

Updates against River Water Quality Task and Finish Group Recommendations

Further to the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report of the River Water Quality Task and Finish Group on the 9 November 2023 the Task and Finish group identified what they have defined as hard recommendations and softer recommendations. They expect that the hard recommendations will, in most cases, have a more direct impact on reducing sewage pollution and be more measurable in terms of delivery and impact.

Recommendations		Lead Officer	Shropshire Council Actions
Hard recommendations:			
1.	That Shropshire Council, as the Local Planning Authority, should <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adopt Grampian Conditions in Shropshire to ensure that new developments will be joined to appropriate infrastructure and access to treatment works with the sufficient current and future capacity in place.• Promote the requirement for grey water systems and rainwater capture as part of new housing developments, reducing the use of drinking water to water gardens and clean cars. As part of this, Members recommend that the feasibility of introducing supplementary planning documents (SPD) should be explored and progressed.	Planning – Charlotte Morrison, Edward West, Tabitha Lythe	<p>To review Grampian conditions and establish how they would operate in Shropshire and whether the outcomes identified in the recommendations can be delivered using different approaches.</p> <p>To confirm options to make best use of water including whether grey water systems and rainwater capture will be a feature of housing developments in Shropshire in the future.</p> <p>To confirm the feasibility of an SPD in relation to grey water systems and rainwater capture.</p>
2.	That Shropshire Council, as the highways authority, should proactively engage with and encourage Severn Trent Water in their progression of works that will increase the separation of rainwater run-off from wastewater, including highways runoff, thereby helping to reduce the risk of overwhelming sewage infrastructure and treatment works.	John Bellis	To establish a programme of proof of concept and test and learn projects with Severn Trent Water to provide evidence of what can work and inform a pipeline of projects to take advantage of investment opportunities.
3.	That more monitoring of the health of rivers and waterways needs to take place: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Severn Trent Water should increase the frequency of monitoring and reporting to once a week and ensure that testing occurs before and after releases. This data needs	Mark Barrow, Hayley Deighton	Developing partnership working and wider relationships with Severn Trent Water and the Environment Agency to promote improving the quality of waterways, including through strategic interventions in the catchment area.

Recommendations	Lead Officer	Shropshire Council Actions
<p>to be made available and the results made visible and easily accessible and understandable e.g. using trend charts and maps.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System partners, including Shropshire Council, should work with citizen scientists to identify and put in place mechanisms that will allow them to continue to deliver and develop testing and monitoring that enhances the picture of what is happening beneath the surface of rivers and waterways. 		<p>Encouraging increased testing of river water quality by identifying and pursuing opportunities with system partners including developing the infrastructure for remote testing and reporting e.g. utilising mobile digital networks.</p>
<p>4. That Shropshire Council is a 'Place Leader'. Within this there are a number of roles and actions that the Council should take to enable communities to help contribute towards improving river water quality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and provide access to small grants or accessible funding such as through initiatives like civic social crowdfunding that can be used to enable communities to take forward work that results in improved river water quality e.g. funding equipment and lab testing of citizen scientists work, and funding the River Health Checker app. • Supporting and enabling initiatives and applications for Bathing Water Status. • Assessing the feasibility of managing the River Health Checker App and promoting its use locally with stakeholders in the system and communities. 	Mark Barrow	<p>To take a leading role in the local area and in partnerships that encompass places that either impact on the river water quality in Shropshire or are impacted by the river water quality in Shropshire.</p> <p>Within this work establish the opportunities and feasibility to offer small grants or other forms of accessible funding.</p>

The following softer recommendations were made through the River Water Quality work. The expectation is that these recommendations should be delivered through the wider delivery of the hard recommendations above and through the implementation of strategic working across the River Severn Partnership, The Severn Valley Water Management Scheme and The Marches Forward Partnership. The implementation of these recommendations should be monitored through the work looking at the hard recommendations as set out above.

Recommendations		Lead Officer
Softer recommendations:		
5.	That system partners confirm shared outcomes and objectives in relation to river water quality and the environment and use these to jointly and consistently lobby Government to realise a regulatory framework and requirements that encourages water companies and other stakeholders who are part of the system, to target and achieve the best environmental outcomes.	Mark Barrow
6.	That local representatives, including Shropshire Council, should work closely with Severn Trent Water to inform how and where the recently announced investment to reduce sewage pollution takes place. This should include enabling and ensuring the engagement between agencies and with local communities and help to realise the greatest benefit for the environment of the resources being brought to bear.	Mark Barrow
7.	That system partners work to support increasing the visibility of the data and enabling greater understanding of what is actually happening in Shropshire rivers and water ways. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the adoption of the River Health Checker App • Enable and promote consistency of recording, data structures and access to the data, using those nationally described and adopted by other areas of the country. • Encouraging effective use of the data, and promoting the development of visualisation, including engaging with local further and higher education colleges. 	Mark Barrow
8.	That, once a reduction of sewage releases has been put in place, Shropshire Council progresses activity, directly through its own services and responsibilities, and through its partnership working as a Place Leader, to reduce the flow of other pollutants from agricultural and highways run-off.	Mark Barrow
9.	That the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee form a standing group that tracks climate and environmental topics and issues including river water quality and flooding, keeping abreast of plans and developments, the results of monitoring, and the impact and progress across the relevant stakeholders. To inform it's work it may specify key measures of activity and progress that it wants to review. The group should meet every 6 months and report back into the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee twice a year.	Joyce Barrow