

Sewage Dumping

This Council notes with concern that earlier this year the Environment Agency reported that water companies had released raw sewage into rivers and seas in England for more than 1.75 million hours in 2022 - averaging 825 spills per day. Furthermore just 14% of the UK's waterways are in good ecological condition while more than half of England's waterways fail to pass cleanliness tests.

Here in the Borough of South Ribble, the Rivers Trust has revealed in their latest update that 1,094 raw sewage spills were counted lasting for 4,002 hours. These spillages included not only the River Ribble, but the River Lostock, River Yarrow, River Darwin, Bannister Brook, Longton Brook, Mill Brook, Black Brook and Tarra Gate Gutter.

According to figures for 2020 and 2021, our water supplier United Utilities was the worst performing water company in terms of the levels of sewage discharges over the two years, totalling 1,267 million hours, but paid out the highest level of executive remuneration in both years, whilst in 2022 they posted profits of £610 million.

Council believes that we have a duty to protect our natural environment; that the government has failed to hold water companies accountable for dumping raw sewage into waterways; and that water companies should direct profits into minimising sewage discharges into our rivers and lakes rather than into executive bonuses.

Council therefore calls on the government to-

- i) Set meaningful targets and deadlines for water companies to end sewage discharges.
- ii) Introduce a sewage tax on water company profits to fund the clean up of waterways.
- iii) Reduce the number of licences given to water companies permitting them to discharge sewage into rivers.
- iv) Strengthen Ofwat's powers to hold companies accountable.
- v) Cease making cuts to Environmental Agency funding and ensure that it has enough staff to significantly improve its monitoring of the threats of inadequate storm-water infrastructure and pollution from sewage and agricultural nitrates.
- vi) Work with local authorities to ensure water companies protect our rivers by a requirement to invest upfront in sewerage infrastructure to reflect environmental objectives in local plans and planning applications.

Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs accordingly.

Proposed- Councillor Angela Turner.

Seconded- Councillor David Howarth.