

Councillor Zoe Nicholson (Leader)
Councillor Stephen Gauntlett (Cabinet
Member)
Lewes District Council
Southover House
Southover Road
Lewes BN7 1AB

Date: 28 October 2022

By email to Sarah.Lawrence@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Dear Cllrs Zoe Nicholson and Stephen Gauntlett

Thank you for letting me know, through Sarah Lawrence's email of 10 October 2022, that you would like further clarification of our response to your request:

“that the Environment Agency issue a position statement in relation to Lewes District, which sets out your understanding of the cumulative impact of 800+ sewage discharge on our rivers, or set out the reasons if this is not possible.”

It is difficult to isolate particular impacts relating to foul sewer storm overflows alone or in combination because of their being so many variables to take into account such as the intensity and distribution of rainfall over time and the amount of dilution available in the receiving water. Put this together with surface water storm overflows and other pollution sources such as from fully treated sewage discharges, road run-off and agricultural diffuse pollution and it becomes very difficult to isolate the impact of foul sewer storm overflows alone.

Our approach to understanding what is holding rivers, lakes, groundwater and marine areas back from reaching good ecological status is to look in detail at the quality of the water environment and analyse causes. The published information for [Lewes District](#) reveals a wide range of issues and causes and we are working through these, with partners, landowners and the water industry as resources allow.

The approach taken in England regarding storm overflows is to look at the frequency of spills and prioritise these for remedial action. This is the basis of the Government's £50billion [Storm Overflow Reduction Plan](#) which seeks to reduce average spills from storm overflows to 10 each year. Environmental risk levels will help prioritise this work with the most sensitive and highest risk sites being prioritised first. As a result of our influence, Southern Water has committed to going further and faster with their planned reduction in spills than other water companies, committing to an 80% reduction by 2030 (see page 36 of the plan).

When permitting new discharges to the water environment, we consider their cumulative effects and the likely dilution into the receiving water. Our expectation is that discharges

Environment Agency

Pevensey Office, Coast Road, Pevensey Bay, East Sussex, BN24 6ND
Telephone: 02084745684

customer service line 03708 506 506
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will occur in compliance with permits – and if not, we have a range of options to bring the operator into compliance (please see our first letter of 03 October 2022). Our approach to permitting discharges is further explained [here](#).

I hope that this clarifies our response to your request.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M Turner", with a horizontal line underneath.

MICHAEL TURNER
Area Environment Manager
Solent & South Downs

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Pevensey Office, Coast Road, Pevensey Bay, East Sussex, BN24 6ND
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