

Local Angling Journalist: Mr Wayne Thomas	Answers provided to questions from the Committee:
<p>1. <b>In your opinion, how bad is the issue of water pollution in the rivers and on the beaches of North Devon and what are the causes?</b></p>	<p>The rivers and watercourses across Devon are all impacted upon to some degree by pollution. The degree of pollution depends very much on where the area the water flows through on its route to the sea.</p> <p>The rivers that flow from the moors with limited agriculture and urbanisation tend to be good quality with abundant fish and aquatic life.</p> <p>The lower reaches of rivers tend to be more heavily polluted.</p> <p>The main causes of pollution are many:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sewage effluent:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Agricultural runoff from farms, including phosphates, slurry, soil, insecticides.</li> <li>➤ Herbicides, anti-biotics for treating livestock, animal waste.</li> <li>➤ Road run off – Including oils, Petro-chemicals, road salt.</li> <li>➤ Domestic Pet treatments – Spot on etc used to kill ticks and flea kills aquatic insects.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Industrial waste products.</li><li>➤ Plastics and micro plastics.</li><li>➤ Sun-screen from bathers.</li><li>➤ It's is to be remembered that during periods of low flow there is less dilution resulting in higher concentrations of pollution.</li><li>➤ Water temperature is also harmful to many fish species, particularly salmonoids.</li><li>➤ Low oxygen levels resulting from algae growth.</li></ul>
<p><b>2. The public receives a variety of different information on the water quality in their rivers and on their coast. Sometimes this information conflicts. Who is responsible for this confusion? And how should the public be informed?</b></p>	<p>The Environment Agency has suffered from extensive cuts in funding over recent decades and is no longer able to adequately monitor the rivers and coastal water quality. Citizen Science has to some extent stepped into the breach with organisations such as the West Country Rivers Trust investing in widespread testing all be it at a rather fundamental level. There needs to be more joined up efforts to compile data. There also needs to be a political will to put the environment much higher on the agenda.</p> <p>Data whilst vital is always open to interpretation and is frequently manipulated according to political and financial convenience.</p>

<p><b>3. In order for planning authorities to properly determine planning applications, should water companies provide up to date appropriate information on the capacity of sewage disposal for the proposed development?</b></p>	<p>It is widely accepted that water companies operate waste water Treatment plants that cannot cope with the present level of development. Before planning permission is granted an adequate infrastructure needs to be in place. It is easy to blame water companies for inadequate funding and payments to shareholders but it has to be acknowledged that it is the population that produces the effluent; a population that has more than doubled in the past fifty years.</p> <p>Whilst it seems wrong to have privatised water and waste water treatment it was a failing industry before this happened.</p>
<p><b>4. Individual organisations and groups currently undertake their own testing. How can we compare those results and use that data in the most effective way?</b></p>	<p>A National and regional network of data gathered from individuals and organisations would be beneficial.</p>
<p><b>5. When will this situation be resolved and how? And what are the main impediments?</b></p>	<p>An adequately funded Environment Agency is of course the answer but our political system ensures that this will not happen for historically the environment is not a vote winner. An ever increasing population results in increasing competition for funding with the NHS, Housing, Transport, Education, Defence and the economy trumping the natural world every time.</p> <p>There appears to be a growing awareness of the vulnerability of the natural world and its value to us as a species. In the present world we need to put a value on the natural world and to some extent move away from the present obsession with GDP the main measure of wealth.</p>