

Report on sewage in the River Erme.

On Friday 18 November I represented the Council at a meeting devoted to pollution of the river Erme, held in Holbeton Church. Present were representatives from South West Water (SWW) and the Environment Agency (EA). Sir Gary Streeter (SGS) was there, so were Councillors from Ermington and Holbeton along with Surfers Against Sewage and other interested residents – a number from Ivybridge.

Everyone recognised there are issues with pollution due to SWW out-pouring untreated sewage into the river at times when their treatment plants cannot cope with the flow of run-off water into their sewers.

SGS praised the new law and said it will improve things but not quickly. 2035 and 2050 are key dates. Many thought we should not simply sit back and wait whilst the river continues to be polluted.

EA pointed out that their priorities in this area are the rivers Dart and Teign. Ivybridge Water treatment Works (WTW) had been non-compliant during 2022 **[I suggest we follow this up with a question re the nature and frequency of the non-compliance and what enforcement measures were used]**.

I asked David Pateman of SWW whether the new housing developments built in and around Ivybridge have been matched by the necessary increase in the WTW capacity. The answer is yes, capacity for handling the increased **LOAD** has been made. He pointed out that increased **FLOW** was the issue. Pre 1960s buildings may drain run-off rainwater into sewers, but buildings since then are engineered differently, rainwater is taken away by separate culverts and pipes and therefore not into sewers. During periods of heavy rain, run-off from pre-60s builds together with water getting into the system (through breakages, etc.) is the issue. This extra flow is difficult to cope with, either the WTW are flooded and thus put out of action, or the untreated sewage is let into the river. He suggested, as an aside, that improvements could be made at the Ivybridge WTW but did not elaborate **[I suggest we follow this up with a question re the nature of the improvements which could be made at the Ivybridge WTW and a timescale for such improvements]**.

There was a suggestion (made after the meeting by email) from Ermington that a standing committee, or group, representing the whole of the Erme catchment be formed. This would include Cornwood, Harford, Ivybridge, Ermington, Holberton, Modbury and Kingston. **Is this something that Ivybridge could take a lead on** as the larger (and most central) partner?

Cllr T Rea, November 2022