



Action for the River Kennet

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29 March 2021

## Stop sewage polluting the Kennet

Action for the River Kennet is calling for an end to sewage pollution in the River Kennet after the frequency of untreated sewage being pumped into the river at Marlborough more than trebled last year.

A freedom of information request to Thames Water showed that in 2020 Marlborough Sewage Treatment works tipped untreated sewage into the River Kennet for 2,872 hours, the equivalent of 119 days and nights of continuous dumping. This compares with a total of 989 hours in 2019.

Water companies are only permitted to discharge sewage like this in exceptional circumstances linked to extreme weather events. However, these data show pollution occurring for more almost a third of the year.

Action for the River Kennet's Director Charlotte Hitchmough said 'it's unacceptable that untreated sewage is allowed to be dumped in our rivers. It damages habitats for plants, fish and other wildlife. As the warmer weather approaches and people are thinking about enjoying time outdoors, they shouldn't have to worry about whether it's safe to paddle, or fish or play in the river.'

Marlborough is not an isolated case, data from sewage treatment works across the catchment paint a similar picture of persistent pollution.

The River Kennet is one of England's finest chalk streams and its clean clear waters are a defining characteristic of our beautiful countryside. We want to see the Environment Agency take strong action to clamp down on sewage pollution, we want Thames Water to make more investment to prevent pollution, and we want the planning system to recognise that the current sewer network is inadequate, and to stop allowing more homes to be added to sewer networks that already can't cope.

We are delighted that our local MPs Danny Kruger and Laura Farris have listened to the concerns of their constituents and supported the sewage bill in parliament, and we look forward to their commitment turning into investment and into action to clean up our rivers.

ENDS

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## Notes to editors

Action for the River Kennet is part of the national Rivers Trust movement calling for an end to sewage pollution.

The sewage bill is a private members bill championed by Philip Dunne MP for Ludlow and Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee. He said:

'I introduced my Private Members Bill to help tackle the scourge of sewage discharges polluting our waterways.'

Data for sewage discharges across the country is due to be released by the Environment Agency on Wednesday 31 March 2021.

Data for 2020 was provided by Thames Water.

Data for 2019 was sourced from the 'Is my river fit to swim in' map here:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/e834e261b53740eba2fe6736e37bbc7b/>