

Earlier this year my partner and I headed to the Blue Tier to explore the north-east coast and spend some time in the mountains. We stayed just outside of Derby.

We spent our first day in Derby as I had not been there for over five years, well before the new mountain bike trails had been constructed, and boy was I surprised by what I saw! The town has been transformed from a quiet rural town to a tourist mecca. There were new mountain bike shops and several new restaurants and cafes in town, and it was buzzing with activity. Tourists were camping all the way along the river and filling the various houses that have been changed to short-term holiday accommodation.

Other than the crowds and shops, I was struck by the overwhelming smell of sewage along the banks of the river. I am an engineer who does a fair bit of work in water and sewage and so I know that Derby has no reticulated sewage treatment and relies on septic tanks, which require time and land area to treat sewage properly. If too many people use septics within a small area they fill too quickly, saturate the ground and send untreated sewage into the waterways. I believe this is what was happening in Derby, since the number of people using the toilets and washing bikes would overload any septic system in a town this size. When we spoke to some locals, they indicated that testing had revealed a *e coli* in the river, which confirmed my fears.

I sent an enquiry on the matter to the Dorset Council, highlighting the problems that I had noticed and asking if they were aware of them and what they were doing about them. Their response did not really address my questions, but rather claimed that Council maintains a 'proactive approach' which is 'consistent with best practice for operating and maintain public

waste water systems'. I cannot see how this is consistent with best practice when you consider that the whole town smells like a sewer. They did, however, concede that Derby may require a reticulated sewage system in the future stating:

*Council is aware that development pressures may require that the town is serviced by a reticulated sewerage system sometime into the future. Council has raised this with TasWater as a potential issue that may need addressing. TasWater and Council are currently adopting a 'wait and see' approach with regards to this matter.*

So, it appears that Dorset Council will 'wait and see' and bury its head in the sand while Derby is flooded with tourists for whom there is not enough camping space, and inadequate infrastructure to deal with all their waste. Derby is a classic example of how a focus on a particular industry (tourism in this case) without considering the other effects (waste, overpopulation and pollution) can lead to inundated infrastructure and pollution of the environment.

In my opinion, this focus on tourism in Derby is having the same effects as we have seen in places like Queenstown where there was a focus on mining with no consideration for the negative effects. Queenstown suffered acid rain and heavy pollution and Derby is suffering pollution of its waterways.

Derby is an example of what is happening all over our state in our national parks and regional towns as the result of a focus on tourism and its economic benefits with no consideration for its economic and environmental costs. Until our government starts to evaluate these industries holistically, incorporating all these factors, it will remain up to us to raise these issues and stop them before they cause the damage we are already seeing in places like Derby.

**James Sugden**