

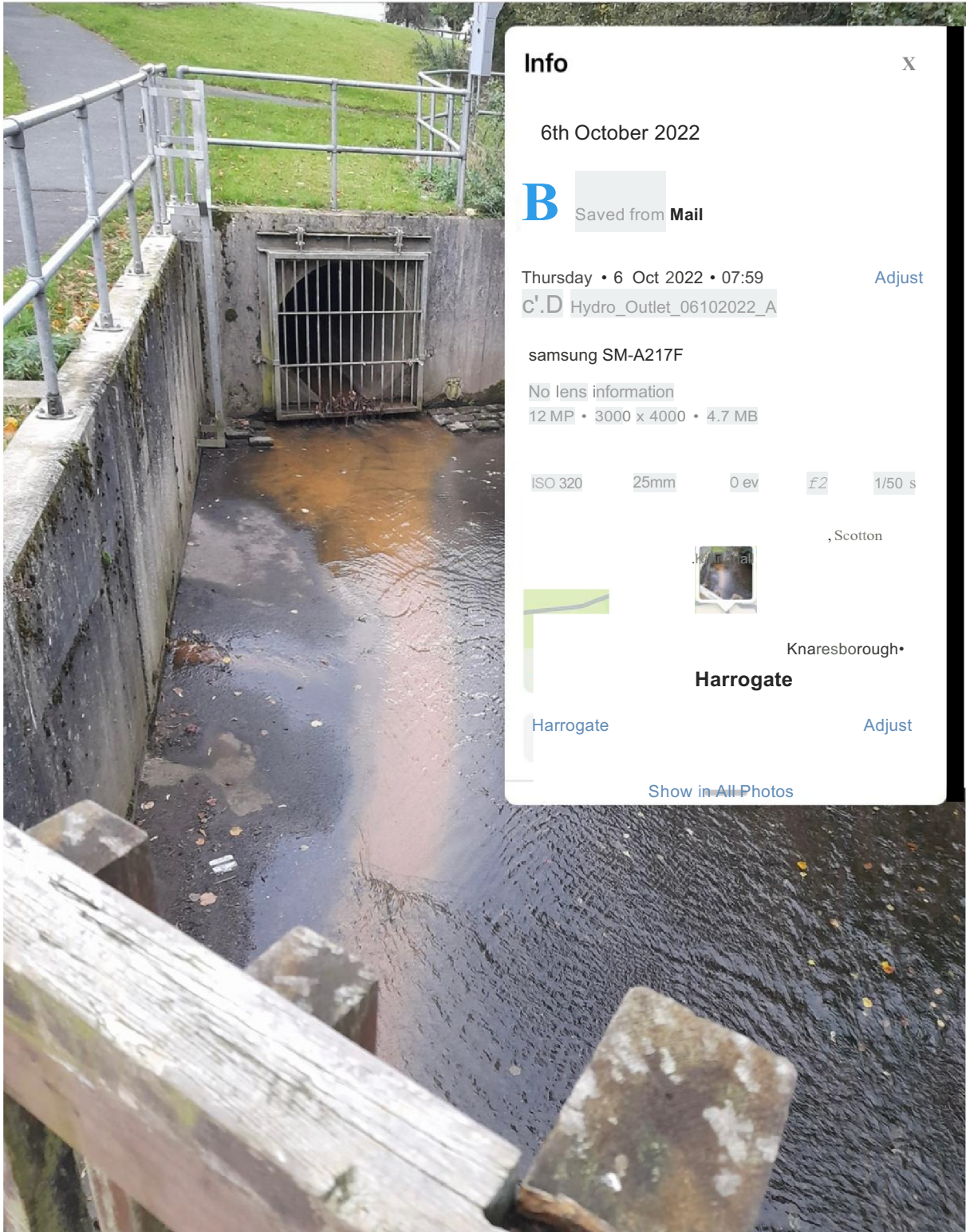
WATER POLLUTION IN HARROGATE

IN THE 21st CENTURY

RISKS TO PUBLIC HEALTH

AND THE WIDER ENVIRONMENT

HARROGATE HYDRO – downstream Storm Drain



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BILTON CONSERVATION GROUP

Honorary Chairman

Warren Considine



Honorary Secretary

Keith Wilkinson MBE

Established 19th May 1982

WATER QUALITY IN HARROGATE'S WATER COURSES

[the river Nidd and its main tributaries]

10th September 2022, in my view, is a watershed moment (pun intended) when we need to come together to use all the means at our disposal – Regulatory, Political and Voluntary, to bear down on the unacceptable state of our local watercourses.

The issues raised in this document are symptomatic of a wider malaise across the whole of the United Kingdom – from Lake Windermere to the Northeast Coast and all our rivers. For the purposes of this report, I am only focusing on Harrogate's main watercourses [Annex 001] and the impact of water pollution on the health of Harrogate District's citizens [Annexes 002, 002A, 003] and the quality of the wider environment.

Highlighting the problems now and developing a strategy to deal with them is most important at this time when Harrogate Borough Council is about to be dissolved and absorbed into the greater North Yorkshire County Council, some 50 kilometres away

CONTEXT:

19th century: by the 1890s Harrogate's watercourses were open sewers. Oak Beck and Bilton Beck (not culverted then) were "choked with sewage and dead dogs" and the local community protested at the instances of Diphtheria and the fear of outbreaks of Typhoid Fever [Enc book page 30].

20th century: 1900 AD saw the creation of a conventional Sewage Treatment Works (Harrogate Northern Outfall at Bilton) [Annex 005].

1854 – 1970: Harrogate Town Gas Works and, to a lesser extent, Harrogate Electricity Generating Station, frequently contaminated Oak Beck with discharges of toxic and/or thermal pollution.

1970: Natural Gas from the North Sea began to replace Town Gas Production and the risk of toxic sludge contaminating Oak Beck receded.

1982 – 2022: Forty years of conservation work on the Oak Beck and throughout Nidd

Gorge – by volunteers, supported by Harrogate Borough Council, saw an amazing recovery in the biodiversity of the watercourse itself and the disused quarry alongside which became a popular, small, semi-wild, urban park [102,000 hits on Google Earth in 2022] – [Annexes 006,007 and enclosures].

2010 – 2012: From a healthy peak in 2010 the Oak Beck has suffered intermittent setbacks most years from raw sewage escapes and building site run-off from the rapid expansion of Harrogate to the west [Annexes 008 – 024]

CURRENT CASE STUDY – 10th September 2022 (08.30 – 0849 + 10.15 onwards)

Incident 1: intermittent pollution in the form of a thick Ferric Oxide (?) sludge [Annex 013] and an oily, luminescent scum [Annex 017] appears to have killed fish from a point mid-way along the Old Gas Works abutment [A59] for 2.5 kilometres+ along the Oak Beck to Knox Ford and beyond – Brown Trout, Minnows, Bullheads, Stone Loach, and 3-spined Sticklebacks [Annexes 008 – 024]. There are unconfirmed reports of dead waterfowl, but I have no evidence of this (corpses may have been scavenged by foxes and corvids).

Incident 2: a second, later, discharge of raw sewage came from the downstream Storm Drain below Harrogate Hydro [Annex 014]. This was quite short lived but nevertheless very unwelcome.

STOP PRESS – see inside front cover 6th October 2022 [and Addendum 8th October 2022].

Investigations and outcomes

Yorkshire Water

YW's position appears to be that there was no escape of raw sewage because their water sampling was clear [Annex 022, 022A].

This may have been the case at that time because the sewage escape was later that day around 10.15 [Annex 014]. The primary pollution was a form of sludge and oil prior to 08.32 [Annex 017].

Q. Yorkshire Water has fixed CCTV monitors with telemetry at all these sensitive points along Oak Beck [Annexes 001A, 001B]. What do the recordings show between 7th and 11th September [and now between 5th and 7th October]?

Northern Gas Networks

NGN accepts that engineers were pumping toxic sludge when they dismantled the gasometer before 10th September (and since?), prior to clearance of the site – but state that this sludge was disposed of safely into the main sewer in accordance with standard protocols and none escaped into Oak Beck [Annexes 016A, 017, 023].

Q. What Planning Consents governed this project? What Risk Assessments were there? Have all constraints been complied with when working heavy plant on this site?

Environment Agency

As the first official representative to visit the site it is not clear what the EA investigator found and what conclusions were drawn [Annex 017B]. EA reference: 220927/SM09.

Lay Observations:

1. Toxic Sludge – is it possible that heavy plant movement on the old gasworks site, elevated high above the Oak Beck, caused ground movement leading to surface liquid escaping from two drainage points on the gasworks abutment above Oak Beck? [Annex 018]
2. Raw Sewage – There had been no heavy rainfall for months to account for the escape on 10th September [Annex 017C]. Was pumping sludge into the main sewer on the gasworks site responsible for the sewer backing up [then and since] and sewage escaping over the sill and out of the downstream Hydro Storm Drain? [Annex 014, and frontispiece].

THE WAY AHEAD

[Please consider these comments in the light of longstanding TESCO plans to develop this gasworks site as a Retail Park – and what that may mean in terms of ground disturbance and removal of x metres depth of contaminated soil down to a clean and inert stone substrate].

What conclusions do EA and YW draw from this? what lessons have been learnt and what future mitigation strategy is planned?

Recovering Biodiversity (2025)

Damage to wildlife and Public Confidence is done. It will take at least three pollution-free years and a thorough flushing of the Oak Beck from below the Hydro Storm Drain to the river Nidd before we see the return of significant fish life. Brown Trout are unlikely to spawn on this section before 2025 although mature fish from the Birk Crag section may migrate downstream to populate it if water and stream bed conditions permit.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP IN THE FUTURE

The Nidd Gorge Advisory Partnership (a forum of all interested parties: Harrogate Borough Council (NYCC from 1st April 2023?), other landowners, Knaresborough Town Council, Woodland Trust, CPRE, Knox Valley Residents Association, Bilton Conservation Group, Harrogate District Naturalists Society, Ramblers, Cyclists, and Dog Walkers) – was founded originally by Harrogate Borough Council in 1983 as ‘The Nidd Gorge Project’. It serves to balance the interests of wildlife, recreational use and livelihoods by meeting twice a year to discuss issues and resolve problems by consensus wherever possible. I would like to repeat my invitation to EA and YW to address the partnership and work together to arrest the decline in Harrogate’s watercourses.

Keith Wilkinson

Honorary Chairman – Nidd Gorge Advisory Partnership

Honorary Secretary – Bilton Conservation Group

E niddgorge@gmail.com

Encs: Newsletter Spring 2022, Newsletter Autumn 2022, Bilton Through The Ages (2019).

Acknowledgements: with thanks to all those local residents, retired professionals, Councillors, journalists, Bilton Conservation Group and Knox Valley Residents Association members and others who contributed reports and photographs – and Andrew Jones M.P. who responded so urgently in September 2022.

On-Line copies of this document will be made available to NGAP partners, Harrogate Civic Society and others on request [e.g. Pannal Parish Council, H.A.P.P.A.R.A. etc – see late Addendum].

Drone Footage (Nidd Gorge) courtesy of Kaj Metcalfe (Switzerland), Harrogate gasometer (Facebook).

Addendum: [Since completing this report on 6th October 2022 there has been another pollution incident in Oak Beck [8th October 2022 and ongoing]. Judging by the colour and appalling stench it is being caused by seasonal, agricultural, slurry spreading.

It is too late now to modify the general thrust of this report, but I would like to pose the following proposition for the for recipients to consider: -

‘Harrogate Three Rivers Project 2022 – 2032’

The deteriorating condition of Harrogate’s watercourses is now so serious that restoring and maintaining the quality of Harrogate’s three rivers (sic) Oak Beck, Crimple Beck and river Nidd is a major task,

Is it not time for the narrower focus of the Nidd Gorge Advisory Partnership to be expanded into ‘Harrogate Three Rivers Project 2022 – 2032’ in the form of a Trust or other less formal grouping?

This would capture the support of those groups to the west who are involved in conserving the Crimple Beck. Such a project could view Harrogate’s water quality problems holistically and better focus the energy and resources of the Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water and the multiple voluntary and amenity groups.

LIST OF ANNEXES

| | | | |
|------|---------------------------------------|------|--|
| 001 | Harrogate Main Rivers | 023A | YW – no reply to enquiry 10/02/22 |
| 001A | Oak Beck – Gasometer schematic | 024 | YW – Foul Water escapes 2021 Harrogate |
| 001B | Oak Beck – Timeline 10/09/22 | 025 | NGAP – Invitation to EA/YW |
| 002 | Raw Sewage – Biohazard? | 026 | EA – Fines Awarded 2021 |
| 002A | U.K. Water Pollution | 027 | Angling Times 2020 |
| 003 | Gasworks Liquor | 028 | Proposals to OFWAT 30/09/22 |
| 004 | Oak Beck – buildings run-off 30/09/22 | 029 | Knaresborough Post – 06/10/22 |
| 005 | Harrogate’s 7 Sewage Works | 030 | YW - £350,000 fine August 2016 |
| 006 | Oak Beck Park – Local Green Space | 031 | YW - £15.2M fine 2022 |
| 006A | Oak Beck - Biodiversity | 032 | YW – 36,000 hrs of discharges 2020 |
| 006B | Oak Beck – Fish Species | 033 | EA – Policy October 2022 |
| 007 | Nidd Gorge – Oak Beck confluence | 034 | YW – New Commitments 2016 |
| 008 | Hydro Storm Drain – 01/08/16 | 035 | Knaresborough – Nidd E-coli |
| 009 | Hydro Storm Drain – 15/01/17 | 036 | Harrogate- Population Increase 2021 |
| 011 | Oak Beck/River Nidd 2017-2019 | 037 | EA – Funding Cuts |
| 011A | Oak Beck – 08.30 10/09/22 | 038 | EA – Staff Discipline Issues |
| 012 | Oak Beck – 08.49 10/09/22 | 039 | Angling Trust Report - 2020 |
| 013 | Oak Beck – 08.55 10/09/22 | 040 | EA – Report 2014 |
| 014 | Hydro Storm Drain – 10.15 10/09/22 | 041 | Knaresborough – Nidd Pollution 2020 |
| 015 | Oak Beck – 13.30 10/09/22 | 042 | EA – Slurry Regulations March 2022 |
| 016 | Oak Beck – 13.31 10/09/22 | 043 | Oak Beck – Complaint 05/07/21 |
| 017 | Oak Beck – 17.18 17/09/22 | 044 | Darley – Nidd Pollution |
| 017A | Harrogate Advertiser 20/09/22 | 045 | Northern Gas Networks - Policy |
| 017C | EA 2021 – River Nidd Pollution Report | | |
| 018 | Oak Beck – leaks from gasworks | | |
| 019 | Oak Beck – Knox Ford 13/09/22 | | |
| 020 | Oak Beck A59 – dead fish report | | |
| 021 | YW – FOI request 13/09/22 | | |
| 022 | YW – Pollution investigation 13/09/22 | | |
| 023 | Oak Beck – 09.08 17/09/22 ongoing | | |

NGN Environmental Aspects

Aspect The elements of NGN's activities, products and services that can interact with the environment, e.g. an emission, Oil.

Impact Changes to the environment (adverse and beneficial) resulting from an aspect, e.g. air pollution caused by an emission.

NGN's Environmental Aspects and Impacts have been identified through analysis as outlined in [NGN/PM/SHE61 Environmental Management](#).

There is a risk that any of NGN's environmental aspects could have a negative impact on the environment and harm the company's image despite not being classified as significant. For this reason, all aspects must be managed and planning action put in place where necessary. Procedures must be followed to minimise any risks as much as possible.

Significant Environmental Aspects

In accordance with NGN/PM/SHE61, environmental aspects are awarded a significance score rating (up to a maximum of 25) based on their likelihood or occurrence and potential severity, with the following guidance:

- Significance score 15+ = significant;
- Significance score 20+; must be managed with a specific programme.

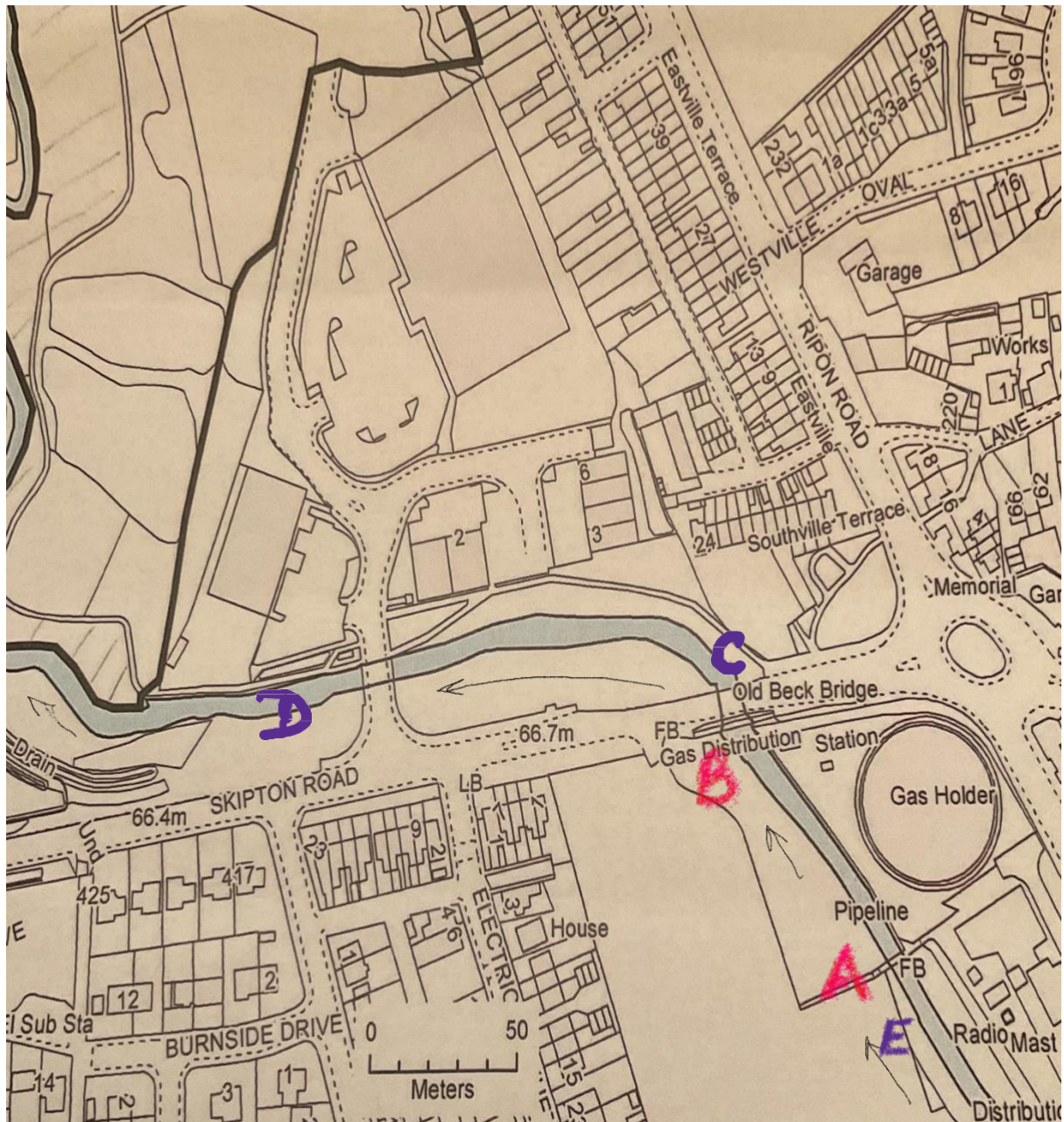
Based on NGN's latest Environmental Aspects and Impacts Register (dated September 2017), the following significant aspects were identified:

| Aspect | Impact | Significance Rating |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Use of Virgin Materials | Depletion of resources | 16 |
| PE pipe production | Depletion of resources | 15 |
| Use of G, H | Depletion of resources, Air pollution (including contribution of greenhouse gases) | 20 |
| Venting Gas | Air pollution (including contribution of greenhouse gases). Nuisance (noise and odour) | 15 |
| Use of Electricity | Depletion of resources, Air pollution (including contribution of greenhouse gases) | 20 |
| Use of Fuel | Depletion of resources, Air pollution (including contribution of greenhouse gases) | 15 |
| Gas Transportation | Air pollution (including contribution of greenhouse gases), Nuisance (odour) | 15 |
| Traffic Management | Air pollution (including contribution of greenhouse gases), Nuisance | 20 |
| Contaminated land | Water pollution, Land Pollution, legal compliance with environmental regulations EPA 1990. Nuisance to adjacent sites | 15 |



Oak Beck (classed as 'main river' by EA) drains west to east into the river Nidd. It is North Harrogate's main drainage channel.

Crimple Beck (classified as 'main river' by EA) drains west to east into the river Nidd. It is South Harrogate's main drainage channel.



Since the Oak Beck was running clear below the Footbridge [A] when the beck was polluted from above Footbridge [B] it would appear that the toxic contaminants entered at some point between A and B on or before 08.00, Saturday 10th September 2022.

Details of the event will have been recorded on Yorkshire Water's fixed CCTV cameras at [C], [D] and [E] which relay their images to YW by telemetry in real time.



Dismantling Harrogate's Last Gasometer – September 2022 [Facebook]

Dangers Of Raw Sewage Exposure - Is Raw Sewage A Biohazard?

Raw sewage is a special subject, I ask Wondering what kind of diseases can Raw sewage cause? Just how dangerous is it? If you get exposed to Raw Sewage?

In this guide you will learn:

- What Types of Hazards are Raw Sewage
- Diseases Of Raw Sewage which can do to your health
- Your home
- Diseases Caused by Raw Sewage
- Raw sewage exposure symptoms & should you be
- Clean up raw sewage your own



We will also cover what steps to take to clean up raw sewage spills and how to handle them properly.

What Is Raw Sewage - Is It A Biohazard?

Raw sewage is water or sludge that contains excrement from industrial release and debris, such as toilet paper and plastic.

Raw sewage is a toxic biohazard. Raw sewage can contain harmful bacteria, such as fecal coliform and E. Coli.

Raw sewage often contains organic substances, including chemicals and poisons. That is why it should be kept away from the municipal sewer systems to be processed and treated.

Because of the odor or harmful physical effects, raw sewage can be very harmful to your health.

Dangers Of Raw Sewage

Sewage and wastewater contain bacteria and viruses that can cause many illnesses.

One of the most serious risks of sewage is leptospirosis and with bacteria it would be tetanus.

Coming in contact with raw sewage can be extremely harmful if you are not being careful.

The main way of contracting an infection is through hand-to-mouth contact or through splashes, so always wear protective gear when necessary.

Raw sewage is a health hazard even in small doses. With a sewage spill there will be bacteria and viruses and pathogens with the raw sewage that are extremely harmful.

No cleaning up a sewage spill is a serious illness and spreading of

Water Pollution 2022

Water pollution: How clean are the UK's rivers and lakes?

By Esme Stallard
BBC News

13 Jan | [Science & Environment](#)

England's rivers are contaminated by a "chemical cocktail" of sewage, agriculture and road pollution, according to MPs.

Microplastics, slurry, car tyre particles, oils and wet wipes are all part of the problem, they said.

» [**No English river free of pollution, MPs warn**](#)

Why do we need to protect our water?

High quality water is key both to our survival and that of the environment.

Each person in the UK uses around 140 litres of water a day for washing, drinking and cooking.

The water we use in our homes is safe, but increased pollution means more intensive treatment is required, which raises household bills.

Contamination also threatens water sources crucial for the survival of wildlife, the natural environment and the food system.

According to the Wildlife Trusts, **rising pollution levels place 10% of freshwater and wetland species at risk of extinction**. In Wales and England, **38% of fish health checks are failed** due to disease caused by pollution.

THE BACTERIAL PURIFICATION OF GASWORKS' LIQUORS. THE ACTION OF THE LIQUORS ON THE BACTERIAL FLORA OF SEWAGE.

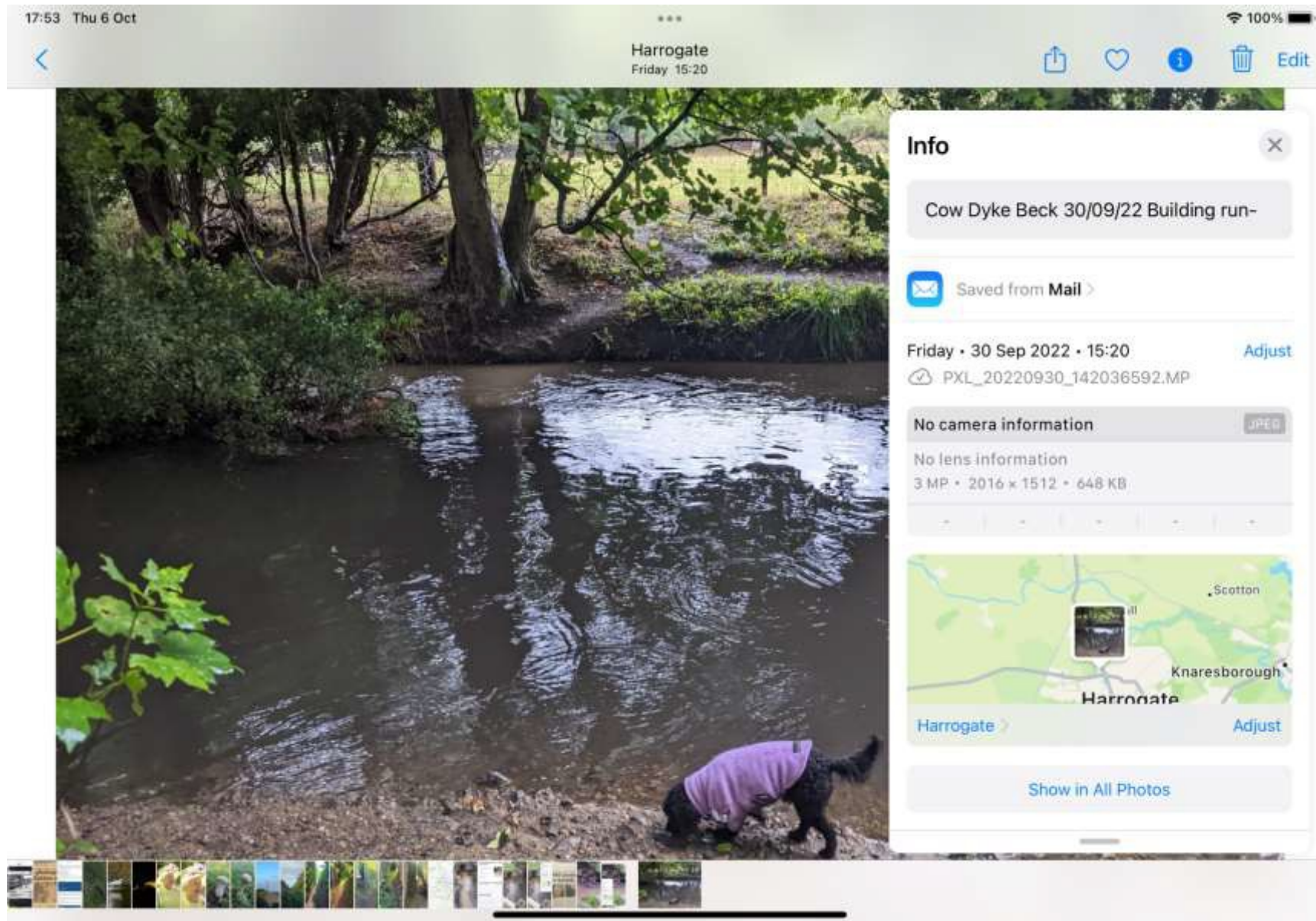
BY FRANK CHARLES HAPPOLD AND ARTHUR KEY.

(From the Department of Pathology and Bacteriology, and the Department of Coal Gas and Fuel Industries, the University of Leeds.)

For some time it has been a common practice to purify the spent liquor resulting from the recovery of ammonia from gasworks' ammonia liquor by methods which involve the principle of mixing the liquor with sewage and allowing the mixture to percolate through bacteria beds. In the majority of cases the purification takes place at the local sewage treatment works, the spent liquor being mixed with the whole of the town's sewage, amounting, on the average, to about 200 times the volume of the liquor. This is a satisfactory way of purifying the liquor, and provided the sewage works is of sufficient capacity, little difficulty is experienced. In some cases, however, the sewage works is not of a sufficient size to be able to deal with the spent liquor without prior purification. In a few cases, in order to effect this, percolating filters have been installed at the gasworks, as, for instance, at Coventry, where the present work had its origin. By the term "purify," gas engineers have largely envisaged the removal of phenolic and other bodies, which, when discharged into streams, might render them poisonous to fish life, either through the removal of dissolved oxygen, or because of a direct toxic action.

It is known that the phenolic bodies in spent gasworks' liquor are gradually destroyed when the liquor is mixed with sewage and passed through percolating filters. Fowler, Arden and Lockett (1910) isolated from bacteria beds so treated two organisms, one of which, *Bacillus helvolus*, they stated caused the oxidation of phenol. The organism was a Gram-negative bacillus which would not grow at temperatures above 30° C. They considered that the purification in the beds was due to a bacteriological oxidation. Harowitz Wlassowa (1930) suggested that this decomposition of phenol in waste waters is not a biological process, but takes place by a purely chemical process of oxidation if the liquid is aerated in the presence of wood carbon. Our own view based on previous experience (Happold and Raper, 1925) is that, while this might be so with phenolic substances having two hydroxy groups in the ortho position, it is unlikely with monohydric phenols unless the system contains ferrous salts and can produce hydrogen peroxide (Martinon, 1885).

In a previous communication (Happold, 1930) it was shown (a) that, amongst a large number of oxidase containing bacteria, *Vibrio tyrosinatica*



Sand and silt from building site run-off entering Oak Beck

SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS
IMPACTING ON THE RIVER NIDD

[west to east]

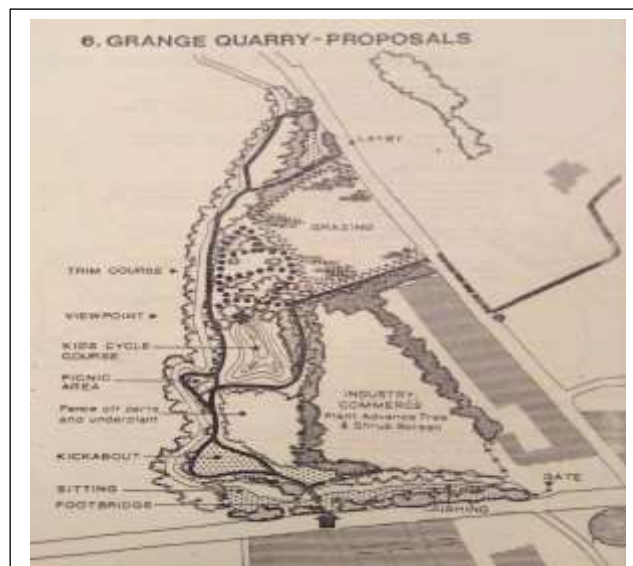
Pateley Bridge – Menwith Hill – Darley
Ripley - Harrogate North (Bilton) – Knaresborough
Harrogate South (Spofforth)





OAK BECK PARK

Oak Beck Park is a designated Local Green Space at present in the ownership of Harrogate Borough prior to transfer to the new Unified Local Authority – North Yorkshire County Council on 1st April 2023. It is a popular and well visited park and is normally a safe environment for families and children unless the beck is in flood or contaminated with toxic discharges. Apart from five species of native fish, the park supports Roe Deer, Fox, Badger, Heron, Kingfisher, Dipper, Tawny Owl and Sparrowhawk along with three species of amphibia, three orchids, bluebells and a wildflower meadow. It sits on a disused sandstone quarry and has been managed by volunteers in the interests of wildlife and recreation since 1986.



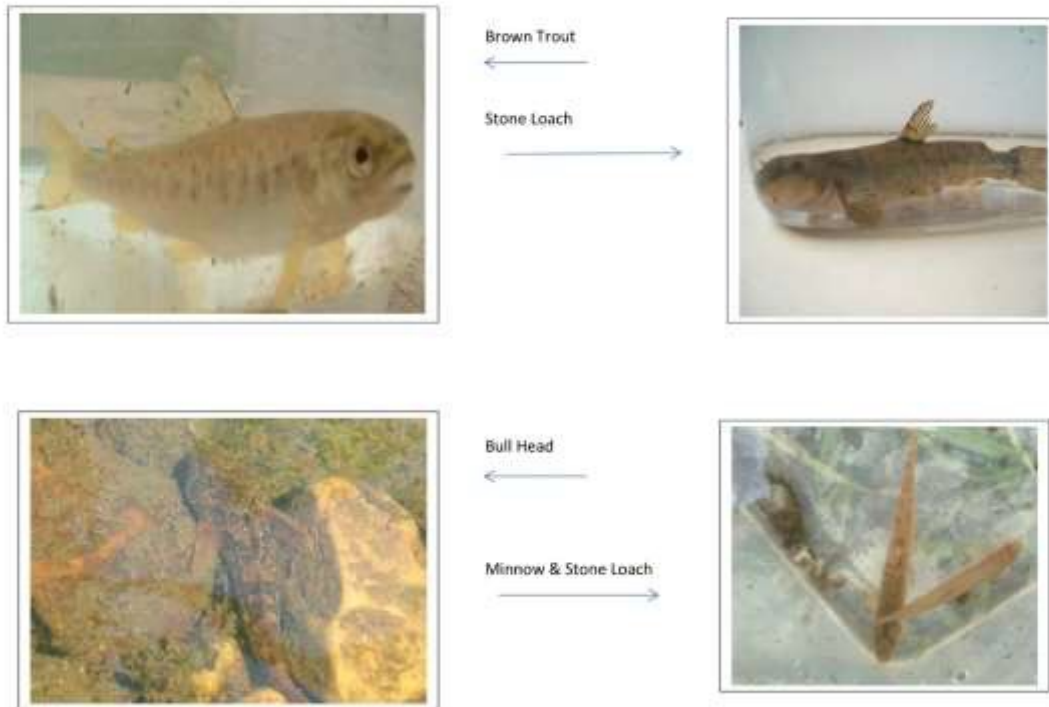
Images of Oak Beck Park have attracted 120,000+ 'hits' on Google Earth since 2019,

Oak Beck, overview

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| Corm'rion E;i;il | <i>Anguilla tmguilla</i> | Ocusiomil siShlings | - |
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Oak Beck, overview

Annex 006B



One of the great success stories of the last 40 years is the evidence of Brown Trout making their way throughout the watercourse and breeding in most years as the water quality improved (1970 – 2010). However, large sewage and other toxic escapes since 2012 have severely impacted the prospects for all fish downstream of the Hydro Storm Drain. Ironically May 2022 saw substantial shoals of small fry – possibly the best since 2018 – but the events of 10th September 2022 have eliminated that generation.



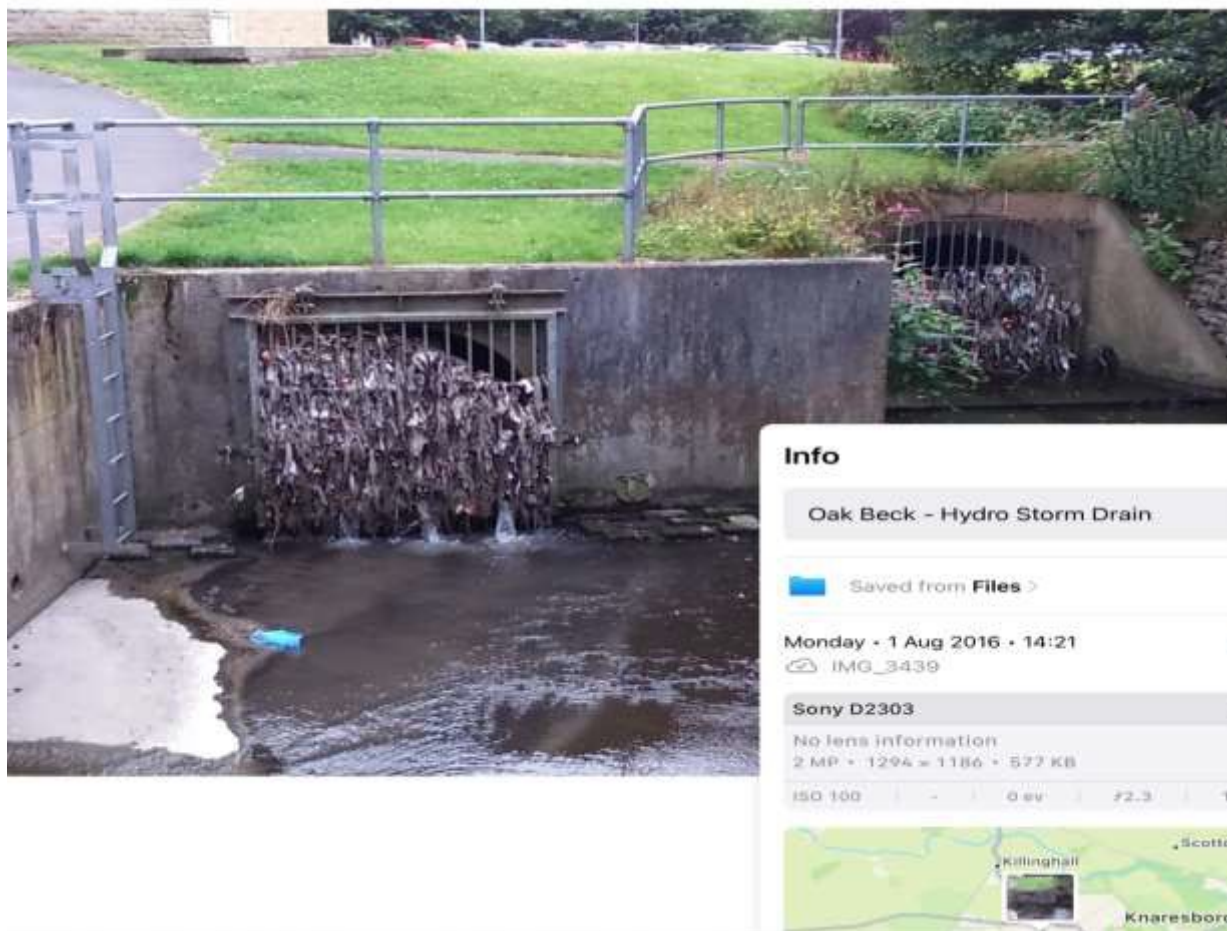
[The pollution images are from Oak Beck, Oak Beck Park – 10th September 2022 at 13.30 hours].

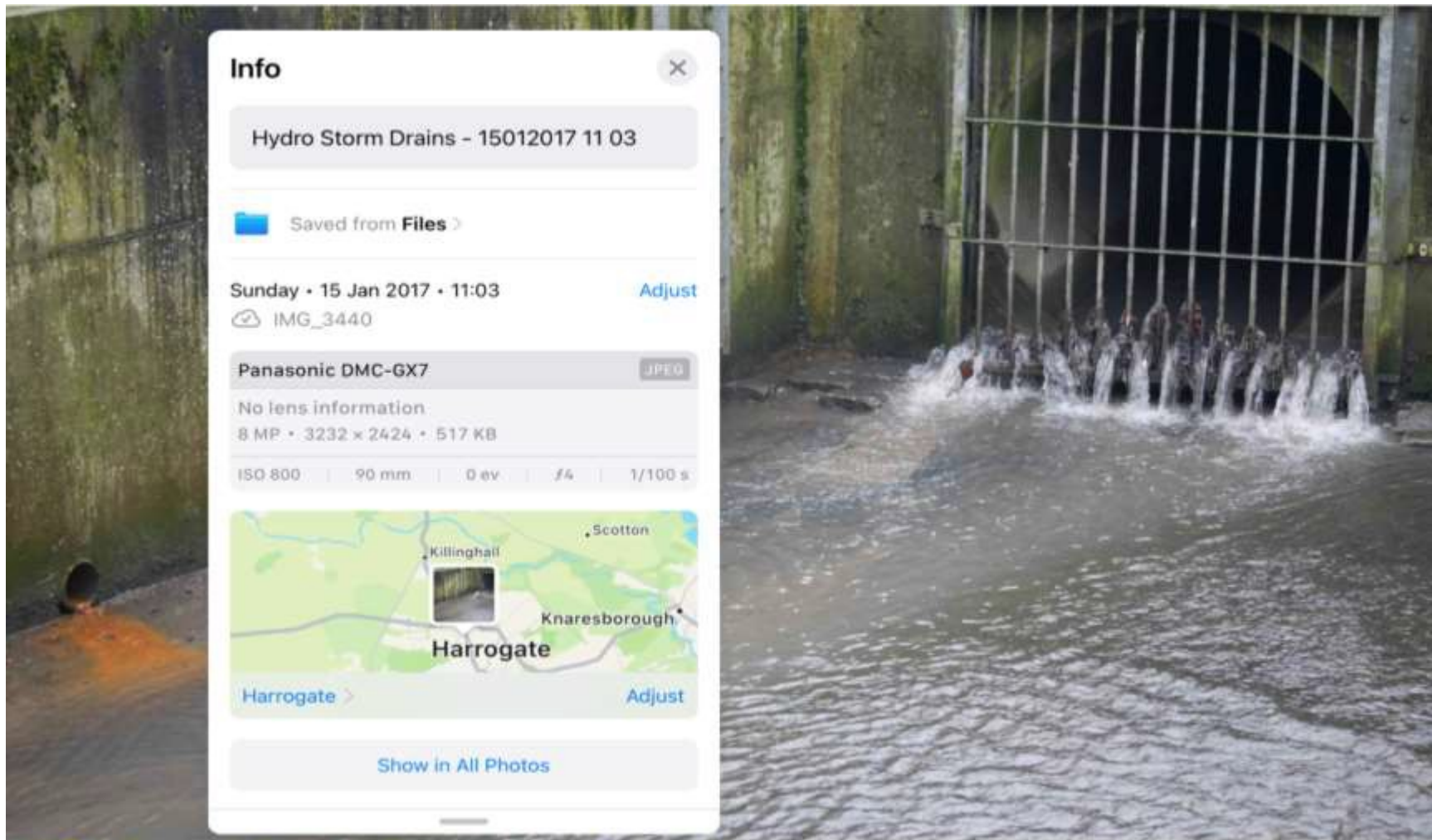


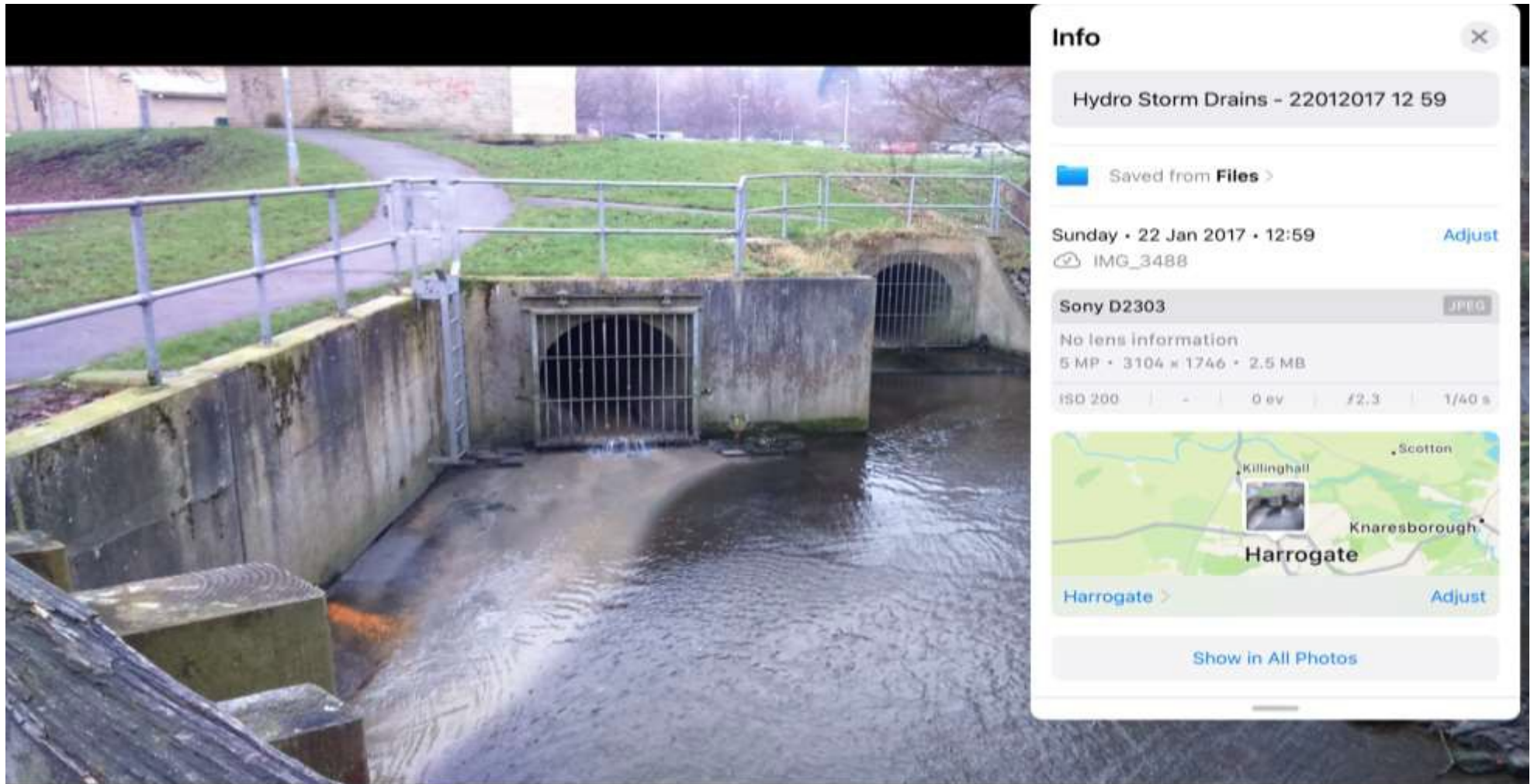
OAK BECK

Hydro Storm Drains – 1st August 2016.

ANNEX 008







RAW SEWAGE ESCAPES – HARROGATE NORTH

1. OAK BECK (& thence to river Nidd)

The perennial problem in New Park is discharge of raw sewage into the Oak Beck to the rear of The Hydro, Swimming Baths (see separate image). 'Solids' + 'grey water' (both toxic) are washed over the protective cill below ground and out through the Storm Grills into the Beck.

Yorkshire Water go in every other year to remove circa 10 tonnes of accumulated solids (+attendant fly maggots and vermin) trapped up to 1.2 metres deep behind the grills.

ROOT OF PROBLEM

This lies below the Hydro, where the former Coppice Beck is culverted before it discharges into Oak Beck (see image). Harrogate, like many towns, has 'dual flow' sewerage which relies on utilising existing stream water to help flush its sewage through the system. Whether Coppice Beck and/ or Kings Road Beck, or simply surface water from the drains on Ripon Road link into the sewage system here I am not sure – but all is well in normal conditions, when the 'safety cill' – a shelf holding back floating solids from escaping via the overflow and storm grill into the Beck. However, at times of exceptionally heavy rain the safety system is overcome – solids pile up behind the storm grill and eventually escape ((see image). An undesirable slick of 'grey water' is seen frequently.

YW inherited the late-Victorian infrastructure after privatisation and is reluctant to undertake the huge investment that exploring and modernising the sub-ground system would require (£6M has been suggested to me).

Meanwhile Harrogate is expanding rapidly to the south and west, placing increasing burdens in an already overloaded sewerage system.

Harlow Hill (area) will, I believe, send its sewage to the Southern Outfall at Spofforth, but A59/Pennypot/Killinghall developments (2021) will still discharge towards Harrogate Northern Outfall (Bilton Sewage Works) – which I believe is operating at maximum capacity already.

Long-term discussions about re-routing ALL Harrogate's sewage to Southern Outfall, Spofforth and eliminating Bilton Sewage Works have (I believe) been ruled out as prohibitively expensive without huge Government Subsidy.

2. River Nidd – Bilton

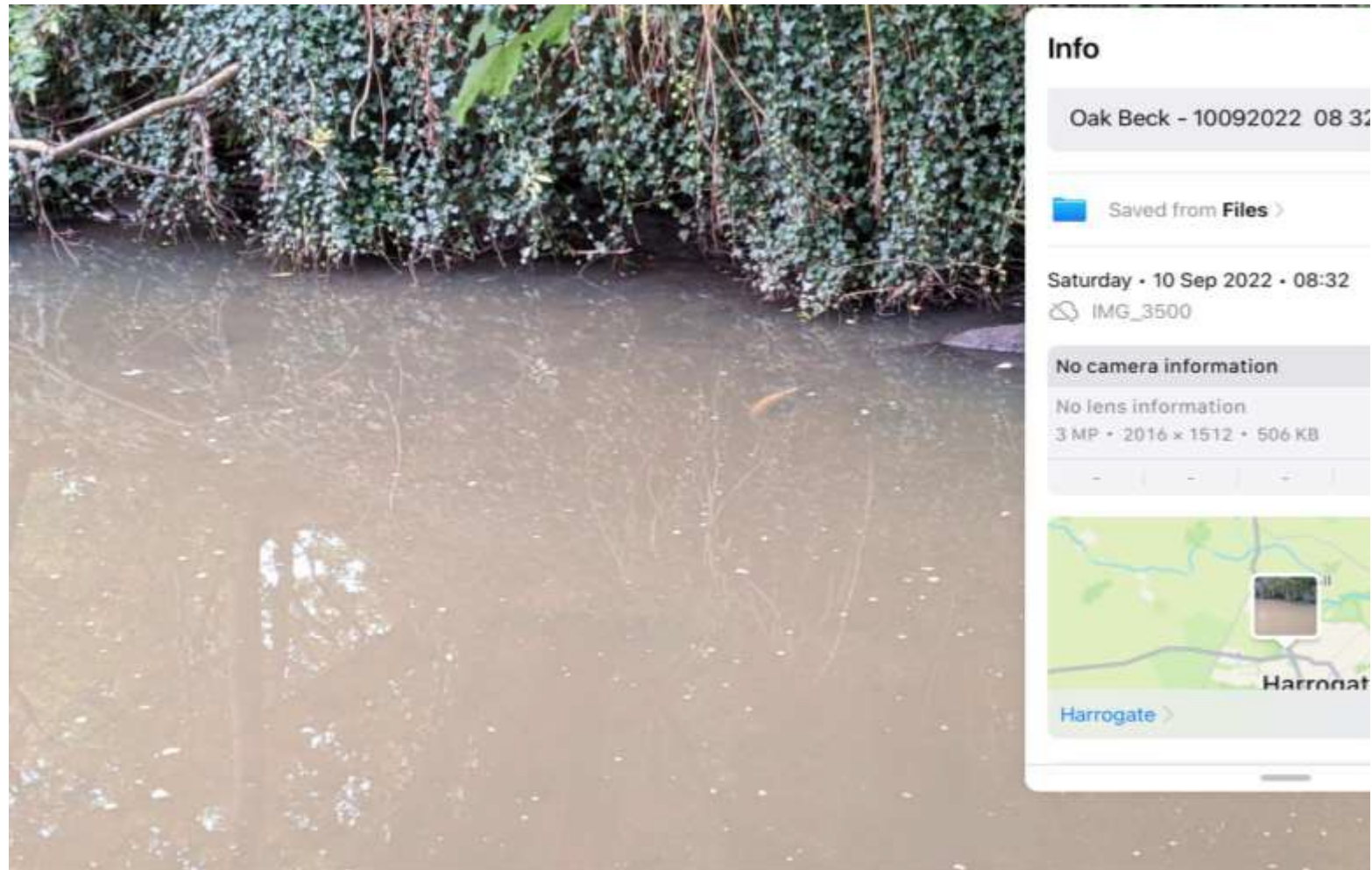
In normal conditions the final discharge from Northern Outfall (Bilton) is clear water – albeit with a minor element of thermal pollution with the water being at a slightly elevated temperature after the sewage digestion/filtration process to remove solids and pathogens. Although the outputs are not potable water they are clear and non-toxic. I believe they are tested by a bio-chemist once a fortnight. Solids are removed of course after being de-watered to 6% and tinkered to Esholt for burning.

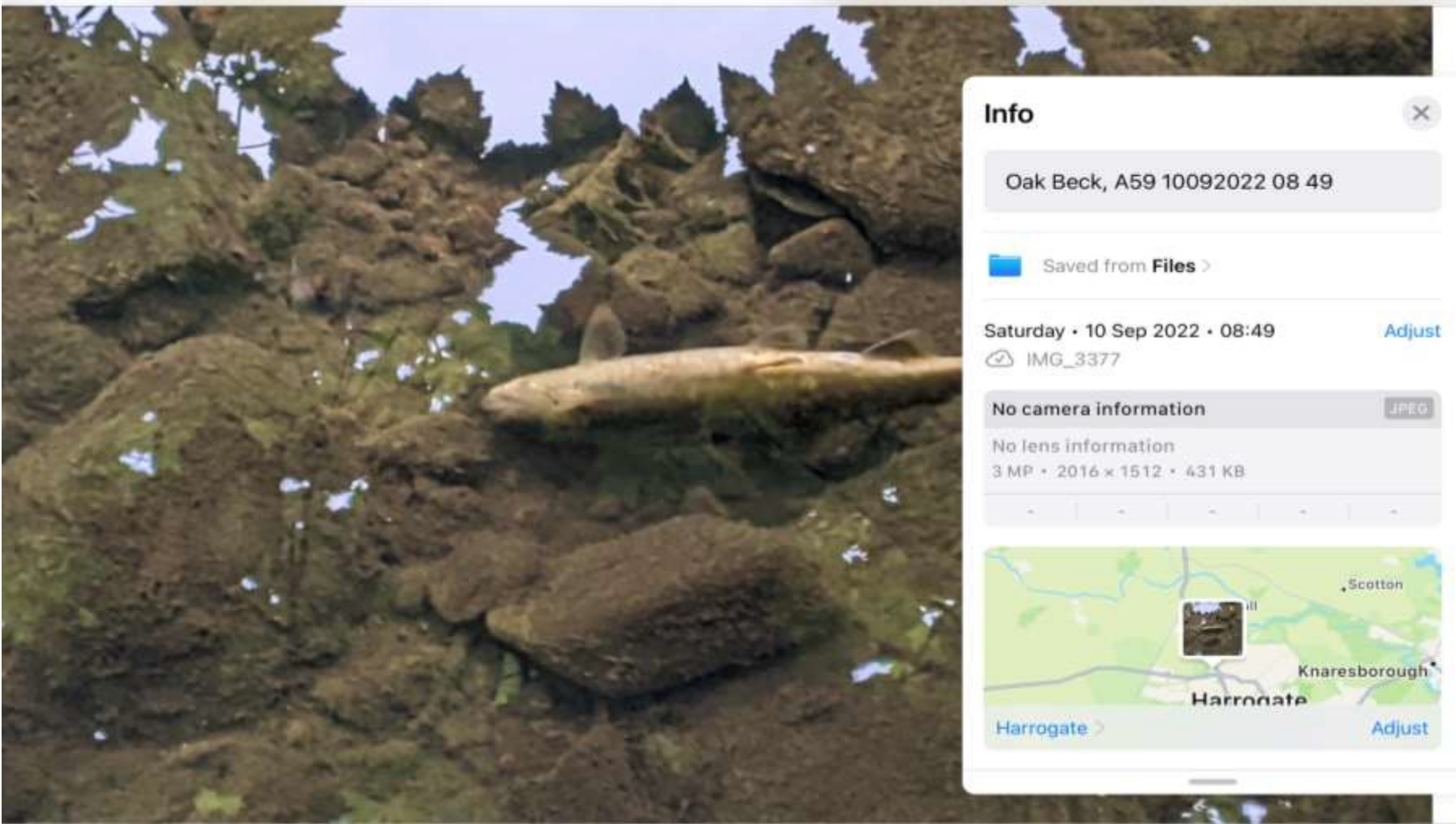
I have not had any reports of raw sewage escapes at Bilton- but at times of heavy rains (circa 2017/2018/2019) the riverside trees in Nidd Gorge have been festooned with multi-coloured condoms & sanitary products – implying escapes of raw sewage somewhere in the system (but not necessarily Bilton?).

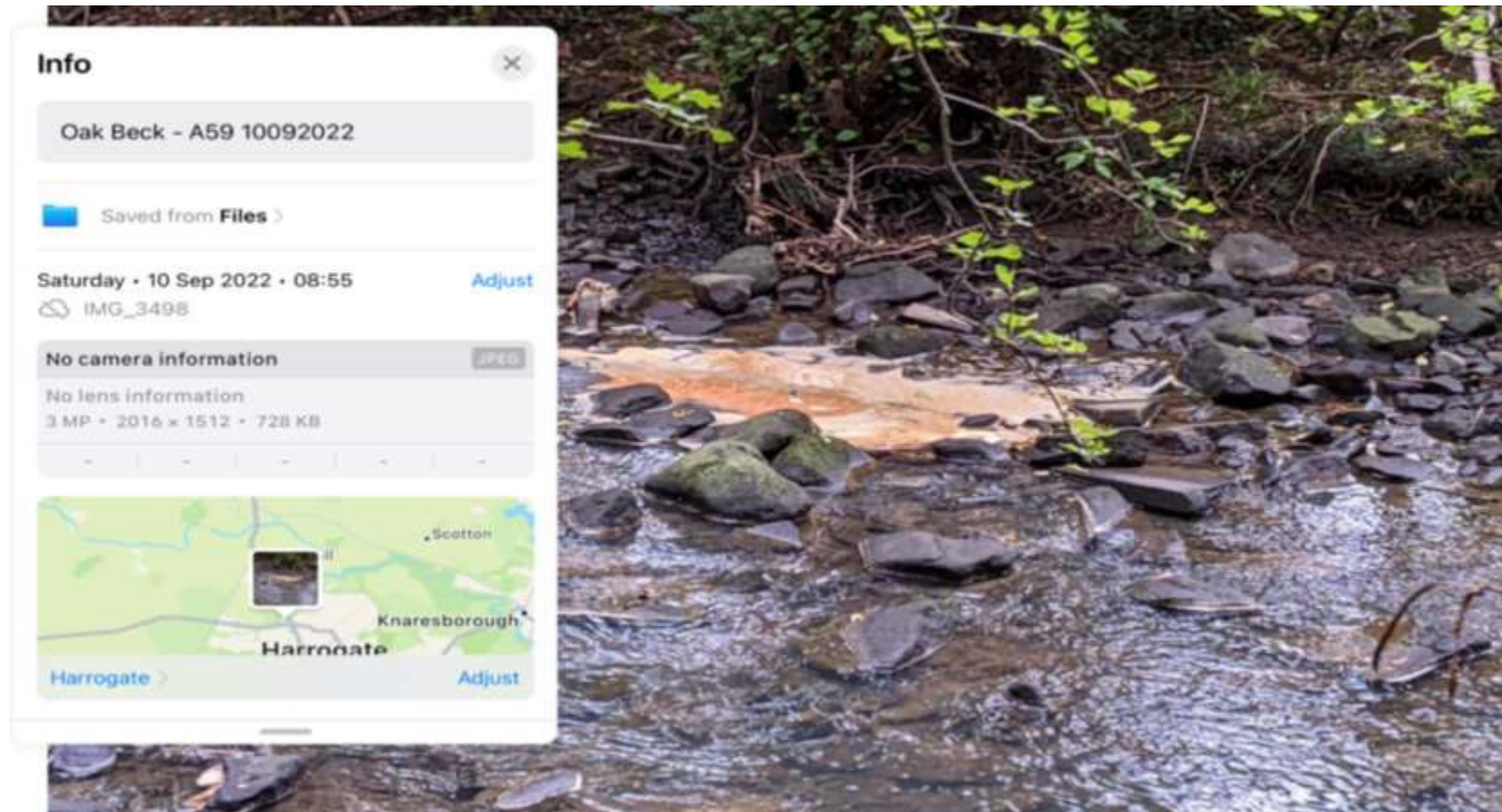


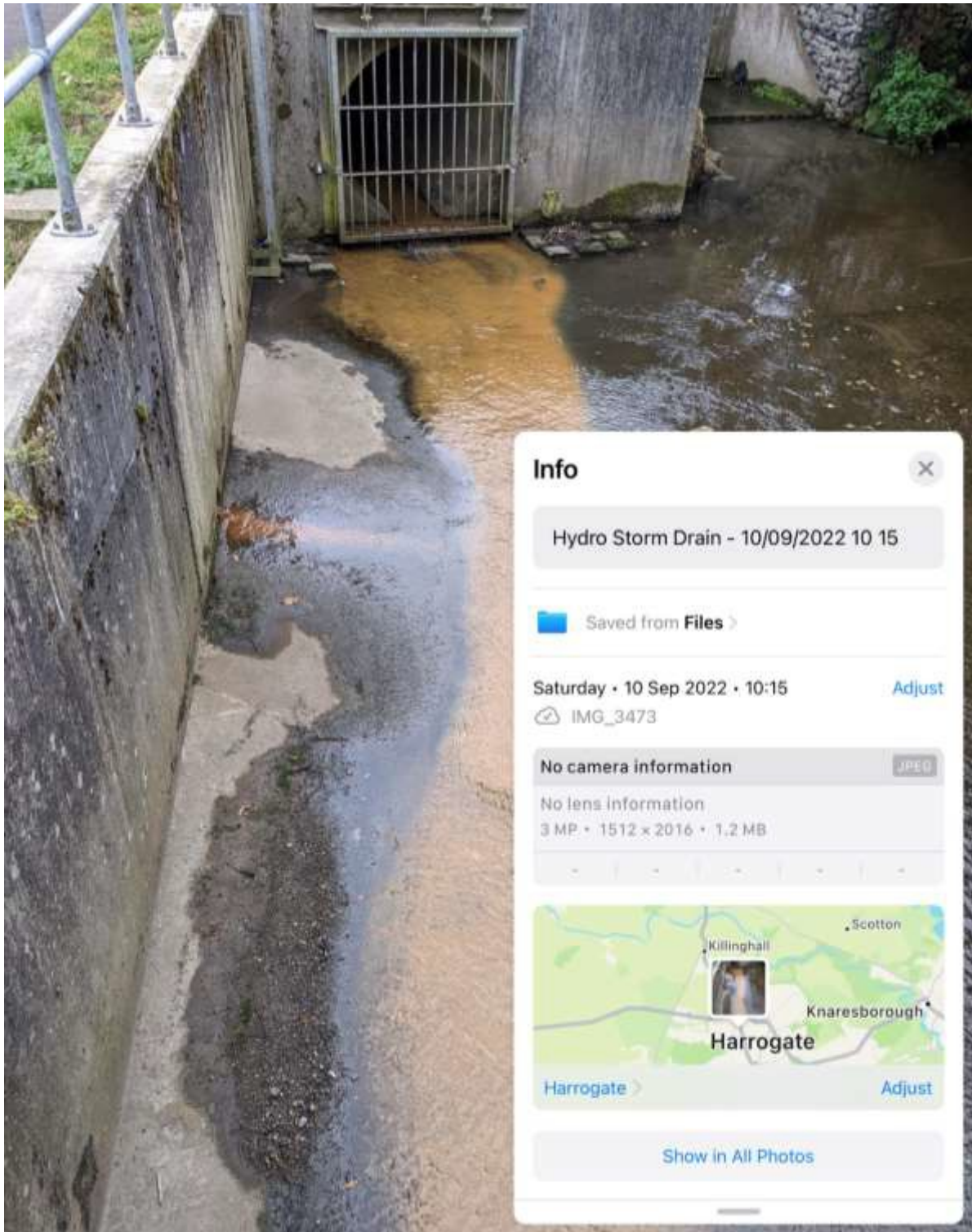
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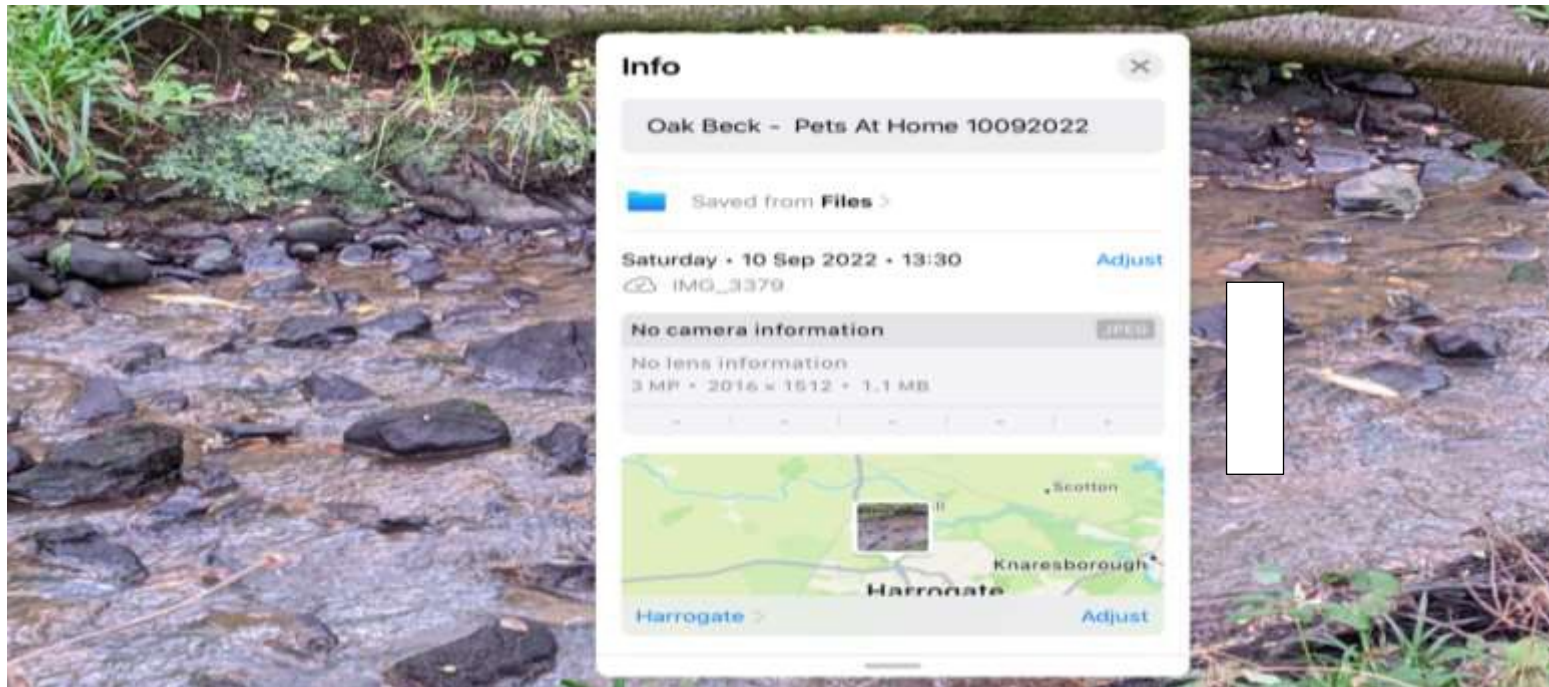
ANNEX 011A

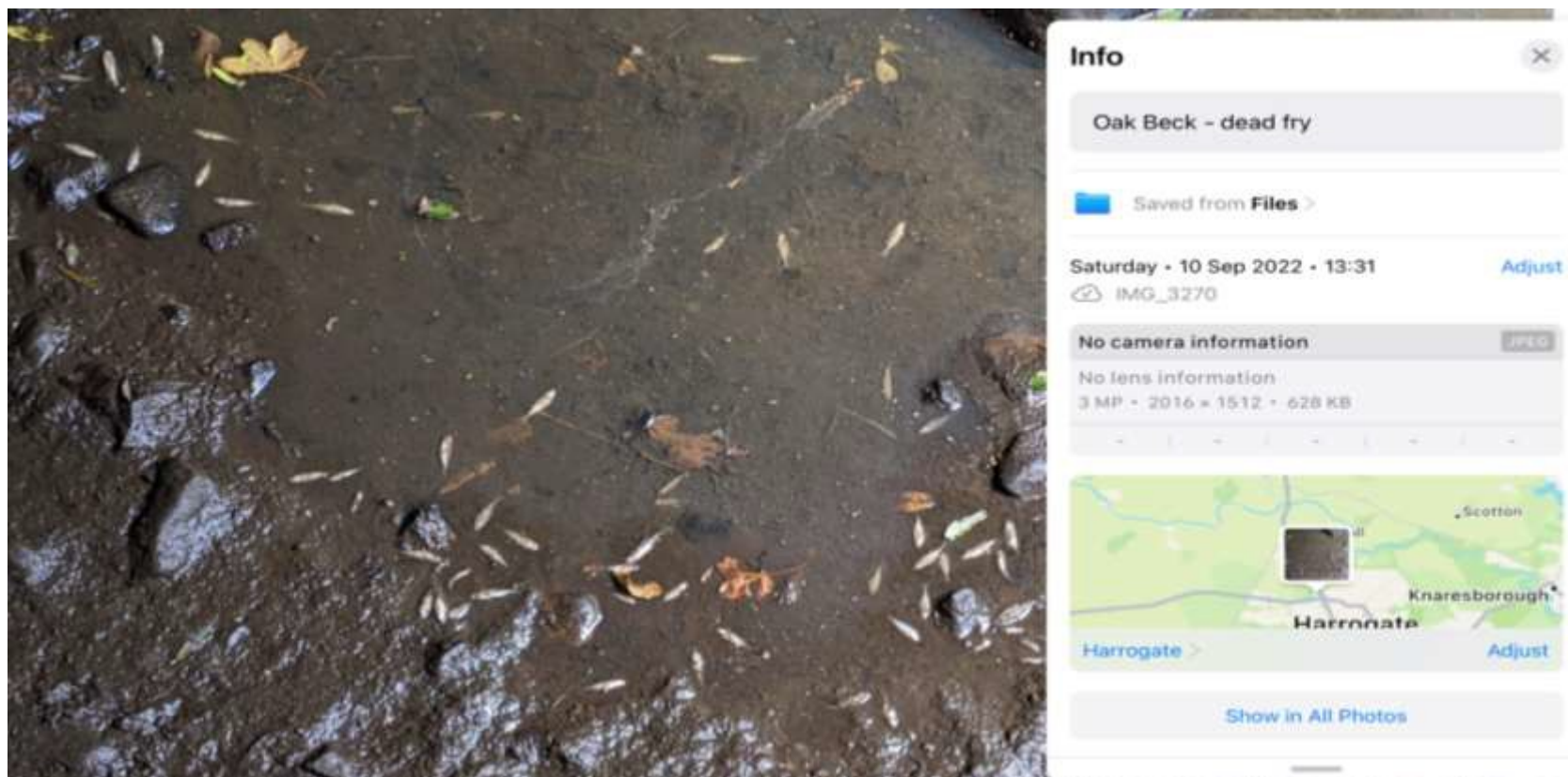


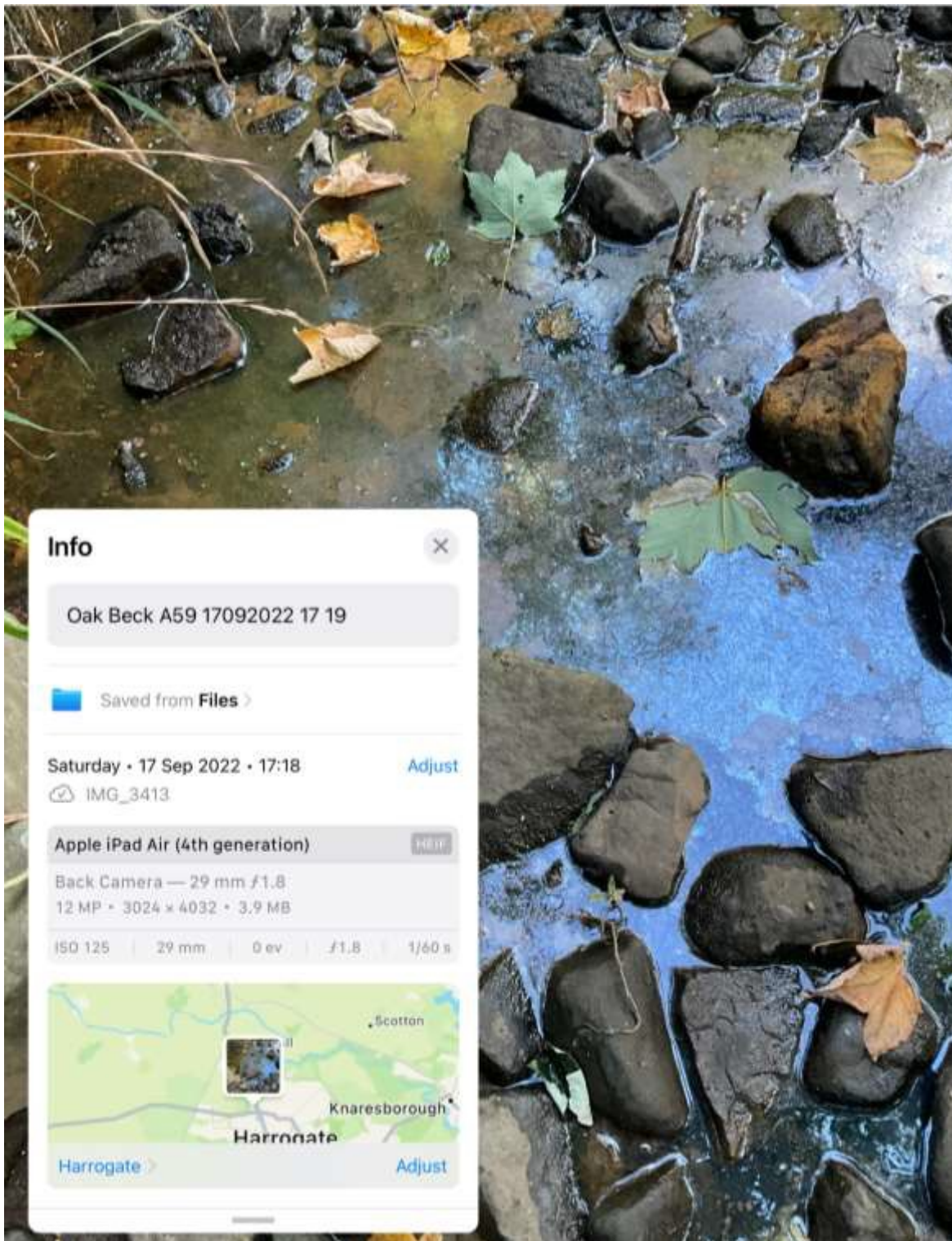












Thursday, September 29, 2022 harrogateadvertiser

NEWS

Reader's photographs show pollution at beck

Graham Chalmers
graham.chalmers@harrogateadvertiser.com

A Harrogate Advertiser reader has thrown light on the recent unidentified pollution incident in Harrogate.

After sending our Tory councillor, Cllr Andrew Jones, calling for urgent action by the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water after a unidentified pollution spill into Oak Beck, resident Adrian Davy sent us his photographs of the scene.

The Harrogate Advertiser's intervention following the discovery by Bilton conservationist Keith Wilkin on MBE, who chairs the Nidd Gorge Advisory Partnership, who had noticed that the

colour and that hundreds of fish had died and were floating in the River Nidd.

But this is not the first time that discharges have caused environmental concerns at Oak Beck.

In 2016 Councillor Matthew Webber (LibDem, New Park) raised the issue of raw sewage in Oak Beck local area near to the Jennyfields area and head toward the river Nidd alongside the Knox Mill area. A spokesperson for Yorkshire Water admitted at the time that: "The sewer network in the area is very complicated; underground spring under the pipes and the various pipes that have been wrongly connected to it."

"We have an ongoing management agreement with the Environment Agency about



Reader's picture showing pollution at Oak Beck.

how we look after it." "Taking all the time, the Environment Agency said:

"The Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water have previously investigated issues

of discolouration and sewage fungus at Oak Beck thought to be caused by one or more

missed sewer connections. "Whatever the culprit of the unidentified spill, it is a disgrace for the time round, Andrew Jones is keen to see real

"This is not the first time we have seen pollutants dumped into Oak Beck," said Mr Jones.

"I am keen that those responsible face a substantial penalty for doing so."

Mr Jones added he had written to the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water who are investigating the issue to determine the source.

It is believed The Environment Agency or Yorkshire Water previously installed monitoring equipment at the Hydro outlet, an outlet close to John Lloyds Fitness Centre and the outlet at road bridge over the A59.

From: Enquiries, Unit <MQulries@environmen1-ag_Y,q2\l.Jlls>
Sent: Tuesday, September 27, 2022 2:22:50 PM
To: 'sschlendorfer@ouuook.com'<sschlendorfer@ouuook.com>
Subject: 220927/\$M09 FW: Update please on environmental disaster

GoodAfternoon Sandra,

We will no longer give individual feedback on incident reports and we will be unable to investigate all reports made to us. This is because we have received less funding for responding to incidents and our priority has to be on those incidents that present a higher or significant risk to the environment.

Please be assured that the information you provided has been shared with our area colleagues who will consider various action. If any is appropriate. We are not in a position to attend every report but each one is recorded so we can understand the overall performance of the site or impacts on the local area.

Until the incident you reported to us worsens or continues for several days you can report this again.

Contact [0300 807060](tel:0300807060)

Our customer service commitment on GOV.UK has been updated with this new approach.

[Environmental Agency customer service commitment • GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environmental-agency/about-us/customer-service)

Regards

Steven Middleton
Customer Service Advisor, Email Management Unit, NCCC
Contact Centre Services • Part of Operations, Regulation & Customer

(Tel: [03708500 506](tel:03708500506)
Web Site: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environmental-agency/about-us/customer-service)

LOCAL WEATHER - HARROGATE

8th September – 12th September 2022.

| DATE | WEATHER | RAINFALL |
|---|---|----------|
| 08/09/2022 | Grey, cool, overcast, light breeze, wet overnight | 5mms |
| 09/09/2022 | Grey, cool, overcast, dry occasional sunshine | 1mm |
| 10/09/2022 | Grey, cool, overcast, slight rain | 2mm |
| 11/09/2022 | Grey, cool, dry, slight rain overnight | 1mm |
| 12/09/2022 | Grey, cool, rain | 11mms |
| | | |
| [The weeks prior to 8 th September 2022 had been excessively dry during the ongoing drought] | | |

Oak Beck – from A59 – looking upstream along gasworks abutment

Facebook 20:16 Sun 18 Sep

82%

ANNEX 018



General



Christopher Dunn · Bilton Hill Top

...

Having wa;k

3d

Like Reply Share



Christopher Dunn · Bilton Hill Top

...

Having walked up Oak Beck (literally in it) from Bilton sewage works to the golf course hot summer days 2018 and discovered the ubiquitous shopping trolleys, as well as : asbestos; rats; toilet detritus; white clawed crayfish; fallen flood inducing trees; numerous dodgy 'connections'; etc, I thought that I was the only one who cared as my HBC coun... See more

3d ❤️ 1

Like Reply Share



Steve Smith · Author · Knox area

...

Thank you, all for your comments, it's good to hear that people care. I had a good look at the stream at the Hydro area, upstream of the gasworks and it looks OK to me, but below the gasworks, things get messy. Looking upstream from the Skipton Road bridge, there are two points where oily-looking substances are draining into the beck. Zoom in on my photos and you should be able to see the two offending areas on the right-hand bank. Yes, I've seen dead fish and it seems very unlikely that the crayfish that I've noticed in recent times will have survived this.

I will be onto the environment agency, thanks for the number.

"Yorks Water are not commenting on anything non life-threatening during the mourning period." Erm... No disrespect to the system, but does reality stop when we have a change of monarch? If so, when does it restart? The dead fish (etc) in the stream certainly look like their lives have been threatened. Sounds more like burying bad news to me than a Queen-burying issue.



1d ❤️ 1

Like Reply Share



Mr Wilkinson said long-term problems with broken and wrongly installed Victorian pipe under the Hydro-maintenance tunnel involved.

This, along with new housing developments in the area, would exacerbate the issue further, he said.

Mr Wilkinson said:

"North Hales sewerage system has been operating at optimum capacity for a while before we see the aggravating water treatment of the massive inflow at the A59 and Penny Pot Lane. "It's not been noticed."

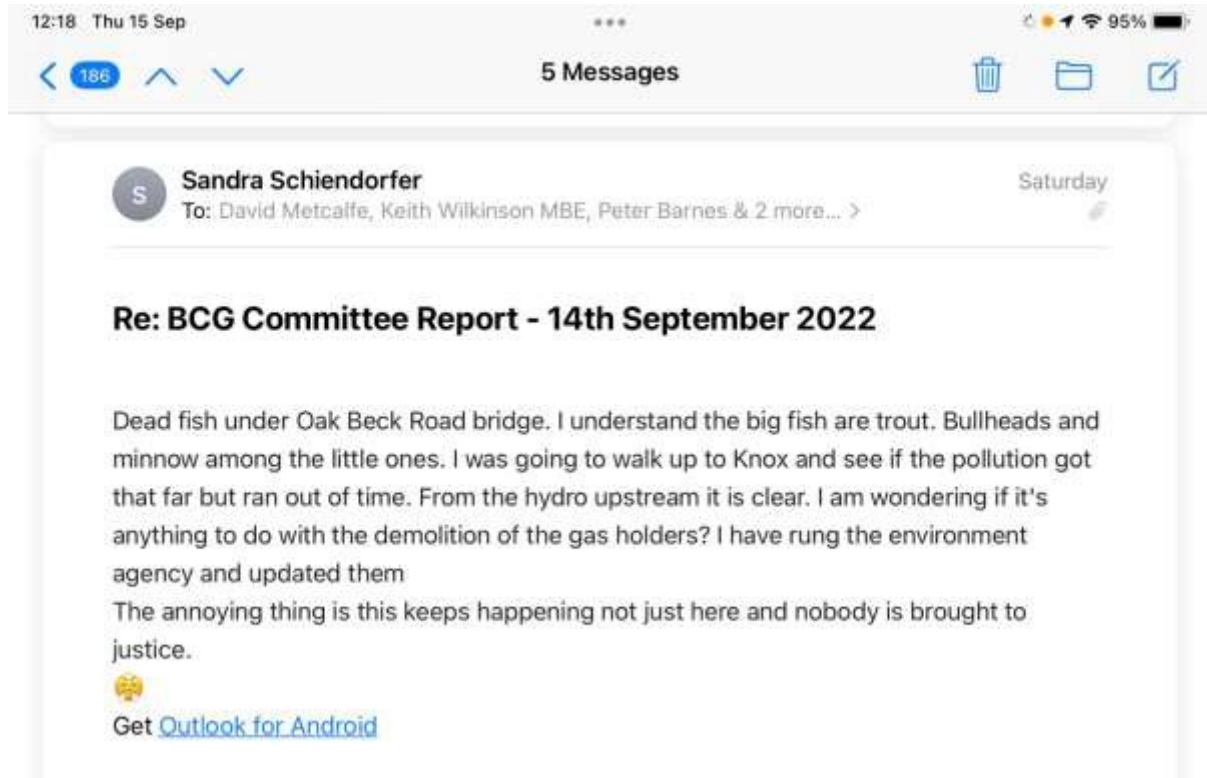
Mr Wilkinson, who was awarded an MBE for services to conservation, also said he was aware of any plan to develop the North Hales. All fall sewage work at Bolton to cope with the anticipated increase of sewage by the end of the century.

"The site has been used for a long time - it's a 1.1 hectare site - but I detect a small amount of investment in the infrastructure to increase the capacity to receive and process more input."

Oak Beck: fish deaths still a mystery

Contaminated water from the Hydro to Bolton this week, Mr Wilkinson said the water would take three years to recover.

Mr Wilkinson said it was "still a bit of a mystery" trying to investigate possible sources of contamination. He added that the water was not safe to drink.



Dear Keith Wilkinson,

I refer to your request for information submitted to Yorkshire Water dated 10 September 2022.

We are considering your request following the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Due to the complexity of your request we are extending the timeframe within which we will respond to you by 20 working days. This is in accordance with Regulation 7(1) of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

We apologise for this delay and will endeavour to respond to your request as soon as we are able to.

Thank you for your patience in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Data Protection Team

Email: [1][\[email address\]](#)

Footnote: the request was for data of all recorded pollution events on Oak Beck from 01/01/2017 to 11/09/2022 + analysis of cause + mitigation proposals.



Jr Wilkinson said lo.ng-mcogJl:sOO problems with broken and wrongli/ e-011n1Kted Victorian p e6 ntllir The Hydre.ma.lned unrt'i>Olved.

This, along with new housing developments in the area, would exacerbate the issue further, he said.

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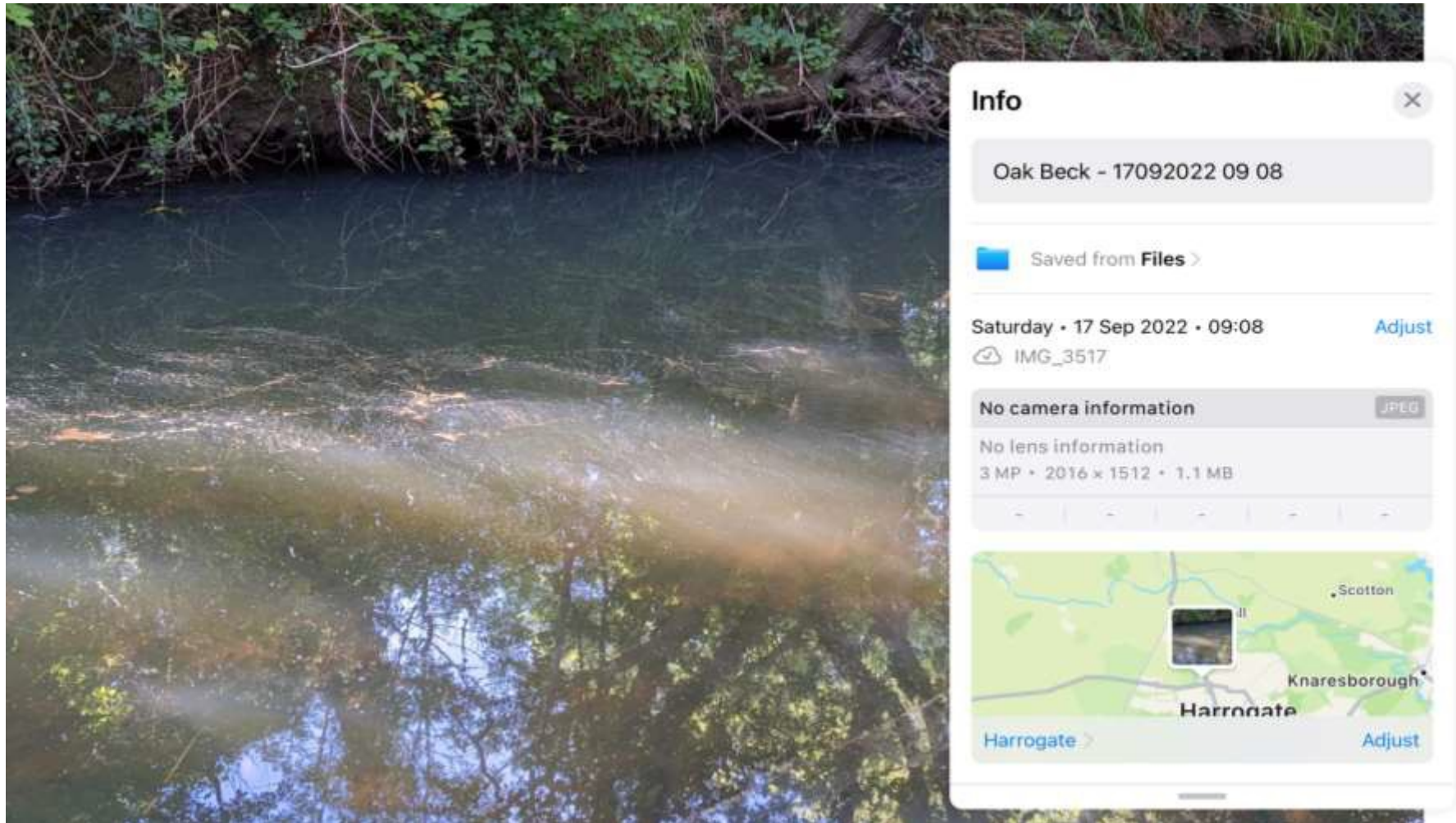
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Honorary Chairman

Mr Warren Considine



Honorary Secretary

Mr Keith Wilkinson MBE

Established 19th May 1982

This letter has been awaiting a reply since 13th February 2022.

Annex 025

10th February 2022

To:
Yorkshire Water
Western House
Western Way
BRADFORD
BD6 2LZ

Oak Beck, Harrogate – Pollution Issue.

Dear Sir,

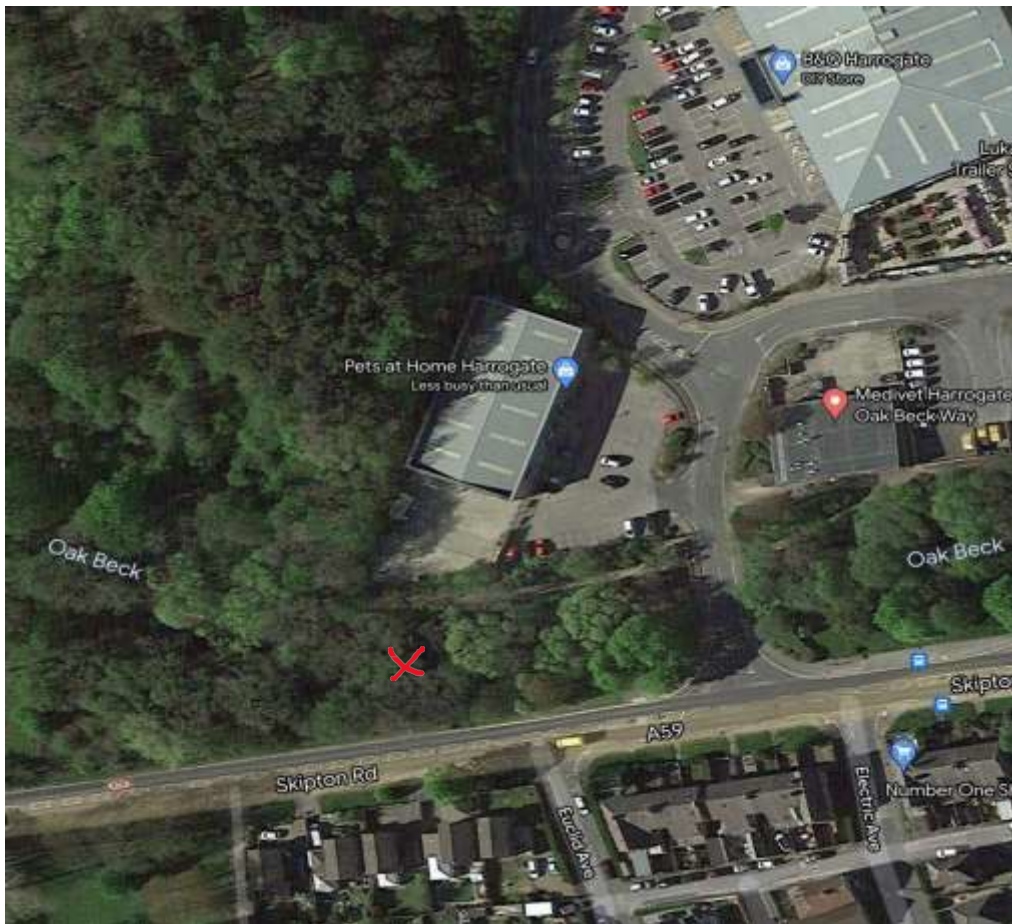
1. I write on behalf of one of our members who shares our concern about pollution on the Oak Beck, beside the A59 at New Park, Harrogate.

Location:

Drain below the A59 which releases surface water/sewage overspill (?) into the Oak Beck. The drain shows thick, permanent, orange deposits (iron stone?) and from time to time there is evidence on the cill of a build up of solids such as wet wipes and sewage items – suggesting an escape from the sewage system at some point.

A Google map of the exact location (“X”) – downstream of your closed circuit camera system – follows:

This letter has been awaiting a reply since 13th February 2022.



Annex 025

On Sunday 6th February 2022 at 10.45 am our member witnessed two Yorkshire Water operatives dealing with a (modest) accumulation of wet wipes/sewage solids at this point. Armed with a long, hooked pole they cleared all the solids from the cill into the Oak Beck where they floated off downstream?

The purpose of this letter is to determine whether this is a new Yorkshire Water policy, as on previous occasions when Yorkshire Water has tackled the potential escape of solid sewage items into Oak Beck the company has been at great pains to collect and remove them to prevent contaminating the beck with non-degradable material (see Appendix image from our archives).

2. Public visits to Sewage Facilities.

It is many years since our group had a guided tour of the Northern Outfall, Sewage Works in Bilton. That visit was in the days of the conventional sewage works process when treated solids were still spread on the land, before the introduction of the modern matrix, 'blood-heat digesters' and incineration of the dewatered solids. Does Yorkshire Water still offer this kind of visit to better inform the Public of the importance and sophistication of modern sewage treatment?

Regards, Keith Wilkinson.

C.C. BCG Committee et al.

APPENDIX

This letter has been awaiting a reply since 13th February 2022.

Historical image of accumulated solids to rear of Harrogate Hydro which were completely removed before they could contaminate the watercourse.





Annex 026

li 111--tt.syfl!rtetco.uk

Ymksflire Water released raw and untreated sewage into Harrogate district rivers and becks on 3,800 different occasions last year for a total of 36,000 hours.

The figure, which was obtained with the St@rt by York:hire Water, shows the scale of river pollution which the Environment Agency said is causing harm to the "millions" of people.

Water companies are legally obliged to find a way to get rid of sewage through overflow pipes when the sewerage system becomes too full. It has happened in the past, but it is expected to be reduced.

Some of the data is below:

| Water body | Number of times sewage entered it | Total number of hours |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| River Nidd | 1152 | 1,713 |
| River Ure | 585 | 6,657 |
| Coppice Beck | 435 | 1,723 |
| Crimmole Beck | 142 | 1,549 |
| Oak Beck | 145 | 856 |

You can't turn it off

Yorkshire Water said that sewage has been in the river for a long time and it is an investigation into the environmental impact of the storm overflows. But people who use and enjoy the rivers said they were concerned about the pollution. The Harrogate district rivers, which run through Pateley Bridge and Knaresborough, are some of our most scenic places to visit.

Kath Martin, who runs the Facebook page Keep Nidd Gorge Gorgeous, said the Nidd "can't be very nasty due to the pollution."

She said:

"I've never seen it so bad as it is now. In the water,"

Knox Ford – below Spruisty Pack Horse Bridge – 13th September 2022.

◀ Ma I 18:34 Tue 13 Sep

t'l1!!sttayferrel.oo.uk cii

47%

He,s Id:

"Pollutfon everits .!long, tihe Oak, Be(:k-which l:s d.isse-d .!!a 'm;iin mrer' by the Er'lvincmmenl A.ge11c.)' -de-stmy wildlif@and have implications for public health.

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Oak Beck looking discoloured.

Readmore

- Hun dn ds oiHlsti illl1d by pulh1tfon un Harrogate's oa eck
- **Meeting called to hear concerns about state of River Nid**

STOP PRESS – considering the multiple discharges from different sources between 10th September and 8th October – this forecast of ‘3 years’ is over optimistic – KW



Oak Beck will take three years to recover from pollution, says Harrogate conservationist

by John Plummer

Sep 13, 2022



Keith Wilkinson alongside Oak Beck at Spruisty Bridge on Knox Lane.

A leading Harrogate conservationist has said Oak Beck will take three years to recover from this week's pollution.

Hundreds of fish are believed to have died when the water turned brown over the weekend. The cause is unknown.

Keith Wilkinson has called on [Yorkshire Water](#) and the [Environment Agency](#) to join efforts to prevent further pollutions in the beck, which he said occur too frequently.

He said:

To date, the largest fine ever handed to a water company by the **Environment Agency** was to **Southern Water** in 2021 which **was ordered to pay a record £90m** for widespread pollution after pleading guilty to 6,971 unpermitted **sewage** discharges between 2010 and 2015.

At the time the judge said the company had shown "a shocking and wholesale disregard for the environment".

READ MORE

Liz Truss confirms she wants to make spending cuts across government departments

Turn gardens into 'bogs' to combat drought and sewage in rivers, experts say

Records keep tumbling for Manchester City superstar Erling Haaland

But since then, anger at the level of sewage routinely entering British rivers, lakes and seas has grown, with England's watercourses now **the most polluted in Europe**.

Plans announced by the government earlier this year - then under Boris Johnson's administration - require water companies to invest £56bn in capital investment over the next 25 years in infrastructure and improvements to reduce pollution.

But after Conservative MPs voted against measures to make sewage dumping illegal, opposition parties **ridiculed the 25-year investment legislation** saying it was nothing more than a "cruel joke" and a "licence to pollute".

In a statement on Monday, the government defended the legislation as "the most significant investment and delivery programme ever undertaken by water companies to protect people and the environment".

Mr Jayawardena said: "On my first day in office, I met water company bosses to give them their report card. I'll be polite: could do better.

"I asked them to write to me with their plans to accelerate investment in infrastructure. They did and now they must deliver. Privatisation has put in £170bn of investment into our water infrastructure already, and the private sector will now put in another £56bn more.

'And, if they don't deliver, I can confirm to you today that we will take forward plans to lift the Environment Agency's maximum civil fine for each individual breach of the rules from up to just £250,000, to up to £250m."

In a statement ahead of Mr Jayawardena's announcement at the Conservative Party Conference, the government said: "The environment secretary also made clear that the environment, food production and economic growth go hand-in hand."

It is not clear what this statement means as the connections between the economy, the food system and the environment are long established.

Damning Failure of the Government and Environment Agency

g Angling Trust •@ Sep 17, 2020



Sep 17, 2020

After a delay of nine months, the Environment Agency have today (17th September) released the ~~latest assessment~~ of the health of our rivers and still waters. It makes for depressing reading. The last assessment showed that only 16% of water bodies covered by the Water Framework Direct were ranked as being good. Today assessment shows that figure has dropped to zone; not a single one!

Messages: 447

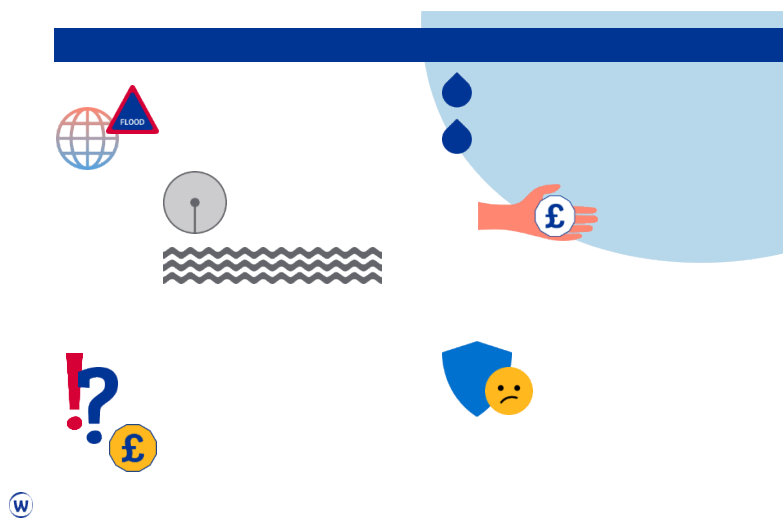
The latest assessment represents more accurate measurements that reveal the true poor state of our waters. Rather than a change in underlying condition, and the improvements needed if the government is going to meet its 2027 target of 75% being classed as good, there has been no progress. The Government needs to urgently invest in turning our failing rivers into thriving blue corridors.

Stuart Singleton-White, Head of Campaigns at the Angling Trust, said, "The government has made great play that they want 75% of rivers, lakes and stream to meet good standards by 2027. Today, we find out that none of them do. This is shameful. Our rivers are officially the dirtiest in Europe. So much for the Government's ambition to leave the environment in a better state for future generations. This shows they are failing and failing badly. What we need is leadership, not excuses. The comprehensive spending review will be a real test to see if the political leadership our rivers, lakes and streams need is there. We have to see funding to clean up our environment massively increased. We need regulators who can do their job properly and we need to hold polluters to account. From the UN to Sir David Attenborough we have heard time and again about the biodiversity crisis we are facing. Freshwater biodiversity is the most at risk. If ever there was a time for action, it is now. We can't wait, our fish can't wait, our rivers can't wait."

The new Environment Agency figures show that:

- Every single surface water body monitored by the Environment Agency in England has failed the chemical standards, meaning that none have a clean bill of health overall
- The failure rate on many other measures of good water health has shown little or no improvement, the most important being assessments of Ecological Status. Only 16% of English waters were classed in good ecological health for in 2016, with the figure remaining 16% in 2019
- The figures released today show that the proportion of English waters in good health is one of the worst in Europe, with a Euro:iean average of 40% of surface water bodies in good health
- England's rivers and lakes are also the least healthy in the UK, with waterbodies in Scotland at 65.7%, Wales at 64% and 31.3% of rivers in Northern Ireland classed in good health

Next steps for regulation – challenges, opportunities and building on the PR24 draft methodology



It's clear that there's a lot of consensus about the significant challenges the sector is facing. And about the need for robust and effective action to address them.

I'm going to share some thoughts on these challenges. And then I'll highlight areas where I think companies should step up to meet expectations and deliver what customers and the environment need.

And I'm also going to look at what Ofwat can do to enable and drive the changes that are needed, and that isn't just price control regulation.



I don't think we've ever seen such focused attention on the sector. The headlines tell the story.

- Outrage about leakage levels when hosepipe bans are introduced.
- River water quality.
- Questions about how our future water needs will be met.
- Ongoing anger over sewage outflows.
- The impact of investment plans on future bills.
- And against that backdrop, it's no surprise to see anger about performance-related bonuses.

I'll come back to some of the individual issues raised in these headlines.

But I also just want to pause on a couple of overall observations.

First, I think these headlines give a picture of what people expect from their water and wastewater services. And it's clear that companies' current performance isn't meeting

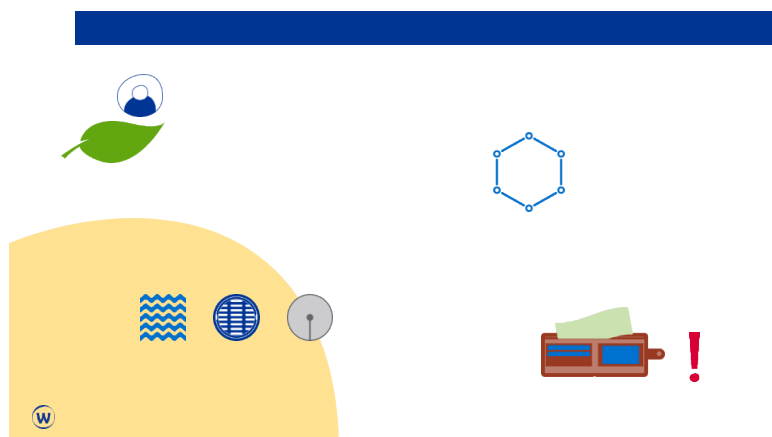
those expectations.

And second, they reflect a sense that companies aren't always being run in the interests of their customers and the environment. It's clear that some companies' behaviours are undermining trust and confidence in the sector.

A linked issue for me has also been the lack of visibility of the sector – at least at a national level. When everyone is talking about water and sewage it's vital that company CEOs are front and centre. Public accountability includes being seen and heard when the media is discussing the issues that matter to the public and for the environment.

We all need to recognise that these concerns and headlines are not going to go away without real change. And I think the pressure is only going to intensify over the coming months. Winter challenges are just around the corner. And so too are companies' announcements on their bills for next year, which of course will be taking account of the highest rate of inflation for more than 35 years.

So the opportunities to address these challenges need to be taken now.



There are a range of things that companies can – and should – be doing right now to deliver for customers and the environment. And to be building the trust and shared understanding of the issues that is so important for progress.

I'll draw out four key areas where I see opportunities for transformational action –

- One – improving companies' current delivery for their customers and the environment;
- Two - opportunities for transformation through open data;
- Three - really effective strategic long term planning;
- and Four - innovating to rise to the affordability challenge.

Let's start with current delivery. Halfway through this regulatory period, we're seeing a mixed picture on performance against companies' PR19 commitments.

Some companies have performed well in the areas where we set common performance commitment levels at PR19, but others are lagging behind. Companies need to step up, and they should look for best practice to emulate the top performers. And this need not require significant investment. New technology may reduce ongoing costs. Or better operational processes can lead to improved services. And new partnerships can deliver innovation.

The sector is not meeting the challenges set in key areas.

- The sector has failed to grip environmental challenges. Earlier this year, in its environmental performance report, the Environment Agency said that *the environmental performance of England's water and sewerage companies was the worst it had seen for years.*
- And we've also still not seen evidence of the sector being able to get on track to deliver essential improvements in water efficiency. It's clear that a step change is needed here, and we think there's potential for companies to pull together and find innovative ways to encourage and enable customers to use less water. And we believe there's significant potential for companies to work with retailers to make progress in the non-household sector too.

The second area of opportunity is open data. We still want to see more action to open up data sets. This will provide greater transparency and accountability on performance.

It will also be a stimulus for innovation and collaboration. Our H2Open paper - published last October - set out our expectations for the industry. We said we would review industry progress in autumn this year and we are commencing the review now. If we find little or no progress is being made, we will consider the formal tools we have to ensure this opportunity is seized.

The third area of opportunity is around strategic planning. Companies should be in the final stages of planning for two of the key challenges facing the sector – how to deliver the water resources needed into the long term, - and how to deliver the sustainable, resilient systems for our drainage and wastewater needs into the future.

We want companies to redouble their efforts to consider alternative options, and to really come up with best value, sustainable solutions.

For long term water resources, companies and regional groups will be publishing their draft Water Resources Management Plans for consultation in the next couple of months. These plans should set out how companies will efficiently deliver resilient, sustainable and best value water resources for customers and the environment, both now and in the long term. This objective should be at the centre of company planning and decisions.

And companies have recently submitted their draft drainage and wastewater management plans. These set out what companies think they need to do to address issues such as storm overflow spills, sewer flooding and pollution incidents over the short, medium and long term. It is critical that DWMPs provide a solid evidence base to make sure the right investment proposals are put forward for PR24.

But our assessment of draft plans identifies that companies have some way to go to do this.

We want companies to demonstrate ambition in the improvements that they can make through existing expenditure. And to consider fully the costs and benefits of options

such as nature-based solutions before deciding the answer is additional storage. I will be writing to water companies shortly to set out our feedback on draft plans and our expectations for final plans.

The last opportunity I want to highlight for companies is the opportunity for fresh thinking on the affordability challenge.

Last week, we called on water companies to be more innovative about setting charges and to establish trials directed at customers struggling to pay. Companies would need to determine what approaches would work best for their customers and we proposed to support high quality trials through communication and facilitating shared learning.

We want companies to be ambitious in supporting and enhancing customer affordability. And we see charging innovation, now as well as for 2025 onwards, as an important dimension in supporting customer affordability. And companies also need to consider the timing for future investments. Companies must ensure that affordability is front and centre of their thinking as they develop business plans for PR24.



Let me now turn to the areas where Ofwat needs to act.

In some of these cases, it is a source of frustration that we need to intervene to push companies to do the right thing or to ensure that there is 'safety-net' protection for customers.

So where do we need to act? We are concerned about remuneration committees' grip on executive pay in a sector that clearly has a long way to go to meet the public's expectations.

We have been clear that performance related executive pay must demonstrate a substantial link to stretching delivery for customers, including the environment. And taken in the round, regrettably, we don't see this outcome has yet been achieved.

A number of companies fall short of our expectation of good practice agreed at PR19. And in some cases, we have concerns about how environmental considerations have been taken into account. Given the scrutiny across the sector on environmental performance, we are disappointed that greater restraint was not shown. We also expected to see better explanations and justifications of why awards are being made, including one-off payments, and especially where performance overall is poor.

We intend to take further steps to reinforce expectations in this area to ensure customers' interests are protected. There are a number of ways to approach this. For example, we could use targeted principles backed by the licence. Or *perhaps* we could approach this through cost allowances, in circumstances where it is not reasonable for customers to pay for rewards.

A second area of focus is the need for companies to ensure that they are financially resilient.

In a long-term sector, providing an essential service, it is vital that companies have access to the financial resources necessary to deliver their obligations and their commitments to customers at all times. Inadequate financial resilience puts customer money at risk and undermines the ability of companies to focus on customers and the environment.

In recent years we have seen a number of companies take steps to improve their financial resilience through the introduction of new equity or the retention of dividends.

But in some instances when we have raised concerns, companies have been slow to acknowledge that their financial position needs to be improved, and have been unwilling to engage openly on these issues. We have also seen recent cases of companies stepping back from public commitments to improve financial resilience.

These experiences have indicated that the backstop financial protections across the sector need to be improved. And so we have recently consulted on changes to the regulatory ring fence which will enable us to step in and protect customers where necessary.

A third key part of our regulatory toolkit is our enforcement powers, to ensure that water companies are meeting their legal obligations. We are currently investigating all wastewater companies in England and Wales in relation to how they manage their wastewater treatment works, and within that investigation we have six live enforcement cases.

Recent years have seen an increase in our enforcement activities across a range of different topics, from leakage and transfer pricing, to smart metering and wastewater treatment works. Our recent cases have also seen us secure our largest fines and spending commitments from enforcement action, demonstrating the costs to shareholders of a company failing to deliver on its obligations.

I want to end with a few points on my ambitions for PR24, and how the proposals in the draft methodology can help deliver into the long term for customers and the environment. And for companies to be clearly accountable for this delivery.

We have always regulated this sector with a focus on the long term. The construct of the RCV has enabled investment to be made when needed, but with payment for that

investment shared with the future customers who will also benefit from it. And we continue to build on how the sector can deliver sustainable, long term, best value outcomes for customers and the environment.

The long term delivery strategies that companies will produce for PR24 will not only drive better planning and evidence to help identify the key actions that need to be taken by companies in the next few years. They'll also help us to hold companies to account in consecutive review periods for the money they have received from customers. And we've been clear that in streamlining the outcomes regime, we're focusing on issues of enduring importance, so companies can be confident that great performance in these areas will attract outperformance payments into the future.

We are also driving companies to deliver the best outcomes for the environment. Again this builds on previous price reviews. At PR19 we provided for 4.8 billion pounds to deliver the ambitious environment programmes agreed for England and Wales. And we have tested proposals to encourage more nature-based solutions and incentivise innovative approaches to reach net zero. And we intend to make greater use of measures to help track delivery and keep companies on the hook to deliver their programmes of investment.

And we're very conscious of the importance of trust and accountability throughout our system of regulation.

For PR24, we're well into our nationwide research which will give us a much better understanding of the views and priorities of customers of all water companies.

And we're proposing to introduce open challenge sessions for companies to hear directly from their customers and other interested groups, and for us to hear those voices clearly and directly in the review process. We need to keep identifying ways to hear directly from people about what they want and need from water companies.

And it's essential that companies take every opportunity to turnaround performance, be accountable, and demonstrate the behaviours that the public expect. There is much still to do.

-ENDS-

Thursday, October 6, 2022 harrogateadvertiser.co.uk

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NEWS

River Nidd protection call after health scares

Graham Chalmers
graham.chalmers@nationalworld.com

Pressure is growing for the River Nidd to be given new protective status after a series of scares in Harrogate and Knaresborough, and Nidderdale.

Green Party member of Town Council said moves to win Status for the river after the by-anglers' alarm was sounded "The issue is August at a meeting the Nidd Catchment group in Darley Wood noted a pollution in the river. The Nidd, like many other in the UK, is not just a



Member of Harrogate Town Council, Sharon O'Connell.

"we must work out how to clean it up."

Despite the safety of the river, which runs for 56 miles from the lope of Great Whernside through Pateley Bridge and Knaresborough to join the

River Ouse at Nun Monkton, the river is not immune from the sort of horror stories seen in the national press involving raw sewage or household chemicals.

Recent years have seen a series of health alerts on



The River Nidd. Photo courtesy by Roger Ratcliffe.

the Nidd, including a category 1 major pollution declared by the Environment Agency in June 2021 after a 12-mile stretch of the Nidd turned brown in colour. In July this year, a group of Harrogate parishioners raised

fears about the safety of the river after children fell ill after swimming at Knaresborough Lido.

The first meeting on the issues saw a wide range of participation in attendance, including the Environment Agency, the

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, the Yorkshire Water and Knaresborough Rivers Trust and Andrew Jones, Harrogate Borough MP.

Earlier this week a second meeting took place at Knaresborough Town Hall. The meeting was held at a high level above the Nidd at High Bridge. It was encouraging to see people from Leeds University, Knaresborough and Harrogate, including Harrogate Council, that the best way forward is to work to improve the water status.

By Bathing

If granted a new Status, the Environment Agency would have to test water in the river regularly for including E. Coli throughout the bathing season.

Press release

Yorkshire Water fined £350,000 for polluting Harrogate watercourse

Illegal sewage discharge affected Rud Beck and
the River Crimple

From: [Environment Agency:](#)

Published 18 August 2016



Yorkshire Water has been fined £350,000 for illegally discharging sewage that polluted a Harrogate watercourse.

The company was sentenced at Bradford Crown Court yesterday (17 August) after previously pleading guilty to an environmental permitting offence relating to a pollution incident from a sewer overflow near Sherwood Drive, Harrogate in April 2013.

At the time, the company had reported a blockage in the sewer that had caused untreated and unscreened sewage to flow into Rud Beck at Sherwood Drive.

Inspections by the Environment Agency found that the pollution had a significant impact on Rud Beck and the River Crimple, into which the beck runs.

Eleven of 17 water companies in England and Wales have been fined for missing their targets and will be forced to give customers millions off their bills.

At regular intervals, regulator Ofwat determines whether water firms have kept in line with industry standards on issues such as supply interruptions, pollution incidents and internal sewer flooding.

Breaches mean multi-million pound fines, which are then given back to customers in the form of bill reductions.

How much is your water company being fined?

Arfinity Water - £0.8m

Anglian Water - £8.5m

Dwr Cymru - £8m

Harren Dyrrdwy - £0.4m

Northumbrian Water - £20.3m

SESWater - £0.3m

South East Water - £3.2m

South West Water - £13.3m

Southern Water - £28.3m

Thames Water - £51m

Yorkshire Water - £15.2



We're telling the stories that matter to you

Raw sewage released into Harrogate district rivers for 36,000 hours last year

by Thomas Barrett

Last updated Nov 9, 2021

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Yorkshire Water released raw and untreated sewage into Harrogate district rivers and becks on 3,800 different occasions last year for a total of 36,000 hours.

The figures, which were shared with the Stray Ferret by Yorkshire Water, show the scale of river pollution that the Environment Agency said is causing harm to the environment.

Water companies are legally allowed to release sewage through overflow pipes when the sewage system becomes too full which can happen during increased rainfall.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

ACCEPT

The new environment secretary Ranil Jayawardena has said the government will act to clean up the UK's rivers and seas with considerable fines to maximum fines for polluting water companies.

Speaking at the Conservative Party conference Mr Jayawardena announced plans for up to a 1,000-fold increase in civil fines for water companies which illegally breach permit conditions.

This means that maximum fines for each individual breach of the rules will go up from £250,000 to £250m.



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To date, the largest fine ever handed to a water company by the Environment Agency was to Southern Water in 2021 which was ordered to pay a record £90m for widespread pollution after pleading guilty to 6,971 unpermitted sewage discharges between 2010 and 2015.

At the time the judge said the company had shown "a shocking and wholesale disregard for the environment".



A pumping station control kiosk

Yorkshire Water takes ownership of more than 350 sewage pumping stations including 32 in Harrogate

3 October 2016 · General News / Harrogate

Stray

We're telling the stories that matter to you

Sickness outbreak prompts concerns River Nidd is not safe for swimming

by John Plummer

Jul 28, 2022



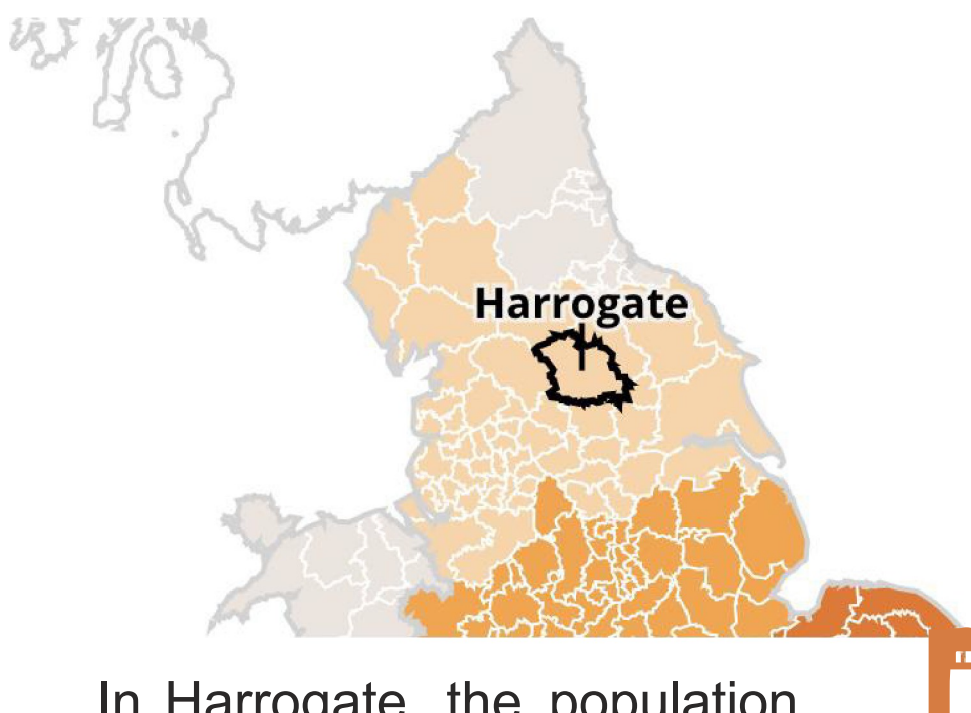
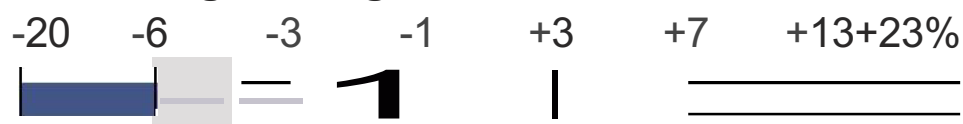
Lisa Poole's three children have been ill for 10 days.

Parents have expressed concerns about the safety of swimming in the River Nidd after a spate of children falling ill.

There have been widespread reports on social media of young people suffering from sickness and diarrhoea since they went in the river to cool down during last week's heatwave.

Population change (%) of local authority areas in England between 2011 and 2021

Percentage change



In Harrogate, the population size has increased by 3.1%, from around 157,900 in 2011 to 162,700 in 2021. This is lower than the overall increase for England (6.6%), where the population grew by nearly 3.5 million to 56,489,800.

Liz Truss's £235m cut to Environment Agency 'doubled sewage discharge'

Raw sewage discharge more than doubled from 14.7 per overflow in 2016 to 29.3 in 2021, when the future PM was in charge of Defra.

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by **Jack Peat** - .CL2-08-2307SS nEnvironment, News



Agency staff were silenced as pollution worsened

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As public disgust at foul waterways in England grew, the body responsible for protecting them tried to stifle internal criticism



a Polluted water on the River Thames at Maidenhead. Environment Agency staff were threatened with dismissal if they discussed its work either publicly or within the organisation. Photograph: Maureen Mclean/Rex/Shutterstock

Sandra Laville and Rachel Salvidge

Sat 29 Jan 2022 08.00 GMT



The internal email dropped into staff inboxes **at a time when public outrage about pollution in English rivers was in full cry**, generating parliamentary debates, demonstrations and mass petitions.

But within the agency responsible for protecting and enhancing the environment the focus was on gagging staff with the threat of dismissal if they discussed its work both inside and outside the organisation.

Chief executive James Bevan, a former Foreign Office mandarin who was appointed in 2015 to run the regulator, issued a draconian warning silencing staff **after a wave of criticism about its performance protecting rivers**.

Staff should not, he said, "openly criticise or discredit the organisation in the media or on social media" or "disclose any confidential information in connection with the **Environment Agency** to anyone who is not

(B) 'It is desperate': how Environment Agency staff were silenced as pollution worsene...

Damning Failure of the Government and Environment Agency

& Angling Trust 0 Sep 17, 2020



Angling Trust
RSS feed

Join! 5, 2020

Messages: 447

SW 11, 2020

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After a delay of nine months, the Environment Agency have today (17th September) released the latest assessment of the health of our rivers and still waters. It makes for a depressing reading. The last assessment showed that only 16% of water bodies covered by the Water Framework Directive were ranked as being good. Today's assessment shows that figure has dropped to zero; not a single one!

The latest assessment represents more accurate measurements that reveal the true poor state of our waters. Rather than a change in underlying condition, and the improvements needed if the government is going to meet its 2027 target of 75% being classed as good, there has been no progress. The Government needs to urgently invest in turning our failing rivers into thriving blue corridors.

Stuart Singleton-White, Head of Campaigns at the Angling Trust, said, "The government has made great play that they want 75% of rivers, lakes and streams to meet good standards by 2027. Today, we find out that none of them do. This is shameful. Our rivers are officially the dirtiest in Europe. So much for the Government's ambition to leave the environment in a better state for future generations. This shows they are failing and failing badly. What we need is leadership, not excuses. The comprehensive spending review will be a real test to see if the political leadership our rivers, lakes and streams need is there. We have to see funding to clean up our environment massively increased. We need regulators who can do their job properly and we need to hold polluters to account. From the UN to Sir David Attenborough we have heard time and again about the biodiversity crisis we are facing. Freshwater biodiversity is the most at risk. If ever there was a time for action, it is now. We can't wait, our fish can't wait, our rivers can't wait."

The new Environment Agency figures show that:

- Every single surface water body monitored by the Environment Agency in England has failed the chemical standards, meaning that none have a clean bill of health overall
- The failure rate on many other measures of good water health has shown little or no improvement, the most important being assessments of Ecological Status. Only 16% of English waters were classed in good ecological health for in 2016, with the figure remaining 16% in 2019
- The figures released today show that the proportion of English waters in good health is one of the worst in Europe, with [a.f.w:Qpeaoaverage or 40% of surface water bodies in good health](#)
- England's rivers and lakes are also the least healthy in the UK, with water bodies in Scotland at [-Wales at 64%](#) and [31.3% of rivers](#) in Northern Ireland classed in good health

Environment Agency Admits to Serious Failures over Fish Kill Investigations

Publication of the report by the Agency



**FISH
LEGAL**

The Environment Agency (EA) has admitted that it has failed to follow its own procedures when investigating pollution incidents which cause fish kills. Fish Legal has criticised the EA about its pollution response several times over the past few years, but the Environment Agency had previously refused to accept this criticism.

Fish Legal has now been able to view the EA's own data, obtained through a freedom of information (FOI) enquiry, to back up its complaint. The EA then commissioned an internal audit in response, which confirmed Fish Legal's findings that there were serious issues that needed addressing.

The EA audit and Fish Legal's analysis exposed poor or non-existent record keeping, and a failure to monitor performance in responding to pollution incidents as part of the EA's fisheries function. It found that fish kill assessment reports and post-pollution fish stock surveys were lacking or inconsistently provided. Response times to pollution incidents similarly appeared poor, and experienced fishery staff were often not sent out to investigate fish kill incidents. Fish Legal concluded in its letter to the EA Head or Fisheries that - amongst other factors - structural and internal management issues caused this poor performance. With insufficient focus on fisheries team involvement when incidents were being reported. Operational instructions were also not being complied with by Environment Management Team staff, who decide on the nature of the initial response to reports of pollution incidents.

This is important because the quality of regulatory response depends on accurate information being obtained early on through appropriate and timely action. The failings exposed by Fish Legal and the internal audit mean that enforcement action against polluters can be severely hindered (or not occur at all). The cause of failures in reacting to pollution events and/or keeping accurate and complete records of subsequent investigations. Furthermore, Fish Legal has at times not been provided with the information it needs when fighting civil claims against polluters on behalf of its member clubs and fishery owners, because the Agency simply does not have it. The EA's Internal audit accepted that action was required to address Fish Legal's criticisms.

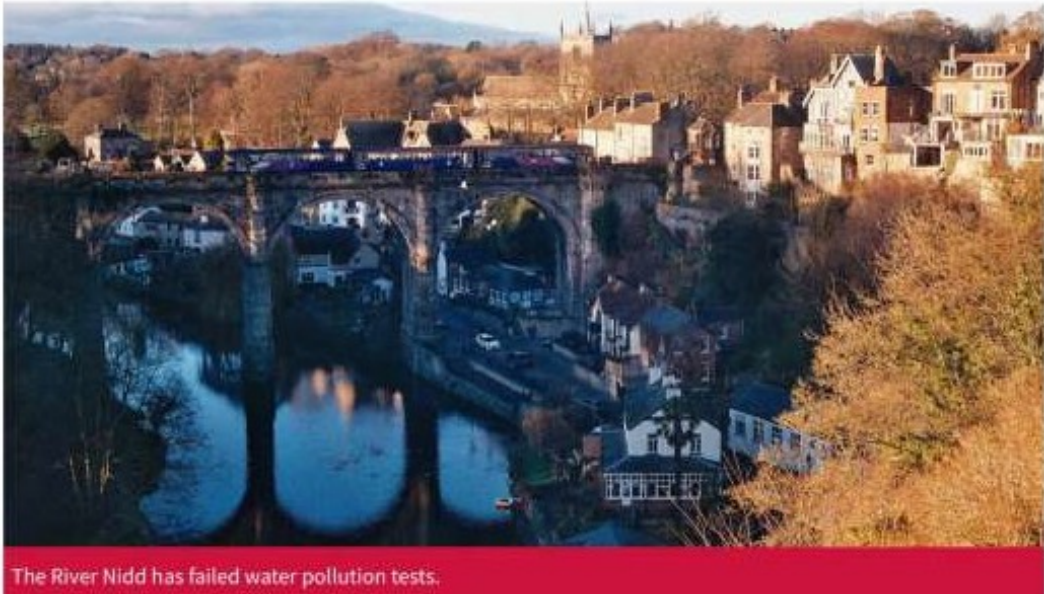
The Audit recommended further action by Environment Agency Directors in several areas:

1. Internal record-keeping
2. Accuracy of Information recorded
3. Involvement of fishery staff following fish kills
4. Compliance with its own internal procedures
5. Contacting angling clubs and fishery owners to record amenity impacts of pollution

River Nidd fails water pollution tests due to raw sewage

by Thomas Barrett

last updated Sep 18, 2020



Every section of the River Nidd that runs through the Harrogate district has failed water pollution tests due to the river being contaminated with wastewater - including raw sewage.

The Environment Agency yesterday published its latest report into the health of the UK's rivers which revealed that each of the Nidd Middle and Lower's 13 waterbodies failed chemical tests to determine whether the water is of good quality,

The agency said this was mainly due to wastewater from water companies and agricultural pollution.

Wastewater includes raw sewage, household chemicals, and water from sinks, showers, washing machines and dishwashers.

A Yorkshire Water spokesperson told the Stray Ferret that the company uses sewer overflows into the River Nidd which help to prevent flooding in the sewer network. Sewer overflows (known as CSOs) are permitted and regulated by the Environment Agency.



Guidance

Spreading organic manure on agricultural land: RPS 252

Updated 15 October 2021

This guidance was withdrawn on 29 March 2022

This regulatory position statement expired on 1 March 2022 and is no longer current.

Applies to England

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What is RPS applies

Conditions you must comply with

Enforcement

What to check back

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Environment Agency

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This regulatory position statement (RPS) applies to land managers. A land manager is anyone who has custody of, or the responsibility for, controlling agricultural land.

Regulation 4(1)(a) Reduction and Prevention of Agricultural Diffuse Pollution (England) Regulations 2018, requires that when you apply organic manure to agricultural land, the application must be planned so that it does not either:

- exceed the needs of the soil or crop on that land
- give rise to a significant risk of agricultural diffuse pollution

This RPS does not alter your legal obligations under the relevant legislation. However, if you follow the conditions in this RPS the Environment Agency will not normally take enforcement action where you have a plan to apply organic manure to agricultural land that may exceed the needs of the soil or crop on that land. The plan must not cause a risk of pollution.



Trevor Close asked a question in Bilton Community Group.
3 h • 1E

Hi i walk my dogs most days along the stream behind pets are us in the woods. This year there is a absence of ducks and ive not seen the normal trout rising taking flies.

Has the stream been polluted with all the new building work going on. I was told some time ago the sewerage plant by david Lloyd's was running at capacity?





the^{stray}ferret.co.uk

Meeting called to hear concerns about state of River Nidd

by John Plummer

last updated Aug 1, 2022



Anglet S, Vo(kShlr) Waler and Andrew Jones MP are to meet this month to discuss concerns about the quality of water in the River Nidd.

The meeting will focus on the foul smell and state of the river near Oarley sewage treatment works.

ACCEPT