



## Winchester Council April 2022



### Phosphate pollution

On March 16th Natural England dropped without any warning a major bombshell by releasing new guidance and evidence on the problem excess phosphate in waste water is having in the Solent. This problem is similar to the problem of excess nitrates in the Solent. The end result is excessive algae bloom and excessive seaweed growth which kills off fish and invertebrates at the lower end of the food chain. The mudflats of the Solent are a vital source of food for both migrating and local birdlife. In short, a serious problem that can also impact on human health.

It also, of course, adversely affects our rivers! It will be no surprise to any of you that the phosphates from existing housing will dwarf those from new homes.

The logic is that new residential development adds to the excessive phosphate due to the wastewater that is produced. Planning authorities within the River Itchen catchment area are required to calculate the impact the nutrients will have on the Solent. Planning permission will only be granted for new residential development where the phosphate as well as the nitrate impact has been addressed.

The River Itchen catchment area does not cover the whole district so that areas outside the catchment are not affected. The catchment extends into Basingstoke and Eastleigh, which allows a collective approach. The solution developed for excess nitrate can perhaps be used as a model, for the nitrates problem a system of mitigation was set up, in which developers bought credits.

The problem is now that the council cannot progress planning decisions until the full impact of more wastewater is understood. The Council has a statutory obligation to follow the most up-to-date guidance provided by Natural England in determining applications. The immediate impact is going to be a delay in new planning applications and the secondary impact is going to be an increased cost for developers. Neither of these is good news. The government took almost a year to address the problem of high levels of nitrates, so it is likely that the phosphate problem may take a similar time.

Furthermore, this problem is going to impact on the programme for the developing Local Plan. Two aspects against which the Local Plan will be judged, the five year supply of building land and the viability are going to be affected.

Methods exist to reduce the level of phosphates being released from sewage treatment plants back into rivers. These can be either chemical or biological solutions such as reed beds. Both solutions are difficult to implement particularly in smaller Water Treatment Plants. There has been chronic under investment on water infrastructure leading to sewage overflows after heavy rain into rivers. Human waste in raw sewage also contains high levels of phosphates. Lack of proper investment in modern phosphate removal and recovery has led to excess levels of phosphate in discharged water. Privatisation was supposed to lead to investment into the industry, something that clearly hasn't happened.

One of the main causes of high levels of phosphates in domestic waste water is the excessive use of cleaning products and detergents containing phosphates. Collectively we can all help to reduce the problem at source by cutting out any cleaning products that contain phosphates.

The WCC planners are working with other to develop solutions. We will keep you informed.



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### News from the Doorsteps

**The costs of heating and food** are a grave concern to those on limited incomes and existing measures will not address any but the short-term issues of affordability. We are encouraging those that do not currently claim any form of benefits to see if they can claim, it opens up so many other doors.

The **20's plenty** campaign is very popular, and for so many keeping to existing 30mph limits would be a blessed relief. We would encourage you to endorse a form of the resolution to Hampshire County Council on this matter.

**Community SpeedWatch** in Alresford has ceased due a lack of administrators. Margot is one of the volunteers and found it a positive experience. Perhaps we need an Itchen Valley wide pool of volunteers?

**Trees** are a mixed blessing for those that live very close. Many of those in the town are coming to the end of their life and being replaced with more appropriate species, and some action is being taken where pavements have been made impassable

**Next Steps for Sun Lane.** There are omissions in the construction management plan, we are working with officers to have those incorporated to the approved version in the interests of protecting residents from undue nuisance.

**Unsafe conditions for pedestrians** through town and villages are widespread. Some recent work on Broad Street is of such poor standard that it has been reported again. Some good news, the sinkhole at the bottom of The Dean has had some material packed in, but we suspect it may be washed away before it is capped.

The normal plethora of **missing and damaged road signs** have been reported.

Margot Power 01962 734167

Russell Gordon -Smith 01962 733219