

Erme Catchment Update to go with proposed Motion:

"ITC supports WATER (Wild About The River Erme) and will look to work with it, and local Parish Councils to improve water quality and the environment with the River Erme Catchment. "

I would like ITC to consider what future support we can provide - whether we can agree in principle to allocate any funding from this year's budget pots and/or provide support in kind - eg use of rooms/venue. And setting up an ITC working group on this matter.

I attended Joint Parishes meetings about the River Erme on 10 May in Ugborough & 23 March in Modbury.

Next catchment Joint Parishes meeting is on Wed June 21st. Venue to be confirmed.

I also attended the Wild About The Erme River (WATER) Mtg on 22nd May at the Watermark, along with a number of other Town and District Cllrs.

The Cllrs Catchment meetings have been very useful, as we have discussed what Parishes could do to improve the River Erme, how we could work together or support each other. We had an EA representative at one of the meetings as we discussed what monitoring might be needed, and it became apparent that SWW, the EA and other organisations already accept there is an issue that doesn't need to be proven, though that doesn't mean that there isn't need for pressure to be put on SWW to take action. There is also funding available for projects to improve water quality and environmental biodiversity, but it was agreed that a new Catchment organisation was needed similar to what had been set up for the River Yealm. We also discussed what we as Parishes could do to support, but not replicate, the work of this new organisation, which following the meeting on the 22nd May has been launched as WATER (Wild About The River Erme).

It was discussed that Parishes could have a crucial role when it comes to planning. Currently SWW provides reports for planning applications regarding new developments and capacity at Sewage Treatment Works, but the increasing number of sewage spills (mostly due to Storm Overflow Discharge) suggest that this is not necessarily the case. There are issues around new developments which have been built to ensure surface run off doesn't go into sewage drains, only for waste from those developments to then join shared waste water drains further along the network, negating some of the benefit of keeping surface water run off separate.

It was discussed that Parishes often contain local knowledge that could be useful if collated with SWW information regarding drains, in understanding where our waste

water goes, and what SWW should be doing to reduce the amount of Storm Overflow Discharge. Holbeton PC are slightly ahead in this regard. It was proposed that each parish request plans from SWW showing parish drainage - and whether they are for surface water, or shared, or just waste water to then create their own parish maps.

This could enable Parishes to see 1. issues that needed to be taken into consideration for new planning applications, and 2. Areas where SWW needed to upgrade/ which could potentially have the biggest impact.

At the moment SHDC ask SWW to comment on planning applications, but essentially SWW marks their own homework. Also we could focus community action on some high profile areas, eg Modbury high street is to be dug up for the main shared sewage pipe to be replaced, only for them to replace like for like, rather than putting in the infrastructure that could lead to less strain on the sewage works, and ultimately less sewage in the river. SWW say it would cost too much to have separate surface water and waste water drains, and would take longer to do the works / lead to more disruption.

However, as Parishes working together we could campaign around these issues to highlight what should be done, and ask whether SWW thinks it's cheaper to pay fines than actually create the infrastructure needed to improve water quality. And potentially/ideally get SWW to consider changing plans. Modbury PC are very keen on this, but I think people in surrounding parishes would have an interest, and would be shocked that SWW is thinking so short term.

This would probably need a working group in each parish, as it's a big project, but it's something the Parish Councils can lead on, while the WATER group focuses more on using/collecting data to pressure SWW, citizen science and applying for funding to do larger improvement projects, working with landowners etc.

At the next meeting on Wed 21st June we will discuss a report from SWW about Mothercombe bathing water quality.