

Stakeholder Newsletter



from
Southern
Water® 

My first six months as CEO have seen Southern Water face a number of challenges in terms of drought, extreme weather and increased media scrutiny, which have reinforced my commitment to improve our performance.



These events have further highlighted the fact that the environment and our customers are at the forefront of everything we do.

My commitment to customers **is that we're taking action to significantly strengthen our environmental performance** by:

- investing a further £2 billion (c.£1,000 per household) between 2020–25 to significantly reduce leakage on our network and the overall volume of pollutions.
- reducing pollution by 40% this year-to-date and committing to reduce 80% of our pollution incidents over the next three years, while maintaining industry-leading levels of self-reporting.
- delivering an ambitious turnaround of our Environmental Performance Assessment (EPA) ratings, moving from a one-star company to achieving a three or four-star (out of 4) position by 2025.

We know that any untreated wastewater going into our seas and rivers is unacceptable. Storm overflows are part of the network's design and are regulated by the Environment Agency. Fundamental changes will require clear policies and funding from Government and regulators. We are:

- investing significantly in building our network and treatment capacity, improving the resilience of the system and putting 21,000 sensors in our sewers to prevent flooding and pollution.

- working with Defra and our partners to deliver on the recent Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan, meeting these tough targets through a combination of increasing storage capacity and reducing the rain run-off entering the sewer network e.g. sustainable drainage systems for schools and school rain gardens.
- leading our industry on monitoring and reporting – transparency is key to reducing the use of storm overflows and constantly improving water quality – using Beachbuoy, our 24/7 near real-time reporting service. We also have a pilot in place for live water quality monitoring, a first of its kind.
- testing ways of further reducing overflow in our network by diverting rainwater back to the environment in sustainable ways. Our pathfinder projects will be implemented across the region over the next two years. With plans to scale up the most effective e.g. Isle of Wight smart water butts.

Our customers should be reassured that **we're making investments where they're needed most. We have not paid external dividends to shareholders since 2017 and bonus payments to our executive are linked to clear environmental and customer service improvement progress.** Detailed information about how much is paid out is published annually in our Annual Report and Financial Statements.

It's a busy time for our colleagues, and I'm proud to be leading them as CEO. Every day our teams work tirelessly for our customers and for our communities. I hope you'll see from the stories here, the programmes we're undertaking to place the environment and customers at the forefront of everything we do

Thank you,

Lawrence Gosden,
Chief Executive Officer, Southern Water

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Your feedback matters

Let us know what you thought of this issue. Please email:
Stakeholderteam@southernwater.co.uk

Wastewater

Reducing storm overflows

We think untreated wastewater going into rivers and seas is unacceptable and we're working hard at finding solutions to reduce the use of storm overflows.

Storm overflows are part of the sewer network's design and are regulated by the Environment Agency. When it rains storm overflows stop homes, businesses and roads from flooding.

The discharges from storm overflows are heavily diluted – up to 95% rainwater – and are monitored through Event Duration Monitors (EDMs) at 98.5% of our storm overflows.

Through cross-industry partnerships across our region we are finding new and innovative solutions to managing this issue through pathfinder projects.

Our annual bathing season update provides details of improvements to our Beachbuoy tool and new water monitoring technology, alongside open data on the numbers of storm overflows during the 2022 bathing season. View here at southernwater.co.uk/BathingWaterUpdate.

You can find out more about the Clean Rivers and Seas Task Force and our pathfinders at southernwater.co.uk/CleanRiversAndSeas.



Havenstreet, Isle of Wight

Havenstreet is a small inland village of 4,000 people on the Isle of Wight. It's situated within a nationally designated Area of Outstanding National Beauty and UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

The village is served by a combined sewer system, which accepts wastewater from properties but also rainwater from highway gulleys and roofs.

When it rains, the pumping station at the bottom of the village becomes overwhelmed by the flows and the storm overflow discharges into the Blackbridge Book, a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest).

We collaborated with the Parish Council to:

- **Offer every property a free, slow-draining water butt to capture rainwater from roofs while still allowing water use in gardens. More than 72% of homeowners took up this offer. These water butts capture over 14 tonnes of rainwater from the system every time it rains.**
- **Identify areas with impermeable surfaces and sent a brochure to home and landowners setting out a variety of interventions to slow the flow including soakaways and planters. This had a 100% uptake.**
- **Divert flow from the council's highway gulleys to soakaways and permeable land. This had an additional benefit of reducing internal property flooding**
- **Removing the connection from a rainwater drain from the wastewater sewer after conducting a risk assessment with the Environment Agency to ensure the water did not need treating.**

There has been no discharge since the interventions were implemented despite significant rainfall events.



Slow-draining water butts capture rainwater from roofs while still allowing water use in gardens.

Wastewater

£1.6 million SuDS in Schools project

Nearly 50 schools across our region are participating in a new project to help to slow the flow of rainwater into our sewer systems.

The schools are using rain harvesting and nature-based solutions like rain gardens and green roofs to remove or slow the flow of excess surface water runoff from hard surfaces such as playgrounds, car parks and roofs.

Developing these Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in schools will help to reduce excess surface water entering our overloaded combined sewer systems, one of the main causes of floods, poor water quality and spills in our waterways.

Meanwhile, more greenspaces in the schools will be good for wildlife as well as the health and wellbeing of the schoolchildren. The children will learn about water and wastewater issues that affect their local environments, including misuse of the sewers and water-saving measures.

The scheme, which began in October 2022, will run until April 2023, and is jointly funded with the Department for Education. This is the first time we have run a large-scale programme of this kind in schools, and we hope to repeat it in future years.



Digitalising our network

As part of our digitalisation programme, we are rolling out 22,000 sensors on our wastewater network to detect weaknesses or blockages as early as possible to reduce pollution.

We have already seen fewer pollution incidents compared to last year. At the end of 2021, we also introduced a pollution prevention desk in our control centre which proactively monitors the network looking for anything that could lead to a possible pollution event 24/7.

Tackling blockages

Sewer blockages can cause flooding, adding further costs and lost earnings for local businesses.

Our Local Area Catchment blockage reduction programme sends out letters and visits hot spots speaking to customers, lifting manholes to find blockages and carrying out sewer flushing.

We also distribute 'gunk pots' that help people to store and dispose of their unwanted fat, oils and grease, rather than putting it down the drain. Last year we reached 10,000 properties in nine blockage hotspot areas, talking to more than 4,000 customers on their doorsteps.

For more information on how to prevent blockages visit southernwater.co.uk/KeptItClear.



Water

Planning for new developments

New developments are popping up all over our region. While we support the Government’s efforts to tackle the housing crisis and of the development of new homes, we’re working with developers to make sure they are built in a sustainable way and use water as efficiently as possible.

To make faster progress on key challenges facing the region we’ve developed a number of policy asks, such as a requirement that water companies are statutory consultees on planning applications which we’re putting to Government.



If agreed we could make sure any risks to water and wastewater infrastructure are mitigated ahead of new housing development.

We also have a Sustainable Development Policy which sets out our key priorities for new developments wanting to connect to our water and wastewater systems.



Water Resource Management Plan

We’re currently consulting on our draft Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP), which outlines the actions we need to take to secure a resilient water future for our customers and the environment.

We face big challenges. Population growth, the impact of climate change and the pressing need to leave more water in the environment to protect and improve it for future generations means we must find new ways of securing high-quality water supplies.

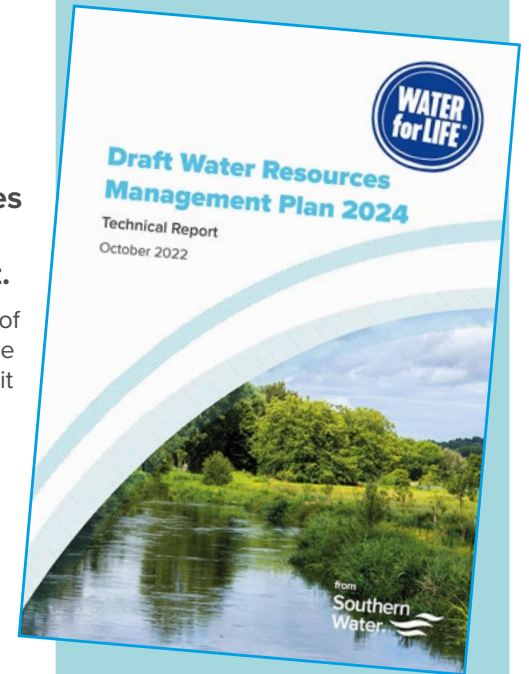
We’re keeping our ambitious target to halve leakage by 2050 and supporting our customers to become even more water efficient through Target 100.

We’ll also investigate how we can work with nature – using catchment-based solutions to improve the resilience of our sources, increase biodiversity and enhance our natural capital.

Longer-term, we’ve identified a significant investment programme in new infrastructure to secure Water for Life for the future. This includes working with Portsmouth Water on Havant Thicket reservoir and the water recycling and transfer project we’ve identified through our Water for Life – Hampshire programme.

We’ll also be investing in water recycling around our region, desalination plants in Kent and Sussex, building a new reservoir near Henfield in West Sussex and enhancing how we move water around our region. In the future, we could also receive a significant amount of water from Thames Water through a new strategic pipeline.

Our consultation is open until February 2023. Read more at southernwater.co.uk/WRMP and have your say.



With a growing population, the impacts of climate change and less water available in the natural environment, we must find new ways of securing high quality water supplies.

Water

Water resources plan for the South East

Alongside our WRMP, Water Resources South East (WRSE) is consulting on its draft regional plan for water resources.

WRSE is an alliance of the six water companies serving South East England, working with regulators, stakeholders and large water-using sectors to develop a best-value plan for water resources.

Working collaboratively this way allowed us to identify schemes using water other water companies and from outside our region, as well as opportunities to work with water-using sectors to make better use of the water we already have.

The draft regional plan includes ambitious reductions in leakage and consumption and outlines a significant long-term investment programme to futureproof our region's water supplies.

WRSE is consulting on its draft plan until February next year. To read more, visit: wrse.org.uk.



We're also halving leakage by 2050 and we're investing in teams and technology to help us achieve this with 250 leaks being repaired each week.

Water resilience

We live in a water scarce area. This year we brought in a temporary usage ban (commonly called a hosepipe ban) in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to reduce the demand on the River Test and River Itchen.

River levels were impacted by a significant shortage of rainfall since October 2021 and recent prolonged dry and hot weather. Despite the heavy rain during autumn, river and reservoir levels have not yet fully recovered.

We're bringing forward plans to use water recycling – which speeds up the natural water cycle – to address future shortfalls. You can find out more about water recycling at southernwater.co.uk/WaterRecycling.

We're also halving leakage by 2050 and we're investing in teams and technology to help us achieve this with 250 leaks being repaired each week. Reducing consumer demand is also key.

Target 100 is our education programme designed to help our customers to reduce their own water consumption to 100 litres per day. Together let's hit **Target 100** find out more at southernwater.co.uk/Target100.



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