

WONDERFUL ON TAP

SEVERN

TRENT



# GET RIVER POSITIVE

POSITIVE  
GET RIVER

Get River  
Positive Report  
March 2023



We know that the health of our rivers is important to all of us. That's why in March 2022 we launched Get River Positive, a fundamental part of our ongoing commitment to drive improvement in the health of our region's rivers. A year on and our hardworking teams are delivering some excellent results.

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# GET RIVER POSITIVE

Get River Positive is more than just words. Over the last year our hardworking teams have delivered some excellent results. This has been recognised by the Environment Agency (EA), who once again gave us the highest four-star rating in 2022 for our 2021 performance.

We're moving faster and further to improve river quality. For instance, by the end of 2022 we had installed 100% of monitors on our storm overflows (SOs). These monitors record data every 2 or 15 minutes, providing us with over 300 million data records over the course of a year about how our SOs are performing, ensuring that we are fulfilling the permit conditions as defined by the EA.

Furthermore our performance of 18 activations on average in 2022, means we are ahead of our plan to reach the regulatory target of 20 activations by 2025 and 10 activations by 2050.

We have promised that our operations will not be the reason for any stretch of river in the whole Severn Trent region to be classified as unhealthy by 2030. We currently account for less than 16% of the harm to rivers in our region and we have committed to reaching 0% by 2030.

The health of our rivers is still affected by other sectors, and we want to help here too. According to the EA, the remaining 84% of reasons for rivers in our region not achieving good status can be attributed to sectors such as agriculture, land management, urban and transport run-off. Which is why we have committed to doing all we can to take leadership on many of the issues our region's rivers face by supporting others to improve and care for rivers too. Our Independent Advisory Panel for river health is now in place and giving us valuable guidance as we move forwards.

Our business is effectively plumbed into the local landscape. Our region's river health is not just essential to the communities we serve, but also to the success of our business. So it makes sense for us to take a leading role, not only in protecting rivers, but enhancing them for everyone's future.

We're continuing to invest £100 million a year to improve our wastewater infrastructure, taking us to a spend of more than £12 billion on the region's sewage system since privatisation.

We recognise the part our region's rivers play in enhancing wellbeing and are delivering against our plans to improve 50km of river in Warwickshire and Shropshire. At the same time, we're recruiting the next generation to help protect our rivers, with our Education Team reaching over 90,000 local schoolchildren with lessons on sewer misuse.

We made the Get River Positive pledges a year ago because we want to be completely transparent about our progress as we continue to work to make our region's rivers the healthiest they can be. This is our first Get River Positive Report and provides an update on the strong progress made to date.

Thanks to the hardwork of our people, I'm pleased the EA results show impact from our operations has reduced by one third in one year, down to 16% from 24% and whilst lower rainfall in 2022 helped it's these continued improvements and investments that will keep on reducing activations.

The health of our rivers is important to everyone. So we welcome feedback on our approach and look forward to updating you as the projects against each of the pledges progress. In future, we expect this report to continue to focus on specific deliverables, developments to our pledges, our key project milestones and ongoing learnings.



Liv Garfield,  
Chief Executive

**Five industry leading pledges** to make our region's rivers the healthiest they can be, as quickly as possible

**£100 million a year** continues to be invested to improve our wastewater infrastructure

Severn Trent is currently responsible for **16% of RNAGS** in our region and this continues to reduce

2022 storm overflow performance **two years** ahead of 2025 regulatory target

Our monitoring is providing us with **300 million data records** for how our storm overflows are performing in a year

Our **10 full time River Rangers** have attended over **110 meetings** working with our partners, environment groups and importantly, the community

**19** out of a possible 20 EPA stars from the EA over the last five years

**Over £278,000** granted to four regional community projects benefiting rivers

# GET RIVER POSITIVE | FACT SHEET

## OUR NETWORK:

- 3.1 billion** litres of wastewater with **90,000km** of pipes
- 300 million** data records about how our storm overflows are performing in a year
- 100%** of our storm overflows have monitors

## OUR PROGRESS:

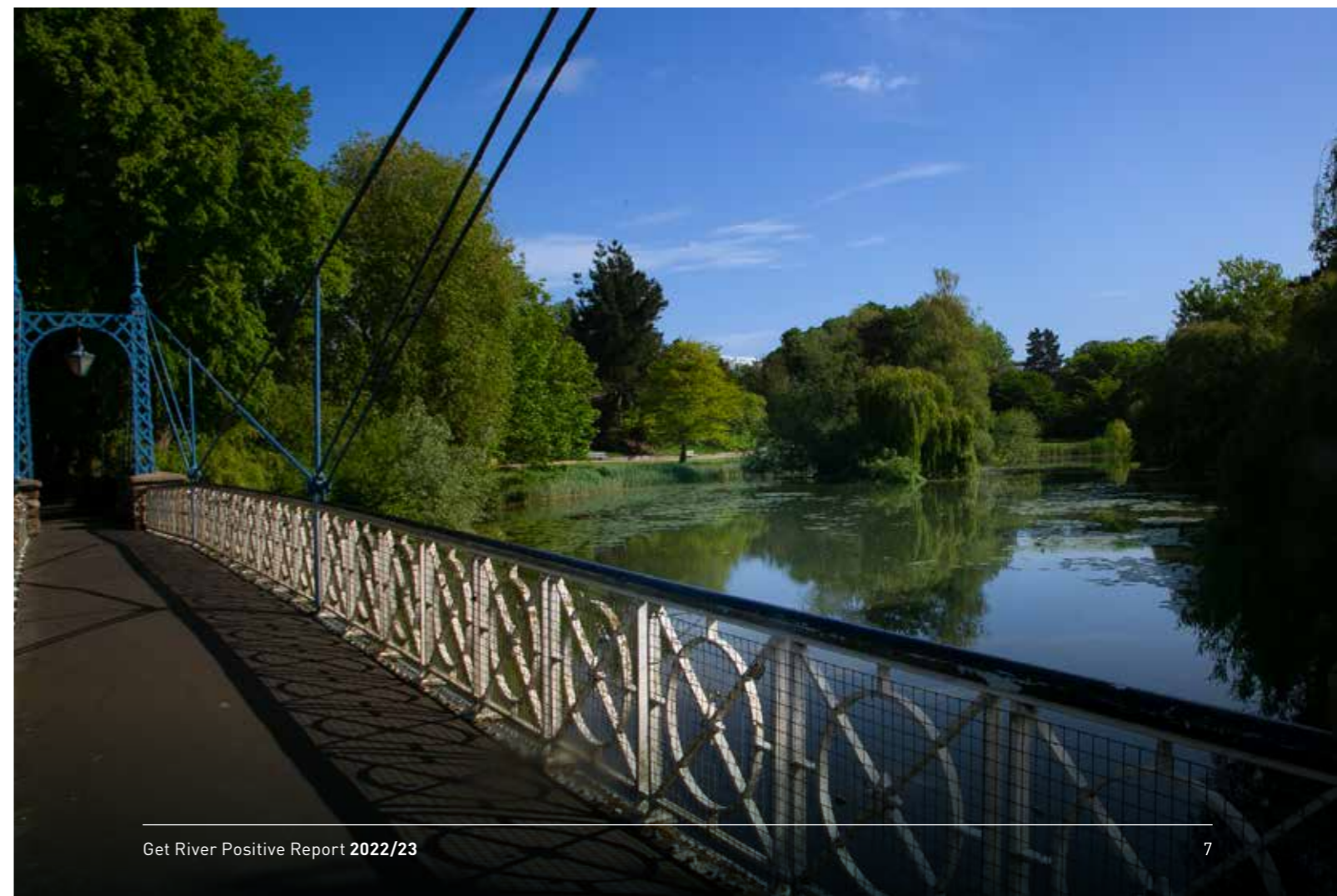
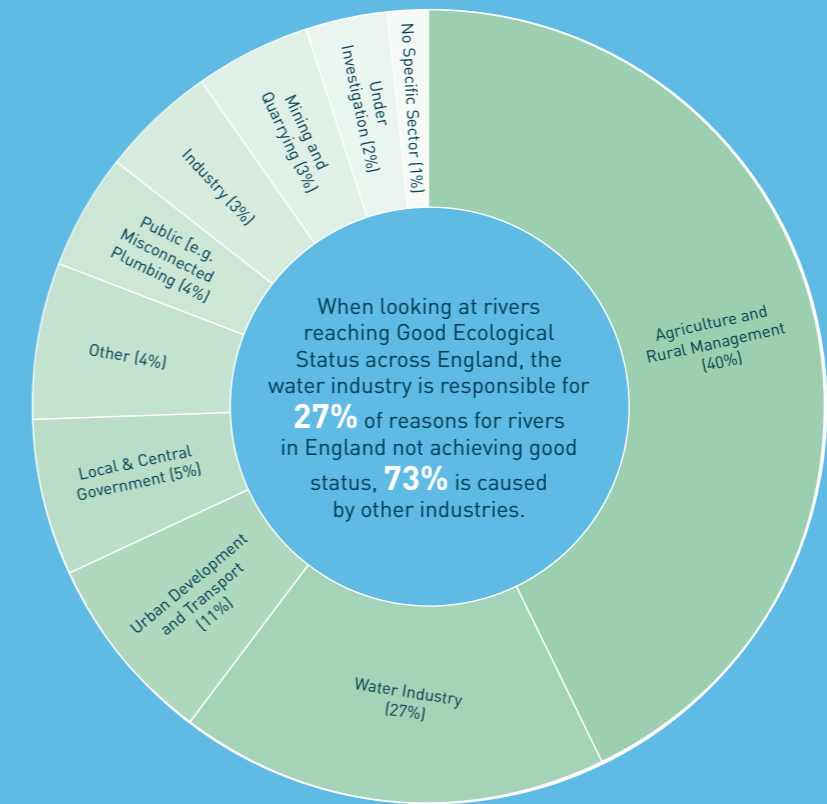
- Continuing to invest **£100m** a year on our waste network
- Increasing **sewer capacity** and **storage** to slow the flow of water during wet weather
- 26%** improvement in storm overflow performance in 2022
- Appointed an Independent Advisory Panel of **six** experts to oversee progress against our river pledges

## OUR BIGGER EFFORTS:

- Moving **two** stretches of river towards bathing quality by **2025**
- Received the highest **four-star rating** from the Environment Agency for the third year running in 2022
- Severn Trent is currently responsible for **16%** of RNAGS in our region
- 10** River Rangers in place, working in communities and with partners to improve river health

## RIVERS IN ENGLAND: Reasons for Not Achieving Good Ecological Status by Sector and Activity

Source: The Environment Agency Catchment Data for England, August 2022



# OUR FIVE POINT PLAN TO IMPROVE OUR REGION'S RIVERS BY 2030



## PLEDGE ONE ENSURE STORM OVERFLOWS AND SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS DO NOT HARM RIVERS

- Based on Environment Agency measures (RNAGS)\*, our operations will not be the reason for unhealthy rivers by 2030.
- We will reduce spills from storm overflows to an average of 20 per year by 2025.
- Using better data we will find and fix problems quicker than ever before at no extra cost to customers.

\*see RNAGS explanation in FAQs



## PLEDGE THREE SUPPORT OTHERS TO IMPROVE AND CARE FOR RIVERS

- Work with farmers and incentivise regenerative farming practices to support our region's rivers to reach good ecological status.
- Campaign for the removal of the automatic right to connect for new development, i.e. building new homes.
- Champion the Bill to ban wet wipes that contain plastic and lobby for a ban on all wet wipes that are not 'Fine to Flush'.



## PLEDGE TWO CREATE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE TO ENJOY OUR REGION'S RIVERS

- We recognise the wellbeing benefits our blue-green spaces provide, we will therefore ensure that 90 percent of people in our regions live within an hour's drive of a bathing site.
- We'll improve 50km of rivers in Warwickshire and Shropshire, helping to move two stretches of river towards bathing quality by 2025 and supporting official designation.
- We will work with local clubs to increase opportunities for water-based activities at our reservoir sites.



## PLEDGE FOUR ENHANCE OUR RIVERS AND CREATE NEW HABITATS SO WILDLIFE CAN THRIVE

- By 2030 we will have protected and enhanced habitats for native species of wildlife, such as great crested newts, beavers, otters and cuckoos, in the Midlands - so our natural communities can thrive.
- Our River Rangers will work with community groups and organisations such as Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Trent Rivers Trust, Severn Rivers Trust and Shropshire Wildlife Trust to care for rivers and address issues across our region.
- Our Get River Positive Community Champion volunteers will work with Waterside Care and the Canal and River Trust to clean and restore rivers and river banks across our region.
- We'll plant over a million trees across our region by 2025, and 1.3 million by 2027.

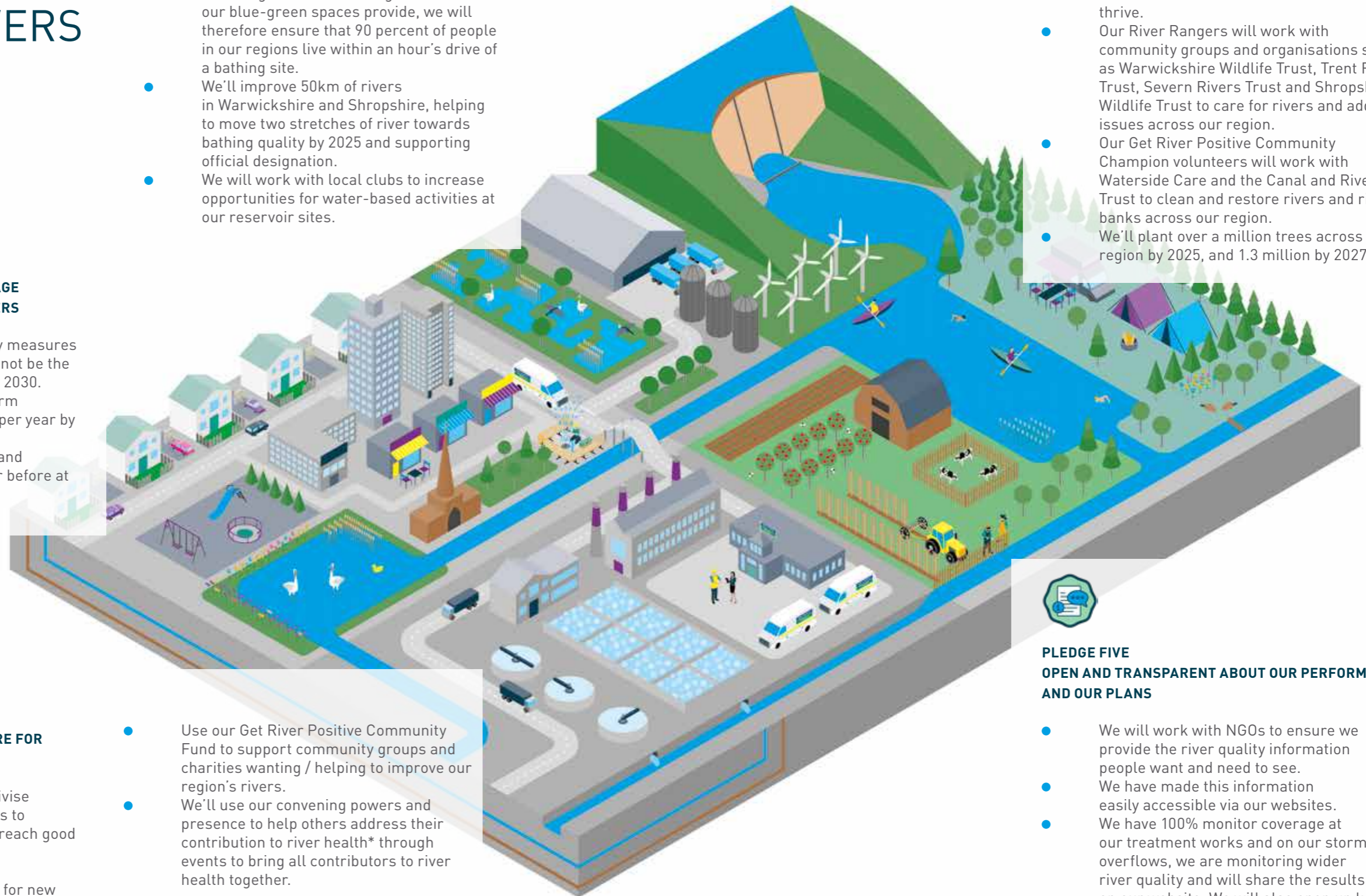


## PLEDGE FIVE OPEN AND TRANSPARENT ABOUT OUR PERFORMANCE AND OUR PLANS

- We will work with NGOs to ensure we provide the river quality information people want and need to see.
- We have made this information easily accessible via our websites.
- We have 100% monitor coverage at our treatment works and on our storm overflows, we are monitoring wider river quality and will share the results on our website. We will also open up key operational sites so others can come and learn first-hand about our role in keeping the region's rivers healthy.

- Use our Get River Positive Community Fund to support community groups and charities wanting / helping to improve our region's rivers.
- We'll use our convening powers and presence to help others address their contribution to river health\* through events to bring all contributors to river health together.

\*Currently, 86% of rivers in England don't achieve good ecological status, with other sectors accounting for 73% of reasons for rivers not achieving good ecological status.



# THE STORY TO DATE

## WE COVER THE HEART OF THE UK

Our region covers the heart of the UK, stretching from the Bristol Channel to the Humber and from mid-Wales to the East Midlands.

Our region is made up of over 130 rivers totalling over 6,800 kilometers. We don't own rivers, but as a key part of the community, we know we are accountable alongside others for their health.

## WE'RE WORKING HARD TO PREVENT RIVER POLLUTION

The mixture of climate change, population growth and increased development has meant that there are more flooding events each year, resulting in more instances of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) having to be used.

Our Get River Positive commitments have set out how we will make a positive impact on the environment and the communities we serve and help our region's rivers be the healthiest they can be.

## WHAT DO HEALTHY RIVERS LOOK LIKE?

River health in England is measured by the (EA). Its ambition is for waterbodies to achieve Good Ecological Status, which means that the river is as close to its natural state as possible.

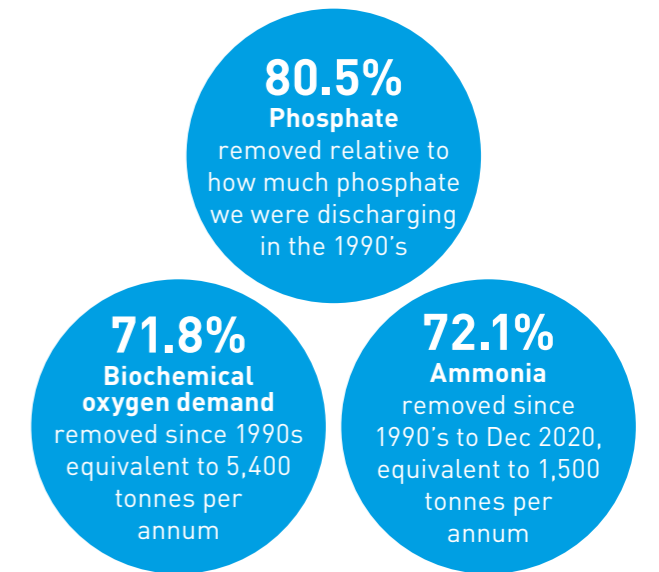
The EA measure this by looking at over 40 aspects including:

- the amount and size of fish and other species e.g. invertebrates
- the presence of chemicals like phosphate, ammonia and dissolved oxygen



## OUR REGION'S RIVERS SINCE 1989

We've contributed to making rivers healthier than they have ever been before. But we still have further to go and Get River Positive is taking it to the next level.



## AN INVESTMENT IN OUR RIVERS

In the last three decades we have invested £12 billion in improving our sewage treatment system. We continue to invest £100 million a year on improving our infrastructure to reduce sewer flooding and pollutions.

## OUR CURRENT IMPACT

Severn Trent currently accounts for less than 16% of the reasons why our region's rivers do not achieve good ecological status.

We are keen to play a role in helping other sectors to improve our region's river health too. This is why we're also continuing to work with other sectors with the shared goal of making our region's rivers the healthiest they can be. Alongside our own progress we continue to educate, advocate and use our convening powers to help others to address their issues too.

## WE'RE COMMITTED TO REDUCING OUR IMPACT ON RIVERS TO 0% BY 2030

Our Get River Positive commitments will ensure that Severn Trent is not responsible for any river in our region not achieving good ecological status.

# PLEDGE ONE

# OUR PROGRESS



## ENSURE COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOWS AND SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS DO NOT HARM RIVERS

We're really pleased to share our progress against this commitment, now reducing Severn Trent's reasons for rivers in our region not achieving good ecological status (RNAGS) to 16%.

However, while this puts us well ahead of our plan, we are continuing to work hard to improve our region's rivers, both through our own activities and supporting others to improve and care for rivers too.

Our Event Duration Monitor data for 2022, comprising of 300 million data records, shows a 27% improvement in the performance of our storm overflows over the last year.

**OUR PERFORMANCE OF 18 ACTIVATIONS ON AVERAGE IN 2022, MEANS WE ARE AHEAD OF THE REGULATORY TARGET OF 20 ACTIVATIONS BY 2025, HOWEVER WE ARE NOT COMPLACENT AND CONTINUE TO BE FOCUSED ON REDUCING THIS FURTHER.**

We're also delighted to announce the creation of our training river, which has been designed to further support our training. Situated at our state-of-the-art Academy in Coventry, the new experiential asset will enable us to continue to train more of our team to respond safely and effectively to possible pollution events.



## PLAYING OUR PART TO PROTECT SPECIAL AREAS OF CONSERVATION: RIVER CLUN

The lower part of the River Clun in South Shropshire is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), protected by legislation to preserve the habitat of a freshwater pearl mussel population. Unfortunately, these mussels are vulnerable to changes in river quality and are now endangered across Europe and the UK.

Analysis by Natural England and the EA in 2014 (a nutrient management plan) found that reductions in phosphates, nitrogen and suspended solids and sediment were all needed to restore the river and support the mussel population. Since then, we've completed upgrades to our treatment works to reduce phosphates by the entire amount requested of us in the 2014 plan.

Unfortunately, phosphates from our treatment works are just one factor that contributes to the river condition – the 2014 plan found that farming was the predominant factor driving phosphate levels and contributing to nitrogen and sediment – so we know our investment alone won't be enough to restore the river.

The area is also an important rural community with housing development planned to meet its future accommodation needs. Stakeholders in the planning

process, including the EA and Natural England want to be confident that this can be achieved without compromising the river restoration before development can go ahead.

Restoring the river and ensuring the needs of the local community are met requires a coordinated approach, so we've been working with the EA, Natural England and Shropshire County Council as part of the Strategic Clun Liaison Group. The group aims to build on the tree planting and work to encourage sustainable farming practices already undertaken in the catchment, and we have proposals in train for us to go beyond the 75% reduction in phosphates initially assigned to us.

The Clun catchment is one of three SACs in our region that cover sections of river. Like the Clun, we're also working with stakeholders including the EA and Natural England on plans for the River Mease in Leicestershire, and the Rivers Wye and Dove in the Peak District.

Having already invested significantly in upgrading our treatment works across all three catchments to reduce the impact of phosphates, we're investing over £70 million to make sure that we're playing our part in protecting these rivers through network upgrades, as well as initiating a partnership scheme with local farmers to reduce diffuse phosphate loads on the rivers Wye and Dove.

# PLEDGE TWO

# OUR PROGRESS



## CREATING MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE TO ENJOY OUR REGION'S RIVERS

We have made significant progress on our £78 million Bathing Rivers programme over the past 12 months. As part of the programme, we are looking to improve 50km of rivers in Warwickshire and Shropshire and move two stretches of river towards bathing quality by 2025. We are extremely excited about this and have enjoyed sharing the plans at our regional community roadshows over the last year.

In 2022 we launched our extensive river monitoring and sampling programmes. To date, the team has installed over 70 water quality monitors on the rivers Leam and Teme. These monitors are helping to build the best picture of current river health and provide the data we need to develop our forecasting tool for river users.

In addition, climate change impact simulations of our network and ground investigations have been taking place ahead of us developing final infrastructure solutions to support our commitment.

We are also investing in new and upgraded sewer infrastructure as well as trialling ozone disinfection technology to ensure that we continue to clean wastewater to the highest possible standard. We're working with others too, including farmers.

And we have gone further still, setting up our water quality monitoring programme at Carsington Water in Derbyshire and Tittesworth Reservoir in Staffordshire. This monitoring is providing us with the information we need in preparation for holding organised sporting events at the sites.



## WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE OUR REGION'S RIVERS GREAT PLACES TO BE

Our work with farmers as part of the Bathing River project began in 2022 and as of spring 2023 we are currently inviting livestock farmers in South Shropshire/East Warwickshire and South Leicestershire to learn about the impact and management of faecal diseases. After attending a webinar, farmers receive free disease testing kits and veterinary advice.

The programme, known as 'Test, Protect and Improve' has been set up to highlight the major risk that E. coli and cryptosporidium pose to both humans and animals when transmitted in water.

To date we have engaged with 139 farmers and seven vet practices have signed up to work with us on Test, Protect and Improve.





# PLEDGE THREE

# OUR PROGRESS



## SUPPORTING OTHERS TO IMPROVE AND CARE FOR RIVERS

We are committed to doing all we can to take leadership on many of the issues our region's rivers face and to partner with others to make them the healthiest they can be.

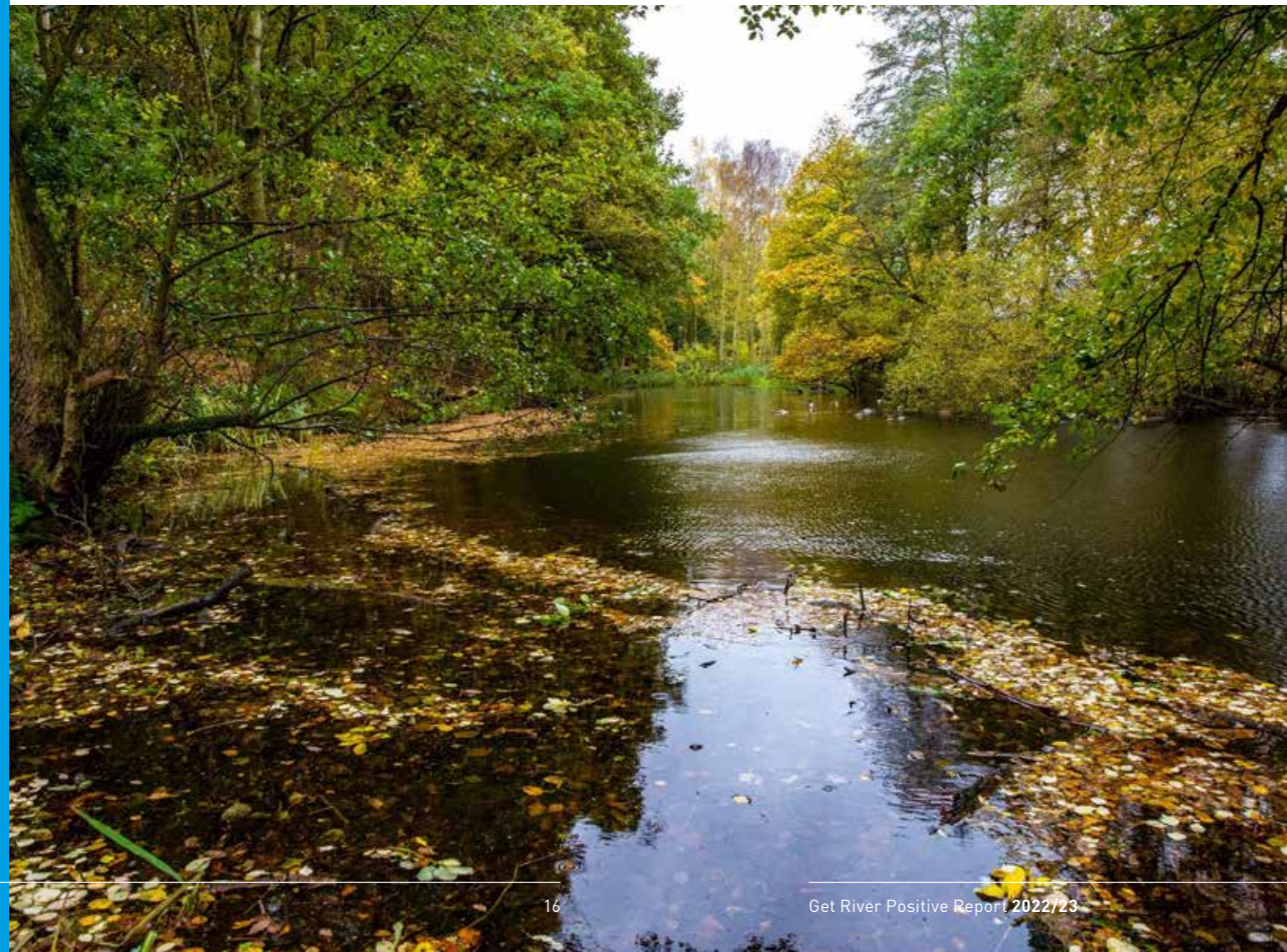
Over the last year we've travelled the region to deliver a series of community roadshows, inviting customers to come along and hear about our Get River Positive plans, our Green Recovery scheme and the work we're doing to create Bathing Rivers in Warwickshire and Shropshire. To date we've delivered seven events, attended by hundreds of people, with more in the pipeline for 2023.

## CELEBRATING OUR FIRST GET RIVER POSITIVE COMMUNITY FUND PROJECTS

While we don't own our region's rivers, we recognise that we have an important role to play in improving river health.

Central to our third Get River Positive pledge is our commitment to use our existing Community Fund to support community groups and charities that are as passionate as us about improving our region's rivers.

Since launching this in 2022 we've already awarded over £278,000 of grants to four brilliant projects across our region that will have a positive impact on our region's rivers.



BY IMPROVING WATER QUALITY IN THE PONDS WE'RE PROTECTING AND ENHANCING WATER QUALITY IN THE RIVER MAUN. THE FUNDING FROM SEVERN TRENT'S COMMUNITY FUND HAS ALLOWED US TO MAKE A DREAM COME TRUE – WE'VE LONG WANTED TO IMPROVE VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND BIODIVERSITY AND THIS MONEY WILL ENABLE US TO DO THAT."



**SHLOMO DOWEN, CHAIR OF FOREST  
TOWN NATURE CONSERVATION GROUP**

# PLEDGE THREE

# OUR PROGRESS CONT.

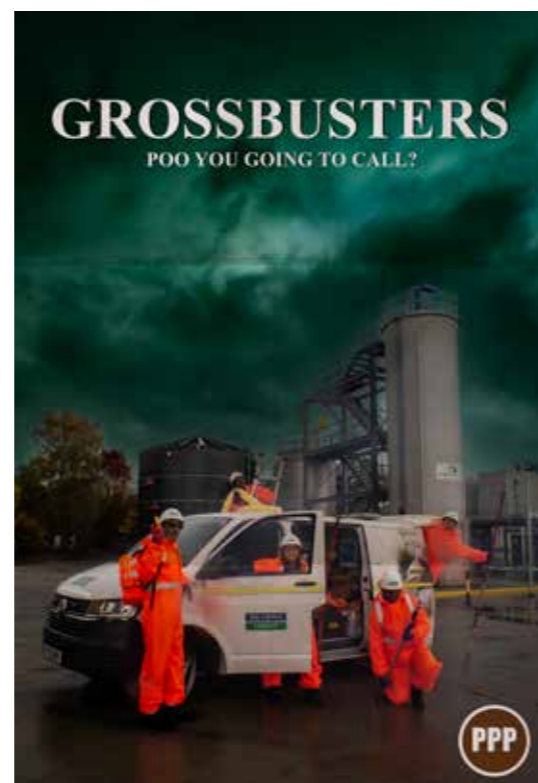
## REMEMBERING THE 3PS

Sewage pollution can be caused by blockages in the sewer network – wet wipes and other unflushables, such as sanitary products and nappies, are often a major source of these blockages.

Preventing our sewers from becoming blocked by only flushing the 3 Ps (pee, poo and paper) could avoid numerous pollutions each year and would be a key step in our journey to halving pollutions and eliminating serious pollutions.

Over the last year we have continued to build on our already extensive proactive engagement plan with the goal of raising awareness of the impact of sewer misuse. This is being achieved through customer education, MP engagement, education in schools and working with food service establishments in collaboration with our partners ECAS to educate on commercial fat, oil and grease disposal.

Since April 2022, our education team has reached over 90,000 children across our region with key sewer misuse messages and lessons – making it clear what items are fine to flush and put down the sink, what items aren't, and showing the consequences of what happens when the wrong things enter our sewer network.



## HELPING FARMERS IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF OUR REGION'S RIVERS

At Severn Trent we're unique in our approach to supporting farmers – no other water company works with the agricultural community on this scale. In the last decade we've supported over 5,000 farmers to protect water quality through a number of different schemes, and we continue to be committed to doing more to support the sector.

In May 2022 we launched our new package to promote regenerative farming practices, with farmers in the Severn Trent region being offered match funding of up to £30,000. To date the package has supported 84 farmers across our region, encouraging environmentally friendly farming practices and protecting water quality.



I HAD A CHAT WITH MY SEVERN TRENT AGRICULTURAL ADVISER. SHE SUGGESTED I SIGN UP FOR THE SWAP YOUR NOZZLES SCHEME SEEING AS I WAS IN A PESTICIDE PRIORITY CATCHMENT. THIS WOULD NOT ONLY GIVE ME A FREE SET OF LOW-DRIFT NOZZLES, BUT ALSO GIVE ME ACCESS TO AGRONOMIC ADVICE FOR SOME OF THE CHALLENGES I'VE BEEN FACING ON-FARM.



### RICHARD WILLIAMS, FARMER

Richard Williams is a farmer in Worcestershire who signed up for Severn Trent's Swap Your Nozzles scheme, which offers practical advice and free low-drift nozzles for farmers looking to reduce pollution risks of pesticide application.

# PLEDGE FOUR

# OUR PROGRESS



## ENHANCE OUR RIVERS AND CREATE NEW HABITATS SO WILDLIFE CAN THRIVE

### CELEBRATING ONE YEAR OF OUR RIVER RANGER TEAM

We know that rivers transform the communities around them, and as our business is effectively plumbed into our region's landscape, our region's river health is essential not only to the communities we serve, but also to the success of our business too.

Since our River Ranger team was established in January 2022, our rangers have carried out over 3,560 riverside inspections. These additional sampling and monitoring activities provide us with further data so we can better understand the quality of rivers in our region and, if needed, take any further action.

Our River Rangers work closely with local stakeholders to build vital relationships as we all work towards the goal of making our region's rivers the healthiest they can be. Since January 2022 the team has attended over 110 meetings with partners and environment and community groups on the subject of river health.



I'M OF A MILITARY BACKGROUND SO WORKING OUTDOORS IN NATURE IS SOMETHING THAT I LIKE - IT MAKES YOU FEEL FREE AND TO HAVE A JOB IN THAT ENVIRONMENT IS WONDERFUL.

I LIKE EVERY ASPECT OF THE JOB, ESPECIALLY ENGAGING WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO EXPLAIN HOW OUR NETWORK WORKS AND HOW THEY CAN HELP TO MITIGATE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS THAT CAN HAPPEN SUCH AS SEWER BLOCKAGES, WHICH CAN IMPACT RIVER HEALTH.



**RANDALL SMITH, RIVER RANGER**



# PLEDGE FOUR

# OUR PROGRESS CONT.



## OUR COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

As part of our Community Champions scheme every Severn Trent employee can spend two working days a year doing voluntary work and further support our Get River Positive commitments. Over the last year, 323 of our people, in partnership with local environmental groups, have cleared more than 36km of rivers in our region and removed over 108 bags of rubbish, as well as a car bumper, a mattress, and two shopping trolleys.



BY THE END OF THE DAY WE FELT LIKE WE'D MADE A REAL DIFFERENCE TO THAT STRETCH OF THE RIVER, MEANING IT CAN NOW BE ENJOYED BY WILDLIFE, AS WELL AS THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.



**ASSMA KHALIFA, SEVERN TRENT  
EMPLOYEE AND COMMUNITY CHAMPION**



## GREEN RECOVERY PROGRAMME 'LAUNCHES' FLOATING WETLANDS IN DERBYSHIRE

Our Green Recovery team has launched its latest nature-based solution in the form of floating wetlands near our Church Wilne water treatment works site in Derbyshire.

The project will be turning to nature to help pre-treat the water, something not seen before in the UK, whilst also improving the biodiversity of 46 hectares. By carefully designing each floating wetland, we can naturally improve the surrounding water quality of the site, encourage habitat regeneration and support numerous birds, mammal, invertebrates and aquatic life.

Part of our early design work has been to work closely with stakeholders including the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, and the EA to ensure the solution not only meets our operational and key customer requirements, but also improves the site overall in terms of biodiversity and carbon impact.

To date, three floating wetlands have been created across gravel beds at Witches Oak Water Nature Reserve, from which water is abstracted for treatment at Church Wilne, with a further 27 set to be launched later in spring 2023.

# PLEDGE FIVE

# OUR PROGRESS

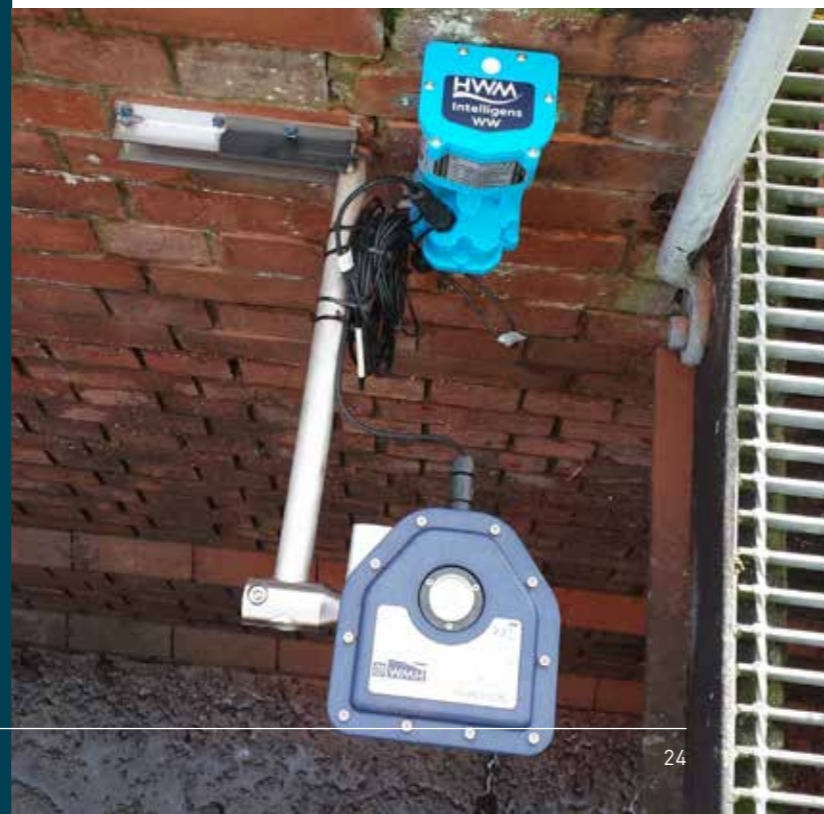


## BE OPEN AND TRANSPARENT ABOUT OUR PERFORMANCE AND OUR PLANS

We have made great strides in transparency during 2022 and continue to look at new ways, such as this annual report, to demonstrate our progress in an open way. We hope our focus and work on river health will inspire others to join the Get River Positive initiative and work with us, to accelerate improvements to river health in our region.

### 100% MONITOR COVERAGE

As of December 2022, we have Event Duration Monitors (EDMs) on all of our storm overflows (SOs) – this is 12 months ahead of the 2023 regulatory target. These monitors record data at 2 or 15 minute intervals providing us with over 300 million data records about our SOs are performing in a year, ensuring that we are fulfilling the permit conditions as defined by the EA.



I'M PASSIONATE ABOUT PROTECTING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND THE VITAL ECOSYSTEM SERVICES THAT THEY PROVIDE. I AM KEEN TO USE MY EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS TO SUPPORT SEVERN TRENT IN ITS COMMITMENT TO MAKE THE REGION'S RIVERS THE HEALTHIEST THEY CAN BE, WHILST ALSO ENHANCING THEIR BIODIVERSITY AND MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE THE PANEL'S PRIORITIES ARE TO BRING INSIGHTS FROM THE MANY AREAS THAT DEPEND ON RIVERS, AS WELL AS PROVIDING THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF SCRUTINY AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO SEVERN TRENT'S FIVE GET RIVER POSITIVE PLEDGES.



**DR JULIA CASPERD, CHAIR OF OUR INDEPENDENT ADVISORY PANEL**

## INTRODUCING OUR INDEPENDENT ADVISORY PANEL

Our Advisory Panel was established in October 2022 with the objective of helping to oversee our progress against each commitment and ensure we maximise potential for outperformance across Get River Positive campaigns.

The panel meet on a quarterly basis to support activity around the pledges, providing advice and recommendations and bringing new perspectives as well as feeding in relevant national plans, programmes and policies, especially in relation to the wider environmental agenda.



# FAQs

## HOW IS RIVER HEALTH MEASURED?

- The Environment Agency (EA) measure the water quality of rivers
- Rivers are divided into units called water bodies
- These water bodies can span counties, constituencies and on rare occasions water company boundaries
- The EA use the water quality samples of each water body to calculate its ecological health and compliance with water quality standards
- The health of the water body is given a status by the EA e.g. good, moderate or poor
- Where the health of a waterbody does not meet good, the EA assign Reasons for Not Achieving Good Status (RNAGS)
- RNAGS record the source, activity and sector involved in causing waters to be at less than good status, and the specific parameter(s) that are failing
- Multiple sectors can be responsible for the same parameter failure

## FOR ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE:

In water body A: There are 7 RNAGS, sector split out as follows:

- 2 - water companies (for example Severn Trent)
  - 2 - agriculture
  - 2 - no sector responsible
  - 1 - urban and transport
- Severn Trent continually works with EA to track its RNAGS reduction
  - Regionally the data set is updated periodically – any RNAGS that are removed outside of these updates may take a while to reflect in the data shown online

## TO NOTE:

- Over time you might see small changes to the data sets online – for example the EA may have learnt more about that waterbody and added in a new RNAGS – in which case, the total number of RNAGS for that waterbody, and associated percentages, will change online
- The Water Framework Regulations set out the criteria for assessing rivers

## WHAT IS A STORM OVERFLOW?

Storm overflows (SOs) operate as safety valves. There are two types of SOs:

- 1, Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) which are on the combined sewer system
- 2, Storm Overflows (StO) on sewage treatment works

## WHAT IS A COMBINED SEWER SYSTEM AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Combined sewer systems in England take away the majority of rainwater runoff and wastewater, including sewage in the same (combined) pipe to a sewage treatment works for treatment.

The combined sewer network is meant to accommodate some storm-water runoff, but not large amounts. When more storm and ground water enter the sewer system than the pipes were designed for, CSOs act as relief valves to avoid homes and other properties being flooded.



## IS SEVERN TRENT PROGRESSING FAST ENOUGH AGAINST TARGETS?

Severn Trent continues to be committed to making the region's rivers the healthiest they can be. Central to our Get River Positive pledges is the commitment that our operations will not be the reason for any stretch of river in the whole Severn Trent region to be classified as unhealthy by 2030 and we're continuing to invest £100 million a year to further improve our region's rivers.

In the shorter term, we have also committed to reducing activations from SOs to an average of 20 per year by 2025, following consultation and feedback from NGOs. This puts us well on track to deliver Defra's target of 10 activations a year by 2050.

- As part of its Get River Positive pledges, Severn Trent has made a commitment to ensure that, by 2030, it will not be responsible for any river in its region not achieving good ecological status
- Through its £566m Green Recovery programme, Severn Trent is improving 50km of rivers across the region, helping to move two stretches of river towards bathing quality and making them better places to be for everyone, no matter how they use them. These trials will pave the way for improvements to more rivers in the future
- Severn Trent is committed to the target of an average of 10 activations a year by 2050, as well as the interim measure of 20 activations a year by 2025

## WHAT IS AN ACTIVATION FROM A SO?

The combined sewer network is meant to accommodate some storm-water runoff, but not large amounts. When more storm and ground water enters the sewer system than the pipes or sewage works were designed for, SOs act as relief valves to avoid homes and other properties being flooded. Their use is permitted and regulated by the EA.

Climate change, population growth and more urbanised areas (including an increase in hard landscaping such as paving and tarmac) are all contributing to more intense rainfall, more runoff and more sewage. All of these factors increase pressure on the sewer system and the number of SO activations.



## HOW MUCH OF AN IMPACT ARE SEVERN TRENT CSOs HAVING ON THE QUALITY OF RIVERS?

According to EA data, CSOs are only responsible for 3% of reasons for rivers in the Severn Trent region not achieving good ecological status. However, we fully understand the concern around them and the impact they can have on rivers.

If we were designing a sewer network today, we wouldn't create a combined system, we'd separate the sewer and surface water systems. Our aim is to dramatically reduce the use of overflows, but with over 90,000km of sewer pipes, we can't replace the system overnight.

That said, there's still lots we are doing, including increasing our networks capacity and storage to slow the flow of water during wet weather, so overflows are less likely to be triggered. As well as successfully installing monitors at all of our CSOs and sewage treatment works; these help us to assess performance and make the required improvements.

## WHAT CAN CUSTOMERS DO TO HELP?

There are three main things that customers can do to help:

1. Hard surfaces such as patios and paving are impermeable to rain, increasing the amount of surface water and in turn increasing the pressure on sewer networks. Planters, grass and permeable paving, all work in slowing rainwater down and stopping the sewerage network from becoming overwhelmed when it rains. Our £76 million sustainable urban drainage project in Mansfield is a good example of this approach on a much larger scale.
2. Wet wipes and other unflushables, as well as leftover fats and oils from cooking, are often a major source of blockages. Customers can help us avoid sewer blockages by putting wet wipes, sanitary products and leftover food in the bin.
3. The simplest and most environmentally friendly improvement and one that we are campaigning for would be for the Government to ban single use wet wipes that contain plastic. At the very least, ministers should require such products to carry clear, bold warnings about the harm they cause to the environment and the increased risk they pose to sewer flooding.





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