

CROWD: Clean Rivers Of West Dorset

Questions to the Environment Agency for June 2023

MONITORING and TESTING

1. **Overview:** It is often unclear from the published data whether EA water quality testing has been suspended temporarily or permanently or simply that information has not been updated. Can the EA provide an overview of the monitoring regime for CROWD rivers and coastal waters for both human and environmental health, including details of tests taken, frequency and specific purpose?
2. **Forecast errors:** Can the EA supply data on the frequency of false positive and false negative daily pollution forecasts (as indicated by weekly bathing water sampling on the day a forecast was issued)?
3. **River testing:** Why has the EA stopped testing in many places on CROWD area rivers? (e.g. on the River Char at Charmouth A35 Bridge (SW-50050525) and Beach Pond (SW-50050521), where an unlicensed SO discharges less than 1km from a popular estuary bathing spot on Charmouth West Stream, and a classified bathing beach?)
4. **CSI monitoring:** If the EA is unable or unwilling to monitor water quality at sites like the above on CROWD rivers, will it recognise and act on CSI monitoring?
5. **Microbial contamination:** Will the EA analyse samples from rivers in the CROWD area using Microbial Source Tracking to identify the ultimate sources (human, bird, livestock, etc.) of microbial contamination?
6. **Viral contamination:** Can the EA supply data on a) the frequency of viral presence in bathing season water samples and b) the half-life of viruses of risk to human health (e.g. norovirus) in river and sea water?
7. **Chemical monitoring:** Is chemical monitoring (particularly for nitrate and phosphate levels) compared by the EA to rainfall patterns? [Resulting data could suggest runoff from fertiliser application.]
8. **Sewage debris:** The EA reports “*sewage debris was not assessed as being sufficient to be objectionable*” in its report for Lyme Regis. How much sewage debris at a holiday site with bathing water is acceptable?
9. The beach at Seatown acts as a filter for pollutants in the **River Winniford**, so that sea water quality is satisfactory, while pollutants concentrate in the river mouth lagoon. Testing by Dorset Council of the lagoon in 2022 showed very high *E. coli* levels. During the holiday season, Seatown beach is very busy, and children are attracted to paddle or swim in the lagoon: this is a real health risk. Will the EA change its classification of the Winniford and the lagoon to take account of its historical use for bathing, and take responsibility for monitoring the quality of the water and requiring its improvement?
10. **Upper River Brit:** The page [<https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/v/c3-plan/WaterBody/GB108044009600>] shows that EA sampling points are all some way down the river. Very few of them have had repeated measurements taken and lots of the data is old (2019 or earlier) or very old (c.2009). How meaningful is the current assessment of the river as of 'moderate ecological status'?

SIGNAGE / ALERTS

11. **Signage:** What are the requirements – and who is responsible – for permanent signage warning of the risks to human health from entering a river or coastal water?
12. **Signage:** Does the EA agree that ALL SOs should be signed to warn of the potential dangers to human health, regardless of the designation of the surrounding area as a bathing river/beach?
13. **Pollution Risk forecast process:** who is informed and what temporary signage/live alerts are required to inform members of the public who do not use the SAS app of the risk of entering the water?

REMEDIAL WORKS

14. **Unlicensed SOs:** What is the EA's process for remedial works once an unlicensed SO is identified? How is the SO then regulated and the timescale for resolution set? [We have 2 in the CROWD area]
15. **Sewerage performance:** Is the EA review of sewerage performance at Lyme Regis being extended to other rivers within the CROWD area? When will it make recommendations for additional improvements to protect and improve bathing water quality?

CATCHMENT THINKING

16. **Catchment thinking:** How does the EA view CaSTCo pilot schemes?

REGULATORY ISSUES

17. What can **Chris Loder** do, politically, to improve the EA's ability to act?