

John Howell OBE, M.P.  
Member of Parliament for Henley  
House of Commons  
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**Councillor Jo Robb**  
**Thames Champion**

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27 October 2021

Dear John,

I write again to ask to you to support the Duke of Wellington's amendment to the Environment Bill when it returns to the House of Commons today (Wednesday 27 October).

The amendment, which is reasonable and necessary, provides much-needed "teeth" to the Environment Bill by placing a statutory duty on sewerage undertakers to take "all reasonable steps" to ensure untreated sewage is not discharged. It requires that they demonstrate improvements and reductions in harm caused by sewage discharges and requires that the Secretary of State, the Director and the Environment Agency exercise their legal duties.

Without this amendment, the Environment Bill is worryingly feeble on the issue of sewage – it imposes requirements to monitor and report sewage discharges (I welcome these steps) but falls short of what is necessary by failing to impose a statutory duty to reduce and ultimately end sewage discharges.

I know you are aware of the public outcry over the Commons vote last week. There is widespread and growing public disgust at the scandal of sewage pollution in this country, but it's important to note that experts and campaigners also support the amendment, including your own colleague Philip Dunne MP, Surfers Against Sewage, Windrush Against Sewage Pollution and others.

Sewage outfalls in the Henley constituency discharged raw or partially treated sewage into the Thames and its tributaries for more than 11,000 hours last year. Across the river in Wantage, Thames Water discharged sewage for more than 6,000 hours.

The practice of sewage dumping is not restricted to times of heavy rainfall, but happens year-round, in wet weather and dry, as demonstrated this year when Thames Water started providing real-time alerts at six outfalls in and around Oxford. In some cases, discharges occurred when there had been *no rain for weeks*. Our sewerage infrastructure is failing due to chronic and ongoing lack of investment, the

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failure of the Environment Agency to prosecute, population increase and increased precipitation.

As a regular river swimmer, this worries me greatly as I see the consequences of the pollution of these discharges first hand. It also concerns me that many children - mine included - swim in the Thames during the summer months. We all deserve rivers clean enough to swim in.

I sincerely hope you will change your mind and stand up for the River Thames and its tributaries in Henley by supporting this important amendment.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J Robb -". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Cllr Jo Robb  
Thames Champion  
Woodcote & Rotherfield Ward  
South Oxfordshire District Council