

## River quality test results in Modbury catchment area

Following concern about the water quality and wildlife in the Erme catchment area, Jeff Booth, who is a member of Modbury Wildlife Action Group (Mod WAG) made an online enquiry to South West Water asking for information on water quality downstream from the Modbury Water treatment plant at Swanbridge. This was on October 25<sup>th</sup> last year, SWW failed to provide this information and redirected Jeff to make a Freedom of Information request to the Environment Agency. he has recently received a response which is summarised below. It does not include information about frequency of discharges from the water treatment plant as the Environment Agency does not hold this information.

These are some of the key points:

The ecological classifications on the Erme and its tributaries ranged from “Poor” to “Moderate” depending on which part of the catchment area was rated. Worryingly, local samples taken from Ayleston Brook FAILED on the high levels of 3 chemicals present. These are: Phosphates, Mercury and Polybrominated diphenyl ethers – known as PBDE.

Reasons for not achieving good results for phosphates were confirmed as intermittent and continuous sewage discharge - Water Authority responsibility, and agricultural and rural land management – livestock and bank erosion.

(PBDEs) and polybrominated biphenyls (PBBs) belong to a **class of chemicals** that are added to certain manufactured products in order to reduce the chances that the products will catch on fire. .. Some PBDEs can build up in certain fish and mammals when they eat contaminated food or water.

Environment Agency Objectives for improving water quality up to “Good” range from by 2027 (possibly) for Phosphates, to 2063 for PDBEs.

The Erme catchment area flows into the Wonwell estuary which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to its varied wildlife and is a popular bathing place for locals and visitors. If you do bathe at Wonwell, we suggest this is safer when there is an incoming tide and to avoid doing so after heavy rainfall when the level of Phosphates is likely to be higher.

This report was discussed at the recent Parish Council meeting and it was agreed that this should be followed up by contacting SWW for information about the frequency of discharge from the Modbury Treatment Centre. We have also contacted the West Country Rivers Trust, an environmental charity, for advice on monitoring the water quality and any other actions the Parish Council and community can take.

*Jeff's full report can be read on the Modbury Wildlife Action Group Facebook page:*

[Modbury Wildlife Action Group | Facebook](#)

Or on the Parish Council website: <http://www.modburypc.co.uk>

For further information held by the Environment Agency, this is the link <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/>

For further information on the work of the West Country Rivers Trust, go to <https://wrt.org.uk>

Ann Turner

On behalf of Modbury Wildlife Action Group (Mod WAG)

and Modbury Parish Council