

To All Partners: Staveley ‘Clean Water, Clean Streets’: Update 3

I note with some alarm that our last Update on the progress of our ‘Clean Water, Clean Streets’ project was back in August 2023. While many of you have continued to be closely involved in our continued efforts to resolve our sewage problems, much has happened since then and it is time to bring everyone up to date. The cause of our concern is now well documented so, for this update, I wish to focus mainly on action.

- Our analysis of river levels during 2023, which provide an indication of expected discharge at the WwTW, continue to show that this is occurring at a similar rate as previously recorded, around 50% of the time.
- So far this year five incidents of sewage discharge from street manholes have occurred.
- United Utilities (UU) has continued to work with the Council to seek solutions to these problems. Working with the Environment Agency, temporary additional facilities at the WwTW have been introduced to enable a greater flow of sewage to be passed through for treatment. This will be increased progressively to ensure that the quality of the treated water returning to the river is not unduly affected. Over time, this additional equipment is expected to reduce discharge of untreated sewage into the Kent.
- Free SUDS pods, to delay and divert rain water run-off, have been installed by UU at the Village Hall and Pavilion. Other installations are planned. Free smart water butts are being made available to local residents, who can make an application for them via <https://www.unitedutilities.com/my-local-area/news-in-your-area/cumbria/action-for-staveley/>
- Local analysis clearly demonstrates that surface and particularly ground water ingress is a major cause of overload in the combined sewerage network and any solution must address this as a priority. Further work has also been done to quantify the impact of community-wide use of water butts. These and other measures have been modelled for their effect and will be shared with UU.
- Westmorland & Furness Council is progressing plans to divert a known culvert that currently feeds a significant flow of water from Reston Scar into the sewerage network. Work will be undertaken later this year. It also continues to explore other similar opportunities to ease pressure on the network.
- The Clean River Kent Campaign has continued to work closely with us throughout. Their support is greatly valued.

Meeting with Louise Beardmore (UU CEO)

Initially planned for Autumn 2023, the meeting with Louise Beardmore (UU CEO) was postponed until 2024 to provide more time for United Utilities to explore the problems more thoroughly and prepare plans for their resolution. Both the Parish Council and Clean River Kent Group held separate meetings with Louise and her senior colleagues on 31st January and a six hour ‘Drop In’ event provided an opportunity for the community to engage fully with United Utilities, Environment Agency and Westmorland & Furness representatives, who were able to explain both their current actions and future plans. It was great to see the local community turning out in huge numbers throughout the day – a real encouragement for those involved.

The discussions with United Utilities were both constructive and positive. While it was already known that investment in the WwTW was planned for the next funding period (2025 – 2030), United Utilities confirmed for the first time that their integrated solution would also include action to resolve street discharges. It was further confirmed that the volume of water in the sewerage system was significantly higher than normal for a network of Staveley's size. The Parish Council's request to use the coming months to investigate more precisely what was happening throughout the network, including at the river crossing and across the flood plain to the WwTW, was fully supported with work on this starting immediately. Crucially, an assurance was given by Louise that funding would be found to incorporate the necessary improvements into the investment for 2025 – 30.

Probably without precedent, these assurances were drawn into a signed Joint Statement agreed by both United Utilities and Staveley with Ings Parish Council.

Louise Beardmore (Chief Executive Officer for United Utilities) writes:

Since I have taken over in April last year I have heard people's concerns and I share and understand the frustration that many feel. I was pleased to attend the meeting and to have the opportunity to set out the action I am proposing we take to tackle both the Combined Sewer Overflows and the flooding that occurs from the manholes.

We have started work this week with extensive CCTV of the entire network and will be installing flow monitors so we can understand where the volume of water is coming from to ensure the design and solution we implement addresses the challenges the village faces.

We will operate openly and transparently and will make all information available once those results are available and ensure we work with the Parish Council enabling visibility of solutions and designs seeking to minimise the disruption to the village whilst we do the construction as best as we can.

We will meet every other month face to face to ensure issues can be resolved and progress can be made at pace. I would like to thank the Parish Council for the constructive way in which they engaged and look forward to working together to drive the improvements we all want to see.

The Parish Council believes this is a huge step forward in resolving these long-standing problems and is determined to play its part in ensuring the plans lead to a successful conclusion. The clear desire of United Utilities to take the action outlined and engage fully with the community and its representatives is both appreciated and acknowledged. Thanks are also extended to all partners for their support and advice.

On a personal note, it is now 24 years since I first joined the Parish Council. Although I'm relieved to assure you that I have not spent all of those years working on sewage, more recently it has become a major focus for the Council. However, it is now time for me to hand over this responsibility which I will do from early April this year. I am particularly grateful to the Parish Council Sewage Group and to Members of the Clean River Kent Campaign for their support.

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

Update 3: 15.2.24