

From: <[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information] gov.scot
Sent: 31 January 2023 17:05
To: <[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot
Subject: FW: Untreated Human Waste in Scottish Waters - MiCase ref: 202300338769 (Case Ref: WR2953)

Thanks [redacted] – I've made a few minor changes.

If you didn't already, can you share the redrafted reply (including my changes) with [redacted] given SEPA's role here to check [redacted] is content with the response. Subject to that, it's good to go thanks.

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information] Scottish Government | 3F South | Victoria Quay | Edinburgh | EH6 6QQ | 0131 244

From: <[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot
Sent: 31 January 2023 15:35
To: <[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot
Subject: FW: Untreated Human Waste in Scottish Waters - MiCase ref: 202300338769 (Case Ref: WR2953)

Hi [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information],

Please see standard lines used for the above MiCase below, with the latest update information from SW and the original correspondence for your information. Grateful, if you can please let me know, if this is okay to send to private office.

Many thanks,

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

Lines used:

Thank you for your further email of 13 January 2023 on behalf of your constituent regarding sewage spills-

Your constituent has raised concerns with bacterial levels in the sea at West Sands and the type of treatment deployed at the local Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW).—In terms of UV treatment, Scottish Water currently uses this at a small number of WwTW's to meet microbiological conditions set out in their discharge authorisations issued by SEPA. Of the 15 current WwTW with UV treatment and microbiological licence conditions, 40% apply all year round and 60% are only applicable during the bathing season (May to September). Microbiological licence requirements are determined based on the uses of the identified water and are set by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency

(SEPA). Normally this means bathing season compliance for discharges to designated bathing waters and annual compliance for discharges to Shellfish Waters. Further information is available in SEPA's Regulatory Method for [Microbial Discharges](#). I can confirm that the bathing waters at St Andrews (both East Sands and West Sands) was classified last season as 'Excellent' ([Bathing Waters : Summary of last season \(sepa.org.uk\)](#)).

Your constituent also expressed concerns over Scottish Water's support of planning applications for large housing developments and the impact on sewers due to the intensity of rain increasing with climate change. Scottish Water has a statutory duty to support the continued sustainable economic growth of communities across Scotland whilst balancing their duty to protect existing customers from any detrimental impact of new development. It undertakes this duty by working with a variety of external partners such as planning authorities and landowners to ensure proposed developments can be serviced by existing Scottish Water infrastructure.

Scottish Water inputs to the preparation of Fife Council's development plans as a Key Agency and is consulted in planning applications by Fife Council. Whilst there may be no formal objections lodged by Scottish Water to planning applications, this does not mean that an applicant has an automatic right to connect to the public networks. Scottish Water has a formal consenting process which all developers must follow to obtain the necessary consents to discharge into the public network. Scottish Water operates on a 'no detriment' approach to new developments, and this means that any new developments connecting to the public drainage network must not result in any additional detriment to the existing network or customers. This means that Scottish Water will not permit development connections where new flooding impacts, or increases to existing flooding impacts, are highlighted through hydraulic modelling to occur.

Within St Andrews, there have been standalone Drainage Impact Assessments carried out for individual developments with associated mitigations installed by developers and Scottish Water conducted a Strategic Drainage Impact Assessment of the St Andrews drainage catchment in 2020 which they intend to update in 2023. This strategic study does include the domestic strategic growth areas Fife Council identified within their Local Development Plan and Housing Land Audit. One of the main solutions identified in the strategic modelling was the ability to remove surface water – from roofs and roads drainage - which currently drains into the existing combined sewer system - by separating this and conveying through new surface water assets. The removal of surface water has a dual benefit of creating capacity for foul drainage discharge into the combined network from new proposed developments and reducing the likelihood of sewer flooding from the combined network at times of intense storm events. Scottish Water is working with the University of St Andrews to ensure this surface water separation occurs and in January 2023, it has committed £2.5 million investment towards this work, which will allow both the continued expansion of St Andrews while protecting the existing community from additional flood risk.

Scottish Water will continue to work with all parties involved in development within St Andrews to make sure that development can happen without any additional detrimental impact to the existing network or customers."

[redacted – rest of email chain out with scope of request as not official communication]

.....

Mairi McAllan MSP
Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform
Scottish Government, St. Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh

EH1 3DG

13 January 2023

Our Ref: WR2953

Dear Mairi

Re: Untreated Human Waste in Scottish Waters

Thank you for your previous correspondence regarding the release of untreated human waste into Scotland's waters.

I have had the opportunity to discuss your response with one of my constituents and there are issues which require further clarification.

My constituent is concerned about high bacterial levels in the sea at West Sands in St Andrews. They have raised concerns directly with Scottish Water and have been advised that they use UV during bathing water season, as per regulatory obligations. My constituent is seeking clarity as to why this treatment is not used all year round as beaches are used throughout the year for swimming and other sports.

My constituent tells me that Scottish Water has supported planning applications for very large housing developments and a 750 bed hall of residence. They are concerned as the sewers cannot cope with the rain at present and the intensity of rain will increase with climate change.

I would be very grateful if you could investigate the issues raised and provide a response that I can share with my constituent.

Yours sincerely
Willie

Willie Rennie
Liberal Democrat Member of the Scottish Parliament for North East Fife

Dear All

For awareness I had a closer look at the Lib Dems claims and I think they're worth further investigation with SW and SEPA.

Alex Cole-Hamilton stated the following at FMQ's yesterday: *"In addition, new Liberal Democrat research that we are publishing today reveals more than **400 sewage dumps** in the vicinity of some of Scotland's best beaches last year. From Peterhead to St Andrews, those award-winning beaches should be protected and pristine. They draw tourists, families and wild swimmers, but, like so many other things on the First Minister's desk right now, this absolutely stinks".*

https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-27-04-2023?meeting=15264&iob=130201#orscontributions_M5815E414P750C2486145

The Scotsman article stated the following at the start *"Figures revealed by the Scottish Liberal Democrats show sewage was discharged for a "staggering" 483 hours near **Peterhead Lido, totalling 337** separate sewage dumps onto the beach"*.

[More than 400 sewage dumps took place in vicinity of Scotland's best beaches last year | The Scotsman](#). Similarly, the Daily Record stated, *"And new Liberal Democrat analysis of last year's [Scottish Water](#) data has uncovered at least **411 times** where sewage spewed onto prize-winning shores."* [Sewage dumped on Scotland's most popular beaches over 400 times last year - Daily Record](#)

Checking SW spill data the 337 sewage spills quoted by the SLDs were from Peterhead WWTW Short sea outfall CSO at the sewage works. The aerial view below shows that Peterhead WWTW Short sea outfall CSO does not discharge onto the beach or anywhere near it and would not impact on bathing water quality from that location. As Peterhead Lido is classified by SEPA as 'excellent' for bathing water quality.

That only leaves another 74 unaccounted spills out of the 411 quoted.

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]



From: <[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot >

Sent: 28 April 2023 07:22

To: Rathjen J (Jon) <Jon.Rathjen@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Environmental Quality and Resilience <DDEQR@gov.scot>

Cc: <[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot >; <[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot >; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot

Subject: FMQ note - sewage spills

DD colleagues

I've added a couple of bullets to the FMQ note under monitoring in response to points raised by Alex Cole Hamilton both in recent tweets and yesterday at FMQs about the relatively low number of monitors in Scotland compared to England, consequent under-reporting of spills and scale of the issue. ACH cited research showing spills near beaches which he singled out as needing particular protection, given local amenity, tourism etc. There was nothing particularly new, and the note

otherwise covers the relevant points. Sorry to add to what is already a pretty lengthy note, however in light of a PQ from ACH in similar terms asking about the data held on monitor's operation the additional info is relevant. Brief already has lines on broad approach, the fact that SW operates under regulatory license etc which all have a bearing in the fuller picture, bathing waters etc so I think otherwise there's enough here. FM responded to points raised by ACH in the Parliament that he would raise the matter personally with Scottish Water, which may be a good opportunity for a refreshed presentation from AW about progress against Scottish Water's Improving urban Waters Routemap and related work on RBMP3 in the context of the first annual update of the Routemap published at the turn of the year.

Are you content with changes?

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

Yes, I just responded, just setting out the full UK Water press release with a little background as to what stimulated it, the response of the UK Gov and explaining further detail not yet available but will be in the summer. Apologies, should have copied you – you could follow up with the finalised FMQ note I suppose, or does DG already get that

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot

From: <[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot >

Sent: 22 May 2023 10:14

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot >; <[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot >

Cc: Deputy Director Environmental Quality and Resilience <DDEQR@gov.scot>; <[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot >; <[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot >; <[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot >; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Rathjen J (Jon) <Jon.Rathjen@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: Sewage pollution - Water UK announcement - Thursday 18th May - briefing asap

Hi [redacted and [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

Are you aware of the request for Roy, below, and leading on the response?

Thanks

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

Roy

You asked for an update on last week's announcement in relation to sewage spills in England.

I attach the Press Release issued by Water UK on 18th May – in essence an apology on behalf of English water companies - in response to public pressure on the issue over the last year - for not tackling the issue of sewage spills more effectively, and outlining in high-level terms increased investment of @£10bn between now and 2020 to reduce spills, provide more storage as a mitigation against waste water treatment works being overwhelmed, and increase treatment capacity.

Further detail including on how these additional commitments are to be funded is not yet available but is expected in the summer with the publication of the trailed National Overflows Plan jointly by the English Water companies – it has been suggested that customer bills are likely to be affected with Anglian Water suggesting that could be by up to around £100 annually. Unsurprisingly, this has been very poorly received by campaigners. I have set out below the response of the UK Gov and Environment Agency to Water UK's announcement.

We'll continue to liaise with Scottish Water (who are members of Water UK) on further detail as it emerges and consider any implications for Scotland, and our lines to take, but at this stage remain of the view that what has been announced is reflected in action that has either already been taken in Scotland or where plans are already in place.

In response to Water UK's apology, Water Minister Rebecca Pow said:

This apology by the water industry is not before time and I welcome it.

The government has put the strictest targets ever on water companies to reduce sewage pollution and demanded that water companies deliver their largest ever infrastructure investment - £56 billion. I am pleased that they are now taking action to deliver on this - but there is still a great deal more to do.

We have asked companies for action plans on every storm overflow to ensure deliverability and expect all overflows to be monitored by the end of this year.

Alan Lovell, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

I welcome the commitments today by Water UK and the wider industry as they work to rebuild public trust, particularly on sewage discharges.

It is right that the industry is honest, accountable and shows the tangible steps it is taking to drive the improvements that we all want to see.

Now we want to see action and a clear plan for delivery. The Environment Agency will be working closely with them to ensure this happens.

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Berge K (Kersti)
Sent: 22 May 2023 09:30
To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Sewage pollution - Water UK announcement - Thursday 18th May
Importance: High

Morning [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

Could you organise Roy's ask below please?

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** DG Net Zero
Sent: 22 May 2023 09:22
To: Berge K (Kersti) <Kersti.Berge@gov.scot>; Director of Environment & Forestry
<director.enfor@gov.scot>
Cc: DG Net Zero <DGNetZero@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Sewage pollution - Water UK announcement - Thursday 18th May

Good Morning,

Roy has requested to see the latest update and background on the Sewage pollution issue that was raised on Thursday.

Grateful if this can be sent over to the DGNZ mailbox as soon as possible.

Kind Regards,

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

[redacted – rest of email chain out of scope of request – not official communications]

1. Water and sewage companies in England apologise for sewage spills and launch massive transformation programme

- £10 billion – more than triple current levels – ready to be invested in a new National Overflows Plan, enabling the biggest modernisation of sewers since the Victorian era, and the most ambitious programme on sewage spills in the world.
- A new Environmental hub, launching next year, will for the first time give everyone near real-time information on overflows, as well as the state of our rivers and coastal waters.
- Companies will also support up to 100 communities to create new protected waters for swimming and recreation.

Water and sewage companies in England have today apologised for not acting quickly enough on sewage spills. To put things right, industry plans to make the largest ever investment in storm overflows as part of a major programme to reduce spills into rivers and seas. In addition, a new national environmental hub with information on all 15,000 overflows in the country will increase transparency and allow the public to hold companies to account.

The industry's plan includes the following three commitments:

1. Accelerating progress

We are today confirming companies' readiness to invest what is needed to deliver the ambition set out in the Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan. This could involve additional funding of £10 billion this decade, more

than tripling (and adding to) current levels of investment of £3.1bn 2020-25. If approved by regulators, we expect that, by 2030, through this initial wave of investment will aim to cut sewage overflows by up to 140,000 each year compared to the level in 2020. This will kick-off the first wave of a massive transformation programme across 350,000 miles of sewer (a length that would stretch 14 times round the world).

Water companies across the country will aim to:

- Install the equivalent of thousands of new Olympic swimming pools to hold surges in rainwater that would otherwise overload the system;
- Increase the capacity of sewage treatment works, allowing them to treat higher volumes of rainfall and sewage;
- Replace concrete with grass and ponds to reduce rainfall run-off entering sewers, protecting them against the overloading that causes spills;
- Treat overflow spills so they have much less impact on the river, including through reed beds, wetlands and other nature-friendly projects; and
- Improve the sewer network by enlarging and improving pipes, allowing them to safely carry more sewage during peak times, and fixing misconnected pipes from properties.

A detailed National Overflows Plan will be published later this summer, explaining each companies' approach to improving their overflows. This

will include when improvements can be expected, and (as projects are developed) how improvements will be delivered and the expected results. For the first time, communities across the country will be able to find out exactly when overflows in their area will be improved and be able to hold their water and sewerage company to account.

2. More transparency to improve accountability

Water and sewage companies will collaborate on creating, by this time next year, a new independently-overseen National Environment Data Hub to provide the public with up-to-date information on the operation of all 15,000 sewage overflows in England. For the first time in the world, any member of the public will be able to get national 'near real time' (within the hour) information on what is happening, building on the requirement on individual companies set out in the Government's world-leading Environment Act. This will strengthen accountability, help the public to track progress and empower swimmers and others with the information they need. In addition, as thousands of new river quality monitors come online (planned to be installed from 2025 onwards), this additional data will also be added to the Hub to let people see the real-world impact on rivers.

3. Supporting new bathing rivers

Water and sewage companies will help up to 100 communities interested in protecting rivers and other outdoor areas of water (like lakes and reservoirs) for the purpose of swimming and recreation. Each water and sewerage company in England will also support the roll-out of new river

swimming areas, by providing help to up to 100 communities to test the water, draw up plans, apply for legal protection, and work with regulators to fix local sources of pollution. Industry will also develop guidance and toolkits and support citizen scientists to help local groups navigate what can be a burdensome process.

Ruth Kelly, Chair of Water UK, said: *“The message from the water and sewage industry today is clear: we are sorry. More should have been done to address the issue of spillages sooner and the public is right to be upset about the current quality of our rivers and beaches. We have listened and have an unprecedented plan to start to put it right. This problem cannot be fixed overnight, but we are determined to do everything we can to transform our rivers and seas in the way we all want to see.”*

Ends

Notes to Editors

Water UK is a membership body representing the water industry.

Its [members](#) include all water and wastewater companies across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Within England, Water UK’s members comprise companies that only provide water (WOCs or Water Only Companies) and those that provide both water and sewage services (WASCs).

Contacts

Comms@water.org.uk, 020 7344 1805

Hi [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information],

Yes, I believe that's the last time we had a case from SOSLeith, happy for you to use it all. If you want general lines on CSOs etc..we've been using the following:

The Scottish Government takes the issue of pollution incidents very seriously and recognises that any sewage pollution is unsightly and can have negative implications for public health and the environment. However, it is not accurate to refer to spills from Combined Sewer Overflows(CSOs) as sewage spills and it is not the case that spills will always cause pollution incidents. CSOs are an integral part of a sewerage network, designed to spill highly diluted sewage to the environment to avoid overloading the sewer system and causing it to back up and flood homes and businesses during periods of intense rain. What is spilled is largely rain water as the toilet sewage element is typically less than 1% of the total volume. CSOs must be licensed by SEPA, and any unsatisfactory discharges will be identified so that Scottish Water can invest to reduce the environmental impact.

Scotland's rivers, lochs and coastal waters are world renowned and SEPA classifies 66% in overall good ecological condition. This is compared to England where only 16% are in good condition or the average across Europe at around 45%. For water quality alone, SEPA classifies 87% of our water environment as having 'good' water quality and last year 98% of Scotland's bathing waters passed stringent environmental standards. Scotland's River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) have measures in place to achieve 92% 'good' water quality by 2027.

Scottish Water is committed to protecting Scotland's urban waters and will continue to work in partnership with the Scottish Government, SEPA, local authorities, customers and others to this end. Scottish Water has published an "improving urban waters routemap" to outline how it will continue to invest in order to improve Scotland's water environment. Scottish Water has already invested £880 million between 2010-2021 to meet environmental quality drivers and this routemap commits up to a further £470 million during the regulatory period 2021-27.

Whilst continuing to invest in sewerage networks, it will also be necessary to ensure that rainwater is not drained to sewer. The improving urban waters routemap recognises the steps that Scottish Water needs to take in the face of increasingly extreme weather resulting from climate change and the impact that this has on an ageing sewer system. The plans will enable Scottish Water to target investment in improving its monitoring, reporting performance and upgrading the worst performing CSOs across the network. The first annual update to the routemap was published in December 2022 and further information is available at <https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/help-and-resources/document-hub/key-publications/urban-waters-improvements>.

Thanks,

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Sent: Friday, June 23, 2023 8:58 AM

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Subject: Water of Leith: Foysol Choudhury MSP response

Hi [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

I'm drafting a response to Foysol Choudhury MSP about the following that he raised in Parliament last week.

- 'A recent marine conservation report noted that only 4% of Scotland's sewage discharge points are monitored. The overspilling of sewage and recent heavy rainfall have left the water in Leith potentially dangerous. Residents have no idea the impact this is having on their health and on the environment.
- Will the Cabinet Secretary also commit to having the water in Leith tested by a public body so that the residents can know the condition of their water?'

Is this MiCase - View Case 337701 the most recent correspondence you've dealt with on the matter of SOSLeith (ie is it up to date?).

I note that the FMQ currently has the following updated lines that I'll add.

WATER OF LEITH

Scottish Water has confirmed that 24 Unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) that discharge into the Water of Leith have been assessed as High Priority by Scottish Water and are in the solution development phase.

- The former Minister for Environment and Land Reform wrote to local MSP, Ben McPherson responding to SaveOurShore Leith's concerns.

I note only one CSO out of the 24 is prioritised due to impacts on water quality, where the majority are for significant SRD.

In the past I've also highlighted Scottish Water's previous £7.5 million Water of Leith project improvement work to various CSOs at 14 locations along or near the Water of Leith ([Water of Leith - Scottish Water](#)). Work started in July 2020 and overall the combined projects are now complete. The work included the installation of new pipework, chambers and screens to reduce the risk of sewage related debris entering the Water of Leith and will minimise spills, improve the aesthetics and reduce the environmental impact of storm overflows on the river.

Are you content for me to use all the information as I think we have a strong positive narrative or is there anything else?

Thanks

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Sent: Tuesday, January 24, 2023 12:22 PM

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Subject: SOSLeith letter and reply

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]– as discussed – I think we (or at least me) should meet them when they next meet Scottish Water, they raise a lot of issues repeatedly, and many unanswerable questions and ~I think a more involved response would be helpful here, to provide assurance of SG priority but also to explore some of the questions they pose about information etc

I'll run this past SW as well.

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

Thanks [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information].

And apologies, I forgot to forward the letters we received! Attached now.

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Sent: 24 January 2023 11:23

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: Letter from Councillor Grant Laing, Leader of Perth and Kinross Council

Hi [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

For awareness, here is the letter (attached) from Perth and Kinross Council to the Minister requesting that the Scottish Government:

1. Instruct SEPA to introduce an overall weight limit on the amount of phosphorous permitted to be deposited into Loch Leven. SG already sets an environmental standard for phosphorus through Directions to SEPA as an annual mean total phosphorus concentration ($\mu\text{g/l}$) for RBMP. See graph below:

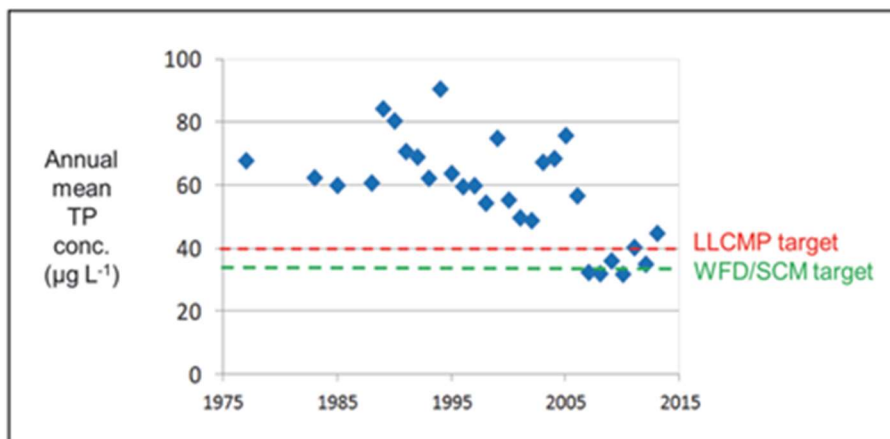


Figure 1. Annual mean total phosphorus (TP) concentration in Loch Leven, 1976-2015; the Loch Leven Catchment Management Plan (LLCMP) target (LLCMP, 1999) is shown in red and the current Water Framework Directive and Site Condition Monitoring (WFD/SCM) target is shown in green.

2. Instruct SEPA to introduce tighter controls to stop Scottish Water depositing untreated sewage into Loch Leven and to ensure that any such overspill events are recorded and reported. The minute from the most recent Catchment Management Group meeting (attached) notes: “SEPA re-iterated that both Kinross and Milnathort WWTWs are operating well below their discharge consent limits of 3mg/l for Kinross and 2mg/l for Milnathort. Their average discharge was ~ 0.5mg/l. Noted that the amount of P entering the loch is a function not only of the concentration but also the population equivalent entering the system. Renewed call for re-visiting the original loading limits for the loch set in 1999 at the time of the Loch Leven catchment plan (see attached meeting note of August 2020)”. See above re RBMP

environmental standard. At the meeting between councillors and SW/SEPA on 6 December it was explained that the storm overflow discharges from Kinross and Milnathort WwTWS are not untreated, ie they are SSSOs, and that spills are monitored and recorded. Recent SEPA inspections on the sewer network indicated that there were no signs of frequent discharges from CSOs and EOs further up the network. SEPA, along with Scottish Water, is due to feed back to local councillors with full details on monitoring of all CSOs and EOs at its next meeting scheduled for April. Again we have the UKCEH independent report to reference regarding source apportionment.

I'll share the draft.

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Sent: 23 January 2023 17:26

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: Letter from Councillor Grant Laing, Leader of Perth and Kinross Council

Hi [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information], please see attached, grateful if you could draft a response. Could you also get it added to micase.

Many thanks,

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Sent: 23 January 2023 17:04

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: Letter from Councillor Grant Laing, Leader of Perth and Kinross Council

For you I think rather than for me!

Any views on the below? Would be good to know for our own understanding (given this was front page of The Times on Saturday)

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

From: Alice Robertson

Sent: Thursday, August 31, 2023 6:02 PM

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Jon Rathjen <Jon.Rathjen@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Environmental Quality and Resilience <DDEQR@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; <[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero & Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZeroandRuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Media query (Times - follow-up) - CSOs - SRD - MCS

I've sent this up given the time, but (as I was re-reading the query and our response) I don't really understand why we haven't addressed the Marine Conservation Society statistic that Scottish beaches had "an average of 88.2 items of sewage-related debris per 100 metres. This compared to an average of 9.1 and 10.7 items per 100m on English and Welsh beaches respectively."

That is such a huge disparity that we must be able to offer some explanation as to why? Are we confident in the MCS data? Is it to do with tidal patterns? Or (by not offering any alternative explanation) are we conceding the point that this is all down to the fact that Scots flush x10 more sewage-related debris than their counterparts in England & Wales and so x10 the amount ends up on Scottish beaches?

Which, given patterns of behaviour are largely the same across the UK, doesn't seem quite right.

So what is the driver behind the disparity?

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Sent: Thursday, August 31, 2023 4:06 PM

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Jon Rathjen <Jon.Rathjen@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Environmental Quality and Resilience <DDEQR@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero & Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZeroandRuralAffairs@gov.scot>; Alice Robertson <Alice.Robertson@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Media query (Times - follow-up) - CSOs - SRD - MCS

Apologies [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]. [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]– could you add a comparison to first line please if possible? And if not, as per my previous email, give me a line I can include in my email setting out why this isn't possible as I'm sure Cab Sec will raise it.

Some tweaks having discussed with Alice. I'll need to get this sent up promptly now so grateful for any further views soonest

Thanks a lot

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

A Scottish Government spokesperson said:

“Scotland’s rivers and coastal waters are already rigorously monitored by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. This monitoring shows 87% of them are classed as having ‘high’ or ‘good’ water quality – [\[comparison to E&W here\]](#)”

“Overflows from sewers normally consist of around 99% rainwater and less than 1% toilet waste. To prevent blockages and overflows, the most important action that can be taken is to reduce the amount of inappropriate items such as wet wipes, fats and oils that are flushed away. We all need to be more careful about what we flush, and we are supporting Scottish Water’s ‘Nature Calls’ campaign highlighting the impact of inappropriately-flushed items and the damage they cause to our environment.

“Scottish Water is also committing up to £500m to improve water quality, increase monitoring of the highest priority waters and tackle debris and spills.”

Background

87% of waterbodies in Scotland are assessed by SEPA as having ‘high’ or ‘good’ water quality, up from 82% six years ago.

Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are an integral part of a sewage network, designed to spill highly-diluted sewage to the environment to avoid overloading the sewer system and causing it to back up and flood homes and businesses during periods of intense rainfall.

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Sent: Thursday, August 31, 2023 3:42 PM

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Jon Rathjen <Jon.Rathjen@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Environmental Quality and Resilience <DDEQR@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Media query (Times - follow-up) - CSOs - SRD - MCS

Hi [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

I don't hold water quality numbers – we need to ask [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information] and [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information] for those.

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Sent: 31 August 2023 15:28

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Jon Rathjen <Jon.Rathjen@gov.scot>; D[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Environmental Quality and Resilience <DDEQR@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Media query (Times - follow-up) - CSOs - SRD - MCS

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information] – is there anything we can say that compares water quality with that in E&W? She will definitely come back to ask for that to be included.

If not can you give me a line pls explaining why we can't do that, to anticipate that?
thanks

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

Sent: Thursday, August 31, 2023 2:45 PM

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Jon Rathjen <Jon.Rathjen@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Environmental Quality and Resilience <DDEQR@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Media query (Times - follow-up) - CSOs - SRD - MCS

OK thanks [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]. I've combined your suggestion below with a bit of what we used the other night highlighting that SW are campaigning on this.

If everyone is OK with this I will check with Leanne

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

A Scottish Government spokesperson said:

“Scotland’s rivers and coastal waters are in good health – 87% of waterbodies are assessed by SEPA as having ‘high’ or ‘good’ water quality, up from 82% six years ago.

“These assessments are produced on an environment-wide basis using several criteria to produce an overall health classification. Increased monitoring of overflows from sewers – which normally consist of 99% rainwater and less than 1% toilet waste – would therefore make no difference to these assessments.

“We do recognise that sewage related debris is an issue in Scotland, and Scottish Water is currently committing up to £500m to improve its network.”

“However, much of the problem stems from consumers flushing away inappropriate items such as wet wipes, fats and oils which block up sewers causing flooding. We all need to be more careful about what we flush, and we are supporting Scottish Water’s ‘Nature Calls’ campaign highlighting the impact of inappropriately-flushed items and the damage they cause to our environment.”

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Sent: Thursday, August 31, 2023 2:12 PM

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Jon Rathjen <Jon.Rathjen@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Environmental Quality and Resilience <DDEQR@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Media query (Times - follow-up) - CSOs - SRD - MCS

Hi [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

We need to provide a line on the SRD question specifically in my view. Morag has already provided a note that sets out the position in relation to SRD which confirms MCS’ observations. So, there is little point trying to refute or try and defend the position as one that is acceptable.

How about:

- Scotland does have a problem with Sewer Related Debris as highlighted by the Marine Conservation Society. Much of this comes from consumers flushing away inappropriate items such as wet wipes, fats, oils etc which block up sewers causing flooding and the pollution of rivers, burns and beaches. Scottish Water reports that there are some 30,000 blockages every year that are a direct consequence of this behaviour. Whilst Scottish Water is investing in Scotland’s sewerage system, consumers need to play their part.

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Sent: 31 August 2023 13:49

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Jon Rathjen <Jon.Rathjen@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Environmental Quality and Resilience <DDEQR@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Media query (Times - follow-up) - CSOs - SRD - MCS

Not really for me but just from an observer perspective, I wonder whether you want to swap your stats around so you lead with 'over 99% rainwater' rather than 'less than 1% toilet waste'? Just a thought.

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Sent: Thursday, August 31, 2023 1:29 PM

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Jon Rathjen <Jon.Rathjen@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Environmental Quality and Resilience <DDEQR@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Media query (Times - follow-up) - CSOs - SRD - MCS

All, further to this, as a starter for ten. Pressure is on here to keep lines short (c.100 words is the preference and this is already 140)

However I would just note that Cab Sec specifically asked for a line expressing that our performance is outstripping the rest of the UK (or words to that effect). So if we don't include that, we'll need to be prepared to explain why we're not as she'll ask for it.

Grateful for views

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

A Scottish Government spokesperson said:

“Scotland’s rivers and coastal waters are in good health – 87% of waterbodies are assessed by SEPA as having ‘high’ or ‘good’ water quality, up from 82% six years ago.

“These assessments are produced on an environment-wide basis using a range of criteria to produce an overall health classification. Increased monitoring of overflows from sewers – which normally consist of less than 1% toilet waste, with the rest being largely rainwater – would therefore make no difference to these assessments.

“We recognise that sewage related debris is an issue in Scotland as well as the rest of the UK. That’s why we are supporting Scottish Water’s ‘Nature Calls’ campaign which highlights the impact of inappropriately-flushed items and the damage they cause to our environment.

“Scottish Water’s Improving Urban Waters Routemap currently commits up to £500m towards several objectives including significantly reducing sewage related debris.”

From: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

Sent: Thursday, August 31, 2023 12:09 PM

To: [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Jon Rathjen <Jon.Rathjen@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; Deputy Director Environmental Quality and Resilience <DDEQR@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]@gov.scot>
Subject: Media query (Times - follow-up) - CSOs - SRD - MCS

All

Follow-up query from the Times (again, English edition) on query from Tuesday, focusing on MCS calls to tackle SRD.

You'll have noted the Cab Sec's point about brevity of lines and addressing certain specific points, which I've copied at the bottom below the query for ease of reference. This query however has a specific focus on SRD which requires a slightly different response.

I will work on an abbreviated version of the lines we used on Tues just now but can someone please:

- 1) Confirm that this is even correct? - Data from the Marine Conservation society revealed that Scottish beaches had an average of 88.2 items of sewage-related debris per 100 metres. This compared to an average of 9.1 and 10.7 items per 100m on English and Welsh beaches respectively.
- 2) Provide further defensive lines on addressing SRD pls?

Hope this is OK

Thanks

[redacted – Reg 11(2) personal information]

Query

As mentioned in my phone call earlier. I am looking to see what actions have been taken by the Scottish government since December in relation to the issue of sewage related debris. The parliamentary briefing from the Marine Conservation Society can be found here: [https://marine-conservation-society-production.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/SCO-4638-2022 MCS Scotland SRD Parliamentary Briefing Dec-22 01.pdf](https://marine-conservation-society-production.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/SCO-4638-2022_MCS_Scotland_SRD_Parliamentary_Briefing_Dec-22_01.pdf)

In particular, the report found that Scottish beaches have eight times more sewage-related debris than England or Wales. Data from the Marine Conservation society revealed that Scottish beaches had an average of 88.2 items of sewage-related debris per 100 metres. This compared to an average of 9.1 and 10.7 items per 100m on English and Welsh beaches respectively.

We will also be writing that Catherine Gemmell-Simpson from the Marine Conservation Society said: "There is still not enough monitoring going on to know what the full scale of the damage that's being done to Scottish waters is."

"We would love to see that commitment from the Scottish government to have that vision of 100 per cent monitoring with the data being live and available to everybody."

My deadline is 5.30pm.

Cab Sec guidance

The Cab Sec is of the view we need to sharpen lines to clarify very clearly that:

- Monitoring is done on an environment wide basis in Scotland and the results are far outstripping the UK. That monitoring every CSO would not change this.
- That when opposition others talk of raw sewage – it's usually 99(?) % rain water!
- The facts on investment already made in CSO and those to be made.
- And that we already have targets to improve overall quality and it's constituent parts.

[redacted – rest of email chain is out of scope of request – not official communications]