

(LGHRRS - Mining Legacy, Water & Flood)

From: [REDACTED] (CCRA - ERA - Water, Flood and Coal Tips Safety)
Sent: 19 October 2023 09:34
To: PS Minister for Climate Change
Cc: Water and Flood / Dŵr a Llifogydd; Bennett, Claire (CCRA - Environmental Sustainability - Director); Fernandes, Clare (CCRA - ERA - Water, Flood and Coal Tips Safety); [REDACTED] (CCRA - ERA - Environmental Protection); [REDACTED] (CCRA - ERA - Water, Flood and Coal Tips Safety); [REDACTED] (OFM - Cabinet Office)
Subject: 19 Oct BBC Network coverage: sewage spills from DCWW wastewater treatment works
Attachments: Briefing note to Board - Cardigan.docx; Cardigan PR FINAL.docx; Cardigan WwTW briefing Oct 2023 (No timeline) ENG.pdf

Good morning,

I would be grateful if you could share this with the Minister to note please -

Context

Today, the BBC is running a network piece on sewage spills from Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water treatment works following research undertaken by Professor Peter Hammond. They have informed us that the report *"follows analysis of the company's own data over the last five years at 11 sewage treatment plants. It shows there were 2313 days where untreated sewage was illegally discharged into rivers and the sea at times where the plants had not reached their "overflow" level – with particular issues at Cardigan, which is the focus on the network piece."*

[Welsh Water admits illegally spilling sewage for years - BBC News](#)

Welsh Government position

In response to the report, Welsh Government has issued the following statement (though we have noticed it is not included in the article itself):

"We expect water companies in Wales to continuously improve services to customers and address any areas of concern."

"We have made our expectations and priorities for the water industry clear in our [Strategic Priorities and Objectives Statement](#) to Ofwat."

"Our water sector is facing immediate and unprecedented challenge; we must achieve decarbonisation, climate resilience and reverse biodiversity loss, all against the backdrop of the current cost of living crisis. Government, businesses and communities all have a role to play in helping Wales' waterbodies to thrive."

Wider actions

We did not have advance sight of the report, but the BBC's description above raised some questions around the meaning of 'illegal discharges' and what water companies and NRW are doing to tackle them.

Illegal discharges refer to unpermitted discharges ones which operate outside their permit. The 2313 days falls across the 11 wastewater treatment works which were investigated by Prof. Hammond, this equates to an average across each wastewater treatment works as 42 spills per year over their permit conditions, though Cardigan accounts for around half of the spills. The spills are across 6 years but only account for part of 2023 when the analysis was done. The harm from any individual spill would be based on its location (i.e. bathing water, estuary, river, small watercourse), the volume of spill and the concentration of any pollution. EDM data does not track volume or specific duration of events rather identify when an EDM has been triggered, a 12 hour timeframe is then used identify its window of spill. Whilst NRW don't have spill volumes provided as part of EDM data submission, they are often able to estimate volumes of spills in breach of permit.

DCWW has recently released a press release and briefing document which details the action and investment they are taking in wastewater assets across Cardigan, whilst NRW have provided a briefing note to their board outlining the regulatory steps they are taking. All are attached.

Many thanks,

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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