

SEWAGE UPDATE

Over the past 2 weeks we have had three successive sewage breakouts on the main sewage line between the Maidstone Rd Pumping Station and its eventual route past Whatcote Cottages and Askew Bridge to Wrotham Heath. These breakouts have all happened in a garden of a house on Sandy Ridge, and there is a major Southern Water operation taking place there. The proposed solution that we have been advised of today is that a 25 metre sleeve will be inserted in the damaged pipe to ensure sewage cannot escape again.

The sewage has been overflowing into the Network Rail culvert that runs west alongside the railway line as far as Griggs Way, and thence through the Recreation Ground stream, heading through Valleyview Estate towards Basted Mill pond. So far judicious damming of the route has prevented a major flow into the river system. The Environment Agency have been kept informed and are monitoring progress closely.

The Maidstone Pumping Station has had to be shut down to allow work on the damaged pipe, and this has necessitated a huge fleet of sewage tankers bypassing the pipe running sewage from Maidstone Rd, Basted and Ightham.

We have to acknowledge the huge effort put in by Southern Water and its contractors, and the exemplary way they have handled the operation, but our main thanks should go to Andy Morris the SW Engineer in charge of the operation, who has been outstanding in his liaison with the residents and Parish Council.

Harry Rayner and I am in contact with senior management at Southern Water to keep pressing for a long term resolution. We believe it is largely the astronomical cost of the tanker operation that will persuade Southern Water to seek that solution.

The one good bit of news about all this is that the recent upgrades to the Maidstone Rd Pumps seem to have worked, in that the increase of pressure with them working properly is what may have caused, if not the actual burst, the escape of sewage through existing cracks. That means that once the current issue is resolved, we should not see a return of the multiple sewage outbursts we have suffered over the years.

Mike Taylor

Recreation Ground Stream



Sandy Ridge Site



First Sandy Ridge Excavation



Tanker arriving at Maidstone Rd



Site of third sewage breakout

