

## **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

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### **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?
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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 25<sup>th</sup> 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.

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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!

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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!

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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.

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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 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

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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?

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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.

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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)?
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- 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.

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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.

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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.

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- 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?
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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 ?

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