

Buckden District Councillors Report

Dear Residents and Parish Councillors,

It is with great commitment to transparency and collaboration that I present this report, reflecting our ongoing efforts to address pressing local matters. As we navigate through these crucial developments, your active participation and continued support remain invaluable. Together, we strive to create a resilient and prosperous community.

BUCKDEN SEWAGE DISCHARGES

In 2023, Huntingdon was polluted by sewage 911 times, lasting a cumulative 10,568 hours - that's 1.22 years! However, monitoring was disabled in some locations, so the actual numbers could be higher.

Specifically, Diddington Brook was polluted by sewage 120 times in 2023 from the Buckden Water Recycling Centre on Leadens Lane, amounting to 2,054 hours – making it the worst offender in our constituency. That's once every 3 days. Unfortunately, data for 2024 is not yet available.

Concerns and Future Developments

This evidence suggests that Buckden's current sewage system may not be up to standard. This is particularly worrying given that there is planning permission for approximately 300 additional houses to be built. Without necessary upgrades to the sewage infrastructure, the new development could exacerbate the existing issues.

Pollution Summary 2023

Here are all the reported sewage overflow totals for Huntingdon in 2023. Sometimes sewage can be being dumped for **months** at a time.

Reporting refers to how much of the time the monitoring was active. In this constituency 2 of the total 33 CSO locations had reporting enabled for less than half the year, of which 2 had *zero* reporting.

Previous1234Next Search:					
Company	Waterway	Site	Sewage Dumps	Duration (Hours)	Reporting %
Anglian Water	Diddington Brook	BUCKDEN WATER RECYCLING CENTRE	120	2,054	100
Anglian Water	Bury Brook	OLDHURST STW	104	1,662	100
Anglian Water	River Kym	KIMBOLTON STW	80	899	100
Anglian Water	River Kym	THE HIGHWAY PS	60	711	100

Ref: <https://top-of-the-poops.org/waterway/anglian-water/diddington-brook>

TILTED BALANCE

The Parish Council will have received an update regarding HDC's position of being back in tilted balance. This situation has arisen due to HDC's success in exceeding our housing targets, which, rather ironically, has led to the Government increasing their targets further. Additionally, a change in the calculation method has resulted in HDC no longer having a 5-year housing supply.

This is a mixed blessing. On one hand, our residents need more housing, and HDC are committed to meeting that need. That's why HDC have been working on the new Local Plan. The need for a stable

and robust plan cannot be overstated, as it guides our growth and development in a sustainable manner.

Tilted Balance, however, is a challenging scenario. The downside is that being in Tilted Balance means that some developments may be harder to refuse, even if they are not ideal. On the upside, this situation presents an opportunity to advance some developments that are more desirable and beneficial for our community.

Under UK planning law, the concept of "tilted balance" refers to a policy approach within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is shorthand for the **presumption in favour of sustainable development**. Here's a breakdown of what it means:

1. **Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development:** When there are no relevant policies, or if the most relevant Local Plan policies are considered "out of date," planning permission should be approved unless there are significant reasons to refuse. This means that the balance is tilted in favor of granting permission for development¹.
2. **Out of Date Policies:** Policies are considered out of date if there is a lack of a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (or four-year supply for authorities progressing a new Local Plan) or if the Housing Delivery Test indicates that housing delivery was below 75% of the requirements over the past three years.
3. **Protected Areas:** There are exceptions where development should be refused, such as in protected areas like Green Belt, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Parks, Heritage Coast, and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.
4. **Balancing Harms and Benefits:** When the tilted balance is engaged, decision-makers must conduct a planning balance to determine whether the harms of a proposed development significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits. This involves a nuanced and subjective assessment.

In essence, the tilted balance aims to ensure that sustainable development is prioritised. It encourages the approval of development proposals that align with sustainable development principles, unless there are strong reasons to refuse them based on the protection of important areas or significant adverse impacts.

QUIETWAY PROJECT UPDATE

My understanding is that Grafham Parish Council (PC) supports the Quietway project between Grafham and Brampton, provided there are no motor traffic restrictions. Likely measures include:

- 20mph speed limits
- Traffic calming
- Repeater signage
- Flush solar lights (similar to Hail Weston)
- White gates (similar to Brampton on Park Rd)
- Buffer zones (60:40:20)
- Build-outs

Cllr Ian Gardener, Chair of Grafham PC, has indicated that Sustrans has funding only for design, consultation, and feasibility work. Additional funding must be identified to implement the agreed measures, potentially from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) 20mph budget.

There is a query about Brampton PC's support and their potential contribution from their unallocated CIL budget. It was highlighted that Brampton PC has not spent on active travel infrastructure or applied for Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) CIL funding over the past 5 years, though I can't confirm this.

Upcoming Sustrans Design Workshop consultations are scheduled for 25 February 2025 in Brampton and 6 March 2025 in Grafham, in a drop-in style. Our MP Ben Obese-Jecty has expressed likely support for the Quietway, provided there are no restrictions on motor traffic, except for HGVs.

A question remains about indicative scheme costs for traffic calming measures and Sustrans' access to future Active Travel England budgets.

Wishing you well,

Martin

Martin Hassall

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