

HUW MERRIMAN MP
(Bexhill and Battle)



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

By email to:

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive, Environment Agency
Mr Lawrence Gosden, Chief Executive, Southern Water

18 August 2022

Dear Sir James and Mr Gosden,

Once again, the rivers and the coastline across Sussex are being blighted by the discharge of sewage. Whilst information to many of our offices appears to be scant, Southern Water's own mapping shows, at the time of writing, some 15 discharges over the last 72 hours following the recent downpours.

In addition to the obvious environmental and community impact, the resulting closure of popular beaches and restrictions on stretches of inland waterways causes financial loss to the numerous businesses who rely on our beaches and rivers.

We believe that these discharges are caused by operational failure at the treatment works or via the outfalls process (which, regulated by the Environment Agency, are used by Southern Water to permit sewage discharge where sewers were built to carry both wastewater and rainwater away from communities).

Whilst the outfalls process may help to protect homes and communities from flooding and pollution by stopping the sewers backing-up or overflowing, during periods of large rainfall, it leaves our rivers and coastline to take the hit. This is unacceptable and we were pleased to support a Conservative amendment to the Environment Bill which after decades of inaction by governments of all political shades, for the first time ever, now puts a statutory obligation on water companies to take steps to eradicate this practice. This must be accompanied by urgent investment in pumping and treatment assets to ensure that they do not fail and cause major sewage discharge incidents (which appears to be the case for at least one of this week's incidents).

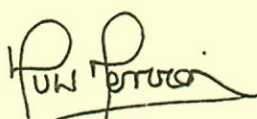
We would like to invite Southern Water and the Environment Agency to Parliament to outline a project plan and timeline to end sewage discharge into Sussex's rivers and coastline.

Please reply to: Constituency Office, 29-31 Sea Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN40 1EE
Telephone: 01424 734910
Email: huw.merriman.mp@parliament.uk www.huwmerriman.org.uk

We would be grateful if you could liaise with my office to find a time in September to meet. The discharge of sewage into water across Sussex is a practice which is anything but unprecedented. On behalf of our constituents, we wish to work with both of your organisations to ensure that our waterways and coast are better respected and protected.

In the meantime, we would be grateful for a written understanding, per constituency, of each and every sewage discharge from the last week and your interaction with the Sussex Resilience Forum.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Merriman MP
Member of Parliament for Bexhill and
Batle

Sally-Ann Hart MP
Member of Parliament for Hastings and
Rye

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Member of Parliament for Lewes

Caroline Ansell MP
Member of Parliament for Eastbourne

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