



Press Release

River Chess Association

Established 2009

Regional Member of the Association of Rivers Trusts

8th March 2017

Sewage Litter in the River Chess

Over the years the River Chess has suffered many issues resulting from the Chesham Sewage Treatment Works (STW), going as far back as 1889. In 1937 there was a famous court case regarding the quality of effluent entering the river. The river users won that case and received significant damages from the operator. These problems continue today.

For 15 years we have been recording sewage litter in the Chess, which we always felt was coming from the Chesham STW. Over recent weeks we have seen an increase in this litter and have drawn this to the attention of Thames Water, the operator of the Chesham STW and the Environment Agency. After some discussion Thames have conceded this is their responsibility and have now started a programme of work to ensure this littering stops.

Initial Work Programme to stop sewage littering at Chesham STW

- Maintenance Projects are installing Copatrawls (net sacks) on the 3 outlets from the lagoon and the storm tank discharge channel; this work started earlier this month and is scheduled to be completed by the end of March. The plan is to install 6mm mesh to minimise the risk of debris getting through.
- Last month Thames fitted 12mm mesh Copatrawls on the 2 Final Settlement Tank outlets and the storm tank discharge line, to replace the larger aperture versions, to ensure the debris is collected. These will be checked regularly and replaced as and when needed.
- At the inlet works, Thames have installed a bird scarer, to stop birds pulling out litter from the chutes and skips. Thames are going to try fitting a tarpaulin over the open part of the skip to see if this will help.

We appreciate that the Chesham STW would function more efficiently if there were less of this sewage litter to process. So we all have a responsibility to ensure this litter material does not get into sewer. We will continue to work with Thames to get this message across, **don't flush it, bag it and bin it.**

"We are obviously disappointed that it has taken 15 years for definitive action to be taken and with the inactivity of the Environment Agency, but we are pleased this work programme has now started. We will continue to monitor the effluent and hope these actions will be positive. We hope we can work more closely with Thames on all River Chess issues."

Paul Jennings, Chairman, River Chess Association

"We want to help keep the River Chess in pristine condition and are stepping up our efforts to avoid the unpleasantness of sewage litter getting in to the river from our works. We also look forward to continuing to work with the River Chess Association on other issues relating to the River Chess."

Richard Aylard External Affairs and Sustainability Director, Thames Water

Contact Email: riverchess@tiscali.co.uk

To find out more about the River Chess Association go to www.facebook.com/RiverChess or www.riverchessassociation.org

The River Chess is a chalk stream that rises in Chesham, Buckinghamshire, and runs through the Chess Valley to Rickmansworth where it becomes a tributary of the Colne. The Chess Valley is part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the river is home to a variety of important species, such as water vole, kingfisher, brown trout, grayling and stream water crowfoot. Interesting visitors, such as Osprey, also come to the river.

The Chess faces many threats, including low flows caused by abstraction for public water supply, invasive species such as mink and Japanese knotweed, and sewage discharges.

The Association carries out environmental monitoring, raises awareness of the issues facing the Chess, educates people about the importance of chalk streams, lobbies the appropriate authorities and provides a forum for the exchange of expertise and ideas.