

To All Partners: Staveley 'Clean Water, Clean Streets': Update 2

This second update on our project 'Clean water, Clean Streets' aims to keep partners informed of work and progress since early May 2023. Discussions have continued in the Core Group involving UU, W&F, as the LLFA, and the Parish Council (PC). It may be helpful to remind you of this group's remit which is:

- To receive reports from participants and take necessary action
- Gather and analyse information
- Track and maintain progress
- Prepare a detailed, joint action plan – both short-term to make an initial impact and long-term to resolve the identified problems
- Report back to the inaugural group

Three inter-related areas of concern remain as our focus:

1. The infrastructure of the combined sewerage system and ingress of surface and ground water
2. Staveley WwTW
3. River water quality, environmental and bio-diversity pollution

Background:

The current emphasis, pursued by both UU and the LLFA, is to reduce the ingress of surface and ground water into the combined sewerage system, which is known to be considerable. This will have been apparent for a long time but was clearly demonstrated by our recent Parish survey results. (see link in accompanying email)

The survey involved a year-long monitoring programme of discharges from the WwTW (as seen from the opposite river bank) from Feb 22 to Feb 23, during which 186 separate observations were made. The 'so called' storm overflow pipe, which discharges untreated or settled sewage into the river, either directly in the very occasional storm conditions or more likely after limited settlement in the holding tanks, was recorded discharging on 53% of the visits. The survey concluded that the two contributory rivers (Kent and Gowan) only need to rise by 15cm (for the Kent) and 11cm (Gowan) for this to happen as a consistent pattern. This is a minor increase for these rivers and clearly demonstrates very little capacity at the site and confirms that it is only operating effectively in fairly dry conditions.

Since then, the EA has produced its annual report on sewage treatment nation-wide (link available in email message). Alarming, this placed Staveley's WwTW as the fourth worst discharger across the whole of the north-west with a discharge figure of 301 (+ 75 direct storm overflows) spills during 2022. UU has agreed that the site has significant problems with an unacceptable discharge rate, a position reinforced more recently, following EA investigation, by the site apparently considered to be in breach of its permit.

Several consequences have emerged from these findings over the last few months.

Focus 1: To determine what is actually happening across the village sewerage network, UU has now installed seven DNMs (Digital Network Monitors) in the village combined sewerage system. These are strategically placed to monitor flow and volume across the extent of the pipe work leading to its restricted crossing under the River Kent and prior to being passed forward to the WwTW. Abnormal or unexpected flows in different rainfall conditions should provide essential information about

surface and ground water ingress. Results and a full analysis are yet to be shared with the Group but are part of the agenda for our forthcoming meeting. It is hoped that the analysis will also show whether any ingress is occurring across the flood plain field between the crossing under the Kent and the WwTW.

The LLFA with UU have mapped and investigated more pipe work, including natural and culverted water courses on the northern side of the village where significant run-off from Reston Scar occurs. Significant ingress has been located in one area and plans are in place to remedy this. Other repair work is also planned. Additional investigation work has also been undertaken in association with the Parish Council to identify other ingress locations. It is hoped this will be extended to other areas of the village. Locally we are aware that this requires a considerable investment in resources and are grateful for the priority that it has been given.

As yet it is not clear whether this will be sufficient to reduce the flow sufficiently to avoid the back-up which occurs through village manholes in heavy and persistent rainfall. If after this approach the problems remain, the Parish Council will insist on a solution that involves a different pipe under the Kent.

Focus 2: This brings us back to the WwTW. In the light of the results described above, UU has now made a commitment, received in writing, that investment at the site will be undertaken in the next funding period (AMP 8) 2025 to 2030. The specific aim is to reduce overflows to 'an average of ten per year.' Currently it is not known what this investment involves as detailed work is necessary for such significant projects. The Parish Council will press that this must be such that it resolves both the inadequacies at the WwTW and those within the village.

Although as yet too early to be fully confident, there is real, positive progress at this stage and the PC is grateful for the efforts being made in a variety of ways to bring this about. The next stage is to pin down the detail and only then will it be known whether these hopes can be turned to reality.

Alongside this, UU has spent a day working with Staveley School to promote pupil understanding of good water management and usage. Other opportunities to visit the village and publicise similar messages are under consideration. Elsewhere, the CRKC Group continue its activities to protect and enhance the local watercourses and plans to embark on a year-long sampling programme, which will help to identify pollution from a wider range of sources across the area, including catchments upstream of Staveley.

Following a direct invitation, Louise Beardmore (CEO of UU) is due to visit Staveley in late September. This will include a look at the issues on the ground, discussion of progress and hopefully an agreement about what precisely is needed to resolve the well documented problems.

I finish with one plea to you as partners, whatever your level of involvement. Collectively in 2023, we just can't allow our village in the National Park (and World Heritage site) to accept the current level of pollution into our rivers and on to our streets. Now progress is underway, let's re-double our efforts to this end.

Arthur Council (on behalf of Staveley with Ings Parish Council)

Update 2: 9.8.23