

Date: 28th April 2021.

For the attention of:

From: David Levy and Stephen Eades, Marinet Limited, Cedar Lodge, Allington, Chippenham SN14 6LW. Tel. 01249 653972 Email. Stephen.marinet@btinternet.com

Environment Bill: Amendment to create a Legal Obligation to stop Sewage Pollution.

Dear

Hope you are well. I am forwarding an important letter from colleagues who would like you to add an amendment to the Environment Bill to place a legal obligation on the water companies and the Secretary of State in order to eliminate sewage pollution.

*All the best Tracy
Tracy Worcester*

The Environment Bill 2019-2021 is coming to the House of Lords after Whitsun for Peers' consideration and amendment.

You will probably be aware that untreated human sewage is being regularly discharged by water companies into rivers and coastal sea bathing waters, not just routinely but in a manner that is often wholly unregulated and unmonitored. See, BBC 1 Panorama report ¹, [12th April 2021](#), and independent witness evidence to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee ², [21st April 2021](#).

This is destroying water quality in England's rivers to the point where all rivers now fail to meet quality tests due to sewage, agricultural and industrial pollution, see Environment Agency data ³ [17th September 2020](#). Added to this is agricultural sewage pollution, often from factory farms whose effluent contains anti-biotic resistant bacteria (AMR) due to the excessive use of antibiotics in the farm's intensive livestock rearing. There now exist serious public health concerns as a result of these sewage disposal practices - see Marinet's main written evidence to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into *Water Quality in Rivers* ⁴, [February 2021](#) along with Marinet's

¹ BBC 1 Panorama, 12th April 2021 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000vk71/panorama-the-river-pollution-scandal>

² Commons EAC, 21st April 2021 <https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/3c528900-fa24-4400-8ee7-c6f4bfc3467b>

³ Environment Agency River Quality, September 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/sep/17/rivers-in-england-fail-pollution-tests-due-to-sewage-and-chemicals>

⁴ Marinet Evidence to House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, February 2021, along with supplementary evidence : <http://www.marinet.org.uk/campaign-article/the-marinet-submission-to-the-house-of-commons-environmental-audit-committee-inquiry-into-water-quality-in-rivers-february-2021> and <http://www.marinet.org.uk/campaign-article/supplementary-submission-to-the-house-of-commons-environmental-audit-committees-water-quality-in-rivers-inquiry-looking-at-the-extent-of-ultra-violet-uv-treatment-at-uk-sewage-treatment-works> and

supplementary evidence to the Committee's same inquiry on both [intensive livestock farming](#) and the [grades of sewage treatment](#) currently operating in England. More worrying still, the Government is walking away from tackling this issue.

A serious response by the Government would be to make it a legal obligation within the current Environment Bill (section 76, clause 3) for the water companies to address sewage pollution in their new 'management plans', thus ensuring that both planning, investment and action will be taken now and in the future to eliminate this problem.

Presently the Environment Bill does not contain this legal obligation, and when an amendment (Amendment 200) was tabled at the House of Commons' Committee Stage in November last year the Minister vetoed its inclusion, see the text of this [amendment](#)⁵ and the [Hansard](#)⁶ record of the decision. Thus the Government has consciously declined to take legal powers to compel the water companies to solve the problem of their sewage pollution.

We urgently need action to halt this decline in water standards both for the health of the aquatic ecosystem and to stop poor water reaching our sources of drinking water.

It is via an amendment introduced in the House of Lords to section 67, clause 3, of the Environment Bill that this action and these standards can be secured.

We are asking you to look at the text and briefing that accompanies this amendment (see footnote 5) and, with the support of other colleagues, to table this amendment for inclusion in the Bill. Only if the House of Lords votes to support this amendment will the Minister and the House of Commons be required to act.

This amendment to the Environment Bill will place a legal obligation on the water companies and the Secretary of State to eliminate sewage pollution.

Yours sincerely
David Levy and Stephen Eades
Directors, Marinet Limited.

<http://www.marinet.org.uk/campaign-article/supplementary-submission-to-the-house-of-commons-environmental-audit-committees-water-quality-in-rivers-inquiry-looking-at-the-extent-of-ultra-violet-uv-treatment-at-uk-sewage-treatment-works>

⁵ Amendment to section 76, clause 3, of Environment Bill (Amendment 200)
<http://www.marinet.org.uk/campaign-article/we-provide-here-the-briefing-for-members-of-parliament-and-other-interested-persons-about-the-amendment-to-clause-76-section-3-of-the-environment-bill-2019-2021-in-order-to-remedy-sewage-pollution>

⁶ Hansard record of the House of Commons Committee Stage debate and vote on Amendment 200 to the Environment Bill
<http://www.marinet.org.uk/campaign-article/the-hansard-record-of-the-house-of-commons-committee-stage-debate-and-vote-on-amendment-200-to-amend-the-environment-bill-2019-2021>

Note: Marinet is a not for profit membership based limited company, founded in 2002 and established in its present form since 2014, which campaigns for protection of the marine and water environment. See our website for full details.