

Ilkley Clean River Group 4th Town Meeting

The Questions Answered

Questions asked were canvassed in advance from Ilkley Residents attending and posed by the Ilkley Clean River Group (ICRG)

Responders:

Ilkley Town Council: Mayor Mark Stidworthy

Robbie Moore MP

Bradford Council: Alex Ross Shaw and Jonathan Hayes (BC)

Yorkshire Water: Richard Emmott (YW)

Environment Agency: Martin Christmas (EA)

The meeting was attended by 75 Ilkley Residents

Yorkshire Water's Plans

At the town meeting in Feb 2020 Yorkshire Water (YW) promised the Town a plan for cleaning up the river.

(a) What is the plan over what timeframe?

(b) How will you achieve it?

Richard Emmott presented:

1. YW proposed approach to improving the quality of the Wharfe throughout the catchment
2. Early work we will undertake as part of preparation for 1st year bathing water status
3. Shorter term measures being taken to reduce the number of discharges within Bradford.

Bathing Status

1. Obvious that the minister would make positive decision, as a result of pressure from media and environmental NGOs
2. Argument that says Bathing status is not necessarily the best way to deliver improved ecological status and cleaner rivers. It captured a mood that resonated with gov.

3. Made us step back and think about the whole catchment in the longer term

Ambition for the whole Wharfe

4. *“More inspiring and ambitious target would be to achieve good ecological status for the whole river as set out in the water framework directive by 2027”*
5. The ambition: Committed to delivering what is required to achieve good bathing water quality for the town – focusing on the ecological status for the whole river is better for the environment, benefits more people and is more sustainable and also much harder to achieve.
6. The scale of the issue: 65 mile long catchment. YW assets make a big impact on the river, agricultural land use, private discharges, surface water run off all makes an impact but so do many other factors including physical barriers (e.g. weirs) and migratory fish. To deal with the complexity need to bring a range of people together to address these. So formed a partnership board to bring these together – Bradford Council, Environment Agency, National Farmers Union, Country Land Owners Association, Yorkshire Dales rivers Trust and will need to talk to bigger land owners upstream. Also will need to ensure local community are widely involved.
7. Structure of the partnership – independent chair. Board looking at the whole catchment. Subgroups on specific issues – Bathing Water Status (getting going in the next few weeks)
8. Priorities of the Partnership: Year 1-2 Model the catchment, understand how it works, conduct source apportionment work (understanding where pollutants come from). This leads to the business plan from 2025 – 2030 with making the River Wharfe an Exemplar river a key part of that – an iconic project for that period.
9. YW have asked engineering consultants what it will take to eliminate all but the most intermittent discharges from everywhere on the YW network and how long that will take.
10. Costs: the public will end up paying through their bills
11. Public Expectations: need to find out more about what the population wants. Bathing status might be what some communities want but others might want investment to go into removal of weirs for instance.
12. Sustainability and Carbon impact: tertiary treatment to remove bacteria is very energy intensive, installing storage tanks is also carbon intensive. Nature based solutions e.g. SUDs are more sustainable but take longer. We will end up with a blend of solutions.
13. Solutions are not easy or quick – this is not a delaying tactic. YW is absolutely clear we will work to secure good ecological status by 2027 and we are committed to delivering bathing water quality that over time, so that the river consistently reaches a good standard in Ilkley
14. Currently 5 years ahead of where we would be, and moving at a fast pace.

Securing Bathing Water Quality

15. The first few years will show poor status. Achieving good water quality will require substantial investment circa hundreds of millions. In the short term we can reduce the number of discharges.
- a. Working with BC planning to divert infiltration from the Tarn into Backstone Beck. This will reduce spill frequency by circa 20%. Can't give a timescale now but we will know the answers soon.
 - b. By end 2022 upgrade the screen on Riverdale CSO and widen the chamber to improve the aesthetics of the discharge and increase its capacity
 - c. Working on a project to increase the size of the sewer network by putting in new pipes to divert flows from Riverdale to reduce numbers of spills. This includes a new sewer down Leeds Road to divert flows from the CSO.
 - d. Piloting a smart network in Ilkley putting in additional monitoring link that to the CSOs and use AI to predict when blockages will occur and intervene proactively
 - e. Longer term we can incorporate citizen science modelling, open source data and make the modelling data available on a real time basis to give it some transparency.

Storm Overflows

In 2018 there were 123 days of discharges, in 2019 there were 144 days of discharges. What does the 20% relate too? The number of events? The number of days/ hours? By when? 20% of 144 means still over 100 days a year of raw sewage discharges into the Wharfe.

Qn: What level of Storm Overflow discharge are you aiming for?

YW: Aiming for zero intermittent discharges. Progressively YW will reduce the number of discharges, and will reduce the volume of discharges.

Engagement for Bradford Council/ Yorkshire Water partnership

Qn: How is the YW and BC partnership planning to involve Ilkley residents in the plans for upgrading the sewage system and preparing for the Bathing Season?

YW: Local engagement critical. It will involve this group (Ilkley Clean River Group) but not just his group, it will include civic society and Friends of Riverside parks. It also needs to be catchment wide engagement. In terms of Ilkley there is a range of opinion in the Town and these need to be part of the planning. Commitment to engage the whole community in its entirety working with the person who does this for YW for the coast.

Ilkley as the First Designated Bathing Site

This is the first designated river in the UK. This is a chance to get it right and be exemplary.

Qn: What happens year 1 re signage and testing?

YW: This is a chance to get it right and be exemplary for the rest of the country.

Environment Agency: The first couple of years the Bathing Status Signage will say that the water quality is poor.

YW: is planning a clean-up of the river to secure good Bathing Status over time (see Bathing Quality above)

Robbie Moore: We are trying to achieve clean water status and 'bathing' status branding is misleading as it implies 'safe to swim'. There needs to be a focus on safety now.

River Management Programme for the Riverside

Qn: How and when will you implement a river management programme and water safety strategy to ensure that there is adequate provision for the peak volume of people that come to visit Ilkley in the height of summer?

Cllr Ross Shaw Bradford Council (BC): explained the wide range of council services that are involved in the river. Re Water Safety strategy is underway, looking at the strategies in place across W Yorkshire and taking the best from those. We finalise the plan at the end of the month and then the policy goes to the Executive, and it will go online a week before the meeting and the meeting will be held in public. We are carrying out an assessment at high risk sites at the district working with consultants, and Ilkley riverside is one of their sites. We are expecting recommendations to prevent people jumping off the iron bridge.

Signage for Below the Iron Bridge where the storm overflow spills raw sewage 1/3rd of the year, and where testing by the Citizen Science group shows that the water is constant risk to public health.

ICRG: We have demonstrated the significant levels of pollution below the iron footbridge where it is never safe to paddle, swim or play. We have a duty of care knowing this data to inform the public. As this is BC and YW land they need to put up signs before the bathing season in May this year. We have known for 2 years now, and there has been no action to address this. Signage by the iron bridge must be provided so that visitors and local people can make an informed choice.

Qn: What is happening about signage for the stretch from the Iron Bridge to Beanlands to 'discourage bathing' and to warn the public of the health risks?

Ilkley Town Council: is not the owner or manager of the land and so can't take responsibility for signage.

Jonathan Hayes, Bradford Council: BC owns the land upstream of the footbridge, and will put the bathing water signage at that point as advised by the EA. They will also provide additional signage to indicate the level of pollution as advised by the EA below the Iron Bridge. Where this needs to be on YW land they will seek permission for these signs.

Environment Agency (EA): There are known bacterial levels below the iron bridge. Cleaning up the river below the Iron Footbridge will take significant investment including ultra violet decontamination. It will be sound advise to tell the public that this is a higher risk area compared to upstream. The EA will be taking 20 samples from May to Sept and 18 need to be below the 900cfu threshold which given the Ilkley Clean River Group's

previous citizen science testing is unlikely. The signage is likely to advise against bathing in 2021.

The EA: is setting up a citizen space web portal and the EA will put any information available on that portal.

YW: is taking immediate steps to reduce the pollution in the river upstream of the iron Bridge to secure good bathing water quality over time. See YW response above.

Upstream of Ilkley

The sources of faecal bacteria pollution of the river upstream of Ilkley are coming from Addingham pumping station and from tributaries. This is evidence from the ICRG citizen science testing.

The Addingham Pumping Station CSO spills after heavy rainfall causing severe local pollution in the Mill Stream and high concentrations of faecal bacteria in the Wharfe.

Upstream tributaries, especially those in Addingham, also contain high concentrations of faecal bacteria (and nutrients) from livestock and septic tanks causing poor water quality in the becks and contributing to the pollution load on the main river through Ilkley.

The EA has a duty to enforce the rules to prevent pollution from agricultural land.

Qn: How will these pollution sources be measured and managed?

EA: The Bathing Water Sampling will provide the classification and we will include some EDMA multisource tracking to find what causes the pollution. We are waiting for our budget allocation, but if secured we are intending a walk over programme based on the advice of Prof Battarbee, with 6 officers to focus on farm assurance to look at storage of slurry and the farming rules for water legislation. Once we understand the whole picture (source apportionment) we can put in place plans to rectify and reduce the pollution

YW: We know there is an issue of storage at Addingham which we need to focus on. YW looking at the impact of Addingham and above in terms of the impact on Ilkley including tributaries.

Robbie Moore MP: Environment Land Management system will also be part of the solution.

We need to join up the investigations to have a comprehensive and shared picture, including the extension of the citizen science work across the Wharfe, so that there is one plan of investigation by the citizen science, YW and EA teams. When we have this we can direct investment properly.

The Impact of Legislation

The Urban Waste Water treatment directive, post Brexit, is now in UK law. This states spills should only happen in extreme conditions and with the 2012 ruling this means flooding conditions. Ilkley Clean River Group considers this to be 2-3 times a year.

Qn How is the national legislation going to secure Storm Overflow in Ilkley at the level of 2-3 times a year?

Robbie Moore MP:

Ilkley has driven this national change by securing Bathing Status it has lead to a national focus on cleaning up rivers everywhere.

The Environment Bill

Clause 76 – drainage and sewage management. Under this YW will be required to produce a statutory drainage and sewage management plan to manage environmental risks. It will be a statutory duty to examine and investigate the capacity of their networks. The clause aims nationally to allow for more assessment and long term planning on environmental impact, extreme weather conditions, and reducing sewer flooding.

Clause on water industry regulation. Modernising the process of modifying the water companies licensing conditions. Bill aims to reduce the divergence between companies licensing conditions. This strengthens Ofwat's ability to improve the way water companies operate and the information Ofwat receives.

The Environment bill sets up the Office of Environment protection to hold the regulatory bodies to account.

Sewage Inland Waters Bill

Private members bill places a statutory duty to ensure untreated sewage is not discharged into rivers or inland waters. The gov has stated it intends to support elements of the Bill.

Defra Storm Overflow Task Force

To date this has identified it is securing real time data through monitoring, and is moving onto prioritisation and solution finding this year. Water companies have committed 1.2 Billion to improving storm overflows including Event Duration Monitoring and reducing leakage from sewage networks.

Robbie is inviting Rebecca Pow to Ilkley to meet the Town residents.

Population Growth for YW and BC

Qn: With all the new houses planned in this area how will you show to us that the quality of the water is not going to worsen?

Cllr Ross Shaw BC: Housing allocation has dropped since 2017.

Robbie Moore: The local plan is 314 new houses in Ilkley, up to 181 in Addingham, 610 in Burley in Wharfedale.

Cllr Ross Shaw BC: There is an established process through the planning system to set out an infrastructure plan so they can plan their investment in line with the anticipated growth. We would now allow a worsening of water quality as a result of the growth and that is part of the planning process. We are also focusing on green streets and that local plans have an emphasis on net zero. New housing should be better quality.

ICRG we would like to see evidence of the integrated activities between those organisations.

YW is not a statutory consultee on the planning, but we do have a statutory duty to provide. We don't think the issue of household waste will be a problem, the issue that is a problem is the surface water drainage. YW would like it to be a mandatory piece of planning guidance that all housing developers have a statutory duty to provide sustainable drainage in their project that do not add flows to the public sewage system. We need to put pressure on Bradford to put very high standard of SUDs. Its not a joined up system at all.

Summary by Mark Stidworthy Ilkley Town Mayor

This is about our river in Ilkley being pleasant safe and sustainably managed for local residents and visitors. Delighted so much progress has been made. It is clear there is an issue of cohesions with lots of strands happening at the same time and we need to also work on communication as the lack of trust and confidence results from a lack of communication – we don't know what's happening and so we don't believe anything is happening. Need to see clear planning about the speed as well as the direction. A concern to local people is how the riverside is managed for bathing status so that this is a positive feature for the river, making is a safe and pleasant place to visit. We need clarity from EA, YW and BC by May.

Key statements

Yorkshire Water

“More inspiring and ambitious target would be to achieve good ecological status for the whole river as set out in the water framework directive by 2027”

Making the River Wharfe an Exemplar - an iconic project for the period 2025-30

YW have asked engineering consultants what it will take to eliminate all but the most intermittent discharges from everywhere on the YW network and how long that will take. Aiming for zero intermittent discharges. Progressively YW will reduce the number of discharges, and will reduce the volume of discharges

Commitment to engage the whole community in its entirety working with the person who does this for YW for the coast who is going to lead this for the Wharfe.

Currently 5 years ahead of where we would be, and moving at a fast pace.

Bradford Council

BC owns the land upstream of the footbridge, and will put the bathing water signage at that point as advised by the EA. They will also provide additional signage to indicate the level of pollution as advised by the EA below the Iron Bridge. Where this needs to be on YW land they will seek permission for these signs.

Key assumptions to challenge

YW: Costs - the public will end up paying through their bills. ICRG will raise this with Ofwat.

Issues and Actions

1. Communications. There are clearly multiple ongoing investigations and solution finding activities. There needs to be an ongoing update of the Ilkley Community. ICRG will be seeking clarity on how residents and the ICRG will be informed of plans and progress.
2. What is the plan for the upstream investigation at Addingham? Storage? ICRG will follow up with a request for more information on timescales and how YW will work with the EA and iWharfe.
3. The current upgrades for Bathing status address the illegal spills upstream of the testing site (popping manholes, the Riverdale CSO) and put in place screens that should have been provided 10 years ago. ICRG notes these as requirements of the status quo rather than developments.
4. The only current plan for the Ashlands Storm Overflow is the diversion to Backstone Beck. ICRG is going to check the data on this and will be requesting a timetable for when the investigation is completed, and site of the options developed to be reviewed by our technical team.
5. The Water Safety Policy is going to the executive before it has had any engagement with the public. ICRG's only chance to comment is at the open executive meeting. ICRG will ask to see this and comment directly prior to Executive.
6. EA source apportionment work upstream at Addingham is dependent on budget. ICRG can lend our support for this.
7. YW would like it to be a mandatory piece of planning guidance that all housing developers have a statutory duty to provide sustainable drainage in their project that do not add flows to the public sewage system. We need to put pressure on Bradford to put very high standard of SUDs. ICRG can lend our support to this.
8. ICRG has written to CCW to ask how the consumer voice is being garnered and reported by CCW to support their contribution to the Storm Overflow Task Force.
9. Signage: ICRG will be seeking notification of the signage going up for the highly polluted stretch of the designation site below the Iron Bridge.
10. ICRG will be writing to BC with suggestions for the coming months in preparation for the Bathing Season, in relation to riverside management, and seeking a higher level meeting in advance of visits by national leaders