

Kingfisher Swimmers

I am not exactly sure of the exact number of Kingfisher swimmers but there are approximately 50 on the WhatsApp group and of these approx 25 are regular swimmers. (The Hampshire Open Water Swimmers and the Southampton Bluetits also swim in the river).

I swim 2-3 times a week, (depending on work commitments) at 6am in the morning. There is between 2 and 4 regular swimmers at this time. The next group swim at 7.00/7.15 followed by the after school drop off swimmers at 9.15am. There are again usually 2 - 4 at these times. Other times can be organised adhoc. So most days we can have approximately 10 swimmers with this number increasing to 20 or more as the temperature rises in Spring and Summer. On a Saturday there are a couple of swimmers at around 5.00pm too.

This morning 6 of us swam and then we had breakfast at The Woodmill Cafe joined by a couple of non-swimmers and their dogs.

As the temperature plummets, and there is frost on the ground, out come the wet suits for most of the swimmers but some swim in leggings and tops all year round.

We park our cars and bikes at Woodmill car park and walk to our swim choice of the day. We have 3 different swims. From Gaters Mill, from The White Swan and from Mansbridge and we swim back to Woodmill.

Several times a year we have fancy dress celebration swims. Christmas sing and swim festival joined by a group of musicians, our birthday celebration, full moon and midsummer are all celebrated by soup, cake and a warming drink afterwards.

We are a warm and caring community of 'strangers' who have come together with the common interest and the love to swim in 'Our River'.

The benefits:

To swim so close to the wildlife and to be excepted by them is amazing. This morning we saw a cormorant, a Canada goose, a yellow pied wagtail, as well as the usual ducks etc. On other occasions we have seen swans with cygnets, a deer, a fox, rats by the bins and heard an owl.

We all find our mental and physical health improves and we are buzzing for the rest of the day. The comradeship of these unknown people who have come together is amazing.

Our main concern is the water quality, which I know was discussed at a previous meeting (but we were not invited to that meeting). The overflow of sewage into this chalk stream river is criminal. I would be interested in your views on this subject.

My biggest concern is the lack of public conveniences in the whole of Riverside Park. The Triangle loo and the toilets at the sports pavilion are all closed and locked even the disabled

loo. I regularly see men and children urinating in the bushes (it's a much more difficult process for woman) and in the 21st century a disgusting and 3 world reaction to no facilities. Is this the welcome that Southampton City Council want to promote at Bitterne Park?

I would like to conclude by saying that anything SCC want to promote or organise at Riverside Park and The River Itchen will need loo's that are open!

If you have read down to this point I would like to thank you for taking the time. Can I also thank you in advance for any improvements to the river and park that will come as a result of this consultation. I hope it is not just a tick box exercise.

Kind regards

Julie Marsh
Kingfisher Swimmers