

**Minutes of a Meeting held Monday 3rd 2022 at Knaresborough Town Hall between NCAG and other interested Parties regarding improving the River Nidd Catchment.**

Present:

Name:	Abbreviation for minutes	Representing:
Peter Chambers	PC	Nidderdale Catchment Anglers Group (NCAG) and Meeting Chair
David Clayden	DC	NCAG
Stephen Culpin	SC	Parliamentary Assistant to Andrew Jones M.P.
Kathryn Davies	KD	Knaresborough Town Council (KTC)
Sherry Doyal	SD	Event Organiser
Jamie Duncan	JD	Environment Agency (EA)
Christopher Dunn	CD	Member of the Public
Mark Flood	MF	KTC and Lions
Hannah Gostlow	HG	KTC/ Harrogate BC (HBC) / North Yorks County Council (NYCC)
Paul Leng	PL	AJS Fly Fishers
Iain Mann	IM	Manager – Nidderdale AONB (AONB)
James McKay	JMcK	University of Leeds
Andrew Murday	AM	NYCC
Shan Oakes	SO	Knaresborough Town Council (KTC)
Alan Paterson	AP	NCAG
Ruth Slyvester	RS	University of Leeds
Marie Taylor	MT	Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust (YDRT)

cc. for info.

Heather Garnett, Nigel Harcourt-Brown, Brian Hunt, David Phillips, John Shillcock, Tom Watson, Sue Welch, Ian Wynn.

**1. Introduction of attendees.**

The Chair (PC) opened the Meeting by welcoming everyone and asking those present to introduce themselves.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting**

The Minutes were agreed and accepted as a true record of the Meeting held on the 22nd of August 2022 at Darley Memorial Hall

**3. Activities since the last meeting**

JMcK of the University of Leeds (UoL) advised that he had made connections in the iWharfe group and was making a start on understanding how bathing water status was achieved based on river use.

JMcK said the UoL was applying for a Research Grant to look into fresh water quality improvement under the working title 'Coproducting a clean River Nidd', and that the PhD Student here in attendance today, Ruth Sylvester would be heavily involved in the work and that her Doctoral Supervisor Dr. Paul Hutchings, had applied for a research grant of £20,000.

This Grant would fund Workshops in Knaresborough and Pateley Bridge in the spring and summer of 2023 aimed at producing a campaign, to engage the public, looking at the full river and sources of pollution, probably via poster and short documentary style media outputs. The Bed Race in mid-summer could provide a focal point for some activities.

The overall aim being to help bring issues to the attention of a wider audience and to generate groundswell for positive action and change.

UoL see this first piece of work as a scoping work Project which, if successful, has the potential to lead to far bigger grants.

The output of the study will focus on how well this group and the community work together to improve the position, comparing and contrasting which approaches prove the most successful in delivering the overall aim of a cleaner river.

JMcK said he felt it likely that Citizen Science would play a significant role in the proposed Project.

RS added that her inputs would include looking at group interactions and ways of working with each other contribute to a successful outcome.

CD advised that the information he had seen in the Minutes was good but that it appeared to miss the point that Pumping Stations also produced Combined Storm Overflows (CSO) and when there were power cuts these Pumping Stations discharged raw sewage direct to a water course. PC thanked CD for his input and the point was noted.

SC, Parliamentary Assistant to Andrew Jones M.P., advised that Andrew Jones had written to the Secretary of State asking that Areas Of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) be included by the water industry in their definition of high priority areas for improvement of CSO's and Waste Water Treatment Works.

No reply had yet been received, but once it was SC would send the reply to DC for onwards transmission to this Group.

IM made the point that if AONB's were added to high priority areas for early intervention it would draw almost all upland area water courses into that category.

DC explained that routine sampling on a variety of bio-chemical and conductivity analyses had commenced on the Nidd using the Angling Trust's methodology, see link below for details.

<https://anglingtrust.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Water-Quality-Monitoring-Network-further-information.pdf>

There are currently 22 different sampling locations on the Nidd and data is building. Anyone interested in seeing where these sites are and / or in the results being obtained can find those data by following the link below.

[https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1E2B8DAh5yGp-bfu3CRJbo4\\_9XvTSpOs&usp=sharing%5C](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1E2B8DAh5yGp-bfu3CRJbo4_9XvTSpOs&usp=sharing%5C)

KD identified heavy rainfall and old sewerage systems as contributing factors to storm overflows.

#### **4. The Environment Agency's view of the river Nidd and its catchment – our challenges and opportunities to improve its water quality:**

JD of the Environment Agency (EA) explained in detail the way in which the Nidd catchment was split into different parts and how each was affected in different ways by diverse types of point source pollution.

In upland areas, at the very head of the river, Agriculture and old Mine Workings are a particular issue leading to sedimentation run off and, in the case of mine workings, heavy metal inputs. Many of the heavy metals originate above Gouthwaite Reservoir in Upper Nidderdale including around Greenhow.

Gouthwaite Reservoir had itself had become a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) largely as a consequence of filling with sediment received from further upstream, leading to its use by wading birds and other mammals as an area in which they could successfully overwinter and / or breed and raise young.

JD explained that by the time the Nidd reached Pateley Bridge and below, it had already been significantly impacted. From Pateley Bridge downstream the river was increasingly affected by urbanisation, house building and inputs from larger sewage treatment works.

The current drought is putting pressure on the way the EA and Yorkshire Water (YW) are looking at release permits from compensation reservoirs such as Gouthwaite as the water is potentially needed for other uses.

This is clearly a precarious potential concern as low flows are already causing significant problems on the river.

JD stated that the EA wish to look at the widest set of inputs and opportunities to resolve problems on the Nidd, and JD planned to bring to the next meeting colleagues able to explain in more detail specific areas of work of the EA, being Fisheries Officer, Projects Officer, and recently appointed Ecological Officer.

He concluded by saying that they were more projects coming forward which he hoped would impact the river and its ecology positively.

IM raised a question of the way in which the EA looked at the scale and spatial distribution of inputs of pollution to the river versus their impact. He believed there was evidence to show the scale and spatial distribution of inputs and that this as a totality lead to the way in which the water chemistry was affected.

But, to successfully address point sources of pollution, there was a need to disaggregate inputs so it was possible to understand the way in which each, if eliminated, would positively impact the river.

MT advised that the Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust (YDRT) work on the Wharfe would be helpful to the needs of the Group as it would allow expertise gained in that exercise to be brought to bear on the Nidd, explaining that the Wharfe exercise had shown that there was much greater complexity involved in identifying and eliminating point source pollution than had first been thought.

Two years on and Ilkley Clean rivers Group and YDRT were still at the stage of establishing where issues were arising on the river and finding how surprisingly far downstream these inputs continued to impact.

MF said it was clear the issues were complex and asked whether there was enough investment/resource in the EA?

JD replied that the EA could always use more resource and noted that in the 20 years he had worked for the organisation resources had reduced progressively and that sampling and surveys were not as widespread as they had been. Therefore, the inputs from the Citizen Science Projects underway were valuable in closing this gap.

He also advised that caravan parks in the Nidd catchment were much more widespread than in other parts of the Dales and that caravan parks tended to be hotspots in terms of point source pollution, as the visitor population peaks and troughs put pressure on the disposal systems in those parks.

PL suggested that sampling activity also happen on the tributaries of the Nidd, given the inputs from say heavy metals ex mine workings.

KD asked for information on the overall size of the Nidd catchment and commented on the need to educate those with waterside gardens that the river was not a suitable place in which to dump their garden waste.

JD confirmed that the Nidd catchment had many public and private sewage treatment works, the private ones comprising Septic Tanks, Package Plant systems and some multi occupancy small scale works. Many people had no idea how to run or maintain these assets.

HG made the point that some caravan parks had permanent residents as well as a seasonal influx.

PC set out how individuals could take part in water sampling actions. He pointed people at the Angling Trust, Wild Fish and Rivers Trust as three organisations all involved in and looking for volunteers to take part. In the majority of cases the training to undertake the testing was simple, often video based, and the uploading of results was generally via an App.

DC asked where the EA stood on the efficacy, reliability, and use as evidence of these various sampling initiatives?

JD said he would check with his Sampling Officer and revert.

## 5. A 'Straw Man' plan

PC took those present through a Presentation offering a view on where this Group found itself and what it could and should do to move matters forward. The presentation slides are attached as Appendix 1.

The presentation concluded by setting out three strands of action, being:-

Achieve Bathing Water Status for a site on the Nidd in Knaresborough.

Continue and expand the existing Water Quality Testing and recording to develop a database of evidence.

Generate Publicity to draw in a wider, and more diverse, set of advocates for the river, to drive a push for action to improve river quality and thus the safety to human health of those using it.

SC usefully tabled two documents, the DEFRA guidance on how to apply for Bathing Water Status. The document can be found at the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bathing-waters-apply-for-designation-or-de-designation>

And, DEFRA's Storm Overflow Reduction Plan setting out the timetable and criteria to be used by the water Industry to address the issue of sewage in rivers.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1101686/Storm\\_Overflows\\_Discharge\\_Reduction\\_Plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101686/Storm_Overflows_Discharge_Reduction_Plan.pdf)

Various points were aired to clarify items in the Presentation including:-

The effect of the Water Framework Directive.

Confirmation that moderate ecological river status was not one of the criteria for early investment by YW in CSO and Waste Water Treatment Works upgrades.

Identification that river bathing had led to illness and hospitalisation in Knaresborough in the summer and Pateley Bridge more recently.

No likelihood of more funding coming forward therefore concerted public action was needed.

Anglers leading this initiative/Project was too niche, the participants needed to be wider and more broadly based.

Local Government re-organisation was posited as a positive and a negative!

Had the owners of the Lido been approached? No, that was a matter for action once a Lead on Bathing Water Status had been identified.

Possibility that two places in Knaresborough could be designated. That is a decision for the Bathing Water Lead but good that there is more than one option.

Dogs treated for tick and flea should be excluded from the river as they add to the chemical issues being faced.

Strategically, to allow as many upstream points of pollution as possible to be addressed go as far downstream as practicable.

Keep taking samples and use these to press YW to act.

Was the Lido above or below the outfall for Knaresborough STW? Above.

## **6. Actions**

PC sought volunteers to lead each strand of the proposed actions. Members were asked to contribute ideas to each of these Strands. On concluding this piece of work the following Leads for each are were identified.

### **Achieving Bathing Water Status at Knaresborough – Shan Oakes**

#### **Water Quality Sampling and Recording – David Clayden**

#### **Publicity – James McKay & Shan Oakes**

PC checked the mood and feelings of the room which were supportive and positive.

MT was asked, given the YDRT input to the Ilkley Clean Rivers Group, what this Group had missed in its proposed actions? MT set out clearly the things the Wharfe Group had done and commented that, at this stage, she believed the Group were on the right track.

MT went on to advise that YDRT were assisting and supporting Town Councils in Wetherby and Boston Spa to apply for Bathing Water Status too.

She further explained, building on the points made re heavy metal contamination and its impact on vegetation leading to soil erosion, that YDRT were running Projects to swap out contaminated soils for new, to allow regeneration of vegetation thus anchoring soils and avoiding sedimentation run-off.

PC thanked everyone for their input and attendance and proposed that in a few weeks' time he would arrange to talk to the Leads of the three areas of action to establish how they had progressed and to decide collectively what further action, including future Meetings, was required and when.

In closing the Meeting PC encouraged those present to contact one or more of the Leads for each strand of ACTION to volunteer their time and energy to assist them in delivering their piece of the overall plan. And to seek out, and draw in, other people and organisations, who could be useful in delivering one or more of the strands of action now agreed.

Alan Paterson

NCAG

5<sup>th</sup> October 2022



## Key Background Points

- ● The EA and OFWAT regulate YW and, to date, have not focused on CSO or WwTW problems.
- ● The ‘permissions’ YW hold to discharge treated sewage are old, outdated, ill defined, and have no automatic option for review.
- ● Inland water courses are not routinely, specifically, sampled and monitored for their safety to human health, consequently there is no push for improvement.



## Key Background Points

- ● Tests specific to human health are carried out **ONLY** when waters are designated as Bathing Areas – *European Water Framework Directive*.
- ● YW current improvement plans are linked to meeting targets set for **2035** and **2050**.

If we do nothing, that is the best we can expect.

**SHOULD WE ACCEPT THAT?**



# What Can this Group Do?

## Strand 1 – Change the Status of the River Nidd.

- ● Change the status of the River Nidd so it falls into one of the three categories that lead to earlier investment, to eliminate CSOs.
- ● Realistically, we cannot achieve SSSI or SAC status and that would only impact WwTW in that area.

# What Can this Group Do?

## Strand 1 – Change the Status of the River Nidd.

- ● Bathing Water Designation is our best and only option. It is best because as a Designation it impacts **all point sources of pollution (including WwTW and CSO) upstream of the Bathing Water.**
  - ● The impact on YW activity and EA intervention following the designation of the River Wharfe in Ilkley as a Bathing Water has been significant and far exceeds anything that preceded the status award.
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# What Can this Group Do?

## Strand 2 – Collect and Analyse Data

- ● We have already seen some questionable data put forward by YW and can only refute this by taking our own measurements and challenging YW.
- ● The NCAG clubs are already collecting regular data sets based on the Angling Trust WQMN see: <https://anglingtrust.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Water-Quality-Monitoring-Network-further-information.pdf>



# What Can this Group Do?

## Strand 2 – Collect and Analyse Data

- ● We are in contact with Professor Peter Hammond, of the Windrush Against Pollution Group (WASP)
- ● <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/aug/04/sewage-sleuths-river-pollution-slow-dirty-death-of-welsh-and-english-rivers>

# What Can this Group Do?

## Strand 2 – Collect and Analyse Data

- Work continues with the team at iWharfe, the Group behind the push for bathing Water Designation in Ilkley.



# What Can this Group Do?

## Strand 3 – Publicise the Issues

- Work together to produce new and different arguments and publicise these via existing contacts (e.g. Fergal Sharkey, etc etc) and develop new outlets (e.g. YP, Look North, National Press) to shift thinking.



## What Can this Group Do?

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” ...

Edmund Burke – Philosopher 1766

**Take Action!**