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Date: Wednesday, 04 October 2023

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Dear Member

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - THURSDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2023

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at the Thursday, 5 October 2023 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No	Item	Page
5.	South West Water Spotlight Review <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responses from South West Water to Key Lines of Enquiry• Representations from members of the public• Question from Council Officer• Additional Background Information <p>South West Water EPA data report 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov</p>	(Pages 2 - 17)

Yours sincerely

Governance Support
Clerk

South West Water Spotlight Review Key Lines of Enquiry

Water supply

We have just had one of the wettest Julys with parts of the south-west recording more than twice the normal monthly rainfall, yet we have been subject to a hosepipe ban for many months.

1. What are the reasons for the need for hosepipe bans and what measures are being undertaken by South West Water (SWW) to alleviate this in the future in light of both climate change and population growth?
 - We are pleased that as a result of combined efforts across the region, we were able to lift the TUBs in both Cornwall and parts of Devon on the 25th September.
 - Last year, the UK faced an extreme period of drought, which provided the biggest challenge to water resources in the South West for a generation. This is a sign of what is to come and highlights the critical importance of investing in long-term resilience. The hottest, driest weather on record in 2022 means we need to invest at speed to ensure ongoing security of supply.
 - We are investing in the future for how we manage water resources to increase supplies and resilience across the region, and support customers as they take action to reduce their usage through our Save Every Drop campaign.
 - Our current system relies heavily on rain and the water in rivers and reservoirs, and climate change has shown us that we need to be developing climate-independent sources of water in Devon and Cornwall.
 - We are doing just that with a water resources investment of £125m, repurposing disused quarries, investing in desalination, and reducing demand side actions with innovative solutions such as Save Every Drop (reducing demand by circa 3% to 4%).
 - Our interventions so far have already delivered results, boosting resources by c.25% in Cornwall, and c.12% in Devon.

HISTORIC

Over the past two decades we have been working hard to secure supplies through:

- Reducing leakage by 40% since privatisation
- Increasing reservoir storage by converting former clay pits into reservoirs
- Improving our ability to move water around the region by upgrading pumping stations, pipes and valves
- Increasing the capacity of our water treatment works by upgrading treatment processes and technology
- Using less water in our treatment processes, for example, we recycle water for jobs onsite, like cleaning screens at our wastewater treatment works
- Investing in pump storage schemes at Wimbleball and Colliford to improve resilience by taking advantage of high river levels.

2. Please can you provide the statistics relating to water usage and rainfall for the past 10 years so that we can understand the trends and challenges.

Awaiting information

3. What is SWW doing to improve the sustainability and reliability of supply to its customers into the future?
 - We operate across a unique topography where 90% of our water resources are derived from rivers and reservoirs. None of our strategic reservoirs are directly connected to treatment works, and therefore the efficacy is directly driven by the health of the rivers. It's the low river flows that will drive the depletion of a reservoir, which acts as a storage facility in drier months.
 - We are making water resources investment of £125m, repurposing disused quarries, investing in desalination technology, and reducing demand side actions with innovative solutions such as Save Every Drop (reducing demand by circa 3% to 4%).
 - We continue to promote our "free find and fix" offer for customers with private leaks at their homes. With 30% of leakage occurring here, we are now fixing three times more leaks than before this offer began– saving enough water to date to serve the equivalent of 8,000 homes.
 - Our teams are working around the clock to conserve our water resources and fix leaks. We continue to invest in innovative technology and solutions to help locate hard-to-spot leaks.
 - We are finding and fixing more leaks than ever before. Using satellites to find water leaks two metres underground, invisible to the human eye, using drone pilots to cover hard to reach places across Dartmoor and Exmoor, using detection dogs to find leaks in challenging terrain, and fixing around 2,000 leaks a month. With around 30% of leaks now typically found on customers' own properties, we have extended our offer to fix these leaks for free. We are investing £87m to reduce leakage by up 15% by 2030, enough to fill 2,600 Olympic swimming pools per year.
4. Many areas within the SWW area are reliant on tourism and therefore the appearance of their towns and green spaces, how do SWW support businesses and authorities affected by the negative impact of a hosepipe ban on the appearance of the environment?
 - The hosepipe ban/TUBs was directed at household customers, not businesses or authorities. We were however also working with many business customers to help them encourage water efficiency as we adapt to a changing climate. We understand the importance of tourism to our region, and we are determined to support the economy on which our communities rely upon. We have offered free leak repairs and water saving devices to businesses and provided grants for water saving ideas through our Innovation Fund. Mindful that we all have a role to play in using water wisely, particularly during droughts, we also reached out to non-household retailers in our region asking to work together to promote these offers to business customers.

Sewage treatment

1. What demographic forecasts are you working to in order to assess future requirements and capacity in terms of supply of water, drainage and sewerage treatment?
 - SWW has a statutory obligation to ensure that there is the necessary water and sewerage infrastructure in place to provide the required clean water and waste water levels of service to our customers. This includes that we ensure that new development does not cause a deterioration to these standards for existing customers within the region. It also has an obligation to ensure that any increase in load of sewage receives sufficient treatment to meet the permit requirements for safe release into the environment.
 - We liaise with Local Planning Authorities (LPA) to ensure that we are aware of the potential growth in our region based on Local and Neighbourhood Plans. We use this information to inform our growth forecasts along with enquiries from developers to inform our planning process. We then use these forecasts to assess whether there may be a need to increase the capacity of our clean water or wastewater networks to cope with the increase in demand. Any strategic works identified are typically included in our five-year business plan.
 - SWW publishes its Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP) and Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP). These are documents that set out how we intend to meet our service obligations for both clean water and wastewater in the future. They use population forecasts based on information from Local and Neighbourhood Plans along with other data sources such as population data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

2. How will you ensure that additional housing growth will not increase the frequency and or amount of sewage discharges?
 - New developments normally only discharge foul sewage into the public (combined) sewerage system. Their surface water should be collected separately and discharged elsewhere, for example, to natural watercourses or SUDS. However, new housing development still has the potential to impact both the frequency and volume of discharges into the environment from our overflows.
 - When we receive an enquiry from a developer, we carry out an assessment to understand the ability of the local infrastructure to cope with the extra demand. The evaluation includes a consideration of any additional impact from climate change and future changes in personal consumption. Where a risk to service is highlighted, we look to carry out a more detailed assessment using hydraulic modelling to understand the impact and to develop a solution to mitigate the risk. Delivery of these interventions is funded through the Infrastructure Charge, that we receive from developers, for the purpose of reinforcing our network to enable growth. The timing of the investment will depend on the progress of the development through the planning system which we monitor using the Annual Monitoring Reports from local councils and other sources. We work closely with developers to ensure necessary works are in place to avoid any

impact on the existing network. This might mean that we look for a timing clause at planning to achieve this.

- SWW is not currently a statutory consultee for the planning process. However, we do comment upon the LPA's local plans for strategic development and provide feedback where required on planning applications to ensure any risks to our assets are minimised, including asset protection and hydraulic capacity.

Storm water capacity

1. What is the reason storm water surges result in raw sewage outflows, what is the frequency of this is occurring over time (please provide a graph to show a trend), and what is being done to prevent this in the future?
 - Storm overflows (CSOs) are built into the sewer network systems so that at times of high network pressure, for example when flows are increased by heavy rainfall, they can take excess volumes of water out of the system, discharging flows to rivers or seas. This stops this flow backing up in the system and flooding into homes and businesses.
 - The vast majority of flows continue to be pumped to and treated at the sewage treatment works, it is only a very small proportion that will be released to the environment. And the discharge is highly diluted, being over 95% rainwater and surface water.
 - The answer to the question below answers the second half of this question. But also please refer to our WaterFit Live webpages, where you will find information on storm overflows, their operation and our investment plans [Bathing water quality | WaterFit Live | South West Water](#)
2. What plans do South West Water have to reduce sewerage discharges and by when?
 - Whilst CSOs were built as part of the system and we have permits from the Environment Agency to operate them, it is clear to us, from listening to our customers and communities that they want us to go further and faster in protecting and enhancing our rivers and seas and that reducing spill numbers from storm overflows should be part of this.
 - We've listened and changed our plans, accelerating our investment to reduce the average number of spills to 10 or less a year by 2040. 10 years ahead of government targets

Across the region there are 1,342 storm overflows. Of these:

- 89 have already been prioritised for action in our Waterfit programme and a further 4 on the rivers Dart and Tavy through our Green recovery programme by 2025.
- In addition, we have prioritised a further 14 in Falmouth and Sidmouth as part of an accelerated delivery programme and are proposing to prioritise a further 68 storm overflows by 2028 of the highest spillers and those near the South West's most

sensitive sites for nature and shellfish, and those close to bathing waters and where communities are particularly concerned.

- A further 662 overflows will then be prioritised for action as we implement our Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan/Waterfit 2040 Plan between now and 2040.
- The remaining 506 have an average spill rate of less than ten times per year and will be addressed over time through our ongoing maintenance programme

We recently submitted our plans for storm overflow reduction to Defra, taking us into AMP 8 and beyond. We will publish them in due course.

3. How much waste is actually dumped each time there is an alert

- We do not 'dump' sewage when a storm overflow operates. They were built as part of the network and we have permits from the Environment Agency to operate them.
- Event Duration Monitors (EDMs) are installed on all our storm overflows. They use sensors to measure the level of flow in our assets. These sensors trigger an alert to us when the level reaches the overflow point, indicating when the overflow is likely to be discharging.

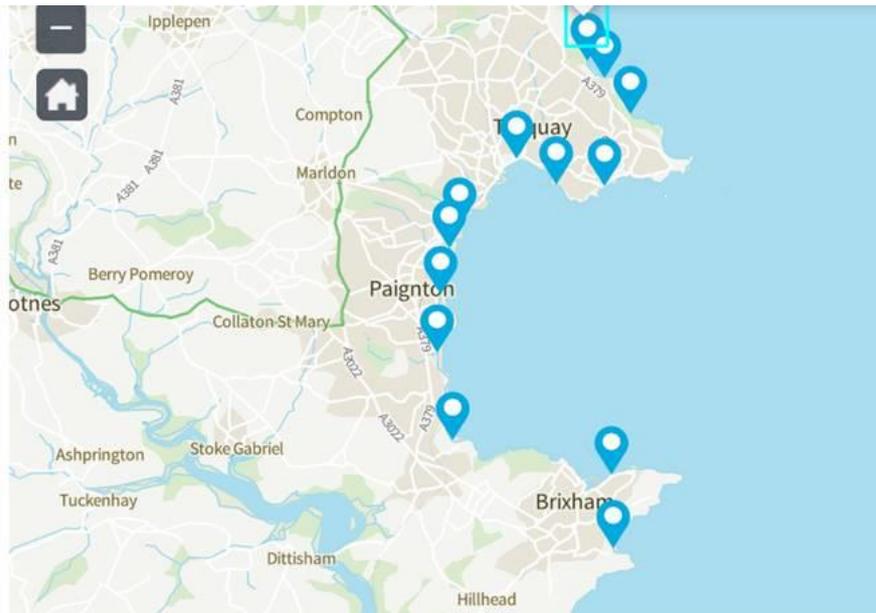
The EDM measures the start and end time of any overflow operations. Our monitors are not able to measure the quality or volume of the flow being discharged.

- Based on the information from our EDMs a BeachLive notification is sent out when an overflow event has occurred that might temporarily affect bathing water at a beach. It is not always the case that an individual discharge from a storm overflow will affect the bathing water. It will depend on factors such as duration and location of discharge, state of tide and relative size of the storm overflow.
- The process for issuing a BeachLive alert (or WaterFit Live amber pin) is rigorous and based on a mixture of specialist equipment, modelling calculations and local knowledge of the bathing water.
- It is important to note that storm overflows operate on a combined network that mixes rain and surface water with foul flows (sewage). When a storm overflow operates the flow discharged is largely rain and surface water – over 95% on average, so it is very dilute. In addition the vast majority of the flow still continues onto the sewage treatment works to be treated.

Bathing water quality

1. Please can you identify the local water quality deficiencies and the reason for them and future mitigation measures.

Bathing Waters compliance - Torbay area



Name	2022	2021	2019	2018
Anstey's Cove	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Babbacombe	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Beacon Cove	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Breakwater Beach (Shoalstone)	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Broadsands	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Goodrington	Good	Good	Sufficient	Sufficient
Hollicombe	Good	Good	Good	Good
Maidencombe	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Meadfoot	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Oddicombe	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Paignton Preston Sands	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Paignton Paignton Sands	Good	Good	Good	Good
Torre Abbey	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

Associated storm overflows at Bathing Waters and investment plans under WaterFit.

Information sourced from: [Bathing water quality](#) | [WaterFit Live](#) | [South West Water](#)

- **Ansteys Cove**

There are no storm overflows associated with this bathing water

- **Babbacombe**

Overflow Name	Spill numbers 2022	Spill numbers 2021	Spill numbers 2020
Beach Road Storm overflow Torquay	2	2	2

No investment planned under WaterFit

- **Beacon Cove**

Overflow Name	Spill numbers 2022	Spill numbers 2021	Spill numbers 2020
Beacon Hill storm overflow, Torquay	6	13	26
Fleet Walk 1 storm overflow, Torquay	15	25	18
Fleet Walk 2 storm overflow, Torquay	18	31	19
Fleet Walk pumping station overflow, Torquay	0	0	1

We have earmarked circa £200,000 of investment up to March 2025 at Beacon Cove. We are assessing data collected from the catchment area to look at how best to improve the performance of the current sewerage system.

- **Breakwater Beach (Shoalstone)**

Overflow Name	Spill numbers 2022	Spill numbers 2021	Spill numbers 2020
Berry Head storm overflow, Brixham	18	18	0

No investment planned under WaterFit

- **Broadsands**

There are no storm overflows associated with this bathing water

- **Goodrington**

Overflow Name	Spill numbers 2022	Spill numbers 2021	Spill numbers 2020
Clennon Valley pumping station overflow Outlet 1, Paignton	5	0	18
Grange Court pumping station overflow, Paignton	3	4	5

We have earmarked circa £400,000 of investment up to March 2025* at Goodrington through WaterFit

Clennon Valley storm overflow already has a large storm water tank. To further reduce discharges from storm overflows, we are looking at opportunities upstream to stop surface water, such as rainwater and groundwater, entering the network by 2025. This helps reduce

the volume of water in the network and therefore helps reduce the operation of storm overflows.

- **Hollicombe**

There are no storm overflows associated with this bathing water

- **Maidencombe**

There are no storm overflows associated with this bathing water

- **Meadfoot**

Overflow Name	Spill numbers 2022	Spill numbers 2021	Spill numbers 2020
Ilsham Road storm overflow, Torquay	2	0	0
Ilsham Valley pumping station overflow, Torquay	79	93	123

No investment planned under WaterFit. We are currently considering strategies to reduce frequency of discharges at Ilsham Valley Pumping Station however, this requires substantial investment and planning and will likely take a considerable amount of time, with investment over several business plans. It is also likely to include removing the River Fleet from our combined sewer system.

- **Oddicombe**

There are no storm overflows associated with this bathing water

- **Paignton Preston Sands**

Overflow Name	Spill numbers 2022	Spill numbers 2021	Spill numbers 2020
Churscombe Cross pumping station overflow, Marldon	11	23	22
Preston Green pumping station overflow, Paignton	4	11	29

No investment planned under WaterFit

- **Paignton Paignton Sands**

Overflow Name	Spill numbers 2022	Spill numbers 2021	Spill numbers 2020
Clennon Valley pumping station overflow Outlet 2, Paignton	5	16	12
Clennon Valley pumping station overflow Outlet 3, Paignton	24	11	0
Littlegate Road storm overflow, Paignton	4	5	8
Paignton Tank storm overflow, Paignton	4	7	6

No investment planned under WaterFit

- **Torre Abbey**

Overflow Name	Spill numbers 2022	Spill numbers 2021	Spill numbers 2020
Cockington Lane pumping station overflow 1, Torquay	0	5	6
Cockington Lane pumping station overflow 2, Torquay	1	5	Not in use
Kings Drive Penstock storm overflow, Torquay	1	2	2
Old Mill Road storm overflow, Torquay	27	21	67

No investment plans under WaterFit

2. How do SWW measure the impact of sewage discharges on our marine grasses and seahorse and other sea life?

The EA assess the health of the water environment using ecological status, chemical status, and the condition of protected sites. The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 – ‘the Water Environment Regulations 2017’ comprise up to 126 elements to be assessed. The tests are applied to rivers, lakes, estuaries, and coastal waters up to one nautical mile from shore, across 4,658 surface water bodies and 271 groundwater bodies.

Assessments of the water environment include:

- ecological status
- chemical status
- groundwater status
- bathing, shellfish, and drinking water protected areas status
- protected nature site condition

SWW do not monitor environmental water quality. SWW’s environmental permits to discharge do however require us to undertake monthly sampling on the quality of the final effluent to ensure that the limits stated within the permit are met. This data is analysed and used to assess treatment stability at the site, the probability of failure across each sanitary parameter and thereby used to prioritise investment.

In addition we measure the daily volumes discharged to ensure that we maintain compliance with the permit limits and use this data to assess when expansion may be required to accommodate catchment growth

Representations from members of the public to South West Water

Why does my water taste so disgusting that I have to filter it before I can even make a cup of tea? And don't even bother to tell me my kettle needs descaling because it's done regularly. And the drainage system needs a complete overhaul due to them not coping in bad weather as when it rains the drain lids raise under the sheer pressure. And why in this day and age are they allowed to keep polluting our beaches and sea water. When the whole system needs overhauling instead of lining the big wigs pockets they need to seriously upgrade the system

Relating to sewerage discharge into Torbay.

- 1 How frequent has sewage discharge happen this over the last year?
- 2 What are the mitigation proposals and it what time frame will these be done?
- 3 Cost implications for business and residential users water bills?
- 4 Torbay is a tourist destination is our council able to fine SWW for detrimental effects to the tourist industry?
- 5 How many councillors have significant shares in SWW (Pennon Group), we all may have a few due to customer share allocation offer earlier, I have!

Future proofing water supplies and drainage:

- 6 Are SWW expanding supplies and drainage to match the planned expansion of Torbay, housing and businesses?
 - 7 How much does water supply and drainage capacity influence planning decisions?
 - 8 How much of the Torbay water and sewerage infrastructure needs replacing?
 - 9 What is the time frame for completing this work?
 - 10 Has all the lead piping for domestic and business users finally been replaced?
-

As a resident of Torbay I am concerned with the effectiveness and efficiency of South West Water (SWW) and the health and well being of myself, friends and family.

Their mission statement: "to be a preeminent operator in business areas of water and sewerage to ensure the hallmark on quality, efficiency and reliability to meet the three key goals of satisfying customers, enhancing the environment, adding value for shareholders, employers and the regional community." SSW Vision for 2020-2050 (Source South West Water business plan "Water Future our vision 2020-2025") Exec summary: "Providing a first-class, innovative, efficient, affordable and resilient service which supports and enhances the communities we serve remains the priority".

Regular alerts are being issued by both SWW (Waterfit live) and via the Safer Seas App in relation to overflow discharges into beaches and seas around the SW Coast. I am concerned in particular with reports regarding my local beaches and waters used by the residents and tourist population. My main local beach of use is Meadfoot Beach in Torbay. This I use for swimming and above water activities. It is also used by my family and friends. I have written to SSW on a number of occasions seeking reassurance regarding the cleanliness of these waters for myself, my friends and family and in relation to the marine life and the local environment/economy.

As a recent example; on the morning of Monday 25th September 2023 SSW Waterfit live and Safer Seas reported a sewerage discharge alert at 01.00 am. The advice therefore was not to bathe that morning. Meadfoot beach was the only beach in Torbay, indeed in the southern part of

Devon with such an alert. I have been informed by SSW that discharges are not made into Meadfoot beach and any discharges flow out through Hopes Nose.

Potential questions to SSW at overview and scrutiny committee meeting:

Why does Meadfoot beach have so many alerts when SSW are advising us that they do not discharge into Meadfoot beach but to Hopes Nose?

How many overflow discharges have been made year to date in Torbay? How many discharges (and associated alerts) specifically affecting Meadfoot Beach this year to date?

Does SSW have plans to meet with the local community and Council officers to discuss Health and well being concerns regarding bathing waters? – I and my fellow swimmers would like this to happen prior to Christmas.

I understand the Environment Agency (EA) tests the water at Meadfoot beach twice monthly during the summer months. What happens the remainder of the year? Would SSW/EA provide water testing equipment to a group of local people to test the water themselves (overseen by a chartered scientist for example) as the waters are used all year round?

I pay amongst the highest charges for our water in the Country. I do not feel we get value for money (referencing SSW vision of efficiency, affordability, resilience.) We have had a hosepipe ban this year for many months and are often advised against swimming in local waters due to health alerts. I therefore feel we are not receiving the service for which we are paying both in terms of water supply and water treatment. I understand that SSW have plans to invest in sewer improvements but want customers to pay for this – can you elaborate on the rationale for this if that is the case?

Thank you for your consideration in this matter and I look forward to seeing the agenda and minutes of the meeting.

I live in Merritt Flats Totnes Road

I would like to know why a water leak on Totnes Road was left for four months! In that time there were two traffic accidents because of it! When the workmen did eventually come they thought that it had only just happened and it was an emergency call out. They had to turn the water off several times that day and every time my water tank emptied. I then received a big water bill because of this and I'm now paying for water that I didn't get to use!

When I questioned this they just said it's the meter reading and that's it! It didn't matter that my tank had emptied several times and then refilled!

SWW have indicated that they have increases Water storage capability by c.12 % in 2023. By 2025 SWW will increase Water resources by c. 30%. The use of the words Storage & Resources are at odds. What does that mean? What it does not explain is that Devon is the second largest County in England. What % of water goes where? In other words we need to know a % increase regionally.

SWW have a Watch dog . They are known as CCW The Consumer Council for Water. They are there to monitor Customers complaints. CCW currently do not function in that capacity. In other words they do not appear to Mediate between Customer and SWW. No responses have been received by myself for six months! I have written to Ofwat in recent days regarding this scenario. Without CCW Residents are at the mercy of SWW Service Levels !

This needs to change.

Over the past six years treated effluent has rise dramatically.
I am led to believe that Fisheries within The Bay have been affected. In addition, Scottish Gas have assisted in Planting Seagrass to counter balance the Water quality.
These discharges are monitored by whom?

During the Summer period, areas of Torbay were subject to Water Pressure reductions. In all instances Residents were not informed of said reductions. The issue with WP reductions is the unknown! Residents are concerned that Appliances would be affected in particular Boilers. Needless financial costs were incurred by householders. I did contact SWW who indicated that Residents are not informed in these circumstances due to Pressures being higher than the minimum! The more likely reason is Old Pipework Infrastructure. That information was told to me by a SWW employee! It is no coincidence that more leaks are repaired than ever before!

We're pleased to read that Torbay Council will be meeting with South West Water, which will give 'Torbay Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board [an] opportunity to discuss issues of concern with South West Water'.

Note: Comments regarding smells have been removed and will be picked up as part of ongoing investigation.

The discharges into the sea are another issue of concern. Living by the coast next to a blue flag beach has been tainted by spells of pollution caused by South West Water. Thinking about the impact this has on people's health (mental and physical), the wildlife, and our planet - these spillages are a disgrace, and have to stop. This is another matter of urgency.

On top of these two crucial criticisms, there has been a hosepipe ban running throughout the year. When you can't swim in the sea, and can't even fill up a paddling pool in your own bad smelling garden, South West Water becomes very unpopular.

We continue to pay our bills to South West Water, and are getting the worst service of any company I've experienced in my life.

Please can South West Water take responsibility. Please can South West Water make things better.

Please can South West Water do the right thing.

I write to express concerns about the water and sewage systems in Goodrington, Paignton and hope you can raise these issues at the meeting with SWW on the 5th of October.

As you are most likely aware, Dartmouth Road is frequently being closed temporarily due to repairs being required to water pipes. As one of the major thoroughfares connecting the towns of Torbay this causes major traffic jams and delays which in turn is off putting to tourists and both costly and inconvenient for local residents. For example, the last time it happened I did not get to a dental appointment in time but still had to pay. I have asked a workman what the problem is and was told that the pipes are not fit for purpose due to their age and the pipes need to be replaced not simply repaired. Otherwise these road closures will continue to happen.

Note: Comments regarding smells have been removed and will be picked up as part of ongoing investigation.

I was delighted to read that you were going to meet with SWW to hold them to account for the lack of investment in upgrading the water and sewage systems and I hope that you are able to insist on improvements in Goodrington and across Torbay.

I am a regular swimmer in the sea around Torbay. It is a necessary part of my routine for health, physical and mental.

I am dismayed by the decline in water quality and sewage discharge regularly uncovered and reported.

The mental health benefits of swimming are now lost as I'm constantly thinking - is the sea water really clean?

Secondly who is policing the cruise ships' and their discharges that now frequent our waters?

South West Water have an appalling record. I won't swim in the sea, especially at Meadfoot Beach, it's disgusting. They have a job to do. If they can't do it, then they need to be re nationalised. The profits they have given to their shareholders should have been ploughed into ensuring that they do that they can do their job and process sewage effectively and efficiently. They must be held fully to account, please do so.

Meadfoot Beach apparently has a Blue Flag status, yet according to data published by the Safer Seas and Rivers Service it has had 40 sewage pollution alerts following discharge from SWW pipes in 2023 so far!! Can SWW please confirm;

- if this statistic is correct?
- exactly where the sewage is being discharged (i.e. at what location is the outfall pipe)?

- and most importantly, what are they doing in this beautiful location to stop this unacceptable and unnecessary pollution getting into the sea?

I moved to the Wellswood area in April this year and have taken up sea swimming by joining a local club, but I am regularly prevented from enjoying this activity as a result of SWW's flagrant disregard for our environment.

We have been renting a Beach Hut at Meadfoot for many years but have become increasingly concerned about the number of sewage pollution alerts for this beach. The only way we can obtain information about water quality at this beach is via the Surfers Against Sewage web site. Meadfoot is the closest beach to the sewage overflow outlet at Hopes Nose so therefore it is the quickest to get affected by pollution. On September the 10th this year in the early hours of the morning storm sewage was discharged from the sewer overflow after heavy rains during a thunderstorm but by morning it turned out to be a glorious day. Families were flocking to Meadfoot unaware of what was in the sea. Dozens of children and adults were swimming and playing in the water. There was no warning notice or a red flag flying to alert people of the situation. Although the sea looked fairly clear who knows what nasty bugs were lurking in the water. There is a small notice board with a letter advising people not to bath for 24hrs after heavy rain but I feel this was not enough warning as the notice board itself is too small and most people walk past it without seeing it. A Sewage overflow outlet should not be used in this day and age. As I am writing this email the water company has temporarily disabled real -time alerts at Meadfoot which it has done so for many days, so is the water safe? Paignton Sands is now showing a pollution alert.

I am a local resident in Wellswood and enjoy the stunning beauty of our blue flag Meadfoot beach virtually daily, either by sea swimming, walking on the beach or by spending time at Meadfoot Cafe. I often socialise with others who swim all year round and the beach provides a Haven for people to relax and enhance mental well-being. My daughter who is 14 also loves swimming at Meadfoot and this has been an important part of her physical rehabilitation following visits and surgery led by Great Ormond Street relating to her leg over the past 8/9 years. Needless to say the wildlife, seals, cormorants, shags, oyster catchers and other marine life is a pleasure to have on our doorstep and I do believe the council also has a moral duty to protect our local wildlife natural habitats as far as it can.

I'm really disheartened about the frequency of sewage discharges at Meadfoot Beach lately and I find this completely unacceptable (another one has occurred today). I would welcome an understanding of your awareness of this situation and what you as my local councillors and the council in general are doing to monitor and challenge South West Water on the frequency of sewage discharges at Meadfoot and indeed their rationale for such frequency. I would also welcome the council's understanding and assessment of the environmental impact of these frequent discharges.

I'm hoping you can assist in raising this matter through the appropriate channels so we are all confident that such occurrences are kept to a minimum and there is a high level of scrutiny and challenge towards SWW to ensure our wonderful environment remains protected.

- How many discharges into the sea has there been in the Torbay Local Authority so far in 2023?
 - How many per discharge location?
 - What is the justification for discharge even in fair weather conditions (i.e. not during storm or significant rainfalls)?
 - What is SWW trajectory to reduce discharge per location in the bay and is it meeting these targets?
 - Why are real time alerts frequently turned off for Meadfoot at present. Has there been any discharges during these periods?
-

Why are there sewage outflows when we have dry weather conditions - this happened a number of times early in the year.

As the Ilsham water treatment outflow point is situated at Hope's Nose - has the flow of sewage been tracked to show exactly which beaches are affected. I ask this as on occasions an alert from Safer Seas will show Meadfoot as receiving sewage yet Anstey's, Oddicombe and Babbacombe are clean. Can SW water clarify how this can be correct.

What is the timeframe for sewage outflows to cease?

How can the council hold SW water to account for their actions ?

Torbay Strategic Planning questions for SWW

Background:

To support the review of the Torbay Local Plan 2012-2030, which will roll forward the time horizon to 2040, Torbay Council commissioned an update of the previous Sewer Capacity Study (2014) to provide suitable evidence base. The updated Torbay Sewer Capacity Assessment (SCA) (May 2023), consisted of hydraulic modelling to predict the effects of population growth, urban creep, climate change and water efficiency improvements on the Torbay sewer network.

Overall, the SCA suggests the sewer network will face substantial challenges due to increased sea level rise and rainfall, urban creep and population growth (modelled as 300 dwellings per year).

Predicted combined sewer overflows and sewer flooding have been indicated by 2040. The majority of this detriment is as a result of climate change and a very small proportion is caused by the predicted population growth combined with urban creep throughout Torbay. The report suggests there will be a 10% increase in combined sewer overflows (CSOs) by 2040 as a result of more rainfall due to climate change. There is an additional 1% increase in CSOs predicted due to a combination of the modelled level of population growth and urban creep from the existing built areas.

Natural England have advised that the Lyme Bay and Torbay Marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC) target is to maintain/improve water quality. SACs are protected areas designated through UK regulations to conserve habitats and species. The predicted increase in CSOs is likely to decrease water quality in this protected area, in contrast to the target set out by Natural England. This designated SAC covers all of the waters in and around Torbay.

The predicted 1% increase in CSOs as a result of future population growth and urban creep will have implications in terms of delivering this growth in Torbay. The Council must assess plans or projects under the Habitats Regulations, known as a habitats regulations assessment (HRA), to test if a plan or proposal (i.e. proposed growth levels) could significantly harm the designated features of a SAC. This work will be carried out at a later point to inform decisions about future growth plans for Torbay. There will be an assessment of what mitigations are achievable and appropriate to offset the increase so that the growth does not result in the increased CSOs predicted. The Council already requires strict adherence to the surface water disposal hierarchy for new development.

We have been advised that the reduction in surface water entering the system required to mitigate climate change will be significant and it is unlikely that nature based solutions alone will create sufficient capacity in the system. New development should achieve the appropriate level of drainage mitigation (incorporating additional capacity to deal with climate change and 'creep'). However some urban regeneration schemes, permitted development and existing urban creep, alongside climate change indicate pressures on the sewer network.

Question:

How do SWW plan to mitigate the predicted increase in CSOs and sewer flooding shown in the recently prepared SCA model, particularly as a result of climate change? Please provide any details of planned infrastructure improvements and programmes to adapt to climate change and at least reduce the occurrences of these events.

The Council needs a good understanding of these infrastructure plans and their delivery. Assurance is needed to understand 'what' improvements are planned and also the 'how' they will be delivered with the associated timeframes. The Council will need reliable and detailed information to ensure suitable adaptation measures are in place and that the mitigations are appropriate to support the HRA.