



Huw Merriman MP

Date: 24 August 2022

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Dear Huw,

Thank you for your letter of 23 August in which you have asked further questions relating to the incident at Bexhill. We will send you the answers to your questions in advance of your meeting with my colleagues on Friday.

Further to my holding letter of 19 August, below are the details of last week's thunderstorms and heavy rain for each of the constituencies affected.

We saw significant rainfall starting on the 16th August, when storms built up around our Hampshire region, leading to around 38mm of rain falling in a 24-hour period, around a 1 in 10-year storm. Rainfall ramped up considerably on the 17th August, with the greatest impacts seen in East Sussex and in Central / West Kent which resulted in further significant rainfall falling on dry compacted ground, where we observed rainfall totals of around 40-50mm in total in short intense bursts, equivalent to a 1 in a 100-year storm.

We had predicted the intensity of rainfall and, with one exception, our systems worked as designed, resulting in storm overflows to protect homes and local businesses from flooding. The exception was Galley Hill Wastewater Pumping Station (WPS), to the west of Hastings, which suffered from electrical failure of its switchgear. This was due to a defective earth impedance loop, which removed the protection from the transformers. Our initial indication is that this protection device, which is in place to prevent fire under fault conditions, failed due to Hydrogen Sulphide damage.

This incident saw an emergency discharge of unscreened storm water onto the beach at Bexhill lasting 151 minutes. This was run as an emergency incident, in line with our established protocols with the local Council and the Environment Agency kept informed throughout. The local team working with the Energy Distribution Network Operator (UKPN) restored power and brought in additional temporary generation and we have rectified the issue. We have completed our beach inspections, and whilst we found very little sewage litter, we ensured any litter we found was safely removed. Beaches were closed from Bexhill Beach to Normans Bay from the morning of 18th August to the morning of 20th August.

Additionally, the Environment Agency provided separate advice against bathing for the neighbouring Hastings Pelham Beach from 15th August, in relation to a Pollution Risk Forecasts due to rainfall and not because of a Southern Water Discharge. The intense rainfall also caused releases from surface water systems carrying road run-off and not connected to the sewage network. One such release was at Seaford which the media wrongly characterised as a sewer overflow. We sought to correct this wherever possible.

The table below highlights those discharges made on 17th August and their compliance to agreed permit conditions. Where we have recorded a potential non-compliance in Leysdown and East Dean this is still to be confirmed with the Environment Agency.

With regard to East Dean Wastewater Treatment Works (WTW) – as part of our planned maintenance we are replacing the secondary treatment process at this site. In agreement with the Environment Agency, during this maintenance, all wastewater is being tankered offsite. In advance of the expected rainfall we had doubled the numbers of tankers, but given the intense nature of the rainfall this proved insufficient.

With regard to Mustards Road Wastewater Pumping Station (WPS) - the screens became blocked during the storm. We are replacing the screens this year for a more resilient set of screens to prevent reoccurrence.

County	CSO	Bathing Water	Nature of the Discharge
Sussex	EASTBOURNE WTW	EASTBOURNE, PEVENSEY BAY	Compliant Storm Discharge
IOW	TERMINUS ROAD COWES CSO	COWES, GURNARD	Compliant Storm Discharge
Kent	RANGE ROAD HYTHE K WPS	HYTHE, SANDGATE	Compliant Storm Discharge
Kent	GRANVILLE PARADE SANDGATE WPS	FOLKESTONE, SANDGATE	Compliant Storm Discharge
Sussex	MARINE DRIVE BRIGHTON WPS	SALTDEAN	Compliant Storm Discharge
Kent	FOLKESTONE JUNCTION WPS	FOLKESTONE	Compliant Storm Discharge
IOW	APPLEY PARK RYDE TRANSFER WPS	COWES, RYDE	Compliant Storm Discharge
IOW	LUCCOMBE WPS	SHANKLIN, VENTNOR	Compliant Storm Discharge
IOW	LION POINT VENTNOR WPS	VENTNOR	Compliant Storm Discharge
IOW	HOPE BEACH SHANKLIN NEW WPS	SANDOWN, SHANKLIN, YAVERLAND	Compliant Storm Discharge
IOW	SANDOWN NEW WTW	SANDOWN, WHITECLIFF BAY, YAVERLAND	Compliant Storm Discharge
Kent	SOUTH STREET QUEENBOROUGH WPS	SHEERNESS	Compliant Storm Discharge
Sussex	EAST DEAN WTW	EAST DEAN SSO	Potential Non Compliant Screened Discharge
Kent	MUSTARDS ROAD LEYSDOWN ON SEA WPS	MUSTARDS ROAD LEYSDOWN ON SEA CEO	Potential Non Compliant Screened Discharge
Sussex	GALLEY HILL BEXHILL WPS	GALLEY HILL BEXHILL EMO	Emergency Discharge

It is worth noting the higher number of discharges from the Isle of Wight. Our innovative pathfinder work there seeks to significantly reduce surface water in foul sewers in a partnership approach with the local council and other stakeholders, to reduce storm overflow events.

Storm overflows are a necessary part of the combined sewer system, protecting homes, businesses, and roads from flooding when the system becomes overwhelmed, or suffers a technical failure. Although storm overflows are regulated and permitted by the Environment Agency, we want to significantly reduce their use across our region by 2030. If we were to turn off storm overflows immediately and without mitigation, during the next heavy rainfall, the network would become overwhelmed in several areas with nowhere for the wastewater to go. It would therefore back up into people's homes and onto roads, causing major flooding and pollution for the community. To prevent this from happening, we need to separate surface water from our system, which requires multi-billion-pound investment, cross-industry partnerships and will take years to achieve.

Our dedicated [Storm Overflow Task Force](#) are taking action now however, to be a catalyst for change across the industry. But, we need support from regulators and the government to make this possible. We've set ambitious targets to significantly reduce storm overflows and through our own innovative [pathfinder](#) projects, we are exploring ways to prevent surface water entering our network and/or slow the flow of water within catchments. We fully supported Defra's [consultation](#) on the Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan, which is due to be published in September. We hope this will legislate for us to act at pace.

We'd love the opportunity to discuss our proposals with you further. If you are interested, please let me know and I'll arrange a meeting with the task force.

We are also investing £2bn between 2020 and 2025 to improve our operational performance. This is equivalent to £1,000 for each property in our region.

It includes:

- £15m to upgrade our control centres
- £20m to upgrade our wastewater pumping stations
- £35m to install 22,000 monitors to enable a proactive digital network
- £517 million to improve our bathing waters and 537km of rivers - 80 out of our 84 of our beaches are now rated either 'good' or 'excellent' – we have none classed as poor
- £72 million between now and 2025 to improve local water quality in and around Chichester, Langstone and Pagham harbours

The funding also means that we can create jobs across the region and contribute as a local employer.

Yours sincerely,



Lawrence Gosden
Chief Executive Officer

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