



## Winchester Council October 2023



### **Water Quality**

The recent street stall on what we might find in our rivers, including a Lucky(?) Dip was a great success and helped to publicise a very serious problem with our wonderful chalk streams. The stall has also been used in Winchester and will circulate to other communities across Winchester District, drawing attention to the appalling state our rivers are now in.

### **Excess Phosphates and Nitrates**

The volte face over the nutrient problem by the government, subsequently defeated by the lords, unfortunately provided only a declaration of intent, to do something at an undisclosed date in the future. Both local authorities and commercial concerns have been investing in measures to address excess nutrients for some time now. Householders and builders will have spent money on measures to allow their developments or domestic improvements to go ahead. A great example of how to upset so many sectors at a stroke.

The restrictions brought in requiring mitigation via planning only made an attempt to stop the problem getting worse, rather than addressing the causes.

However, Winchester Council is pressing ahead with very real measures to mitigate nutrients. We own 50 Waste Water Treatment Plants (WWTPs) across our estate, and work has been commissioned for Northington and Cheriton to clean up our discharges. This mitigation allows the council's own house building program to push ahead. This provides not only much needed additional housing, but also improves river quality, an example of 'joined-up' thinking.

Below is a report from Sophie Evingar of work with Bishop Sutton Parish Council. Please do contact Sophie direct if you think your parish would enjoy a presentation on similar lines. The talk of Water quality attracted an audience of about 40 – an excellent turnout for a parish of that size, especially one with a pub!. ((More joined-up thinking!))

### **Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2023**

WCC are undertaking a review of all polling stations, all parishes will be invited to comment, please do so with despatch. Local knowledge and experience is of great use to the officers, who only have a general familiarity of polling stations. We think all of ours are as good as they could be, but your local knowledge is key to making them better.

'Under the Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983 the council has a duty to divide its area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 (as amended) introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their polling districts and polling places at least once every five years.

Although the review is of polling districts and polling places, the Acting Returning Officer will also take the opportunity to review the location and suitability of polling stations at the same time.'

### **Another crash at the Cart and Horses!**

Yet another crash on the 27<sup>th</sup> September, thankfully with only minor injuries to one person and damage to vehicles. Ironically the Hampshire Chronicle published the next day, the result inquest of the fatal accident at this notorious junction on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022, in which someone was killed and another person badly injured. There has been a consultation on improvements. Progress is at a snail's pace.



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### **Nature Emergency declared by the Council on September 20th**

The motion put forward by Cllr Kelsie Learney, Cabinet Member for the Climate Emergency, recognises the impact that the climate crisis is having on wildlife and nature.

The motion asked council to declare a nature emergency, recognising that:

- Nature is in long term decline and urgent action must be taken to reverse this.
- A thriving natural environment underpins a healthy, prosperous society.
- The nature crisis and the climate emergency are intrinsically linked and that the impacts of the climate crisis drive nature's decline, while restoring nature can help to tackle the climate crisis.

Cllr Kelsie Learney outlined the work that the city council is undertaking already to restore nature: The Council's dedicated natural environment team and Biodiversity action plan which outlines targeted action to halt loss of habitat, the management of sites designated for nature conservation; the management of cemeteries and open spaces including chalk grassland habitats; the planting of wildflowers and ongoing protection of bats and birds with bird and bat boxes on council reroofing projects.

New policies have been proposed in the council's Regulation 18 Local Plan to protect nature – dedicated policies to enhance biodiversity, protect and support green and blue infrastructure, policies which protect trees, important hedgerows and ancient woodlands and policies to protect waterways.

There is clearer evidence every day of just how steep the decline of our natural environment actually is. WCC is taking the problem very seriously. The motion was passed!

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### **Bishops Sutton Chalk Stream Project**

Several village residents have launched a multifaceted project in Bishops Sutton, with support from the Wildlife Trust. The village is home to the source of the River Arle – a rare and precious chalk stream. After speaking with many residents at the summertime Village Fete, we learned that many community members are greatly interested in the stream, but don't feel that they know much about it.

A project group has since held two talks at Parish Council meetings, on chalk streams and septic tanks respectively (the village is entirely off-mains). Community members attended an invertebrate identification session on the riverbank. Volunteers installed wildlife cameras; sightings include a grey heron and possibly a visiting otter. Another resident is expanding the village website with information about the stream.

### **Sophie Evingar**

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