

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Angling Trust and Action for the River Kennet Call for Immediate Government Intervention on Sewage Pollution

Tuesday, 30th April.

In an urgent appeal to the water services industry regulator OFWAT, the Environment Agency (EA), and Steve Barclay MP, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Angling Trust and Action for the River Kennet (ARK) have raised significant concerns regarding ongoing sewage pollution issues in the Kennet, Lambourn and Pang river catchments, overseen by Thames Water.

With the initial determination of Thames Water's business plan proposals for 2025-2030 due on June 12th, both organisations highlight the severe environmental threats posed by unchecked sewage spills into these critically sensitive habitats. Recent data underscores the scale of the issue, with Thames Water identified as a major polluter, responsible for lengthy and frequent sewage discharges into these rivers.

#### Key Points from the Letter

- **Widespread Pollution:** In 2023, the Thames Water region experienced 16,990 sewage spills totalling 196,414 hours. Notable areas of concern include the River Lambourn and the River Pang, both of which have suffered extensively due to inadequate infrastructure and operational oversight.
- **Public Outcry:** The local communities have voiced their frustration and anger through protests, reflecting the urgency for remedial action. A recent rally in Newbury attracted over 250 attendees, including political figures from multiple parties, echoing a united demand for significant changes in Thames Water's operational practices.
- **Demands for Immediate Action:** The Angling Trust and ARK are calling for:
  - An immediate Government intervention to place Thames Water under special measures.
  - An urgent comprehensive review by OFWAT and the EA of Thames Water's operational and planned activities in the affected areas.
  - Immediate commencement of upgrades to sewage treatment works, particularly those that are overdue and critical for preventing future spills.
  - Acceleration of groundwater ingress control measures within the upcoming asset management plan (AMP 8).

The Angling Trust and ARK stress that without immediate and robust intervention, the ecological health and biodiversity of these chalk streams are at a grave risk of long-term, irreversible damage.

Charlotte Hitchmough, CEO, ARK, commented, “For too long the water industry has got away with pouring untreated sewage into the chalk streams of the Kennet and Pang, sometimes for months at a time. Not only is it illegal, but the ecological and human health risks from allowing this practice are not acceptable and proper investment in infrastructure is urgently required.”

Martin Salter, Head of Policy, Angling Trust, said “Local anglers and community groups are up in arms about the disgraceful treatment of these iconic rivers and streams in the Kennet catchment. They have suffered for far too long and will be irreparably damaged if these levels of pollution are allowed to continue for another 20 years. We are calling on the regulators and the government to reject Thames Water’s wholly inadequate proposals and insist that long overdue investment is made to their failing wastewater infrastructure.”

[The full letter can be viewed here.](#)

For more information about the Angling Trust’s **Anglers Against Pollution** campaign or to get your club involved in our Water Quality Monitoring Network please see: <https://anglingtrust.net/get-involved/anglers-against-pollution/>

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Notes for Editors:

[Video of sewage in streets and rivers](#) – Please credit Action for the River Kennet or the Angling Trust as labelled.

[Pictures and videos from the public protest in Newbury](#) - Please credit John Sutton, Clearwater Photography