ensure full legal compliance and dramatic environmental improvement.
- End bonuses and dividends for water companies who break the law and deliver consistently poor environmental performance.
- Prioritise action to protect the health of the thousands of people who use the water for physical and mental health benefits.
- Safeguard and restore our most precious and sensitive natural environments including Sites of Special Scientific interest.
- Mainstream and prioritise the use of innovative and effective nature-based solutions, to help tackle the causes of sewage pollution and deliver co-benefits for biodiversity and climate mitigation and adaptation.
- Provide the public with consistent and easily understandable information to protect water users' health.
- Create transparency across the system to ensure water companies can be held to account.

Immediate

David Clayden, Nidd Action Group Chair, 4 August 2024