

Westcountry Rivers Trust: Chief Executive Officer Laurence Couldrick:	Answers provided to questions from the Committee:
<p>1. 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?</p>	<p>Water pollution has been an ongoing issue over the last 30 years and is the main reason why the Westcountry Rivers Trust formed. The problems are complex and multifaceted but the main pressures stem from agricultural sectors and the sewage sector (both CSO's Treated Effluent and Septic tanks). The Trust have been monitoring some the rivers of North Devon and this reinforces the Environment Agency data that few of our rivers (bar those draining Exmoor and Dartmoor) meet the ecological status with failures driven by phosphate pollution, sediment loss and physical modification.</p> <p>These issues are documented in South West River Basin Plan (with data on Catchment Data Explorer) and the Catchment Partnership's North Devon Catchment Evidence Review</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>There are no organisations in charge of making sense of the myriad of different sources of data available and understanding if and why there is conflict. Data is collected through the Environment Agency, South West Water, Westcountry Rivers Trust, our Citizen Science Investigation volunteers, Surfers Against Sewage, North Devon Biosphere Reserve, Devon Wildlife Trust, University and Academic groups, and so on.</p>

<p>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?</p>	<p>Yes, and this should be publicly available including data of the capacity based on surface water infiltration as well.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>We do have an Horizon project looking at how to collate and communicate this information and are working with all parties but this is challenging as different groups are collating data for different reasons and have different tolerances over data standards.</p>
<p>5. When will this situation be resolved and how? And what are the main impediments?</p>	<p>As a society we will have to resolve water pollution as it is integral to other water management issues such as drought, flooding and aquatic habitat and species loss. Climate change and the ecological emergency is forcing us to look for joined up nature based solutions and in many places this can run alongside our need for food but there will be spaces where we will need to decide what we need most from any parcel and a national Food Security Statement and Strategic Land Use Framework is needed. Work is underway to provide this but it needs leadership at the highest levels within Government.</p> <p>https://issuu.com/westcountryrivertrust/docs/north_devon_evidence_review_1-0</p>