

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY WORKING GROUP

7 September 2022

Commenced: 4.30pm

Terminated: 5.45pm

Present: Councillors Boyle (Chair), Affleck, B Holland, Jones, Newton, Pearce, Roderick and Turner

In Attendance: Emma Varnam Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods
Lindsay Johnson Head of Asset Strategy
Aimee Brough Groundwork Greater Manchester
Lindsay Beaton Mersey Rivers Trust
Warren Andrew Mersey Rivers Trust
Mark Sewell United Utilities
Jemma Parkinson United Utilities
Dee Grahamslaw United Utilities

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs S Homer and Mills

9. DELCARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

10. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Climate Emergency Working Group held on 15 June 2022 were approved as a correct record.

11. MANCHESTER GREEN CITY UPDATE

The Chair, Councillor Boyle, gave a verbal update in respect of the above, including the Five Year Environment Plan and the draft Local Energy Plan. The Chair further advised in respect of the Greater Manchester Green Summit 2022, which would take place on Monday 17 October 2022 at the Lowry Theatre, Salford, hosted by the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham.

12. UNITED UTILITIES UPDATE

Mark Sewell, Wastewater Catchment Manager; Jemma Parkinson, Area Stakeholder Manager; and Dee Grahamslaw, Place Based, Planning Pilot Lead, United Utilities, attended before Members and gave an update in respect of river water quality and investment planning going forward.

In terms of river quality impacts, specific factors in the North West were outlined, including:

- Annual average water run-off being 28% higher than the average for England and Wales – i.e. more water runs into sewers;
- 54% of public sewers combine foul and surface water compared to an average of 33%, which filled up more quickly in storm conditions; and
- 25% more storm overflows than the industry average.

United Utilities storm overflow performance was detailed and discussed.

Members were advised of water quality investment planning activities in the short, medium and long term, including:

Short term (present – 2025):

- Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) improvements Mossley/Saddleworth Waste Water Treatment Works;
- Focused work with local partners as part of a catchment based approach;
- Roll out of United Utilities Better Rivers Better North West Programme;
- Leading Partnership Place Based Planning Pilot for the Tame and Upper Mersey catchment;
- Publication of United Utilities Drainage Wastewater Management Plan; and
- WINEP development and prioritisation 2025 – 2030 water quality improvement programme.

Mr Sewell gave further details of a four point plan to improve river health and recreation, by:

1. Ensuring operations progressively reduced impact to river health;
2. Being open and transparent about performance and plans;
3. Making rivers beautiful and supporting others to improve and care for them; and
4. Creating more opportunities for everyone to enjoy rivers and waterways.

Information was also provided in respect of the proposed River Tame Operational Working Group, aligning activity and action planning across key stakeholders including risk management authorities and local interest groups. The development of a partnership action plan to mitigate 'catchment operation' issues including; litter/fly tipping; pollution; and invasive non-native species was also outlined.

Medium term (2025 – 2030):

- Delivery of WINEP prioritised waste water drivers; and
- Collaborative SuDs opportunities to manage rainwater at source, disconnecting it from combined sewers.

Sustainable drainage optioneering in the River Tame was explored which aimed to drive Rainwater Management strategy principles within the WINEP through co-creation of sustainable drainage options. Including collaboration with Tameside MBC and the Environment Agency to identify and endorse feasible options to manage rainwater at source, disconnecting it from combined sewers.

Long Term (2025 – 2050)

- Investment informed by needs identified from DWMP process with place based planning; and
- Future environmental legislative requirements considered e.g. enhanced nutrient management; 10 spills requirements for CSOs; other key water quality drivers.

Detailed discussion ensued in respect of the presentation and Members raised a number of concerns in respect of the frequency of intermittent discharges of sewage, water quality and investment in treatment of sewage prior to discharge. Members sought further clarity with regard to United Utilities commitment to the reduction of the impact of intermittent discharges; and commented on the historical lack of investment in the industry. Reference was also made to a recent report on the high level of micro plastics found in the Tame and Members sought further information in respect of this.

The Chair thanked representatives of United Utilities for their attendance and the interesting presentation.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the content of the presentation be noted;**
- (ii) That a monthly report be produced by United Utilities updating Members in respect of progress on improvements to river quality and reducing the impact of sewage; and**
- (iii) That further information be provided in respect of progress regarding reducing the level/discharge of micro plastics in the River Tame.**

13. CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Aimee Brough, Partnerships Manager & Irwell Catchment Host, Groundwork Greater Manchester; Lindsay Beaton, Senior Project Manager & Upper Mersey Catchment Host, Mersey Rivers Trust; and Warren Andrew, Project Manager, Mersey Rivers Trust, attended before Members and gave a presentation in respect of Catchment Partnerships.

It was explained that the Catchment Based Approach was an inclusive civil-society led initiative that worked in partnership to maximise the natural value of the environment, address the Water Framework Directive and issues such as flooding. The Catchment Based Approach embedded collaborative working or systems scale, delivering a range of environmental, social and economic benefits and protecting precious water environments for the benefit of everyone.

The Catchment Partnership Vision was outlined: 'to make a healthy water environment a positive aspect of people's daily life, through delivery in partnership'. Geography of the Catchments Partnerships was displayed and examples of catchment work were given, including working with and supporting local communities and natural flood management.

Key issues in the Tame were detailed and discussed and opportunities and plans going forward were highlighted as follows:

- Working with partners to take issues forward;
- Tame sub-catchment operational working group – first meeting 4 October 2022;
- United Utilities Place Based Planning: Tame is priority watercourse – objectives meeting – 8 September 2022;
- Habitat improvement plan and funding bid being developed by Mersey Rivers Trust and Wild Trout Trust;
- Environment Agency funding for fish habitat improvements; and
- United Utilities River Rangers – walkover with Mersey Rivers Trust.

The Chair thanked the representatives for a very informative presentation.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

14. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Environment and Climate Emergency Working Group was scheduled to take place on 16 November 2022.

CHAIR