

River Esk facing 'environmental disaster' claims angling boss

Angry anglers allege that untreated sewage and iron ore deposits from old mine workings could lead to "an environmental disaster" on a popular Lothians river.

Marc Anderson, president of Musselburgh and District Angling Association (MDAA), claims otters, kingfishers, salmon, sea trout, trout, grayling and swans are in danger.

He urged urgent action to protect the river and spotlighted an on-going issue on the South Esk where the water has turned orange.

The keen fisherman also claimed that education is needed at all levels and down to school level as untreated sewage including tampons, sanitary towels, condoms and excrement has recently been found in the river.

Anderson said: "This is not a new issue. We've complained for some time about pollution in the river, but the situation is getting worse and worse. All sorts of wildlife is now in danger."

He explained that water from Junkie's Adit, an old pit drain near Bilston, is understood to be the cause of the water turning orange.

The water, he believes, carries iron oxides which are making the South Esk change colour. The South Esk flows into the North Esk near Dalkeith and the river eventually reaches the sea at Musselburgh.

Anderson said the Coal Board claimed they needed to wait until the river reached a certain height before they could identify

the source of the pollution.

The self-employed kitchen and bathroom fitter claimed: "Now they say they need to purchase land to deal with the problem and that could take months. We need action from the Coal Board, SEPA (Scottish Environment Protection Agency) and other authorities now as the river is heading for an environmental disaster."

Forth Rivers Trust say their aquatic ecologist, Iain Reid, has been carrying out invertebrate monitoring over the past month to see how the minewater from the Adit was affecting life in the river.

A spokesman said: "He found that the mine discharge was affecting the type of invertebrate species present and the overall number.

"Fewer, less sensitive invertebrates (were) found below the minewater discharge than above it.

"Less invertebrates means less food for fish, birds and mammals and may serve as a warning that action needs to be taken.

Meanwhile, the Forth District Salmon Fishery Board confirm that bailiffs have recovered nets from the Tyne/Biel estuaries near West Barnes.

A spokesman said that they had been tipped off by a member of the public and the net removed and destroyed.

Bailiffs and police are continuing to patrol the area and the public is asked to remain vigilant and to report anything suspicious.