



**RIVER  
POLLUTION  
FORUM**

**Pan-Parish River Pollution Forum (PPRP Forum)  
Minutes of the PPRP Forum Meeting  
held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April at 19.00 at Houghton Village Hall**

**Present:** Ben Biswell (Owner/Keeper, Testcombe Fishing), Cllr Geoff Cooper (TVBC), Seth Crosswaite (River Keeper, Houghton), Alistair Dougall (Houghton PC), Cllr David Drew (HCC & TVBC), Derek Hallé (Stockbridge PC), Cllr Susanne Hasselmann (TVBC) Claire Henderson (Goodworth Clatford PC), Henryk Kwiatkowski (Goodworth Clatford PC), Alan Marshall (Stockbridge PC), Lynda Middleton (Houghton PC), Diane Newell (Wherwell PC), Caroline Nokes (MP), Ian Tripp (Romsey & District Society), Paul Vignaux (Test & Itchen Association Ltd.), Alan Young (Houghton PC), Jo Young (Lockerley PC)

**Chair:** Lynda Middleton

**Minutes:** Alistair Dougall

The meeting started at 19.00.

**Item Minute**

**1. Welcome/introductions**

Lynda Middleton chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting of the PPRP Forum. She introduced the other members of the Forum and Caroline Nokes, MP, who was able to attend the meeting.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies received from Ian Beacham (King's Somborne PC), Colin Burgess (Romsey Town Council), James Coombes (Houghton PC), Alice Foster (Longstock PC), Catherine Hadler (Mottisfont National Trust), Cllr Alison Johnston (TVBC), Philip Lomax (Nursling & Rownhams PC), Ian Newnham, Caroline Tomlinson (Appleshaw PCC), and Susan Turner (Shipton Bellinger PC).

**3. Minutes of last meeting (held on 27<sup>th</sup> February)**

Approved

**4. Terms of Reference**

Draft Terms of Reference (see Appendix 1 below) had been circulated via the group email prior to the meeting. The meeting was happy to adopt the Terms of Reference, but it was agreed that point 5 of the Terms should define 'pollution' so that it was clear that this refers to pollution in its widest sense and not just to the pumping of untreated sewage water. Paul Vignaux kindly agreed that he will provide a definition to be incorporated in the Terms of Reference.

**5. Updates**

• **TVBC Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> February**

David Drew gave an update on the TVBC council meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> February which considered a motion opposing Southern Water (SW) pumping wastewater into the River Test (see Appendix 2 below). Paul Vignaux, Alistair Dougall and Howard Taylor (of the PPRP Forum) had been given the opportunity to address the meeting and answer questions. David Drew had proposed the motion, which was seconded by Cllr Susanne Hasselmann. A large number of members of the public attended the meeting, illustrating the level of concern among residents about the pollution issue. The motion received unanimous support from TVBC councillors. Cllr Drew pointed out that, while he is happy to play a role where he can, TVBC

has no levers to pull to force SW to take action. However, he did say that both HCC and TVBC councillors might be able to help in terms of funding monitoring equipment to parishes to help with monitoring the quality of the water (see item 7).

Cllr Cooper explained that there will be a meeting of the TVBC Scrutiny Committee on Water Quality on 30<sup>th</sup> April. This will be a round table event which will include representatives from the Environment Agency (EA), and possibly SW, but is not a public meeting. Cllrs Cooper and Drew will make a request to allow one or two experts/members of the PPRP Forum to attend the meeting to at least be there to observe and to answer questions if asked.

- **Houghton water quality probe**

The probe should be ready and in place by the end of April. Seth Crosswaite explained that where it is to be sited will enable monitoring for Stockbridge as well. It will be running permanently and will send out alerts if pollutants exceed certain levels. Paul Vignaux asked if he could attend when the probe is commissioned, and this will be arranged. Once up and running, the data will be analysed and shared with PPRP Forum members.

- **Incidents of pollution**

The day after the protest held at Fullerton on 18<sup>th</sup> March, the water quality improved markedly and remained clear for 11 days – even when it was raining very hard. It is now running dirty again. Lianne Webber of the EA was reported as saying that the water ‘should be better than it was’ and requested that people keep photographs, videos, kick samples and records (Caroline Nokes stressed the importance of clearly dating any such material).

- **Press Release about the PPRP Forum (issued on 8<sup>th</sup> March)**

This got coverage in the Hampshire Chronicle and Andover Advertiser and was circulated to other environmentalists and groups.

- **Email group**

There are now 35 members in the group – many representing local Parish Councils. It has already proved its worth in sharing information.

- **Protest held at Fullerton on 18<sup>th</sup> March**

This was very successful in getting publicity in local media (print and TV). Very powerful and well attended. It was organised by the Angling Trust but attended by representatives from a wide range of groups including the PPRP Forum. (The Angling Trust is organising another protest at Newbury on Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> April).

- **Proposal of new website**

As a result of the press release and subsequent protest at Fullerton, Alistair Dougall was contacted by hugofox.com (which hosts and creates websites for parish councils, charities, clubs and similar bodies) to offer its Gold Standard website package free of charge for as long as it may be needed in order to help the PPRP Forum increase awareness of the threat to the River Test, to share information with group members (parts of the website can be made accessible to members only), to help organise further protests, etc. It was agreed to take hugofox.com up on this generous offer. AD will liaise with hugofox.com to get the website up and running as soon as possible.

- **Other updates**

The National Trust is now testing the water quality regularly at Mottisfont and due to issues on the marsh is submitting fortnightly reports. Catherine Hadler was unable to attend the meeting, but she is happy to share information/data with the group.

Caroline Nokes MP reported that she and a number of councillors had visited the Fullerton site on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April. It is working at well over capacity given the very high levels of rainfall

recently. She stated that there was no point her trying to introduce a Private Member's bill in the House of Commons as that is done by ballot and, realistically, would not succeed. Similarly, using the ten minute rule would be highly unlikely to succeed in changing the law. That said, Ms Nokes said that she can speak to ministers and can get a debate in Parliament.

Ms Nokes explained that Michael Gove's draft bill seeks to stop run-off water going into the drainage system and to make developers pay if their future developments do not address this issue. She explained that SW are statutory consultees for strategic planning but said that, when speaking with SW, the people she spoke to were not sure whether or not SW had submitted a response as part of the consultation process for the new Local Plan (the consultation process has now ended). She said that 100% of all storm overflows are now monitored (although it was pointed out that the follow up and publication and transparency relating to that monitoring was not at all satisfactory). She said that the EA will be getting 500 more inspectors but it is not clear where they will be allocated.

Ms Nokes strongly recommended looking into funding available from the Water Restoration Fund – community groups can apply for funding for monitoring equipment. (See Item 7)

Paul Vignaux pointed out that the data recently published by the EA suggested strongly that some of the spillages that SW claimed were due to rainwater were not related to rainfall. The Test & Itchen Association now have a team that includes media and PR people and intend to step up their activity in publishing data collected in water quality monitoring.

Some data previously published by the EA has become unavailable as it is relevant to legal proceedings being undertaken.

## **6. Contact with Southern Water and the Environment Agency**

AD attended the drop-in day hosted by Southern Water at Totton on 21<sup>st</sup> March and spoke with Nick Mills (SW Environment & Innovation Director) and Keith Herbert (SW Pathfinder Lead) about the PPRP Forum and requesting a meeting with Southern Water. LM and AD then attended a meeting later that day of the Pan Parish group dealing with flooding issues in parishes north of Fullerton. They were impressed by what that group had achieved and the constructive dialogue and relationship it had established with Southern Water. They invited Nick Mills to attend the PPRP Forum meeting, but he said that neither he nor his colleagues would be able to attend. He did provide a statement, which was read out at the meeting (see Appendix 3) and is willing to meet a smaller group at the end of the month. AD and LM are following this up.

The EA were invited to attend the PPRP Forum meeting but declined. Their representative explained that they will be attending the TVBC Scrutiny Committee on Water Quality on 30th April.

## **7. Monitoring in other parishes**

A number of parishes are considering either purchasing their own monitoring equipment (as Houghton Parish Council is doing) or encouraging and training citizen scientists to monitor and share information. Romsey Town Council are discussing joining the PPRP Forum and are considering purchasing monitoring equipment. The Wessex Rivers Trust may be able to give some help with this. Cllrs Drew, Cooper and Hasselmann pointed out that a multi-ward grant may be available to help with such funding. Cllr. Cooper said that he had spoken with the SW's CEO, Lawrence Gosden, at the drop-in event on 21<sup>st</sup> March and he had said that SW may be willing to help with the funding of testing. Diane Newell made the point that it would be useful if such funding covered training as well as equipment and that the work of citizen scientists is becoming more and more acceptable and relevant. The EA has a Citizen Scientist Liaison Coordinator.

## **8. Action plan**

- Meet with SW
- Try to meet with the EA

- Install and commission the probe in Houghton, with training being provided to those monitoring it. Share the data and information with the PPRP Forum
- Set up the website (this will also be used to disseminate information from the monitoring)
- LM to email details of the Houghton probe to the group (maker, cost, specification, etc.)
- A water quality expert group can advise where monitoring stations, etc. could go
- Follow up on Lawrence Gosden's offer in discussion with Cllr Cooper regarding funding water quality monitoring and other potential sources of funding such as the Water Restoration Fund

**9. Next meeting**

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June at 19.00 at Houghton Village Hall.

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**APPENDIX 1**

**Pan Parish River Pollution Forum  
Terms of Reference**

**Name**

1. The name of the group is the Pan Parish River Pollution Forum (PPRP Forum).
2. The PPRP Forum will be dissolved once the member Parish Councils are satisfied there is no longer a need for the group.

**Objectives**

3. To raise awareness in member and surrounding parishes about the extent of the pollution of the River Test and the damage this is causing to the river's ecology, and the threat it represents to local businesses and livelihoods and to public health.
4. To share and disseminate data and information among members of the PPRP Forum regarding levels of pollution and pollution incidents in the River Test.
5. To campaign to stop the pollution of the River Test. [Definition to be added to make clear that this refers to pollution in its widest sense.]
6. To lobby Southern Water, the Environment Agency, Test Valley Borough Council and elected local and parliamentary representatives and other relevant bodies to enforce existing legislation to stop the pollution of the River Test.
7. To seek to work with Southern Water and the Environment Agency to achieve a dialogue and greater transparency regarding pollution and actions taken to prevent and stop it.
8. To campaign for changes in legislation to make Southern Water and the Environment agency more accountable, and for changes in legislation where greater powers are deemed necessary.

**Structure**

9. The PPRP Forum shall not make any commitment of funds or make any expenditure on behalf of any of the member Parish Councils.
10. Membership and Meetings
  - (a) Councillors and non-councillors may be members of the PPRP Forum.
  - (b) Meetings shall be held as and when agreed by the PPRP Forum but at least four times a year.

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## APPENDIX 2

### TEXT OF MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY AT THE MEETING OF TEST VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL ON 29<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2024:

This Council strongly opposes Southern Water pumping wastewater into the River Test or its tributaries. The Council is therefore calling on Southern Water to fix the problem by improving its infrastructure more widely and at greater speed, and work with OFWAT and the Environment Agency to enable the required investment funding to be released. In addition, we are calling on all parties to inform and closely engage with affected communities and relevant agencies. Water quality must be monitored and transparency must be maintained by publishing all testing data promptly.

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## APPENDIX 3

### STATEMENT FROM NICK MILLS (SOUTHERN WATER ENVIRONMENT & INNOVATION DIRECTOR)

Thank you for inviting Southern Water to this evening's Pan Parish River Pollution Forum to discuss our Fullerton Wastewater Treatment Works. We're sorry that we could not attend this time and would welcome a meeting later this month.

I wanted to give you an update on the situation at Fullerton Waste Treatment Works, where there have recently been protests over the challenges experienced at the site, which regrettably led to spills from the overflow to prevent flooding. The elevated water table and subsequent groundwater infiltration within the sewer network from the wettest 18 months ever recorded, caused the site to become overwhelmed.

I care very deeply about the ongoing situation at Fullerton and agree that any spillage into our chalk streams or water courses is unacceptable.

We are continuing to treat a volume of water beyond the normally permitted levels to maximise our ability to keep up with the demand we are experiencing - from 453 litres per second to 630 l/s. This has helped reduce the issues at Fullerton.

However, with the wet weather only recently easing off, the site is still at risk and our storm tanks remain partially filled. I assure you our team continue to work hard, 24/7, to manage the site actively and minimise risk.

We will do everything in our power to avoid further spills at this important site. We are already close to completing an innovative sealing project in part of the Fullerton catchment to reduce groundwater infiltration. We have sealed over 4.5km of both private and public sewers in seven villages which has resulted in 35 fewer disruptive tankers on the road despite record groundwater levels.

Looking further ahead, over the next 5-year regulatory period (2025-30) we have ambitious plans to spend £26m increasing Fullerton's capacity by 60%, with a further £12m on environmental protection. These plans are subject to Ofwat's approval.

It will take a multi-agency effort to resolve ongoing issues at this site, and we have invited local MPs along with the Environment Agency, to discuss how we can safeguard the River Test now and in the future.

Recently, Caroline Nokes MP and local councillors visited the site. We'd welcome the opportunity to arrange a visit for you to see our treatment works where we can discuss our ongoing works to reduce risks from further wet winters.