



Action for the River Kennet

8 January 2014

Pollution fears as River Kennet on flood alert

With the whole River Kennet on a state of Flood Alert and with the water overtopping the banks in many places and flood warnings in place from Theale to Reading, environmental group Action for the River Kennet are warning of pollution danger from sewage.

When ground water levels are high, sewers frequently become inundated with water which gets in through holes in the sewer pipes, gaps around manhole covers and misconnected drains. Sewers become so full of water that the lids pop-up, spewing the foul contents across the surrounding area and letting sewage flow directly into the river.

This example in Marlborough yesterday shows the consequences of sewer 'surcharging' its contents alongside the picturesque Kennet at Cooper's Meadow.



[picture: Sewer at Cooper's Meadow, Marlborough].

Action for the River Kennet is asking people to report pollution from sewer flooding to the Environment Agency Incident Line: 0800 807060 and to Thames Water on 0845 9200 800 as well as telling ARK where the problem hotspots are by emailing carolyn@riverkennet.org.

Thames Water will clear up flooding from their sewers, but better still ARK would like to see sewers maintained to a standard where sewer flooding is much less frequent. This type of pollution is bad

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for the environment, and a health hazard – as well as being very unpleasant to have to walk through.

Everyone can play their part in reducing sewer flooding by being careful what they flush away. For example, wet wipes should not be flushed down the loo, but you'd be amazed how many wet wipes have been coming from the sewers into the Kennet this week. Blockages caused by cooking fat, non-flushable sanitary products and wet wipes make the sewer flooding problem worse.

Charlotte Hitchmough, ARK's director said, 'we are meeting Thames Water this month and one of the issues we will be discussing is the performance of their sewers and sewage treatment works during wet weather, it is simply unacceptable that raw sewage enters the river each time we get heavy rain.'

ARK's call was endorsed by the Angling Trust, the national representative body for angling which campaigns for clean rivers. Mark Owen, Head of Freshwater at the Trust, added:

"Groundwater pollution through leaky sewer pipes is a real problem in chalk aquifers where springs can break through in unexpected places and overwhelm the system at times of high water. It is vital that the water companies are funded by the regulator to build in greater resilience to extreme weather conditions because, quite frankly, the current ageing infrastructure is simply not up to coping with what climate change is throwing our way."

/ENDS

Notes to editors

Action for the River Kennet www.riverkennet.org and www.facebook.com/riverkennet

Angling Trust: <http://www.anglingtrust.net/>

Environment Agency River Kennet levels: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/riverlevels/136495.aspx>

Thames Water information on sewer abuse: <http://www.thameswater.co.uk/help-and-advice/9137.htm>

For more details contact Charlotte Hitchmough 01672 513672