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The Rt Hon Emma Reynolds MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
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Dear Emma

As I write, sewage is pouring into three rivers in my constituency – the River Itchen, the River Meon and the River Hamble.

In the first seven weeks of 2026, sewage has been flowing into the River Itchen for over 400 hours and counting in just one monitoring site, near Headbourne Worthy. This is a protected and rare chalk stream that runs right through the centre of the city of Winchester.

The River Itchen is one of just six chalk streams in England that support the endangered Atlantic Salmon population, which is currently laying eggs needed for the species' survival. Project White Hart, the campaign to save this species, has warned that a single major event could be catastrophic.

In the River Meon, there have been over 500 confirmed sewage dumps this year alone. This is happening where beavers have recently been reintroduced, and the sewage flows right through the South Downs National Park. A recent report from the South Downs National Park Authority found that 90% of the park's rivers are not meeting a good standard for nature. If we cannot protect nature and landscapes in our National Parks, how can the public have confidence in our ability to protect them anywhere?

Action on this cannot wait.

Failure to protect Hampshire's chalk streams will lead to ecological catastrophe. These habitats are exceptionally rare, rich in biodiversity, support unique flora and fauna, and are impossible to recreate or replace.

Will the government introduce an immediate package of support to clean up the sewage spills that have poured into Hampshire's rivers this winter and commit to an urgent meeting with me to act on these spills and safeguard our chalk streams from future discharges?

Yours sincerely

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