



Future Management of the River Mease Catchment to 2027

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

This document provides additional information be read in conjunction with the Mease Joint Statement FINAL V8 05 Jun 20.

Objective of partnership approach: To bring the condition of the River Mease Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation into favourable condition as well as meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive

This will be achieved through a variety of mechanisms including investment from Catchment Sensitive Farming, a Developer Contribution Scheme, River Restoration and Water Company Investment.

1) What is the Catchment Based Approach? The Catchment Based Approach (CABA) encourages organisations to manage land and water in a balanced way, by identifying the pressures on the water environment, by working together to agree common objective and by implementing solutions. The Trent Rivers Trust leads the CABA for the Mease.

2) What is being proposed? Severn Trent will divert the effluent from the major sewage treatment works to discharge to a location outside of the Mease catchment. This process has sometimes been referred to as 'pumping out'.

3) Why is the transfer necessary? There are several reasons why this course of action is considered as necessary.

3.1 The River Mease is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and is formally notified for two freshwater fish species of national and international importance. The current nature conservation status of the river is currently classified as unfavourable no change, due in part to high levels of phosphate coming from both point source and diffuse sources.

3.2 The designation of the river as an SAC imposes strict limits on the quantity of phosphate that is allowed to enter the river. Objectives for both river water quality and a naturalised flow regime have been set by Natural England for the River Mease, as required under the EU Habitats Regulations. The 'pumping out' proposal is considered an essential component of an overall strategy to deliver these water quality and naturalised flow objectives.

3.3 All sectors which impact on water quality are making a contribution to the improvement of the River Mease relative to their impact on the river. This includes tackling diffuse sources through Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) which is delivered in partnership by Natural England, the Environment Agency and Defra.

3.4 The Environment Agency, whilst taking advice from Natural England, has placed an obligation on Severn Trent through WINEP (the Water Industry National Environment Programme) to divert discharges from the River Mease. It is anticipated that the removal of the effluent will help the flows in the river return to a more natural regime, which would be the case before the treatment works were installed.

- 4) Why is a flow investigation necessary?** There is currently insufficient understanding regarding the impact of the proposed transfers on downstream river flows. An investigation has now started to determine the specific benefits to water quality and the impact the proposed transfer will have on flow in the river.
- 5) What will the flow investigation tell us?** The investigation will quantify the impact of the planned transfers on river flow and identify appropriate mitigation measures. This investigation is expected to be complete by 2023.
- 6) What other work will take place before the transfer work starts?** A review of the other potential implications for the transfer will be undertaken. This will include examination of the other interests in the river that rely on the water regime as it is currently. This includes abstractions, water quality, fisheries and nature conservation.
- 7) Where will the effluents be moved to?** Severn Trent will work with the Environment Agency to identify a suitable discharge point with acceptable capacity.
- 8) Are any other organisations involved?** The Environment Agency, Natural England and Severn Trent are committed to work alongside the organisations involved in the Catchment Based Approach to pursue an open dialogue moving forward, with the aim of achieving favourable condition of the River Mease SSSI/SAC to the benefit to all those that live and work within its catchment.
- 9) Are there any other works planned?** Separately to the pump out work, the River Mease CABA partners are working together to deliver a range of projects to enhance the Mease. This is helping to restore natural habitats within the river, to trap diffuse pollution from elsewhere in the catchment and providing advice and grants to farmers.
- 10) Will leaving the EU affect the proposed works in any way?** SACs have very high levels of environmental protection under European legislation that will be maintained as we leave the EU. The environmental targets have been adopted through UK legislation.
- 11) What will this mean for me?**

11.1 If you are a developer

Additional phosphate that will be generated by further development will have to be mitigated for in order to ensure that the water quality of the River Mease, which is currently failing water quality standards, does not get worse. Bespoke solutions to mitigate phosphorous levels will need to be prepared. It will not be possible for developers to rely on the DCS until such time that a permanent solution of either pumping foul sewage out of the catchment or increasing the capacity and technology of the STW can be implemented. The Mease partnership is working with all the Local Planning Authorities on a range of interim phosphorous mitigation measures alongside possible non-mains system options. Details are available on the website <https://www.rivermease.co.uk/>

Developers are directed to the relevant Local Planning Authority or to the Mease partnership to discuss specific bespoke solutions. Please email enquiries@rivermease.co.uk for more information.

11.2 If you are a farmer or hold an abstraction licence.

If you are a farmer and currently abstract water in the Mease catchment, you are entitled to a free advisory visit on water management through the Catchment Sensitive Farming initiative. The visit will identify water resource risks both now and in the future for the current system and make recommendations on potential changes to cropping/sourcing/storage of water to ensure farm business resilience and efficiency. This will include any anticipated impacts of changes to water resources regulatory regimes and new licence requirements. It will make prioritised farm-specific recommendations which consider leakage reduction, water efficiency, recycling, alternative sources and appropriate water storage and harvesting facilities. Ultimately it will highlight existing good

practice in sustainable water sourcing, storage, management and use and opportunities to develop this further, and enable the farmer to plan water resources on the farm better to make the farm more resilient to drought, changes in abstraction permitted, or disruption in water supplies (e.g. frozen pipes), reduce the need for abstraction and times of the year that impact most on water flow and to reduce the impact of the farm on water quality and quantity in natural water bodies. It will then provide estimations of the costs, benefits and pay-back times of recommended changes. If you think you would like a visit please email enquiries@rivermease.co.uk

11.3 If you are a member of an angling club

Any change in future flows will be unlikely to have a significant effect on fish populations, this will be considered carefully, with reference to point 6 above. It is likely that the reduced levels of diffuse pollution in the river will result in a more natural fish population.

11.4 If you live in the catchment of the River Mease

The proposed transfer is unlikely to have a direct effect on people living in the catchment. Once the work is complete, the river will be closer to achieving the water quality targets set resulting in a more natural system supporting a range of important habitats and species.

12) When will the pump out take place? The proposal has been under consideration for a number of years. Pumping out flows to another catchment is a significant investment and the implications of such a change are inherently complex. It has taken the key organisations involved some time to develop the details of proposal as being the most appropriate course of action. It is vital that the implications of the pump out are properly understood, hence the need for adequate time and research before the scheme is implemented. The pump out is expected to be in place by the end of 2027.

Enquiries

If you have a question or query that relates to the Environment Agency, such as;

- Queries around abstraction licensing,
- How the Environment Agency will deal with planning consultations
- Fisheries related matters

Please send you queries via email to enquiries_westmids@environment-agency.gov.uk

Links for the relevant Local Planning Authorities;

- [North West Leicestershire District Council](#)
- [South Derbyshire District Council](#)
- [Lichfield District Council](#)

River Mease partnership website

- www.rivermease.co.uk

If you are unsure as to who should deal with your question / query or for more general queries relating to the River Mease, please use the email address enquiries@rivermease.co.uk