

Itchen Valley News March 2022

Sewage, chemicals and pesticides - none of us want this stuff in our local waterways! **Improving local water quality is a passion of mine** and Russell's, and if my mail bag is any indication, we are not the only ones concerned about the health of our rivers, streams and brooks. **They are not only beautiful, they provide restorative space for us all and vital habitats for wildlife.**

We are pushing for Winchester City Council to add the protection of rivers and the creatures that live there to its biodiversity plan.

Individually, however, we can all play our part, so here's some ideas on how you can make a difference and help **clean up our local rivers.**

1. Cut back on the water you use from the tap and toilet!!

Every drop of tap water used comes from local chalk aquifers - the more we use, the less there is in the aquifer to feed our rivers. Purifying water to drinking standards produces a significant carbon footprint, so using less helps reduce your carbon footprint as well. Actions range from easy to challenging. **'Shower not bath'** is well known if you want to reduce water consumption but why not set a timer for 5 minutes and/or use an aerator or low-flow shower: power showers increase the volume of water used.

Toilets account for over 35% of all the water used in the home so install a Hippo, free from Southern Water, if you don't have dual flush, repair toilet leaks (dual flush toilets often leak at the valve after a period of time and need replacing) and, if you're feeling keen, adopt the mantra "if it's yellow let it mellow" overnight and flush less! Run washing and dishwashing machines only when full please, don't run taps unnecessarily, common when toothbrushing, and promptly repair leaking and dripping taps.

2. Change your cleaning habits

Many of you are on 'private arrangements' rather than mains drainage but all of us can make simple changes to our cleaning habits to prevent chemicals leaking during sewage treatment and contaminating our aquifers and rivers.

The suggestions below apply especially to those with septic tanks and following them will save money on pump outs as well as benefit water quality but they are also important for those of us on mains drainage. Most obvious of all, **use fewer cleaning products - they all have an impact.** A lot of grime can be removed with a hot damp cloth. Use toilet fresheners, mild detergents, fabric conditioners and washing powders/liquids **in moderation.** These can adversely impact the natural bacteriological balance in the septic tank. Use bleach and disinfectants **VERY SPARINGLY** - bleaches kill friendly bacteria. **Use non-biological and less aggressive cleaning products.** There are many environmental ranges and even a

biodegradable bleach. Look for labelling which shows that products are septic tank friendly. **Don't use your toilet and sink as a rubbish bin!**

Important don'ts for septic tank owners:

don't flush cat litter, disposable nappies, paper towels, sanitary items, facial tissues, coffee grounds, cigarettes, cotton buds or condoms down the toilet;

don't use anti-bacterial hand wash It poison's your septic tank with every wash;

don't install a waste disposal unit they can double the solids going into your tank meaning more frequent emptying;

don't dispose of grease, oil, or fat down the sink - they block your pipes and disrupt the tanks processes - remove fats with kitchen towel which should be binned;

don't dispose of white spirit, varnish, paint thinners, motor oils, petrol etc down the drain - they will ruin you tank, and will seriously pollute groundwater;

don't wash paint brushes in the sink or put brush cleaning liquids into the drains - collect these liquids and dispose of them safely at our local tip;

don't connect rainwater drainage pipes from roofs or drains to the septic tank.

3. Garden for water conservation

Rather more fun is to be had in the garden - by **engineering levels** you can reduce run off - the silt impacts water quality - and retain more water for your plants, as well as providing possible boggy bits, for interest and diversity. You are all, of course, using water butts where you can, not on seedlings though, there's a risk of fungal disease.

To reduce run off and increase retention, grow plants that use less water, and increase permeability - not grass. Grass is very overrated - it's good for playing on, and livestock, but a lawn takes a lot of love, effort and chemicals – which again will end up in the aquifer.

4. Volunteer



And finally, get involved. **There are lots of volunteering opportunities with**

<https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/watercress-and-winterbourne> -

I did! Here I am invertebrate sampling - this is an indicator of water quality monitoring.

Cllr Margot Power & Cllr Russell Gordon-Smith