

Notice of Motion submitted pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 5.27

To consider the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor F Hoskins, seconded by Councillor G Bridges, on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group in relation to Save our Rivers:

This Council notes that:

- (1) Every river in England is now polluted beyond legal limits;
- (2) The Environment Agency rated only 14% of rivers as 'Good' in 2019.
 - This chemical pollution is mostly caused by sewage discharges from water companies and the run-offs of nutrients from farms.
 - 36% of English rivers have been damaged by water companies.
 - Southern Water released 184 spills in the river Medway and its tributaries in the Tonbridge area during 2021.
 - Government funding to the Environment Agency to monitor river quality and regulate farms and water companies has dropped 75% since 2010/11.
 - In 2020 just 3.6% of pollution complaints made to the Agency resulted in penalties.
 - Farms are now almost never inspected, water quality is rarely tested, and water companies can pump raw sewage into rivers with virtual impunity.
 - In addition, tyre particles, metals from brake pads, and hydrocarbons from vehicle emissions wash off road surfaces and into rivers introducing potentially carcinogenic material into the water supply.
 - Phosphates are naturally occurring minerals found in human waste and can lead to dramatic growth in algae and can deplete oxygen levels when they are dumped in our rivers.
 - The latest targets approved on January 26th of 80% reduction of phosphates in rivers by 2038 allows water companies to continue dumping for another 15 years
 - Our River Medway and its tributaries in Tonbridge are particularly threatened by further sewage discharges.

This Council believes that the UK Government should commit to:

- Restoring Environment Agency budgets to deliver the necessary oversight.
- Increasing inspection regularity of water companies and farms, and rigorously prosecuting offenders through the Environmental Audit Committee and Ofwat.
- Funding local and highways authorities to introduce systems to prevent road pollutants from entering our water courses.
- Setting more ambitious targets for water companies to improve storm overflows.

Council resolves to request the Chief Executive write to:

- The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs calling for the Government to make these commitments.
- The Chairperson of the Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee to advocate for greater enforcement of existing regulatory powers.
- The Chief Executive of Southern water calling for urgent action to address the impact of waste-water discharges on our local rivers.
- The Regional Director of the National Farmers' Union requesting clarification on the action being taken locally by farmers to prevent nutrient run-off.
- The charities River Action and The Rivers Trust expressing this Council's support for their campaign to restore the health of Britain's rivers.

Local MPs Tom Tugendhat and Tracey Crouch to be copied into this correspondence and asked for their support.