

Letter to Parish Councils from ERA – Eco Rother Action, April 2026

RE: Report on the E.coli project you previously supported and a request for further support

Firstly, may I again thank you all for responding positively to our initial request in December 2024 for funding towards the purchase and running costs of a Fluidion Alert One for testing of E.coli levels in the River Rother and its Tributaries. It took us to the end of July before we had raised enough money, including a grant from SDNPA, and were actually ready to get started, but we have been pretty busy since then.

All our results can be seen at <https://ecorotheraction.org/fluidion-alert-one>

We are delighted to be receiving support from Portsmouth University with analysing these results and suggesting how our project design can be further improved. We hope to offer feedback on our E.coli work as our October or November ERA talk.

Recently I was interviewed for Channel 4 News on this project, as a follow-up to their docudrama Dirty Business. They only used about 20 seconds of the 20 minutes they recorded, but it still helps to raise the profile of this work. It can be seen as the 26 March piece here <https://www.channel4.com/news/by/clare-fallon> .

One of the questions I was asked was what are your results showing? I answered, 'one thing that has shocked us is how much E.coli wastewater treatment works add to our waterways even when all that is going into them is **fully treated effluent**. You may be surprised to learn that there is no upper limit set for E.coli in our rivers and streams, unless there is a designated bathing area downstream or there are shellfish. So, for the vast majority of wastewater treatment works their 'permits to discharge' do not set any limits for E.coli levels. Where there are downstream shellfish or bathing areas the effluent is UV treated to reduce E.coli, but that simply does not happen elsewhere. Defra would not permit spending money for UV treatment when the permits to discharge have no E.coli limits set. Spills are a huge problem, but one that is beginning to be addressed. E.coli in fully treated effluent is the elephant in the room that nobody is talking about yet.'

This project is producing E.coli results, but it is also vastly increasing our understanding as to how the whole sewerage system works. This was particularly useful when Andrew Griffith MP accompanied us on one of our testing sessions as we could discuss with him all the regulatory changes that we feel would vastly improve things.

We have also had useful face to face meetings with Southern Water, and a lot less useful email exchanges with their Environment Information Regulations team. We continue to pursue meaningful answers to our valid questions.

However, there is one glaring limitation to how we currently work. We are testing above and below wastewater treatment works, but each test takes around 9 hours, implying that it is only practical to complete one test per day. Our above-and-below results are always on subsequent days. Taking those tests on the same day would be far more meaningful. This would not increase our running costs as it would be the same number of tests being carried out. Our predicted costs for reagent and other consumables for the coming year is just over £4000, but a second Fluidion Alert One would allow us to do same day testing above and below wastewater treatment works, pumping stations, dubious septic tanks etc. That would need a further £3826, at current cost.

Accordingly, we are repeating our sponsored walk which raised over £700 last year, and hoping to exceed that figure this year. (If any of you wanted to individually support our work with a donation

please visit [Fundraiser by Eco RotherAction : ERA's Sponsored Family Riverside Walk 2026](#) .) We will again be seeking matched funding, but that still means finding the first half of the money!

Needless to say, I am also asking that our Parish Councils again consider funding us. Please would you consider a donation as follows (proportional to number of households per parish):

Parish Council	£
Elsted and Treyford	60
Harting	300
Rogate	320
Stedham with Iping	160
Trotton with Chithurst	70
Woolbeding with Redford	40
Buriton	190

Thank you for giving consideration to this request.