

Thames Water's sewage spills are damaging Kingston's rivers

By Josh Smith

The Southeast River Trust has warned that sewage pumped into Kingston's Hogsmill River by Thames Water is damaging the vulnerable stream.

Kingston's rivers, the Hogsmill and the Thames, experienced 14 sewage spills for a total of 75 hours in 2022, according to data from The River Trust.

The Hogsmill was affected most by sewer storm overflows with nine spills in 2022, releasing sewage for a total of 70.45 hours.

Dr Chris Gardner, Head of Science at the Southeast River Trust, said: "There are lots of environmental impacts coming from what is being discharged... into the upper reaches of the Hogsmill."

Sewage pumped into the Hogsmill "leads to a reduced biodiversity of fish, birds, and invertebrates" he added.

The Hogsmill is an urban chalk stream - one of only 200 in the world, and chalk streams have very high water quality, so the ecology of the stream has adapted to be less tolerant to pollution.

Further pollution into the Hogsmill came from sewage spills at St James Road, while spills from Portsmouth/Uxbridge Road and Kingston Main fed into the Thames.

This comes after it was revealed that Thames Water had pumped 72 billion litres of sewage into the river Thames since 2020, according to data from an environmental information request submitted by the Liberal Democrats.

Pollution in Kingston's water ways affects many river users too, such as Wendy Saunders, Chair of the Executive Committee of Kingston Rowing Club.

She said: "It is bad when you go out and you worry that you could be catching diseases from



The Hogsmill River which runs through Kingston University's Knights Park Campus.
Photo : Josh Smith

polluted and contaminated water and obviously as a club, we are really concerned about that".

However, she does admit that it is much worse for river users who are more immersed in the water such as paddle boarders and swimmers.

Saunders has visibly noticed a deterioration in the quality of water that she rows in and implores Thames Water to reduce the amount of pollution they are pumping into Kingston's rivers.

"I think it would be really good for all river users if Thames Wa-

ter could really address this pollution issue, not just for users of the river but also to protect the local environment.

"I think it is a really high-priority issue that Thames Water should be taking active steps to deal with," she said.

A Thames Water spokesperson said: "Taking action to improve the health of rivers is a key focus for us and we want to lead the way with our transparent approach to data. We're the first company to provide live alerts for all untreated discharges throughout our region and this 'near real-time' data is available to customers as a map on our website and is also available through an open data platform for third parties, such as swimming and environmental groups, to use.

"We regard all discharges as unacceptable and we have published plans to upgrade over 250 of our sewage treatment works and sewers."