



Autumn Newsletter for our Zero Pollution Supporters 2025

Hello and welcome to our newsletter; we hope that you are all well and that you have been keeping up to date with our activities on the Stormwater Shepherds UK website at

<https://www.stormwatershepherds.org.uk/>

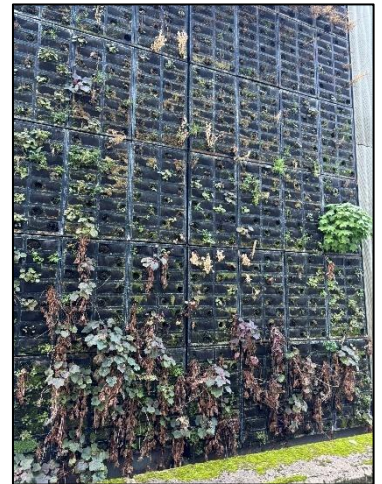
☂ I'm pleased to report that the rain returned, after our long, dry summer, so we have been able to do some more stormwater sampling across the UK.



In a complete turn-around, our recent site visits have been carried out in pouring rain, and even in the middle of Storm Amy. It's been a bit of a shock after the lovely site visits in the sunshine of the summer. During Storm Amy, we visited the motorway outfalls from the M6 into the River Lune at Tebay. The results of analysis showed the runoff to be polluted. Luckily, Jo Bradley doesn't seem to mind getting wet! 💧



At Stormwater Shepherds we do our best to celebrate good examples of sustainable drainage systems, like the ones below in Amsterdam. But this 'green wall' in Birmingham is in a terrible state. A good green wall can provide a beautiful display of foliage and flowers, whilst also creating a lovely place for little birds and creatures to feed and hide. But this one has been allowed to dry out and die. If we build these features to make our cities greener, we must look after them.



Our Director of Operations, Jo Bradley was lucky enough to visit Amsterdam in November to attend Stormwater Europe 2025. It was a fascinating conference, and Jo met lots of useful people and chatted about stormwater with everyone. She also spent some time mooching around Amsterdam to look at their stormwater management strategies. These planted wetlands in the canals in the city centre not only look beautiful, but they help to absorb pollutants too. In the breeze they make a delightful rustling noise!



When are hairy legs a good thing? When you are trying to identify an insect! Do you remember the samples of insects that we collected from a little stream in the Spring? This is a picture of one of the insects under a microscope and the only way to identify accurately which species of caddis fly this is, is to count the hairs on it's legs!! What a fascinating job 🧐

Not a lot of people
know that ...



Every year, thousands of frogs, toads and newts fall into roadside gully pots and often get stuck in there and die. This special curb-stone has been designed to encourage the amphibians to crawl in the 'indent' into the curb, and so avoid falling down the gully pot. These have been used across a development in Wichelstowe, along with lots of other drainage ideas to care for wildlife. 🐸 🐙



Have you heard of biochar? This is a new product that everyone is talking about. It is created in the same way as charcoal, by heating sticks and wood to a high temperature. It locks-up carbon and it can be used to improve soil condition. This sample is from a road-building scheme near Gloucester where they are using it in the new planting schemes and tree-planting that they are delivering. I'm sure we'll all hear a lot more about it over the next few years.

NEWSPAPER

● *Economy*

● *Business*

● *Environment*

● *World*

10.11.2025 MONDAY

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Highway runoff pollution getting noticed at last

"The health of British Rivers can start to make a slow but steady recovery now."



This is the outfall from the M6 motorway in Lancashire discharging into the River Darwen. It discharges every time it rains, causing river pollution.

National Highways has published a list of 182 highway outfalls and soakaways that they will remediate over the next 5 years. These polluting discharges are located across England, and it is a great step forward to see this investment in the control of pollution.

The Department for Transport has agreed to provide the funding for these treatment schemes, and design engineers are poised to design treatment schemes that capture the pollutants and allow natural processes to break-down some of the harmful chemicals.

DEFRA have recognised the role of highway runoff pollution in British Rivers and there are plans for the new Regional Water Authorities to oversee the reduction of pollution from these highways across their catchments in the future. This is all great news for the activists that have been advocating for this work alongside Stormwater Shepherds UK for the last 5 years.



This outfall off the M6 discharges into the River Lune at Tebay which is a salmon fishery.

Motorway outfalls

After over 10 years of campaigning by Stormwater Shepherds and River Action Groups, we are delighted to see a list of motorway outfalls that are going to be improved over the next 5 years.

Build on success

Jo Bradley of Stormwater Shepherds said "Although the 182 outfalls and soakaways are a tiny proportion of the total number that are owned and operated by National Highways, this is an excellent step forward, and if they deliver good treatment schemes and maintain them properly, this will certainly reduce pollution, and we can build on this success year on year."

Limiting toxic pollution

These outfalls and soakaways cause terrible pollution of rivers, groundwater and oceans and it is essential that we start to manage it properly. This news from National Highways and the Department for Transport is welcome and will start to limit toxic pollution.

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Your role as a Zero Pollution Supporter

🌿 Autumn has arrived with a flurry this year, rushing in with Storm Amy's winds and rain. It seems to have got darker very quickly and the temperatures are dropping. This is when we all need to 'batten down the hatches' and get ready for winter. Here are some ideas that you can use around your home and garden.

- 🛡️ Don't sweep all the leaves away! Piles of leaves are essential for bugs and insects over the Winter, and hedgehogs use them to hibernate in. If you want to tidy up, just move the leaves to piles in the corners of your garden and they'll help wildlife to stay cozy until Spring.
- 🛡️ Clear the roadside gully pots near your home if they get blocked with leaves and debris. A blocked gully pot can quickly lead to localised flooding, so if you can do it safely, use a rake or a brush to keep the ones near your home free.
- 🛡️ Remember that soil is the most important part of any garden, plant pot, green space or allotment. This is the best time of year to love your soils; turn them over a little and break them up with a fork to allow winter frosts in a little.
- 🛡️ Keep making compost over the Winter using your kitchen and garden scraps.
- 🛡️ Spread a layer of compost over your flower and vegetable plots now, so that it can be breaking down, ready to enrich your soil in the new growing season when the World warms back up.

We found this cute little bug hotel in a park in Amsterdam. It doesn't look like much, but it is full of bugs and bees, where they have hidden their eggs in the tubes to over-Winter safely. In the Spring all these little bugs and bees will hatch out and fly away, enjoying the food in the wetlands and meadows across the park. What a brilliant idea 😊



We are delighted to have you 'on-board' as a Zero Pollution Ambassador. Let us know if you find out about grants and funds that you think that we may be able to bid into so that we can deliver more projects to improve stormwater management.

And let us know if we can help you too; we can help you to organise a litter-pick, or talk to local groups about plastic pollution and the impacts of stormwater. *Enjoy the rest of the Winter and have a fabulous Christmas if you celebrate it* 🎅