

Pollution in Shutford Stream

Some readers may have watched the Panorama programme (aired on 12 April 2021) "The River Pollution Scandal" which highlighted the significant deterioration of many English and Welsh rivers and waterways over the past few years.

There is widespread evidence of underreporting of pollution incidents, indicating that the Water Companies see self-reporting as an opportunity for unscrupulous behaviour rather than as a responsibility to be exercised on behalf of wider society.

The excellent new interactive map (see 'The Rivers Trust' website) shows the extent of this problem very close to home: In 2020, Thames Water's Sewage Treatment Works at Shutford released untreated sewage into Shutford Stream on 114 occasions, for a total of 1530 hours. This is up from 79 occasions (just under 800 hours) in 2019. In 2020 this was the equivalent of untreated sewage being released into our local stream 24 hours a day on an uninterrupted basis, for just over 2 months! The data shows that Shutford Sewage Treatment Plant is one of the worst in the entire country.

Many of us probably have childhood memories of looking down into the clear waters of our local stream, our curiosity and interest perhaps aroused by the fleeting glimpse of a red-finned Roach, a small silvery shoal of Dace or Minnows, or even a shy Brown Trout breaking the surface for a fly. We probably admired dipping Swallows or circling bats on a summer's evening. I don't want the beauty of these things to be lost to our children and grandchildren and we have a moral duty to protect them. I simply cannot understand how the management of a supposedly reputable business like Thames Water can think it is in any way ethical to destroy mile upon mile of delicate ecosystems in order to generate marginally greater profitability or as a substitute for effective site management.