

# SENS Press Release - Kicking up a Stink!

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Dear SENS member,

Today SENS has issued the following press release.

If you have any comments/questions please

email: [senstaveley@gmail.com](mailto:senstaveley@gmail.com)

Many thanks, SENS Committee

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**For immediate release: 30<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

## **PRESS RELEASE:**

**Lake District community kicks up a stink about raw sewage on their streets creating a health hazard and polluting local rivers**

Research has shown that since 2015, during storms there have been 61 incidents of raw sewage flooding the village roads of Staveley, near Windermere in the Lake District National Park. The health of both residents and visitors is put at risk every time this happens and the community is urgently demanding investment to upgrade the inadequate wastewater infrastructure.

The Sustainability and Energy Network in Staveley (SENS) believes that rural communities cannot be left to simply manage the unpleasant, unhealthy and potentially disastrous consequences of sewage pollution.

Staveley residents have watched with patience and now frustration as very little has happened to stop the overflow of sewage over recent years. A local Flood & Sewage Task Group has been set up to investigate the situation and engage with the relevant authorities. It has discovered that United Utilities does not fully record and report each incident separately and claim that the problem is too expensive to fix for a small community.

Arthur Capstick, Lead for the Parish Council on the Task Group, explains that the village combined surface water and sewage system has reached its capacity, *“This matter has been illustrated beyond doubt to the Parish Council, causing them to take the bold step of pausing their support of any further development in the Parish.*

*Without proper investment to upgrade our sewage systems, we can't properly protect the community or permit development of additional homes for local people. Our protected waterscape is being threatened and the chances of homes being flooded in the future is being increased.”*

Isobel Stoddart, Chair of SENS says, *“A Freedom of Information request by local citizens has shown that the current wastewater management system is not working. An ‘emergency’ discharge of untreated effluent has occurred 1,000 times in the last three-year period directly into the river Kent – that is an average of nearly once a day. Not only is the river extremely popular with local bathers but it is also a SSSI as one of the few remaining homes for the UK's only native, freshwater, white-clawed crayfish which is on the global IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.”*

SENS point out that this is not just a local problem, but similar situations are occurring with increasing regularity across the country. For instance, recent media articles have shown that Southern Water was recently fined £90m for discharging raw sewage into rivers and off the coast of SE England.

Fran Richardson, local resident says, *“Storm Desmond 2015 brought the River Kent into many of our homes and businesses. It was an exceptional event, which we expect to be far less exceptional in future with changing rainfall intensity as a consequence of global heating. The river Kent is considered one of the cleanest rivers in the country. This may be because it is also one of the quickest to rise and fall in heavy rain with a huge and steep catchment area. However, Staveley is under great pressure to provide more housing and this policy of ‘build, build, build’ on our greenfield sites adds yet more stress to an inadequate drainage system that is in turn causes more flooding and is simply not acceptable .”*

Dialogue with United Utilities has been difficult: they said two years ago it would cost £1million to upgrade the capacity of the combined system here but that this

was not going to be a priority investment for a community of less than 2,000 people. Earlier this year, they quoted £2million for the same work.

**Notes for Editors:**

1. Contact SENS: [savestaveleyrivers@gmail.com](mailto:savestaveleyrivers@gmail.com) / 07952 786621 for more information, interviews, quotes or images. More information on the **Clean up the Kent** campaign is available at: <http://www.sustainablestaveley.org.uk/clean-up-the-kent/>
  2. SENS was formed in November 2007 to promote sustainability action in the village, by looking at ways to reduce home energy use, explore the potential for hydro-electric schemes, promote cycling and walking, develop renewable technologies and raise awareness of and take action on climate change. 2015 floods brought (climate) chaos to our village, and since then we have seen episodes of extreme weather each year: [www.sustainablestaveley.org.uk/](http://www.sustainablestaveley.org.uk/)
  3. The full report of the Staveley Flood Action Group: <http://www.staveleywithingspc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Sewage-Community-Statement-for-Partners-Representatives-for-PC-5-7-21-1.pdf>
  4. A recent Environment Agency report on raw sewage pollution, which criticises the water companies: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jul/13/water-industry-england-raw-sewage-pollution-environment-agency>
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