

## THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Environmental Forum held virtually via zoom, on Wednesday 21 June 2023, 7.30pm.

Councillors Jon Tankard (Chair), Chris Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Reena Ranger OBE, Stephen King, Narinder Sian and one representative from each of the following organisations:

Batchworth Community Council	- Cllr Andrea Fraser
Croxley Green Parish Council	- Parish Councillor Andrew Gallagher
Bedmond Residents' Association	- Jan Smith
Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative	- Tony Booker
Colne Valley Regional Park	- Stewart Pomeroy
Friends of Croxley Common Moor	- Graham Everett
Maple Lodge Conservation Society	- Keith Pursall
Rickmansworth Waterways Trust	- David Montague
Spokes (South West Herts Cycling Group)	- Roger Bangs
Sustainable Three Rivers	- Rosi Jordon
Watford & Three Rivers Friends of the Earth	- Graham Everett

### Guest Speakers

Tony Booker from Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative.

### Officers

Elen Roberts and Joanna Hewiston

Apologies for absence were received from Tony Bradford

	Action	Lead Organisation
1.	To receive the Notes of the Meeting of the Environmental Forum held on Wednesday 8th March 2023.  Minutes agreed.	
2.	Matters arising:  None	
3.	A TALK BY TONY BOOKER FROM COLNE VALLEY FISHERIES CONSULTIVES.  Briefing note was presented.	

We don't know what the accumulative impact of these chemicals are, although we may know what each chemical may do when released.

One of the things we didn't do in the report was to delve into the total chemicals which could be in the river but would make the report too complex. We had 9 sample sites including an observation borehole – 4 in Watford which gives a reasonable probability that these chemicals can be found all the way down to the Thames.

267 present in some areas. 11 of which were present at all 4 locations in the same quantity across a 12-month period.

This is constant, not coming from flood waters, but not being filtered through the sewerage system.

Does more need to be done to prevent people and pets from entering the rivers and water due to health concerns?

Need a taskforce to address issues and events quickly as no one claims responsibility for the issues to we need all bodies in one room.

Questions:

Cllr Ranger – Don't think many people are aware – people know about sewerage but not micropollutants – think there is a moral obligation to inform people of the risk. Would signage be appropriate? Agree a task group could be an effective way of dealing with the issues to bring experts and landowners together. Answer from Tony Booker – in the concentrations we are seeing, no one can give an answer of how harmful the mix of chemicals is, national work needs undertaking that looks at the potential risks. In the days we were getting regular sewerage discharge from Chesham works you could see the sewerage in the water, but people and pets were still in the river – this issue was kicked around, and answers were never received. ColneCAN are now working to address this and forming working groups to decision make and make plans for future events. Storm surges are not a significant issue in the Colne, it's mostly down to urban and field run offs, landfill sites, and missed connections. We don't want to scare people away from nature, so communication needs to be done carefully.

Jan Smith: We have field in Bedmond which has an aquifer underneath it, we have local hydrologist with his own borehole. We are concerned about local plan plans to build housing which could cause a number of issues in the future if the building goes ahead on the natural springs. Answer from Tony Booker – Would love to test borehole water further down the river and warns of dangers of using water directly from boreholes.

Cllr Chris Lloyd: If we are saying we should educate people, I wouldn't support signs but would support a press release in partnership with relevant organisations. Lots of areas have signs and are not effective. To be discussed outside of the meeting. Answer from Tony Booker – We need to think more about the Colne and other areas now the Chess has improved.

	<p>Tony Booker: Fish Kills due to misconnection.  In 2015 there were 2 large events, one in the Colne upstream of the Withy Beds. It is believed there has been an outfall from the industrial estate on Tolpits lane of litter, waste and rag including sanitary products, the Environment Agency didn't step up, and they tried to identify from the waste who released the waste. This has now happened again with a significant fish mortality of Chubb fish. It was fairly isolated, not a huge number and mostly larger mature fish. Environment Agency usually categorise the events based on the number of fish killed, but this isn't effective if there aren't many in there from previous kills or wildlife moving. The storm drain was solid with waste, and no way of knowing how large the block is, so there could be a major problem when the blockage is removed. This isn't flushed waste, this is dumped. Who takes responsibility for this? This has been known about for 9 years and discussed with the Environment Agency constantly with no resolution.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <p>Jo Hewitson: If this is a missed connection it could be responsibility of building control. Isn't this an Environmental Health issue? Answer from Tony Booker – I don't know whose responsibility this would be down the, Environmental Health has previously put them across to Environment Agency, we need everyone in a room to establish, and we need a proper investigation to see where this has come from.</p> <p>Cllr Ranger: Is someone with a blocked drain pouring chemicals down to clear the blockage? If so, it will continue to get worse and cause a huge chemical spillage when cleared? Answer from Tony Booker – Yes, this is likely. Cllr Tankard – we can try to coordinate a Forum, however we cannot force people to join. Tony Booker needs various departments of the Council in attendance.</p> <p>To be discussed further outside the meeting. TRDC to discuss internally.</p> <p>Chris Whately-Smith: the Times has been running the Cleaning up campaign – could we as an LA be involved in their campaign? Answer – Tony has met him to discuss but nothing has come of it.</p>	
4.	<p>TRDC CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY CONSULTATION UPDATE BY ELEN DOLDER</p> <p>Cllr Ranger asks if the Ward emissions vary because some have train stations – it would be useful to see a breakdown of the figures. Answer – there is a key and link to the website the data comes from in the consultation.</p> <p>Cllr Sian: How is it being publicised? Answer – This has been shared through all Council networks, social media platforms and in person events.</p>	
5.	<p>Member Exchange.</p> <p>Rosi Jordon: The community garden construction began last week in the community orchard in Rickmansworth – thank you to all who have</p>	

	<p>supported the project and volunteered their time. There has been a great response from local residents – we want to encourage as many people as possible to get involved.</p> <p>Cllr Sian – Grassland management plan – we had a 50% objective – is there an update? Update to be provided.</p> <p>Cllr Ranger: Would like more information about the emissions by ward graph as it looks like lots is consumption. Where are our nearest plastic bag recycling bins, is there something we can do to facilitate this? Answer from Elen Dolder – we don't collect soft plastic as an Authority and won't be - this would be down to community groups to fill the gaps with the likes of Terracycle.</p> <p>Tony Booker: Has received funding towards their aquatic plastics recycling charity – there will be a hub in close proximity to Three Rivers and able to collect littered plastic no high enough quality to recycle. WREEEP. Tony to keep the Forum updated on the project.</p>	
6.	<p><i>AOB:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recent fish mortality in the Colne in the TRDC area which has been discussed during Tony Bookers discussion.</li> <li>- Jan Smith – issue with speeding traffic in Bedmond, but as there have been no fatalities nothing has been done. 2 incidences have happened in the past couple of weeks. Bedmond residents association I'll be contacting Highways for an investigation to be undertaken. Cllr Ranger suggests this is raised with the areas County Cllr.</li> </ul>	
7.	<p><i>Suggestions for future speakers – Please contact Elen Roberts.</i></p> <p>No suggestions given.</p>	
8.	<p>Cllr Tankard thanked everyone for attending the meeting.</p>	

#### EF06/19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Forum noted that the date of the next meeting is Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

*Associated documents/links related to meeting and action points:*

#### **Action Points**

Three Rivers District Council to continue discussions outside the meeting with Tony Booker and ColneCAN to establish protocol and responsibilities for pollution incidents.

Update to be provided on the coverage of the Three Rivers District Council grassland management plan.

