



Sarah Bentley
Chief Executive Officer
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Clearwater Court
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Dear Sarah

Wednesday 12 October 2022

As you will know, following periods of heavy rainfall in August, parts of England saw surface water flooding which brought the issue of sewage discharge into sharp focus once again.

The River Cherwell is a much-loved stretch of water that flows through my constituency rising in Northamptonshire and ending in Oxford. Many of us locally, including my own family, enjoy bathing in the river and its waterways. My constituents and I are all understandably concerned about what is being done to safeguard our river and limit sewage discharge into it.

The Government's recently introduced storm overflows discharge reduction plan sets stringent new targets to protect people and the environment. Through the passage of the landmark Environment Act last year, we also placed a commitment to deliver a resilient and sustainable water supply, and significantly reduce the frequency and volume of discharges from storm overflows, on a statutory footing.

As you will know, some of the new duties placed on water companies include:

- a legal requirement to make progressive reductions in the adverse impacts of storm overflows;
- a legal requirement to monitor the water quality upstream and downstream of storm overflows and sewage disposal works;
- a legal requirement directly on water companies and the Environment Agency to publish data on storm overflow operation on an annual basis;
- a legal requirement directly on water companies to publish near real time information - within one hour- on the operation of storm overflows.

The Government has been clear that while storm overflows are necessary to avoid sewage backing up in our streets, water companies should work towards ending their reliance on them. While I welcome the huge progress that has been made so far there is still more work to be done.

I wondered whether it might be possible to set up a meeting to discuss this issue in further detail and understand what work Thames Water is doing to deliver on the new duties placed on water companies.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Victoria Prentis