

The Morgan's Hill Rivers Group: Constituency Campaign Manifesto

Morgan's Hill, in central Wiltshire, marks the hydrological triple divide of southern England. From here rainfall drains via the **Bristol Avon** into the Atlantic Ocean, via the **Hampshire Avon** into the English Channel, and via the **Kennet** and the Thames into the North Sea.

The three rivers fed by water from Morgan's Hill, like rivers across England, suffer excessive **abstraction**, chemical **pollution**, and contamination from raw **sewage**.

The management of England's rivers, including the work of the water companies, is overseen by Ofwat, which is itself overseen by the government. In early 2022 the government will issue a **Strategic Policy Statement** (SPS) for Ofwat, setting out its objectives for the next five years. This is therefore a key moment for the future of England's rivers.

The members of the Morgan's Hill Rivers Group are all MPs representing constituencies through which the three rivers flow - in Wiltshire, Berkshire, the Cotswolds and the New Forest. The Group calls on the government to ensure that the SPS includes the following requirements for Ofwat:

1. **Investment in infrastructure.** Water companies should be required to make the appropriate investment in pipes and sewage treatment works, and if necessary enabled to finance this work through increases in prices. Low-income households should be protected from unaffordable water bills and price rises should not finance shareholder returns until the necessary investment in infrastructure has taken place.
2. **Nature-based solutions.** Ofwat should create a system for the management of water catchment areas, not just rivers themselves, with new market mechanisms to incentivise good agricultural practice, including afforestation and better drainage, and better and more sustainable housebuilding. This also therefore requires alignment with the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes and the expected reforms to the planning system.
3. **Enforcement.** The SPS should stipulate the precise measures that are needed to track the necessary improvements in infrastructure and catchment management. In addition, the government should properly resource the Environment Agency to proactively monitor these measures and enforce the rules, particularly on sewage discharges. Fines should be used more frequently, and the money raised from all fines should be used to finance remediation and nature-based solutions in the affected catchment area.

Signed:

Danny Kruger (Devizes)
Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cotswolds)
Laura Farris (Newbury)

James Gray (North Wiltshire)
Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire)
Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West)