



Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

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Response to Environmental standards and rivers ('Nature Needs You' - WWF campaign) – July 2017

Thank you for contacting me about environmental standards and rivers.

I fully support my Ministerial colleagues' aim to make this the first generation that leaves the environment in a better state than we found it, and I agree that our rivers are a vital part of our natural heritage. I share your concern about river pollution from sewage, but I am glad to say that action is being taken to prevent it.

Since privatisation, around £9 billion has been invested on the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive to reduce pollution from sewage treatment. In England, between 2015 and 2020, water companies are investing over £3 billion to improve their sewerage infrastructure. It is encouraging to see tough enforcement action when things go wrong, as with the unprecedented fine of over £20 million levied against Thames Water in March in response to six cases of avoidable sewage pollution, following an Environment Agency investigation.

The Environment Agency is also responsible for issuing licenses for water abstraction. In making these decisions the Agency is guided by regional river basin management plans, which set out how all interested parties work together to improve the water environment of the area. Collectively they set out how at least 680 waters will improve by 2022, benefitting from around £3 billion of investment.

Following the vote to leave the European Union, Ministers will work with environmental organisations and the public to develop new policies. Leaving the EU means we can tailor them to the needs of our precious habitats and wildlife, instead of following a one size fits all approach for 28 different countries. Ministers are committed to seizing this opportunity as they work on an ambitious 25 Year Plan for the environment.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP