

# CROWD: Clean Rivers Of West Dorset

Notes and action points from the meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> January at Wootton Fitzpaine.

## Attending:

- **Winniford River (Winniford River Action Group, WRAG):** Peter Stapleton
- **River Char (River Char Community Project (RCCP):** Andrew Carey
- **River Char (Lower Char Community Project (LCCP):** Dana Assinder
- **River Mangerton (River monitor):** Chuck Willmott
- **River Asker (Parish Council Chair):** Michele Warrington
- **River Asker (Riverfly Testing coordinator):** Howard Atkinson
- **West Dorset Rivers and Coastal Streams (Catchment Officer):** Ian Rees
- **River Simene (Parish Councillor):** Steve Evans
- Chris Loder MP
- Harry Coutts (Constituency Assistant)
- Seth Dellow (Constituency Assistant)

**Name:** We agreed the group name: Clean Rivers of West Dorset (CROWD) but acknowledged that the name didn't include the coastal waters and beaches and didn't represent our intention to **take action**. The following variations (proposed since the meeting) might address these points:

Clean CROWD (Clean Coasts and Rivers of West Dorset)

Action CROWD (Action on Coasts and Rivers of West Dorset)

**ACTION** - Next meeting - discuss and agree on definitive name for group

## Aims and intentions:

Chris Loder stated his intention to work with us "to ensure clean and safe waters for the people and wildlife of West Dorset." We agreed the following description for CROWD:

*CROWD works to get positive action to clean up West Dorset's rivers and coastal waters so they meet the targets set in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (2018) and the Environment Act (2021)*

CROWD will do this by:

- *collating factual evidence and local information on all issues related to river and coastal water quality.*
- *briefing our MP on these issues so he and others can have informed conversations with Water Companies, Dorset Council and relevant statutory bodies and agencies and act on our behalf.*
- *working together and in partnership with others, including local communities, to deliver action on the ground.*

## Representation:

We agreed that, geographically, at its widest, the group would cover the south-flowing coastal rivers and streams and coastal waters/beaches from the River Bride in the east to the River Lim in the west – and that we would seek, in due course, to have all those rivers and coastal areas represented.

**ACTION:** Ian Rees will

- **invite a representative of Dorset Coastal Forum to attend in future to represent the coast and beaches.**
- **contact Bridport Community Connections and, through them and other groups, try to identify one or two representatives of the River Brit to join CROWD.**
- **liaise with Dorset Wildlife Trust to identify a representative from their Water Guardians project)**

Geoff May and Margaret Morgan-Grenville from The Asker Project (who couldn't attend this meeting) will be invited to attend future meetings. The suggestion remains that each river should send a maximum of 2 representatives to each meeting and we leave it to each river group/parish to decide who they will send.

The list of attendees at each meeting will be circulated among us ahead of that meeting.

We anticipate that as CROWD gains momentum, the need will arise for meetings with a specific focus to which other interested parties will be invited.

**Engineered sewage releases (spills):** In our area, there are sewage treatment plants (STPs) on the Lim, Char, Winniford, Simene, Brit, Mangerton and Bride. West Bexington coastal CSO is also a heavy polluter.

**ACTION:** We agreed that each river group/representative will gather information on sewage releases from these STPs and their associated storm overflows. It may take time for each group/rep. to understand local conditions and gather this information accurately. To help present the data systematically, Dana Assinder will:

- prepare a sheet of sewage and water quality resources to share with the group before our next meeting.
- propose a format for recording 'spills' information to facilitate quick reading and cross referencing.

Thereafter, we agreed to investigate ways of getting these sewage releases analysed. Water and Sewage Companies (WASCs) and the Environment Agency (EA) both have a statutory duty to report on *some of the* chemical and biological contaminants present in sewage discharges.

**ACTION:** Dana will provide details of what is/is not currently required to be tested for and how new legislation is likely to change that. As Michele said, "*any water pollutant is a concern*".

**Other water quality issues:** Howard is coordinating riverfly monitoring data on the Asker; Dana is actively involved in CSI monitoring on the Char using West Country Rivers Trust criteria – we agreed to establish who else is doing monitoring work in our rivers and where, and to ensure that accurate and comparable data is available. This will be a topic at our February meeting.

**ACTION:** We asked Chris Loder, as soon as he can, to invite Wessex Water to:

1. provide details of its Asset Management Plan, budgets, priorities and schedules over the next 5-year period as they relate to our rivers
2. identify any areas or opportunities for community engagement where the Group or its members could work effectively with WW to achieve local improvements
3. supply sewage release data (events and duration by location and date) for the CROWD area for 2022 and the same data each month from January 2023 onwards. (n.b. the data currently issued by Wessex Water to the SAS Safer Seas & Rivers app does not cover all discharges – i.e. LSOs – and has anomalies.)

#### **Future meetings:**

Chris Loder will attend our meetings quarterly and we anticipate meeting, if necessary, between those quarterly meetings, when Seth and/or Harry will aim to attend on Chris's behalf.

The next meeting (without CL) is set for **Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> February**, again at Wootton Fitzpaine at 12:30. If everyone is in agreement Andrew/Dana will draft and circulate for comment the agenda for this meeting. We will agree at this meeting who will coordinate and organise future meetings and where they will be held.

The following meeting (with CL) is set for **Friday 14<sup>th</sup> April** at 11:00 (venue tbc). We intend to invite Wessex Water (and maybe also South West Water and the Environment Agency). We agreed to work towards preparing a list of questions and detailed issues to raise with them at that time. To be discussed on Weds 8th Feb.