



21 October 2022

Sir Oliver Heald MP
House of Commons
Westminster

Dear Sir Oliver,

As our President since our inception and through your long-standing concern and campaigning for Hertfordshire's chalk streams, you are well aware of the issues confronting the River Rib and River Quin.

Our work as a group has been to seek to raise local awareness of our rivers and the problems they are encountering, to benchmark the rivers and the wildlife they support and to campaign for change in our catchment that leads to an improvement in the health, ecology and environmental status of our chalk streams.

Through these efforts we have established a series of Riverfly Monitoring sites as part of The Riverfly Partnership's ARMI scheme, supplemented by our own water quality testing regime focussed on phosphates.

We have collated the findings and assessments of the Environment Agency for our catchment and sourced further information from the Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy, much of which we had been unable to source by other means.

Seen in its entirety, the conclusions are clear.

The Rib and Quin are excessively abstracted to such an extent that, aside from drainage following rain, the first and only water encountered in them is that from Sewage Treatment Works, instead of from springs in their upper reaches.

The Rib and Quin receive direct pollution on a regular basis. The number and volume of raw sewage spills from STWs within the catchment is increasing yearly.

Phosphate pollution on the River Rib emanating from the Buntingford STW is at levels that we are unable to accurately measure as they exceed the upper limits of our equipment, but sit at levels 30X natural levels as a conservative estimate.

Unfortunately, whilst some have faith in the Catchment Based Approach as a forum to discuss these issues we do not and instead seek direct dialogue with the water companies that serve our catchment (Affinity and Thames). We would further wish to include the Council Departments and Planning Authorities in that dialogue, as there are questions of concern which they might be best placed to address.

We as a group and as representatives of our supporters, which include local town and parish councils, angling interests and youth and community groups and associations, who are also customers to the water companies and planning authorities, seek answers specifically to the following questions;

Abstraction

- Why is there such disparity in the levels of abstraction across the individual river sub-catchments in Hertfordshire?
- Why is the Rib/Quin catchment abstracted to the level that it is, when it has one of the lowest populations and nationally rare and important wildlife?
- When and where will our catchment see abstraction reductions?

Water Quality

- What were the reasons for the significant releases of raw sewage at Therfield and Barkway STW?
- When will we have real-time data available on raw sewage releases from the treatment works in our catchment?
- When will all our STWs and in particular Buntingford, have phosphate stripping infrastructure in place?

Planning

How can ANY new development in the catchment be approved when;

- Sewage infrastructure is inadequate and failing significantly
- There is insufficient water supply for the current population

Over recent months, in discussions as the FORQ committee and with local town and parish councils, we have contemplated a conference that might bring parties together to seek answers and clarity on the future. However, as our MP and President we would welcome your input as to the best way forward.

Can you help us in facilitating dialogue with the water companies and planning authorities to gain answers to these questions?

We are well aware that our 'voice' is perhaps quieter than others, ironically largely due to the low population of our catchment. We do however feel passionately about our river system and the wildlife it supports, some of it literally unique. Despite the national outcry on these issues and a number of announcements relating to our other chalk streams in the county, the Rib and Quin continue as Hertfordshire's Cinderella chalk streams - forgotten gems hallowed in angling circles, steeped in history and in many ways untouched except for the dirty hands of the water industry.

Yours sincerely

Mark Wilkinson

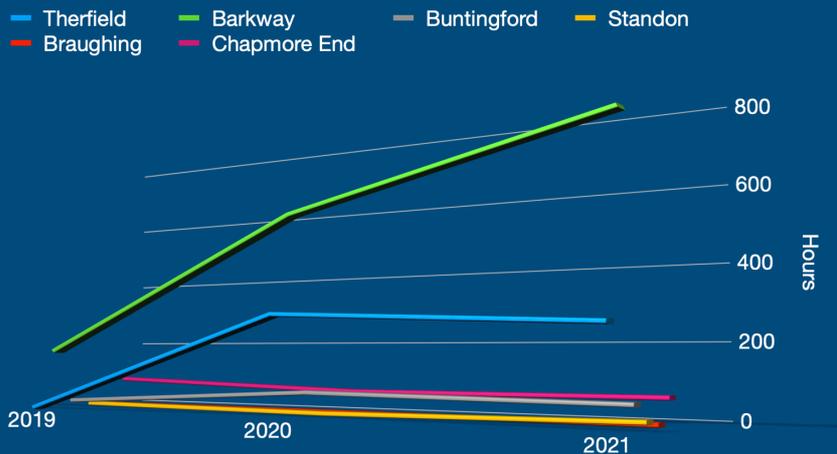
Chair, Friends of the Rib & Quin

Cc.

Aspenden Parish Council	Barkway Parish Council	Buntingford Town Council
Braughing Parish Council	Chipping & Buckland Parish Council	
Standon Parish Council	Thundridge Parish Council	
Cllr David Andrews	Cllr Peter Boylan	Cllr Stan Bull
Cllr Jan Goodeve	Cllr Andrew Huggins	Cllr Tony Hall
Cllr Jeff Jones	Cllr Gerald Morris	Cllr Graham McAndrew
Abbey Cross Angling Society	Fanham Flyfishers	Upp Hall Syndicate
Buntingford Civic Society	CPRE Hertfordshire	

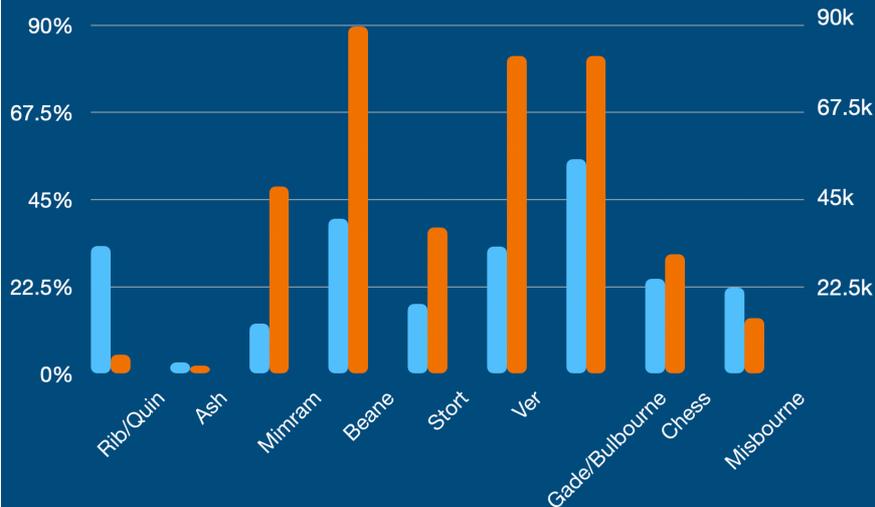
Untreated Sewage Spills

2021 Discharges of raw sewage in our catchment



Abstraction

A%R v catchment major town populations



Phosphate testing snapshot

River Rib - mid summer 2022

