

Restoring our rivers

Proposed by Cllr Paul Hodgkinson

Seconded by Cllr Bernard Fisher

This Council notes that:

- Gloucestershire is fortunate to have 28 rivers running through our county, including the River Severn and River Thames, Britain's longest and second longest rivers.
- However, many of these waterways are flooded with harmful pollutants, including raw sewage discharges from water treatment operators Thames Water, Severn Trent and Wessex Water.
- This pollution is causing extensive damage to the fragile ecosystems around our county.
- It can also prove a serious public health concern for those residents living near rivers or using them for leisure activities; with pathogens able to cause serious illnesses.
- Furthermore, traces of Covid-19 have been found in sewage outputs in global hotspots.

This Council recognises that dumping raw sewage into rivers is currently legal in extreme circumstances, but also recognises claims that the use of these measures has become routine for some operators.

This Council believes that the adverse impacts on the county's waterways are unacceptable and that water treatment operators need to adjust their behaviour and invest more in the networks to avoid damaging our county's public resources.

This Council also believes that the county's waterways are a resource that every resident should be confident in using safely, and that we should strive to have the country's first designated bathing waters in rivers, which could bring great economic and social benefits to Gloucestershire.

This Council therefore resolves to

- Call on the Cabinet to take urgent action with District Councils, the Environment Agency, local partners and communities to lead comprehensive monitoring of the county's waterways to determine the extent of the damage caused by raw sewage and pollutants.
- Call on the Cabinet to work with local partners, including The Rivers Trust and water treatment operators to promote better use of sewage facilities – recognising that everyone has a role to play in improving our waterways.
- Write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to ban the routine dumping of raw sewage into our rivers, with the ultimate aim of restoring our rivers to a state where we can safely swim in them and to protect their environment and biodiversity.

RESOLVED that under standing order 11.1.13, motions without notice, Motion 864 'Restoring our rivers' be referred to the Environment Scrutiny Committee.