

Improved Treatment of Waste from Sewage Treatment Works?

An article in The Guardian today highlights changes in EU legislation that will require EU members to improve water quality by improving their sewage treatment. [UK 'falling behind' on sewage pollution regulation while EU tightens rules](#)

1. This updating of the 1991 urban waste water treatment directive extends sewage treatment to **'tertiary treatment'**, specifically of phosphorus and nitrate pollution.

The UK currently remains committed to the 1991 directive, and only water being discharged into "sensitive areas" such as nature reserves is required to go through tertiary treatment.

2. Wastewater from certain treatment centres in the EU will have to go through a new and even stricter form of water treatment known as **'quaternary treatment'**, which removes micropollutants from water. These come from industrial chemicals, pharmaceuticals, cosmetic products, pesticides, and hormones.

EU members must assess threats to human health from these pollutants, including specifically to bathing waters.

UK has left the EU, so is not bound by new EU legislation, but:

1. Yorkshire Water (YW) proposes to treat phosphate pollution at its Killinghall and other STWs on the Nidd. We await OFWAT's imminent decision on its acceptance of YW's revised 2025-2030 plans
2. The Environment Agency (EA) is due to announce the results for the Knaresborough Lido of this bathing water season's water sampling - surely confirming the 'POOR' quality of the water for swimming
<https://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/profile.html?site=uke2203-08903>
3. The results so far from the July / August 2024 survey at Lido and other UK Bathing Waters, as reported in NAG's website [Lido water quality](#) showed a huge number of these micropollutants, which UK has no current plans to treat.

With ongoing concern for clean rivers and seas showed by the public, including the weekend's Surfers Against Sewage march in London, I believe we need our new Government to turn its warm words into some concrete (and sustainable) action.

- How about adopting the EU's planned improvements – and policing as well as regulating Improved standards of waste treatment to avoid them continuing to contaminate our fresh and sea water?

The EA can justifiably say that they are under-resourced to deliver their claim *'to protect and improve the environment'*, let alone do more – but *'improve'* is what we are all asking of them!

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency/about>

I thought that leaving the EU enabled us to set new and higher standards of water quality? Doesn't look like it so far!