TEMPLATE LETTER TO MP’S: please feel free to edit and personalise this letter, you could include specific mention of the waterways in your area, what they mean to you and how you may have seen them change over time or any specific issues you have seen, such as pollution.

Your address and contact details

Dear XXX MP (if you are unsure who your MP is check [here](https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP)

**I am writing to ask you to speak up for water quality in our constituency, our county of Somerset and across the country.**

**In the face of a climate and ecological emergency we need our waterways to be clean, healthy functioning systems, where wildlife thrives. Unfortunately, this is not the case.**

**Our waterways should be a haven for wildlife, with a wide variety of aquatic plants, invertebrates, amphibians, fish, mammals, such as water voles and otters, and birdlife, such as kingfishers. These waterways should act as safe wildlife corridors, allowing these species to move through our county.**

**However, a recent report from the Environment Agency highlighted the sorry** state of the country’s rivers throughout 2019, based on ecological and chemical factors. The percentage of rivers with good ecological status remained at 14%, whilst 0% of rivers met good chemical status. Since a river must be considered ‘good’ in both categories to be good overall, none of our waterways meet the criteria. It has also been reported that in 2019 water companies discharged raw sewage from storm overflows for 1.5 million hours in 204,000 incidents.

Somerset has a great many streams, rivers, canals, lakes and wetland areas, including the internationally important Somerset Levels and Moors. None of these waterways are considered to be in good condition and large areas of catchments are polluted from a variety of sources, including agricultural and urban run-off and sewage discharges.

Many of our waterways flow through the Somerset Levels and Moors and in May 2021 Natural England changed the condition status of all the Somerset Levels and Moors Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to ‘Unfavourable – declining’ (the worst status before ‘destroyed’), due to poor water quality across the area. Monitoring work shows that Phosphate inputs are at least 3 times the target, causing ditch and invertebrate assemblage to fail, this is likely to have knock on impacts for other species.

**As a Somerset MP can I ask you to be a vocal advocate amongst your constituents for responsible behaviours that improve water quality, both in domestic settings and also supporting farmers who are reducing fertiliser inputs and promoting soil health.**

**In Parliament can I ask you to call for significant improvements to our water quality by the strengthening of water quality requirements and enforcement in the Habitats Regulations Review** (being undertaken by Rt Hon Lord Benyon, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at DEFRA) with sufficient funding for statutory agencies.

Yours sincerely,