



All Party Parliamentary Water Group

Co-Chairs: Angela Smith MP and Baroness McIntosh of Pickering
Vice-Chairs: Neil Parish MP and the Earl of Selborne GBE FRS

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 12 September, Committee Room 18, Palace of Westminster
6.00pm – 7.00pm

1. Welcome

Baroness McIntosh chaired the meeting and welcomed attendees.

2. Election of Group Officers

Baroness McIntosh nominated Angela Smith as Chair. Ian Mearns MP nominated Baroness McIntosh as Co-Chair. The nominations were seconded by Liz Twist MP.

Baroness McIntosh nominated Lord Selborne and Neil Parish MP as Officers of the group. The nominations were seconded by Lord Bradshaw.

3. Income and Expenditure

Connect will continue to act as the APPG's Secretariat. The prepared income and expenditure statement was agreed.

- Wessex Water
- Affinity Water
- Plastic Pipes Group
- Major Energy User Council,
- Water UK
- WWF

Following this, the AGM was closed.



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Quality of water and rivers: One year on from WWF's report, Flushed Away

(Non-Verbatim Minutes)

The All Party Parliamentary Group's October meeting was on 'the Quality of water and rivers: One year on from WWF's report, Flushed Away.'

Guest Speakers:

- Catherine Moncrieff, Freshwater Policy and Programme Manager - UK Rivers, WWF-UK
- Stuart Colville, Director of Strategy at Water UK.

Baroness McIntosh chaired the session, welcomed attendees and introduced the panellists.

In her opening remarks, Baroness McIntosh said that 45% of the UK's rivers are of good ecological status, which is in large part due to the privatisation programme and level of investment that this has been brought in, as well as legislation from the EU.

Catherine Moncrieff did not disagree with Anne's opening remarks. She said the water industry has done a huge amount in the past few years for UK rivers. Catherine said the reason for producing the report a year ago was to highlight that 40% of rivers in England and Wales are infected by sewage. While there have been great strides forward since 1858 and the Great Stink sewage pollution remains an issue.

She then discussed the changes that have been implemented one-year on from the report. She said there has been a shift in attitudes, with key figures in government and beyond recognising that more needs to be done to address the quality of rivers.

Discussing key recommendations in the report, she said that water companies need to avoid quick fix solutions to water infrastructure. Rather, strategic long-term planning is needed to deal with population growth and storm incidents. In addition, Catherine said that waste water planning is extremely important and water companies should be required to have a waste water strategy.

The second key recommendation in the report relates to environmental monitoring. This enables the sector to understand where to target investment and where pollution is occurring. She welcomed the Environment Agency's programme which monitors two-thirds of water waste overflows but questioned why this cannot be extended to the remaining third.



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Stuart Colville thanked Catherine for her remarks. He said that water companies and NGOs feel that a lot has been achieved, but the sector as a whole needs to think again about the tools they can use deal with sewage. Unlike WWF, Water UK thinks it is important to distinguish between the different sources of sewage – discharges and overflow, compared to pollution accidents.

In terms of other aspects of report, Stuart welcomed its call for the transposition of EU legislation. He said that there is a lot of common ground between water companies and NGOs on moving regulations over from EU to the UK statute books. He welcomed the work of NGOs such as WWF in this regard and said that these organisations, unlike water companies, can shine a spot light on this area with authenticity.

Stuart then discussed other means of tackling sewage overflow and pollution. He said that Water UK are currently developing flushable wet wipes. Finally, he concluded by saying that the sector needs to work collaboratively to drive down sewage overflow.

Baroness McIntosh asked what WWF would like to see in the new environmental body. **Catherine Moncrieff** said that she would like to see a regulatory body that sets out clear objectives which are put into statute in an Environment Act.

Baroness McIntosh addressed Stuart's point about wet wipes and asked the panel whether we can change attitudes on using wet wipes due to plastic content.

Stuart Colville said that a technical standard would help with this. **Angela Smith** added that Yorkshire water has put adverts on buses about wet wipe use.

Angela Smith then discussed the EU Water Framework Directive. She said that the UK needs to maintain the approach set by the EU. She also said that the Environment Agency does a good job given its limited resources. Finally, Angela mentioned the importance of SudS and reducing pressure on the water network.

Baroness McIntosh asked whether water companies should be statutory consultees on certain developments. **Stuart Colville** said that some companies would argue that having this backstop would be quite helpful, but there is a risk of the burden becoming too onerous, and companies being asked to respond to a consultation for very small developments.

Elaine Coles said that local authorities already struggle in their role and don't have the resources to be able to undertake this work. **Stuart Colville** agreed and said that the water industry should think about how to better engage with local authorities.

A representative from Thames Water said that Thames Water works closely with the Environment Agency to identify properties that are disconnected from sewerage systems. However, it is often the case that local authorities don't have the resources to enforce this properly, meaning that some households will continue to pollute. **Stuart Colville** agreed with this comment.



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Angela Smith said that it is very confusing for home owners to know who is responsible for what issue, given the number of players in the industry.

Baroness McIntosh thanked all speakers and guests for attending and closed the meeting.

END OF NOTE