

PORTREATH PARISH COUNCIL 29 JULY 2024

Overview – South West Water’s performance

The last year, the weather has been both our friend and our foe.

With 10 named storms and 12 yellow weather warnings since September, it is a sobering statistic that 5 of the 10 wettest February’s have been in the last five years, and with average rainfall increasing by 50% when compared to long term averages in the second half of the year. On one hand with more rainfall, we have been able to break the back of the drought in Cornwall we experienced in 2022, and in doing what we said we would by achieving 100% strategic reservoir capacity for Devon and Cornwall by April, ahead of target.

The significantly increased wastewater flows have also impacted our headline performance for wastewater pollutions and the use of storm overflows, with rising groundwater levels and increasing flows into the network. Historically, 70% of our pollutions have occurred in our networks. The work we have done over the last few years is working, with performance stabilising. We are achieving sector-leading internal sewer flooding performance, outperforming regulatory targets for sewer collapses and blockages and maintaining the gains we have made previously in reducing network pollutions.

Turning to the 20% increase in flows we have seen in 2023; we are focused on infiltration work. We have redoubled efforts at both our treatment works and pumping stations, where the higher levels of flows have driven spikes in performance. By reinvigorating action plans, our treatment works performance has recovered from the degradation we saw last year, stabilising performance into 2024, with a combination of inlet and storm tank cleansing and risk-based generator servicing, site-based compliance, reedbed surveys and refurbishments. Efforts have now turned to the 1,250 pumping stations, with improved site MOTs, and enhanced cleansing as well as tackling power resilience.

We are clear and transparent about where we are, and over time, we have improved self-reporting of pollutions incidents, and now are one of the best in the sector.

As we focus on improving 49 of 151 beaches through our WaterFit investment programme by 2025, WaterFit Live is giving communities and visitors to the region near real time information about their favourite beach, alongside community roadshows, as we place communities at the heart of our future plans. Portreath is one of those.

Investments

By 2030, we will have tackled all storm overflows at our bathing beaches, shellfish waters and high-spilling sites given the importance of tourism to our region. In the meantime, and to restore confidence in our bathing waters, we will implement a first-of-its-kind monitoring regime so everyone can feel they can enjoy being in the water at their favourite beach. We are implementing our “Green First” approach to investment, working with nature to improve drainage and reduce storm overflows.

Investing in our strategic priorities:

- 2,732m³ of storage increases
- £213.6m of total investment in wastewater

In our South West Water 2025-2030 business plan, we're set to tackle the challenges that matter most in our region head on, with progress already underway.

We plan to invest £2.8 billion in water quality and resilience, with a pledge to fix storm overflows at beaches and eradicate pollutions, whilst delivering on our Net Zero 2030 Promise to The Planet. Our robust balance sheet underpins our ambition.

This plan will create over 2,000 jobs in our communities, alongside our plan for 1,000 apprenticeships and graduates. At the same time, we will do more with less, as we drive efficiency and innovation, with a nature first principle, keeping unwelcome bill increases as low as possible.

We have tested our plan with thousands of customers, and they are confident this is the right deal for right now.

With the South West being the destination for quality water, there are rising expectations of our network and assets – and whilst we have made some improvements, we clearly have more to do.

As a responsible business, and with 100% monitoring on our storm overflows, a year ahead of plan, we understand why people are upset about sewage in the seas and rivers. They are right to demand this gets sorted out.

We also acknowledge that we have lost the trust of the public and our customers as a result of sewage, pollutions and the use of storm overflows. It's our job to fix that. This plan is the right plan for right now, in fact it is the right deal for right now. It is the most ambitious plan we have ever had.

We have a new and strengthened Executive Team that alongside the c.3,000 dedicated employees, who also live and work in the region, are clear that our priority is to ensure there is an uninterrupted water supply with high quality drinking water and effective wastewater services.

It means that when one of our 3.5 million customers turns on the tap or flushes the loo, from Bristol to Bournemouth, Devon, Cornwall or the Isles of Scilly, it works. In the summer months, given we are the UK's most visited tourist attraction outside of London, our services scale up to 10 million as visitors come to the region.

Running a water company is effectively operating a water recycling system for the region. We take in rain; store it; treat it to make it safe, and distribute it to households and businesses. We collect it once used, with water draining from roofs, pavements and roads, clean it and release it back into the environment, where it travels to the sea – and then the cycle is repeated. As it makes its way through the landscape, our networks, and rivers we work hard to ensure that water continues to provide healthy habitats for wildlife and recreational spaces.

Running a water company is a privilege, given customers can't choose their provider. Our New Deal sought to achieve a first in the sector – to change the nature of the relationship customers had with their local water company, putting them in control, building a socially responsible business model where the ownership is unquestioned. In the space of three years, we have achieved something never seen before with c.90,000 customers, four times the number of institutional shareholders, now having a direct say in how South West Water is run. This is the equivalent of 1 in 14 households in the South West.

It also means in the run up to developing this business plan, we have never had more feedback or direct engagement with customers. We have engaged directly with over 30,000 customers and 1,000 stakeholders in our research to develop our plan – with over 250,000 customers engaged in the last two years across the business. Whether at one of our frequent WaterShare+ public meetings, our AGM, the ‘Your Water, Your Say’ sessions, or community meetings.

If you look beneath the headlines, we have already been focused on tackling the biggest challenges head on for our region, being fleet of foot to respond. Underpinning this has been our ongoing financial resilience and strong balance sheet, supported by year on year increases in outperformance.

Pledges for the next five years on water quality:

- Tackling storm overflows and pollution through major investment in bathing beaches and our wastewater network
- Complete the storm overflow investment programme in 15 years – a full 10 years ahead of targets
- Tackle every beach by 2030 – ensuring bathing water quality is maintained all year round
- Assess 100% of storm overflow solutions using the principle of ‘Green First’ – so that nature-based solutions are considered from the outset Increase the volumes of wastewater treated from 97% to 98.5% by 2030
- Deliver the lowest pollution levels in sector, with zero serious pollutions

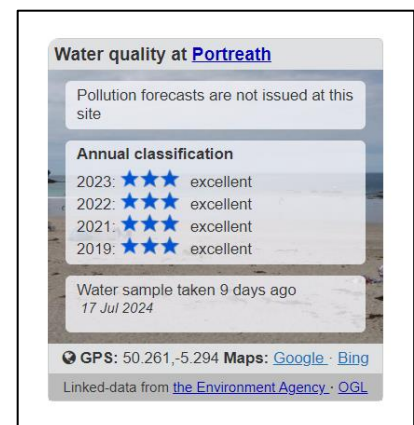
By 2030, two decades ahead of governmental mandates, we pledge to have tackled the use of storm overflows at our bathing and shellfish waters. Our approach blends nature-based and engineering solutions, coupled with comprehensive water monitoring and sampling programme, to rebuild trust in our communities. What’s more, our ambitious journey will create local job opportunities, bolstering the region’s economy.

Portreath

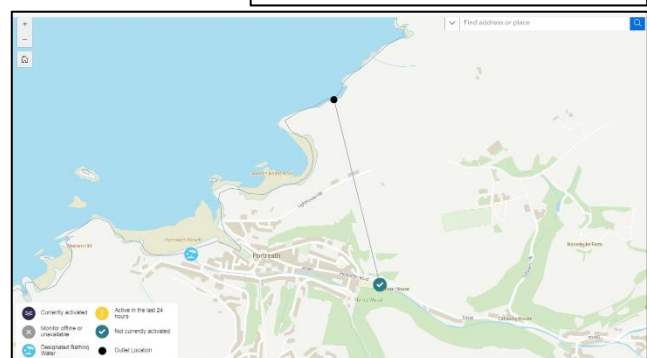
South West Water acknowledge there has been storm overflow activity at Portreath. This has been permitted by the Environment Agency due to frequent localised rainfall recently, which has seen surface water entering and overwhelming the sewer network.

The Bridge Sewage Pumping Station outfall is located c.1.16km northeast of the bathing water (picture below). The prevailing wind direction is south westerly and so the wind advection of any discharge would be away from the bathing water. The changing tides also do not have an impact on the bathing water quality at this beach. The Environment Agency results prove this.

The bathing water classification, as classified by the Environment Agency, was rated ‘Excellent’ in 2023. It has been rated ‘Excellent’ at Portreath since 2015.



Year	Classification
2023	★★★★ excellent
2022	★★★★ excellent
2021	★★★★ excellent
2019	★★★★ excellent



The Environment Agency has increased sampling here for 2024. Of the 10 samples taken so far this year, all have met '*Excellent*' bathing water standards.

We are actively reducing the use of storm overflows with strong investments across the region, and this includes around £150,000 of investment in Portreath by March 2025 to reduce environmental impact from our sewerage network, and to contribute towards improving bathing water quality.

The £150,000 that will be spent to reduce groundwater infiltration – this is where groundwater is entering the combined sewers through manholes or joints in the pipework as well as misconnections from streams and land drains. This is what we have found to be the worst contributor to storm overflow activation in Portreath.

In order to fix it, we will first use flow monitor data, and our knowledge of the area, to identify target areas. Then, we will send a CCTV camera down the sewers in that area to see what's going on inside the pipes. Where we find water entering the sewers, we will arrange repairs which can include lining or patching the pipe or sealing manholes via spray techniques. This is a phased solution, so as repairs are made, we will still be monitoring to see where further repairs or improvements are needed to reduce this infiltration more and more. We will be prioritising the worst infiltration first.

There are other works that may be needed, and the £150,000 will be increased if necessary. Depending on what our investigations report, we may need to divert land drains and watercourses away from our sewerage system to decrease the risk of infiltration.

By targeting and tailoring our investment in this way, we can remain cost-effective whilst significantly reducing storm overflow activation in the area.

Whilst understanding the community concerns regarding the frequency of operation of the storm overflow the pumping station is being maintained and operated in accordance with its EA permit.