

This morning, Friday, June 7, Julian Brazier, MP, met with members of the Little Stour & Nailbourne River Management Group, Southern Water and the Environment Agency (EA) to discuss the issues with the Nailbourne sewer.

The meeting included senior management from both the EA and Southern Water and the consultant that Southern Water has appointed to help with the development of the action plan to repair the sewer where it is leaking.

The survey of the sewer from Barham to Bekesbourne is now 90% complete. Continuing high groundwater levels at the Bekesbourne end of the catchment are preventing the survey from being completed. The survey contractors tried to do the work last Monday evening but the levels were too high and the new plan is to attempt the work next week.

Mark Thompson, Head of Waste Water Assets at Southern Water, explained that the company is taking the issues with the Nailbourne sewer 'very seriously' and that the funding has been allocated to carry out the necessary repairs.

This concurs with the conversation I had face-to-face yesterday, Thursday, with Matthew Wright, the CEO of Southern Water, who assured me that he has issued instructions, with the full support of the Board, for the situation to be resolved.

Southern Water has twenty-four communities which have suffered groundwater infiltration into the sewer this year. Seventeen are significant. Two others (ie three in total) are of the scale we have here. Our sewer is a priority for action and repair.

Southern Water presented a map showing the early results of the survey work (I have a copy should anyone wish to view it.) The company will be writing today to local people/stakeholders with an overview of what has been found to date and the repair work which has commenced. Again I have a copy of this letter but I will not reproduce the main statements in it as it should be coming to you direct from Southern Water in the next day or so.

While surveying the sewer and jetting it clean the company has found some blockages caused by fat, oil and grease (FOG). We all have a duty not to put these substances into the sewer

and I have volunteered the River Group's help in giving out up to 4000 (free) oil/fat recycling units which Southern Water has ordered for distribution locally. (More of this in further updates.)

The meeting also discussed briefly the maintenance issue on the Great Stour between Fordwich and Grove Ferry. Andrew Pearce, EA Kent Manager, confirmed that his team are currently reviewing the maintenance regime and doing some modelling work which will be reported back to us. I believe this includes the Little Stour maintenance regime and protocol for running the Littlebourne/Ickham/W'breaux/Seaton bypass channel. Andrew also said that best practice and experience of agricultural land flooding in the South West suggests that steps should be taken for water not to be left to stand on agricultural land. (Again more of this later when we have discussed it further and the review is complete.)

Julian suggested that it would be good to have a volunteer day on the Gt Stour and that he personally would join in. The EA agreed to scope this probably via the East Kent Catchment Interest Group co-ordinated by Barrie Neaves. (I attend this as a River Group rep.)

The River Group members stressed the social costs/impact of the sewer issues: ie the tankering noise and traffic disruption; and the visual degradation of the landscape; and also asked that the action plan is given deadlines. We expect all the repairs to be in place by the start of the next high groundwater season - which will begin in October. (January is possibly a more realistic deadline.)

One further action point was agreed and that is that all future development work in the valley to have a planning condition that new lateral sewer pipes are laid in a material and manner suitable for a groundwater catchment. It was agreed that Southern Water would pursue this with Canterbury and Shepway City Council and Cllr Oakey volunteered to support it with CCC. The River Group members also suggested that the parish councils could remind parties of the requirement when commenting on planning applications in their parishes.

It was a good meeting with positive results.

Jill Thomas, Secretary, Little Stour & Nailbourne River Management Group
June 7, 2013