

Alresford Salads

Bakkavor Foods Limited owns and operates a site at Alresford Salads, The Nythe, Bighton Lane, Alresford, SO24 9DZ. The site supplies and distributes salad produce.

Bakkavor Foods Ltd has applied to 'vary' its existing permit to discharge wash water from its processing plant to the River Alre. This is being portrayed by some people locally as a review of a permit or a new application, which is not the case. The variation is a planned improvement; the operators have looked at the chemicals they currently use and are planning to replace them. We are assessing the application, which has been advertised on GOV.UK, and we are formally consulting Natural England. The permit will have limits attached to ensure the discharge will not have a detrimental effect on the river. We will monitor the discharge to ensure that the operator complies with the permit.

The Environment Agency carries out regular invertebrate sampling of the chalk streams in this area. We do not see a decline in the invertebrate community across the river system. Sampling at sites on the Alre showed levels considered to represent an exceptionally healthy chalk stream system. However, we understand the concerns that have been raised. Officers in our monitoring teams have had success in running freshwater shrimp traps on parts of the Itchen. We will use these shrimp cages to identify any localised water quality issues that are affecting invertebrates in the upper Itchen. We also monitor fish numbers within these water bodies and 2017 monitoring showed that the Alre supported a very healthy fish community. The Water Framework Directive classification, a European standard for river classification, for the River Alre is Good with some elements High.

Many factors affect water quality. These include 'permitted' discharges to the river, (such as the one at Alresford Salads), diffuse pollution from surrounding land, and the management of the river by riparian owners. There is more work to do and we are committed to working with businesses, partners and riparian owners to continue to protect and enhance the River Itchen.

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