

CH&MS Public Meeting**Christchurch Harbour has become Bournemouth's toilet bowl**
Stewarts Garden Centre, Christchurch, 28th November 2024**Guest Speaker: Charles Watson, Founder of River Action and Organiser of The March For Clean Water**

The Christchurch Harbour & Marine Society (CH&MS) were delighted to welcome 350 people to their latest public meeting at Stewarts Garden Centre. With Charles Watson as the guest speaker, local fishermen, sailors, swimmers and residents among others, gathered to learn just how critically **a Harbour Protection Policy is needed for Christchurch Harbour** and how we as a community can demand this from our elected BCP Councilors.

In great detail Charles explained how water companies are not being held accountable for their sewage 'spills' and, essentially, the ecocide they are committing. Spills are not as accidental as they sound, these are deliberate discharges of raw sewage in the rivers. In 2023, within a 20 mile radius of Christchurch Harbour, the Harbour, River Avon and River Stour saw a combined number of 466 raw sewage discharges over 6,533 hours. The River Stour has become the open sewer, or you could say the toilet, of Wimborne, Boscombe and Bournemouth with sewage being dumped in the river to avoid it reaching the beaches. However, dividends continued to be paid to shareholders, with the fines placed on them for their failings falling into insignificance when compared with the dividends being paid. These sewage discharges have contributed to Christchurch Harbour becoming the highest risk ecosystem in the country.

'We don't inherit this planet from our parents, we borrow it from our kids'.

Martin Stewart and Sir George Meyrick have been regularly testing the phosphate levels of the River Stour. Initially thinking their equipment was faulty due to the consistent top-of-the-scale readings, the penny then dropped – the levels of phosphates in the River Stour are off the scale. These readings have led to encouraging and inspiring Sir George Meyrick, Martin Stewart and Raymond Nottage to share this damning evidence with the local community. CH&MS wants the community to be well aware of the pollution and careless attitude of the council. With regards to phosphates in the River Avon in May 2022, BCP took the stance that "The River Avon is already saturated with phosphates upstream by the time it reaches Christchurch. Therefore any additional phosphates from Christchurch Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) cannot worsen the situation." As residents of BCP, we cannot accept this.

The loudest and most organised activists will be heard by water companies and the council, and that is what CH&MS must become. Vanessa Ricketts, Christchurch Independent Cllr and joint secretary of CH&MS, announced that our petition is now live on BCP's website. This is for those who work, live or study in BCP to sign, which demands the Harbour Protection Policy. 2000 signatures are needed in order for this to be debated at council. The petition can be signed here: [Protect Christchurch Harbour Petition](#)

May we sincerely thank you all for your support in our mission for a Harbour Protection Policy for Christchurch Harbour.



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