

## Nidd Action Group Committee Annual Report 2023

### Summary:

A very busy first year for the Nidd Action Group (NAG)

Initiated in 2021 by a group of Nidd Flyfishers, public concern about Storm Water Overflows from Sewage Treatment Works resulted in NAG's formation. NAG's timeline for 2023 is as follows

### Timeline:

*From the initial meeting in August 2022, the meeting forming NAG took place in Knaresborough on October 3rd 2022.*

March 14 <sup>th</sup>	A major public conversation event about the Nidd, in Knaresborough
April 15 <sup>th</sup>	An outline plan of work presented.
May 14 <sup>th</sup>	NAG took part in the Nidderdale Charity Walk
June 6 <sup>th</sup>	NAG took part in the Knaresborough Great Bed Race
June 19th 2023	a NAG constitution agreed and a NAG committee formally appointed
	Chair: David Clayden; Treasurer: Mandy Evans; Secretary: James Mckay; committee members: Stephen Culpin and Megan Godden
July 10 <sup>th</sup>	iNidd sampling training event held next to the Nidd at Conyngnam Hall
August 3 <sup>rd</sup>	First iNidd sampling day
September 3 <sup>rd</sup>	NAG takes part in Knaresborough Riverside Community Event at The Lido
October 17 <sup>th</sup>	Second iNidd sampling day
November 1 <sup>st</sup>	Bathing Water Designation Bid submitted to DEFRA
December 5 <sup>th</sup>	Second Public Conversation at Knaresborough, and NAG AGM

### Aims of the Group:

NAG aims to make the river Nidd **safe for humans** and to ensure **a diverse ecology** for all wildlife along the river.

A major concern is the **pollution of the river Nidd by sewage**. We wish to **improve the water quality categorisation** of the Nidd, and **the standards required for all rivers**

### Activities:

During 2023: NAG worked to:

- get The Lido at Knaresborough designated as a safe bathing water to benefit swimmers and other river users and to gain additional resources to be applied locally to establish and ensure safe bathing. This involved Stephen Culpin on behalf of Andrew Jones MP organizing material about The Lido as an historic and current swimming location on the Nidd, and volunteers particularly from the wild swimming community collecting evidence for the Bid
- raise the ecological standard of the River Nidd's Upper and Middle & Lower Catchments from its current Water Framework Directive (WFD) Environmental Quality Standards (EQS) 'Moderate' through sampling for polluting elements.

Some 30 citizen scientists were trained according to a protocol created by the Ilkley Clean River Group (ICRG), and they took water samples from the length of the Nidd and its tributaries on two separate occasions.

### Results: Human Health

- **E. coli concentrations** found were consistently **worse than the 'sufficient' standard** especially in the middle and lower catchment.

- The separate sampling survey by Maddy Wright from The University of Leeds of locations above and below The Lido at Knaresborough during the early Bathing Season of 2023 showed overwhelmingly POOR bathing water results

### Results: Phosphates

- In the Middle and Lower catchment, above 'EQS moderate' levels of phosphate concentrations were found in the Nidd and its becks.

### General Observations:

- High concentrations of E. coli and phosphates seem to be associated with the locations of Sewage Treatment Works (Killinghall, Harrogate North (via Oak Beck), Knaresborough, Harrogate South (via Crimble Beck) and several STWs in the final stretch of the Nidd before it meets the Ouse.
- The pollution we found may have come from a variety of point and diffuse sources – not just from waste water treatment but potentially from agricultural practices, urban run-off etc.
- It is necessary to determine which sources affect which locations, so that any necessary mitigations can be put in place, and NAG, who have shared our data with EA and YW, are working with them and with others in follow up investigations
- NAG collected data of other indicators of river health, including concentrations of metals. will be analysed and presented in due course, and form part of potential future Citizen Scientist works.

### Plans For the Future

These will depend on the outcome of the discussion with NAG members and the general public at the December 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, and subsequently.

At this stage, it is proposed that:

- NAG will follow up our work to date with more focused investigations to extend the knowledge of the Nidd Catchment and of the various sources of pollution, while campaigning for improvement in habitat and water quality. These activities will include:
  - survey work to distinguish human and animal sources of E. coli pollution in specific locations, to assist with mitigating actions
  - working with other indicators of pollution, such as diatom, and riverfly numbers and diversity to establish the changes in biodiversity in different parts of the river
  - investigating using citizen science methods the riparian habitats, particularly of the polluted becks in Harrogate and Knaresborough, to identify and carry out appropriate mitigating actions
  - critiquing and monitoring closely the plans put forward (and the actions taken) by YW for 2025 – 2030 to improve and extend existing infrastructure.

Collaboration with Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust, The University of Leeds and Bilton Conservation Group has been vital to the project.

This citizen science activity was only possible because of local citizens' passion and energy in giving their time.

**David Clayden. Nidd Action Group Chairperson, 21st November 2023**