

WaterFit – Our plan for healthy rivers and seas

Update
June 2023

WaterFit Update

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About this document

In April 2022 we launched **WaterFit** as part of our plans to do our bit at every beach in the region. WaterFit is the three-year 2022-2025 plan to protect and enhance the South West's water for future generations.

One year on, we have been making great strides in our three-year plan – and this report summarises that progress.

This document explains progress on the six pledges that make up WaterFit, providing a clear summary of the step change in performance and outcomes already delivered under WaterFit, and confirms our ambitions for 2025 and beyond.

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Executive Summary

We want everyone in the South West to feel confident about the water at their favourite beach, or river and to know we are serious about reducing pollutions, our impact on water quality and the use of storm overflows, which have become a striking symbol of unacceptable practices in the water industry. That's why in April 2022 we launched WaterFit.

WaterFit is the next stage in our environment strategy, going further and faster to protect and enhance the South West's water for future generations as part of a £330m of investment over three years and focused on the protection of our 860 miles of coastline and rivers in the South West.

One year on we have made good progress on the six pledges underpinning WaterFit, whilst accepting there is more to do. This includes important elements bespoke to our region, our customers and our environment such as bathing water quality, where for the second year running, we have achieved 100% and biodiversity, where we are significantly ahead of target with our innovative Upstream Thinking programme with 107,000 hectares in catchment, and delivering over 300 hectares of peatland restoration.

With 100% monitoring of storm overflows now in place, a year ahead of plan, a highlight has been the launch of WaterFit Live, giving customers and visitors live information about the region's bathing beaches, storm overflows as well as the detailed investments we are making to reduce overflow spills across the region's coastline by 2025, with 45 beaches prioritised. Through **#YourBeachYourSayOurInvestment**, we are empowering customers and communities in working together to plan our next phase of improvements.

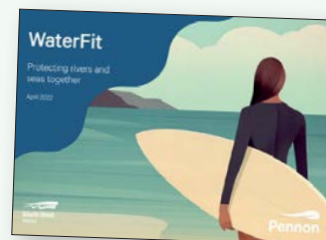
For 2022, overflow spills have reduced by 30% on average, and we remain on target to deliver an average of no more than 20 spills across storm overflows by 2025, a good base for then meeting the Government's mandated targets. Whilst undoubtedly the dry weather will have played a part, over half of the improvements seen in the year are due to interventions we have made – whether capital investment to increase network capacity or through proactive maintenance.

We have also been focused on reducing pollution levels – accepting that one pollution is too many. Our pollution incident reduction plan continues to deliver improvements in performance, at their lowest level for 10 years. With a 50% reduction over the last two years, we continue to take actions to deliver our glidepath to 2025, including rising main replacements, installing sewer depth monitors and continuing our investment in technology and innovation. Continuing this trajectory to 2024 will see us achieve a sector-leading performance, with the lowest number of absolute pollution numbers.

“I think it's fairly comprehensive, I can't think of anything that is missing. It is good to see that they are thinking about it and are exploring different avenues.”

SWW customer, Male,
C2DE, Aged 18-45

new
deal



“I do go in the sea, no issues whatever, jump in, go under, and I love it.”

SWW customer,
Female, ABC1,
Aged 18-45

Against our pledge to reduce our impact on rivers by 1/3 by 2025, we have delivered WINEP enhancement projects, and taken steps to address third party impacts for example, ensuring that businesses with trade effluent discharges better understand their obligations. In addition, our pilots on the rivers Dart and Tavy to explore how we might achieve the region's first bathing quality river, are well underway. Given this is a community-led designation process, we have been bringing together stakeholders and community groups to work collaboratively together.

Supported by an interactive communication and engagement campaign, using technology and QR codes, we are helping to raise awareness of river water quality issues, tracking river usage, and to capture people's perception of the rivers they use throughout the year. This is an exciting programme of work to be part of, as we build a comprehensive picture of river health and usage, and later this year will be extending our work to include state of the art genetic monitoring techniques to determine animal usage and their impact too.

Herculean change requires herculean efforts from everyone, and that's been our biggest reflection as we deliver WaterFit. It also requires a pioneering spirit, sitting alongside the significant investment to go further and faster. One year on, we have delivered much, learnt a lot and remain resolute in ensuring that everyone who lives in the South West or visits the South West can have confidence in their rivers and seas.

WaterFit Summary – Progress one year on

1 Nurturing healthy rivers and seas

- Delivering our best ever compliance at our wastewater treatment works, at 99.4%
- Further reductions in pollution incidents – 50% reduction in 2 years and serious pollutions reduced to 2
- RNAGs reducing through our treatment works improvement – two further sites delivered in 2022/23 (ahead of WINEP requirements)
- Average storm overflow spills per location for 2022 reduced to 28 (c.30% reduction) – ahead of our trajectory of 20 spills by 2025 – through c.50 interventions including capital investment, proactive maintenance and data response
- 100% bathing water quality for second year running – average spills at bathing beaches reduced by c.50% (in the bathing season) – on track to deliver water quality improvements all year round

2 Putting nature on everyone's doorstep

- 100% of beaches meeting the standards and 40 inland lakes – means that high quality water is accessible within 1 hour's drive
- Our Dart and Tavy inland bathing water pilots are progressing with 10 river water quality 'real-time' monitors in place, six on the Dart and four on the Tavy – using this information to narrow down nine potential inland bathing water candidate sites to three candidates, and working closely with a stakeholder group to support a bathing water application in the Autumn of 2023



3 Creating and restoring habitats

- Upstream programme ahead of target – 107,735 hectares catchment management delivered
- On track to deliver 1,000 hectares of peatland restoration – over 300 hectares last year
- 207,000 trees planted, as part of our plans to plant at least 250,000 by 2025

4 Inspiring our local champions

- Over one third of our donations go to local community and wildlife groups that share our passion for rivers and seas
- Launch of our **WaterFit Warriors** programme, with 83 schools and over 4,000 children reached in our school education programme
- Updates of environmental performance to the WaterShare+ Customer Advisory Panel and Customer AGM

5 Creating a sustainable future

- Building partnerships to better manage our network, working closely with lead local flood authorities, risk management authorities and local councils. Particularly working with local drainage authorities in Falmouth and Sidmouth, preparing for the delivery of the recently announced storm overflow acceleration programme
- Supporting the call for a ban on non-flushables and supporting the current consultation on plastic wet wipes. Working closely with WaterUK in the development of **Fine to Flush** and our **Love your Loo** campaigns
- Engaging customers and visitors alike through our research channels to understand their priorities and how to encourage sustainable behaviour



6 Putting people in control

- 100% of storm overflow monitors (EDMs) installed
- **WaterFit Live** launched giving live quality updates on all our bathing beaches – and giving customers the opportunity to influence our plans through the launch of our **#YourBeachYourSayOurInvestment**.

On track



For more information, click [here](#)

Introduction

South West Water provides clean water and wastewater services across the Great South West. Stretching from Bristol to Bournemouth, Devon and Cornwall, including the Isles of Scilly. Our population is set across a range of communities, from small remote coastal villages through to urban centres. This is a unique topography and environment that we operate in with many areas of outstanding natural beauty.

We are lucky in the South West to have some of the best beaches in Europe across our 860 miles of coastline. With over one third of the designated bathing beaches, and access to beautiful rivers, reservoirs, lakes and ponds right across the region – our 3.5 million residents and 10 million visitors alike can readily enjoy swimming, surfing, paddling, bathing and amenity recreation.

We see a marked shift in the focus on the environment from government, regulators, stakeholders, and customers alike. With Green Recovery, Net Zero, the Government's 25-year Environment Plan, the Environment Act 2021, and the new Environment Improvement Plan (EIP) and Storm Overflow Reduction Plan (SORP), we need to deliver outcomes above and beyond our plans.

So, one year ago, we launched WaterFit. WaterFit is a step change in the way we invest in and manage our assets in the future to deliver against 6 pledges to protect rivers and seas. Delivering these pledges will ensure that the South West remains THE Destination for Water Quality.

In this document we show how we have progressed each of the pledges we made last year and what is next – with well targeted investment across our asset base to deliver key outcomes around lower pollutions and storm overflows, ensuring compliance, enhancing water quality and nature, and increasing transparency.



Recap on our April 2022 WaterFit pledges



WaterFit outlines how we will play our part, working with partners, customers, visitors and local communities to protect and enhance the South West's waters for future generations. Our six **WaterFit** enablers are:

1 Nurturing healthy rivers and seas

We will:

- reduce our impact on rivers by 2025, by one third and put forward plans to target zero harm by 2030
- reduce spills from storm overflows to an average of 20 per year by 2025
- maintain our excellent bathing water quality standards, all year round, so that everyone can enjoy our 860 miles of coastline
- deliver zero serious pollutions by 2025, and target a year on year reduction in all pollutions



2 Putting nature on everyone's doorstep

We will:

- make bathing water accessible, less than an hour's drive, for 100% of our residents and visitors
- provide access to our 40 inland lakes and reservoirs, so that local communities can continue enjoying them for health and recreation
- achieve the region's first bathing quality river, using learning from our current pilots on the rivers Dart and Tavy



3 Creating and restoring habitats

We will:

- stop pollutants from 120,000 hectares of regional farmland getting into rivers and seas by 2025, working with local partners
- restore an additional 1,000 hectares of peatlands by 2025, to create new habitats improve river quality and reduce flooding
- plant a quarter of a million trees by 2025, to help combat climate change, support river health and create new wildlife habitats



4 Inspiring our local champions

We will:

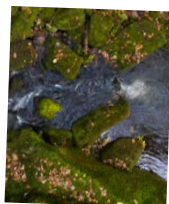
- donate 25% of our Community Fund to local groups that share our passion for river and sea health
- launch our WaterFit Warriors programme, to inspire thousands of water quality champions in schools and communities across the region
- share progress with our customers through our unique WaterShare+ scheme at quarterly public meetings and our annual Customer AGM



5 Creating a sustainable future

We will:

- work collaboratively on the building of new developments in our region, to help us manage our network
- back the ban on non-flushable or plastic-containing wet wipes, to help prevent blockages
- work with our 10 million visitors, and 2.3 million customers, so they understand the important role they play in protecting our region, through our Love Your Loo campaign



6 Putting people in control

We will:

- work with partners to provide water quality information for residents and visitors, making it easily accessible on our website by the end of this year
- help people understand river health, by sharing real-time river water quality information, just as we do for our bathing waters, by 2023
- provide 100% monitor coverage at our treatment works and on our storm overflows, by 2023



Key outcomes delivered – one year on

Delivering fundamental services to our 3.5 million residents and 10 million+ visitors is at the heart of our business plans. With stretching performance commitments, improved environmental outcomes, and a need to keep customer bills as low as possible, our plans also include record levels of investment. Our ambition is to be a leading water company, delivering for our customers.

As a beautiful coastal region, we know that quality of our seaside bathing waters and surrounding biodiversity is of particular importance to our customers and visitors. And against the full set of performance measures and outcome delivery incentives (ODI), we are delivering c.80% of our overall commitments. This includes delivering against metrics bespoke to our region, our customers, and our environment.

WaterFit is about going faster and further in our plans, and bringing forward investment in important areas. Overall, our plans are to invest around £330 million in our wastewater assets to deliver against six key pledges. And whilst the pledges provide a range of benefits for the region, at the heart there are key environmental outcomes that provide the ability to demonstrate clearly progress.

WaterFit key outcomes at a glance

Measure	2022	2023
Compliance*	97.5% →	99.4%
Pollution incidents*	151 →	108
Bathing quality	100% →	100%
RNAGs**	19% →	12%
Storm overflows	39 →	28
EDM monitoring	79% →	100%
Catchment management and habitat creation	95K →	107K

* Environment Agency EPA measures

** Reasons for not achieving good ecological status due to water operations

A particular focus over the last 12 months has been on pollution and compliance. These are two measures developed and assessed by the Environment Agency (EA), as part of their Environmental Performance Assessment (EPA). The EPA is a basket of measures that the EA use to compare companies. The measures cover how well companies have prevented sewage pollution incidents to rivers and seas, and the treatment and disposal of wastewater and sludge.

The EA uses the results in its star rating, but as the thresholds for star ratings are tightened frequently to push improvements in water company performance, no scores are comparable across the years.

Compliance

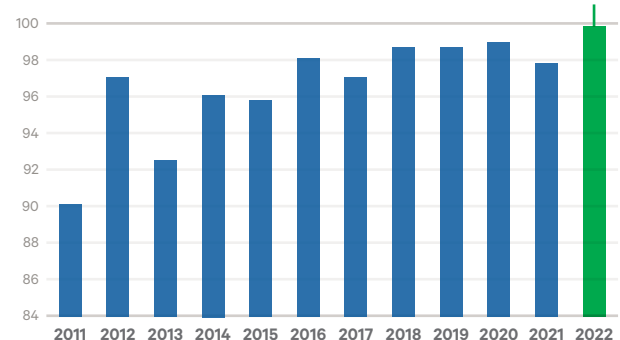
Compliance is our number one priority.



One year on – and we have improved compliance at our wastewater works, with performance improving to 99.4% in 2022, **our best ever treatment works compliance**. We have also delivered 99.14% sludge compliance.

We are focused on maintaining targeted performance through our hotspot investment programme, deployment of data and telemetry and investment in alternative power supplies to increase resilience.

Wastewater treatment works compliance (%) **99.4%**

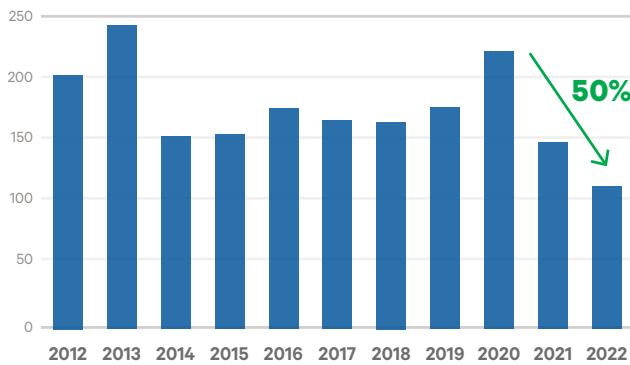


Pollutions

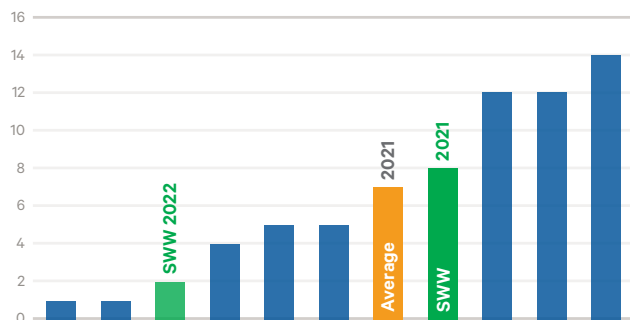
In WaterFit we recognise that we need to make year on year improvements as we look to meet the stringent targets in this area.

This has been an area of focus and we have made considerable progress. But lasting change can take time. We have delivered a significant improvement in pollutions performance, with c.30% reduction last year and 50% over the past 2 years. 2022 was our lowest ever level of pollutions and we are already tracking to deliver lower levels of pollution again in 2023.

Category 1-3 wastewater pollutions (absolute number)



Category 1-2 wastewater pollutions (number)



Serious pollution incidents are also down by 75% – from 8 incidents in 2021 to 2 in 2022.

Behind our pollution reduction is our **Pollution Incident Reduction Plan (PIRP)** which sets out investment, activities and changes we are making to deliver lower levels of pollution year on year.

The key activities to deliver the step change in performance set out in our PIRP include:

- Significant delivery of additional telemetry on our infrastructure – 1,440 sewer depth monitors installed in the last year
- Bolstering our 24/7 review, analysis and response to telemetry data
- Investment at pollution hotspots to prevent repeat events
- MOT investment at pumping stations and treatment works
- Predictive analytics to support operations
- Proactive asset replacements, with 36 rising mains being targeted, and half delivered in the last year
- With blockages and third parties the biggest cause of pollutions, we have behavioural campaigns, community and MP liaison and steps to tackle wet wipes.



Find out more about our PIRP [here](#)

Storm overflows

In the last year, we completed our storm overflow monitoring programme. 100% of storm overflows are now fitted with Event Duration Monitors (EDMs).

Our planned approach to reduce the number of spills and the environmental impact from storm overflows builds on our PIRP, with spills allocated the same prioritisation as pollutions. We have invested in storm storage, increased maintenance to keep sewers clean and free from blockages, and acted to keep surface water out of sewers.

The data for 2022 shows that overflow spills have reduced from an average of 39 per location to 28 – a 27% reduction and ahead of our trajectory to get to 20 spills on average by 2025. The total duration of spills also reduced, with a 17% reduction across the year.

Spills at beaches was a particular focus in the year, with a 50% reduction in total number of storm overflow spills and 75% reduction in the duration of spills across the summer bathing season compared to 2021. 79% of all storm overflow monitors at beaches recorded less than 5 spills in 2022. Over the course of the year, the number of spills at beaches fell from 28 to 21.

Overflows with high spills (over 100) reduced from 10% of locations to 6%.



Water quality – rivers and seas improved

At the heart of WaterFit are steps to improve the quality of our waters – rivers and seas. Rivers and seas are both essential across the region for nature, recreation and the economy.

We use the Environment Agency’s measures of river health, known as the Reasons for Not Achieving Good Ecological Status (RNAGs) to assess our impact on rivers.

When we produced our current plans in 2020, the EA predicted that 19% of the reasons for not achieving good ecological status in our region were due to our water company operations. We targeted 12% by 2025.

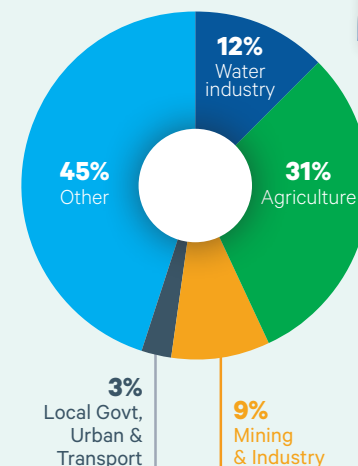
In the last year, two WINEP Investments to reduce nutrients from our rivers – as part of our journey to eliminate harm.

Based on the newly appraised RNAG information for the South West Region, we now have 12% RNAGs associated with our operations. With the delivery of the remaining AMP7 schemes by the end of 2025 we estimate that we will be c.9% of all RNAGs by 2025.

For the second consecutive year, 100% of our regions’ bathing waters achieved stringent bathing water standards, up from c.28% in 1991 – a result of investment to improve sewage treatment standards and reduce spills.

Reasons for not achieving ‘Good’ status in the South West Water area

Cycle 3 (August 2022)
RNAGs summary



Source: Environment Agency



Catchment management – award-winning innovation

In 2006 we developed our visionary approach to catchment management. Since then, we have engaged farmers in the management of agricultural land and restored peatland on Exmoor, Dartmoor and Bodmin moor, in order that we collectively work supporting local landowners to protect rivers used for drinking water, boost biodiversity, support climate change mitigation, and reduce the risk of flooding to local communities.

Fast forward to today, catchment management is an awarding winning innovation, widely accepted as best practice across the sector, and it forms a key part of all water company plans given it can make a significant difference to the quality of water in the rivers that we abstract from, for the benefit of not just our water treatment works but for all river life and users.

We have delivered 107,735 hectares catchment management against a stretching target of 100,000 hectares. We have plans to deliver a further 1,000 hectares of peatland restoration to 2025 – and we have delivered over 300 hectares in the last year.

We have also planted 220,000 trees, well ahead of our commitment to plant 250,000 trees by 2025.

Storm overflow monitoring – WaterFit Live launched



We have 100% of our storm overflow monitors in place. This is ahead of the December 2023 target for complete coverage.

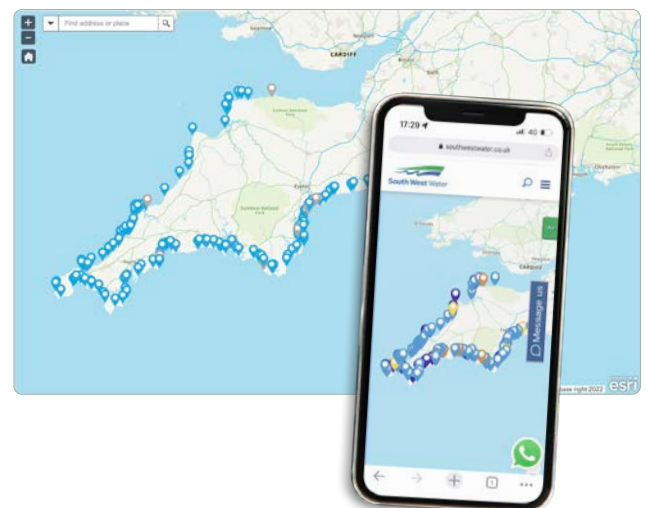
With this level of monitoring in place, we have launched WaterFit Live on our website as part of our plans to boost transparency to customers and visitors.

This is providing information for our designated bathing waters where we have a storm overflow (c. 90 beaches) along with our plans for improvement, and beach information overall.

In customer focus groups, 22 out of 23 (96%) customers thought the site was easy to use and clear, and 18 out of 23 (78%) consider the site important to view before visiting their local beach.

Work is ongoing with regard to the next phase of WaterFit live – on the journey to provide near real time information on the operation of all storm overflows.

Real-time reporting is set to begin at beaches for the start of the bathing season, followed by river data by the end of the year.



Nurturing healthy rivers and seas



Our region is known for its long coastline and bodies of water. We need to take care over the quality of water within our rivers and seas and take steps to improve it. There are currently fewer pollution incidents than there have been in generations but there are still too many. Tackling the root causes of the remaining incidents helps reduce the number of spills and pollution incidents into our rivers and seas for the long-term.

Commitments

Reduce our impact on rivers by 2025, by one third as part of putting forward plans to target zero harm

Reduce spills from storm overflows to an average of 20 per year per overflow by 2025

Maintain our excellent bathing water quality standards, all year round, so that everyone can enjoy our 860 miles of coastline, whatever the time of year

Deliver zero serious pollutions by 2025 and target a year-on-year reduction in all pollutions

One year on...

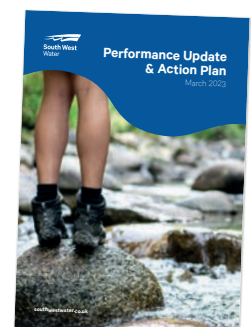
- Improved compliance of our wastewater treatment works, to our best ever performance, and investments to reduce nutrients from our rivers continues, with 2 schemes delivered in the last year
- Storm overflow spills for 2022 reduced from 39 to 28 – ahead of our trajectory of 20 on average to 2025 – through upgrades to 5 treatments works and investment in additional storage at 18 sites
- 100% bathing water quality standards for the second year running. Reduction in number of storm overflow spills at beaches by 50% with 75% reduction in duration
- Overall pollutions reduced by one third giving a 50% reduction over 2 years as we target year on year reductions. Reduction of serious category 1 and 2 pollutions from 8 to 2

Reduce our impact on rivers by 2025 by one third, and put forward plans to target zero harm by 2030

Compliance is one of our number one priorities, and important in protecting rivers and seas. We ensure we maintain compliance at our wastewater treatment works through wastewater treatment upgrades, asset inspections and maintenance. We have invested telemetry and data analytics to support risk-based assessments and proactive investment. Compliance Action Plans (CAP) have been developed for each site at high risk of failure to identify the operational activities and planned investments to ensure compliance is maintained.

We have also taken steps to address recent third-party impacts. Trade effluent is liquid waste from industry and factories that is discharged into the public sewer for treatment at one of our works, such as chemicals, metal rinses, and detergents. Any business disposing of trade effluent must comply with strict legal restrictions set to protect the environment. A small number of businesses have been failing to meet their permits which has caused some of our works to fail. We have launched a proactive campaign to ensure that businesses with trade effluent discharges understand their obligations to comply with discharge consents, and we have highlighted that stronger enforcement will be targeted for further breaches. We have also increased sampling and are trialling 'real-time' water quality monitoring at sites with higher risk third-party discharges.

These steps have supported our best ever compliance performance at 99.4% in 2022, and we have published our plans to maintain this performance in our company action plans.



Our investment

We have also delivered WINEP enhancement projects to protect rivers in the last year, and we have more planned. As our WINEP and our WaterFit programme deliver a reduction in spill numbers, this will also improve river water quality (our investments for spill reductions are included later in this section).

We have however a WINEP programme of improvements focused on reducing the level of phosphates which are discharged (following the wastewater treatment processes) through 33 phosphorus removal schemes at 33 sites by 2025. Ahead of our WINEP timescales we have delivered 4 schemes at Lapford and St Colomb wastewater treatment works in 2021/22 and improvements at Kenn/Kenford and Wilmington wastewater treatment works in 2022/23 (awaiting final EA sign-off).

Our WaterFit target was to reduce the impact we are having on the 'Reason for Not Achieving Good Status (RNAGs) on rivers from the current position in 2020 of 19% down to 12% by 2025 (based on the delivery of these schemes).

In August 2022, the Environment Agency re-appraised the RNAG information in the South West region updating the assessments previously used for Waterfit from 2019. There are now 2,723 RNAGs in the SWW region, 342 are attributed to the water industry (12.5%). The phosphate schemes delivered in AMP6 and the further AMP7 schemes remove 29 RNAGs, reducing the position to 11.5%. With the delivery of the remaining AMP7 schemes by the end of 2025 reducing the position potentially to 8.7% of all RNAGs.

With the 2020 schemes now complete and the 4 delivered by March 2023 we estimate we are at 11.5% – and on track to meet the WaterFit commitment for 2025.

The improvements for the two sites delivered this year include:

- **Wilmington** – Reducing phosphate by 40% to 3mg/l through ARMPHos reactive media bed downstream of the existing treatment works – a nature-based solution avoiding the need to chemical dosing
- **Kenn/Kennford** – Reducing phosphate by 80% to 1mg/l through the installation of a new phosphorus removal system comprising a tertiary filter, tank mixers, pump station and Claral chemical dosing system, reflecting a more traditional solution to the level of P removal needed.



WINEP – Phosphorus schemes



Top Reactive media reed bed (Wilmington), Above Mecana cloth filter with flocculation tank (Kenn & Kennford WWTW)

Commitments

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Case study

Levelling up investment

In March 2022 we announced plans to accelerate funding to support regional Levelling Up plans, helping to offset the impact of future housing development in the Rivers Axe and Camel catchments.

We committed the total spend to unlock the South West's levelling up ambitions of £10 million. This included £5.3 million of investment on our assets which has been delivered, since this commitment a further £1.2 million has been invested at Wilmington and Scarletts Well/Nanstallon bringing the total invested to £6.5m against our target of £10 million. This is a combination of accelerated spending, alongside new investment to support nature-based solutions which aims to reduce nutrient pollution in the area.

While development unlocks jobs and homes for local residents, it also has an environmental impact. Our investment will allow more sustainable development to progress.

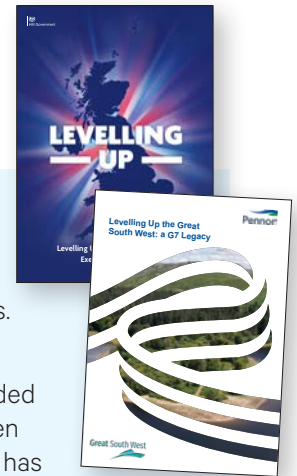
The Local Planning Authorities for the Rivers Axe and Camel have engaged Westcountry Rivers Trust to develop local, agricultural Phosphate reduction schemes. Included in the £10 million, South West Water are donating £1 million towards the schemes to provide the capacity to work with local farmers to take a range of actions to reduce Phosphates including:

- Broad nutrient and soil management advice to store and tailor nutrients and improve in field nutrient efficiency, including farm nutrient mass balance audits
- Short-term annual land management activities (5-year contract) such as cover cropping
- Long-term land use change (30 year +) including wet woodland and river buffer creation.

Investment also includes funding to improve local treatment works, alongside building on the existing Upstream Thinking catchment management programme which works with local partners to protect and enhance land and natural habitats.

We continue to work closely with developers to promote nature-based sustainable drainage solutions for new developments and making sure that local networks have sufficient capacity when new homes are built.

Note: Ofwat's draft decisions on the Defra acceleration process will see a further £12m invested at five sewage treatment works, as we bring forward AMP8 investment.



Case study

Supporting communities to improve water quality

Whilst we recognise that water companies have a responsibility to improve the water quality of our rivers and coasts, a significant proportion of the causes of poor water quality are from agriculture. In the South West, some communities across the region are served by septic tank waste disposal systems. These need to be properly sited and maintained to protect the environment and maintain public health. The waste from these tanks needs to be properly dealt with, and spreading untreated septic tank waste to agricultural land has been banned.

With nowhere else for septic tank operators to put this waste, we have invested to increase our ability to accept additional volumes of tankered waste from septic waste contractors. Through investment in tankered waste reception tanks at wastewater treatment works including Hayle, we are supporting local communities and the environment. We are able to take larger volumes of septic tank waste, and treat this to the same standard and recycle to the environment in compliance with our permits.

This has ensured that septic waste operators are able to safely dispose of their waste, keeping pollutants out of waterways, and ensuring our regulators can enforce environmental protection rules. In addition, our work with farmers as part of our Upstream Thinking programme seeks to reduce the impact of agriculture on our water courses providing grants for managing waste, farm management plans and stopping livestock from entering rivers through fencing and river drinking points.



2025 and beyond

We are currently working with our regulators to develop our plans from 2025 to 2030. We are considering the investment needed to address RNAGs as well as maintain 100% bathing water quality as we build resilience against climate change, population growth and urban creep. We know that we need investment and innovation in our storm overflow spills and discharges.

As we build our plans, customers and communities over the last 12 months have confirmed that coastal bathing waters is our key differentiator, and that coastal water and environmentally sensitive sites are their priorities for our plans. This is shaping our plans for the future.



Commitments

Reduce our impact on rivers by 2025, by one third as part of putting forward plans to target zero harm

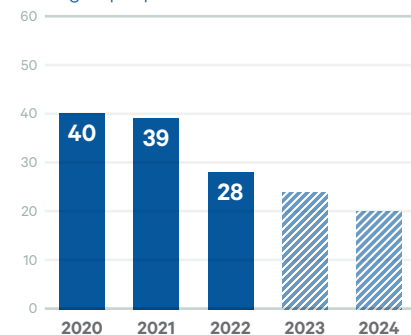
Reduce spills from storm overflows to an average of 20 per year per overflow by 2025

Maintain our excellent bathing water quality standards, all year round, so that everyone can enjoy our 860 miles of coastline, whatever the time of year

Deliver zero serious pollutions by 2025 and target a year-on-year reduction in all pollutions

Spill reductions

(average spill per EDM)



Reduce spills from storm overflows to an average of 20 per year per overflow by 2025

The use of storm overflows can increase as a result of urban creep, population growth, changing rainfall patterns, network blockages, asset failure and infiltration. We use a range of approaches to investigate the root cause of spills and seek to resolve issues as they arise, however for higher spilling sites with more complex causes we use the EA’s Storm Overflow Assessment Framework (SOAF) to ensure we understand the root cause of overflows, allowing us to identify the right solution to reduce spills.

Across all locations – bathing waters and rivers – we have set the target of an average of 20 spills by 2025. In 2022, the average number of spills at locations was reduced by 27% to 28.5 (from 38.9). This is ahead of our targeted profile, which reflected that the larger WINEP programme and WaterFit investments would be completed in 2022/23 with the benefit being recognised in the coming year.

Whilst the weather naturally has an impact on the use of storm overflows, we have completed interventions and improvements at c.50 sites alongside data analysis and review resulting in c.50% of the reduction this year. The remaining reduction is from the weather where although the summer was exceptionally dry, October – December saw much higher levels of rainfall. As a result, the total rainfall for 2022 was c.11% lower than 2021 however, over the summer this was much higher.

Whilst we have been delivering our WINEP programme, the impact of these schemes will be seen in 2023 (as many were completed in early 2023), with the interventions providing benefit for 2022 being, delivery of schemes in year 1 and year 2 (particularly bathing waters), infiltration reduction, proactive maintenance (including cleansing) and improving our data analysis and response.

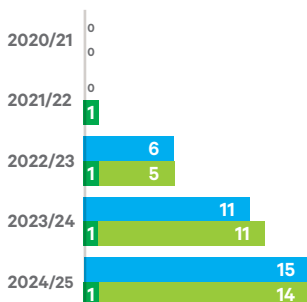
The key drivers for change in performance with 53% estimated to be a result of interventions and 47% from the weather.

Future benefits expected – 2023 and beyond

Our WINEP programme includes investments that we have delivered over the past year that will directly reduce the number of spills in 2023 and beyond including:

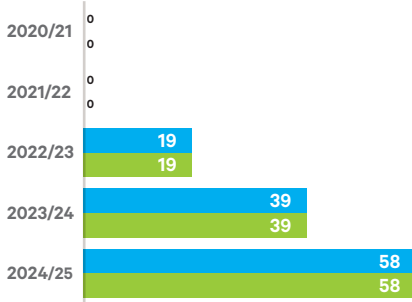
- **Increasing Flow to Treatment (U_IMP5)** – 15 sites targeted to 2025, 6 of which were delivered in the year. These schemes increase the flow treated at these works in order to reduce the duration and frequency of storm overflow discharges. Over the last year we have delivered six treatment works improvements at Dulverton STW, Kenn/Kennford STW, Dunsford STW, Bampton STW, Bradworthy STW and Bridestowe STW, which will provide reductions from 2023.

WINEP – Flow to Full treatment



- **Storm storage (U_IMP6)** – 58 sites targeted to 2025, 19 completed by March 2023 with increased capacity (above WINEP requirements) installed as part of our WaterFit programme, increasing storage at these sites by a third – and we will continue further storage to meet our spill reduction targets. We are on track to deliver the improvements in line with the WINEP timescales. The locations for the sites delivered this year are included on the map below:

WINEP – Storm tank capacity



As part of the Waterfit programme we identified 53 storm overflows requiring action. In the last year we have undertaken work at 25 of the 53 sites (47%). At storm overflows, this work has involved the installation of storm tanks as well as improvements to overflows and screening. We have completed seven storm overflow improvements and a further 18 infiltration schemes whereby we have surveyed and undertaken sewer rehabilitation to seal upstream sewers.

At sewage pumping stations we identified improvements at 59 sites within the Waterfit programme. We have undertaken work at 18 sewage pumping stations in the last year (30%). Work at these sites has involved an optimisation review of the site, upgrades to pumps and control equipment and where appropriate increases in storage at the site.

At sewage treatment works we identified improvements at 180 sites within the Waterfit programme, 85 of which are associated with inlet screen improvements. In the last year we have undertaken work at 37 of the 180 sites (20%). At sewage treatment works this work has involved improvements to inlet screen arrangements, optimisation of treatment processes to increase throughput and installation of storm tanks.

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Commitments

Reduce our impact on rivers by 2025, by one third as part of putting forward plans to target zero harm

Reduce spills from storm overflows to an average of 20 per year per overflow by 2025

Maintain our excellent bathing water quality standards, all year round, so that everyone can enjoy our 860 miles of coastline, whatever the time of year

Deliver zero serious pollutions by 2025 and target a year-on-year reduction in all pollutions

Maintain our excellent bathing water quality standards, all year round, so that everyone can enjoy our 860 miles of coastline, whatever the time of year

We have over a third of the country’s designated bathing waters, and we are delighted that as a result of significant, targeted investment and decades of partnership work, 100% of the South West’s bathing waters met Defra water quality standards for the second consecutive year running, with 99% achieving Good/Excellent water quality classification.

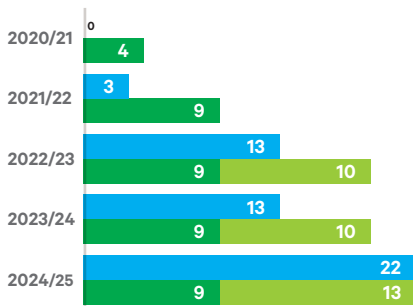
The assessment is done by the Environment Agency and shows that 99% of bathing waters in our region were rated as ‘Good’ or ‘Excellent’ for 2022, compared to just 28% in 1991.

Our WINEP programme includes investments to both improve and to ensure no deterioration in bathing water quality as a result of our assets. We have delivered schemes in this regulatory period ahead of our WINEP programme (as shown in the chart opposite) with 10 schemes at two sites in Bude, Cornwall, and Galmpton in Devon. These investments included three large storm tanks, increased pass forward flow at our pumping stations, surface water separation and improvements/replacements to our overflow screens.

There has been an improvement in classification for nine designated bathing beaches, including Combe Martin, where our investment and interventions have helped achieve a ‘Good’ rating up from a ‘Poor’ rating in 2020. This has been delivered through enhanced and targeted investments in the local network infrastructure, as well as wider interventions across the catchment.

The map below highlights the sites where bathing water quality has increased:

WINEP – Bathing waters



We know we must maintain this progress as well as go further and faster to protect the natural environment. Customers want to enjoy bathing waters all year round and not just in the bathing season of May to September. So, as we have been targeting storm overflows, coastal locations have been a priority. As we look to bring spills on average at bathing waters down to 10, we have been targeting storage and asset upgrades at coastal wastewater treatment works, pumping stations, and network overflows. **At bathing waters, spills reduced from 28 to 21 across the year on average.**

Commitments

Reduce our impact on rivers by 2025, by one third as part of putting forward plans to target zero harm

Reduce spills from storm overflows to an average of 20 per year per overflow by 2025

Maintain our excellent bathing water quality standards, all year round, so that everyone can enjoy our 860 miles of coastline, whatever the time of year

Deliver zero serious pollutions by 2025 and target a year-on-year reduction in all pollutions

Deliver zero serious pollutions by 2025 and target a year-on-year reduction in all pollutions

Overall pollutions reduced by one third giving a 50% reduction over 2 years as we target year on year reductions. We have also seen a reduction in serious category 1 and 2 pollutions from 8 to 2.

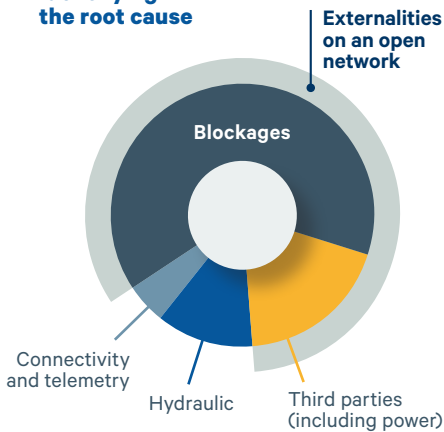
This is our best ever performance, and is the result of delivering our Pollution Incident Reduction Plan.



Key steps to deliver reductions in pollution have included:

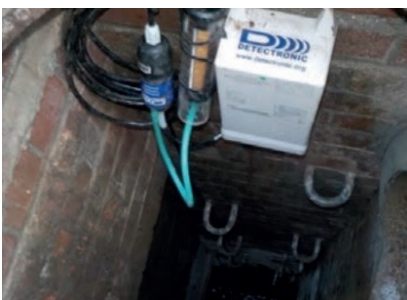
- Pumping station investment** – through maintenance we have kept our sewage pump stations consistently working, delivering at least 98% or more availability. We have been standardising pumps across our infrastructure to improve the availability of spares and maintenance efficiencies.
- Hotspot programme** – we established a fast-track investment fund which targets higher risk ‘hotspots’. This has included the replacement of 18 rising mains in the last year, as part of our programme to replace 36.
- Proactive detection (Ovarro)** – we have invested in Intelligent Burst Rising Main detection at rising mains monitoring over 900 sewer pumping stations, using machine learning to assess the data and escalate for triage and proactive operator response.
- 24/7 Responsiveness** – focuses on how we dynamically respond to pollution incidents operationally. We are investing in sewer depth monitors – 1,440 in the last year – which allows us to better respond to issues as they are arising. We have boosted the number of resources working out of hours, and have increased our alarm response times.
- Root cause analysis (RCA)** – we have established our formal RCA process for all incidents to be completed within two days, with work mobiles utilised to feedback ‘real-time’ information from the field. The key cause of pollutions from foul sewers is blockages – around two thirds of root cause and rapid insight into issues can proactively remove the blockage mitigating a potential pollution or internal sewer flooding. Over the last year we have undertaken 161 RCA assessments which have identified 122 actions of which 42 have been completed and a further 62 are in progress.

Identifying the root cause



Case study

Increasing the monitoring of our sewers



Sewer level monitoring with associated analytics is designed to detect unusual flow patterns and provide early warnings to the Operations Teams. This allows the investigation of potential events that if left could result in a discharge from the sewer network.

The use of real time monitoring and data analytics aids the shift from a reactive to a predictive mode of operation.

We are installing 9,000 monitors at manholes across our sewer network – accelerating so these are delivered by the end of the year, ahead of the March 2025 target date. In the last year we saw the first 1,440 sewer depth monitors installed and these are now providing data and alarms for our operational teams.

Putting nature on everyone's doorstep



Our customers and visitors regularly use the water environment (beaches, lakes, rivers or reservoirs) for recreational purposes and support the protection of the local environment and measures to improve biodiversity. Steps to improve water quality, boost nature, and provide readily accessible recreation spaces is important for customers' physical and mental wellbeing.

Commitments

Make bathing water accessible, less than an hour's drive, for 100% of our residents and visitors

Provide access to our 40 inland lakes and reservoirs, so that local communities can continue enjoying them for health and recreation

Achieve the region's first bathing quality river, using learnings from our current pilots on the rivers Dart and Tavy

One year on...

- 100% of beaches met environmental standards, making bathing water accessible to all – with less than an hour's drive for 100% of our residents and visitors
- We provide access to all 40 inland lakes whenever the weather permits safe and secure access – customers and visitors alike can enjoy for recreation and health
- Dart and Tavy steering group and investments on track

Make bathing water accessible, less than an hour's drive, for 100% of our residents and visitors

Our region contains over a third of all the UK's bathing waters. It is important that we protect these vital recreational areas by improving the quality of our bathing waters and seeking to progress our rivers into bathing waters in the future.

Maintaining the high quality at all bathing waters for the second year running means that any customer or visitor is never more than an hour away from a designated bathing water. This means nature and recreation is on everyone's doorsteps. And as we progress our first river bathing water customers and visitors are getting even closer to nature.

Provide access to our 40 inland lakes and reservoirs, so that local communities can continue enjoying them for health and recreation

There are further opportunities for customers and visitors to enjoy the region's waterways. In addition to 100% of bathing waters meeting the stringent environmental standards, we also own 40 lakes that provide valuable drinking water but are also used by over 2 million visitors a year for walking, cycling, paddle boarding and angling.

We support charitable partnerships that provide health and recreational benefits to the local areas through the use of lakes and our reservoirs. During severe drought there may need to be some restrictions to the use of lakes to protect the safety of visitors, as we saw in late summer 2022, but otherwise these are open to the public all year round.

Achieve the region's first bathing quality river, using learnings from our current pilots on the rivers Dart and Tavy

We are doing our bit to provide more opportunities for visitors and customers to access high quality water, whilst recognising the popularity of rivers and inland waters as places for recreation.

We have started our three-year Rivers Dart and Tavy Inland Bathing Waters Pilot.

Putting nature on everyone's doorstep continued

The pilot aims to increase our understanding of the water quality of these two iconic rivers and build stronger relationships and collaborations with river users, local communities and stakeholders.

Over the last 12 months, we have been working collaboratively with local stakeholders and community groups to identify where permitted access to the river is already occurring, and where local landowners and groups are planning to apply for inland bathing water designations.

Our role in this community-led designation process is to commission and deliver the detailed investigations to assess where and when our assets and activities may influence the water quality around these candidate locations.

We have undertaken a detailed appraisal of nine potential inland bathing sites along the Dart and the Tavy undertaking detailed water quality samples across the bathing season and have deployed ten continuous water quality monitors (six on the Dart and four on the Tavy) measuring Temperature, Conductivity, Ammonium, Turbidity and dissolved oxygen continuously over the bathing season and into the winter period (some sites were decommissioned over the winter period in order to protect the monitors from high flows and damage). In addition, these studies have also been looking at the possible threat to water quality posed by other sources of pollution such as farming, industrial/commercial discharges and other land run-off.

Over the last year these studies have helped us reduce the number of candidate sites to three and start an appraisal of what investments may be required in these assets and catchments to ensure that they do not pose a threat to the water quality in these rivers, or to any future bathing water designation that may come into effect on them. This has helped us understand water quality in the rivers and what the impact of our assets and third party assets has on the water quality.

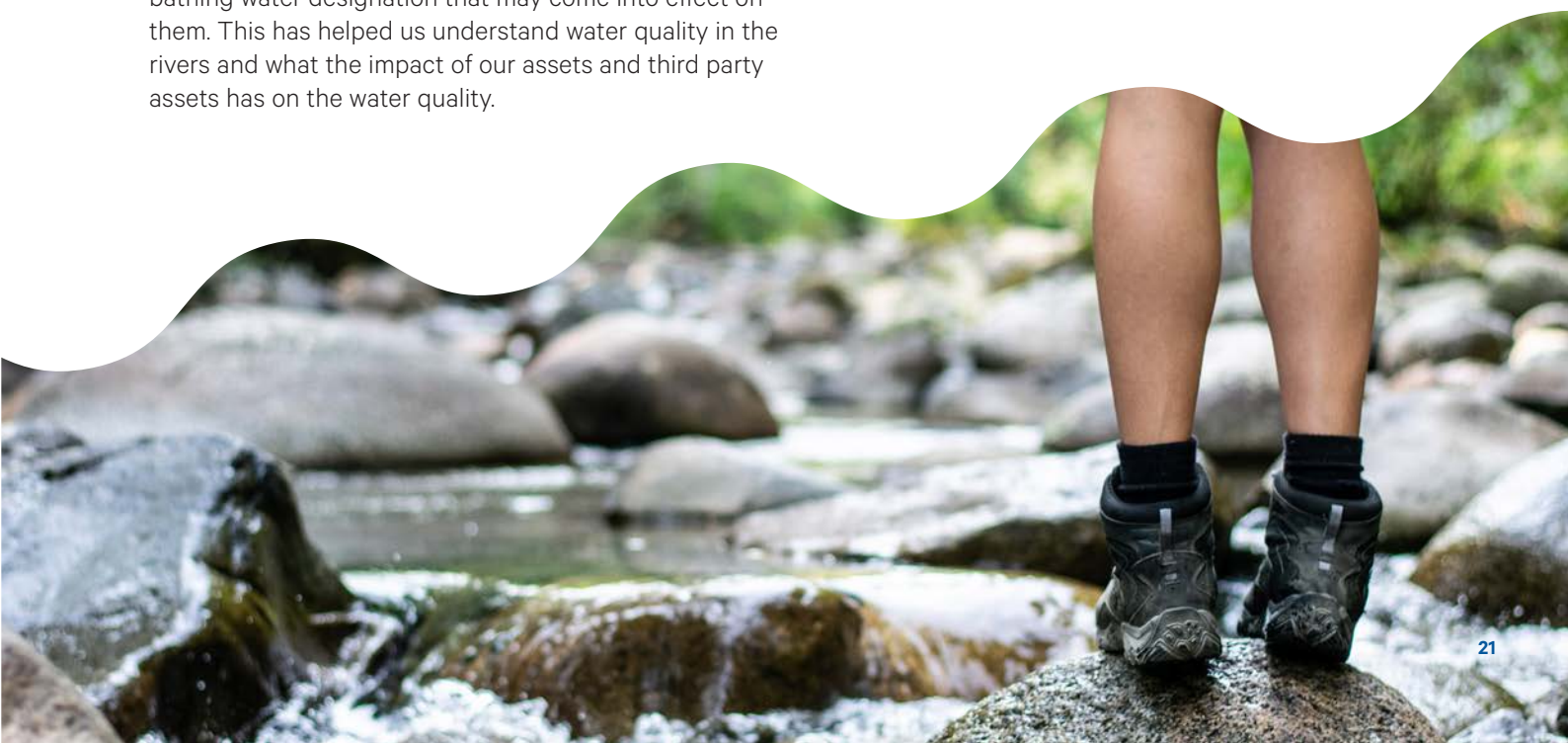
Data from our extensive water quality monitoring programme, coupled with storm overflow monitors throughout both rivers are combined with additional information we are gathering from the communities of the Dart and Tavy about recreational water use. Together this will inform decisions around the most likely candidate locations for an inland bathing water site.

Having worked with stakeholders through our Dart and Tavy stakeholder steering group, the application for new inland bathing water designation is now being actively encouraged and supported by various river and water quality organisations (such as Surfers Against Sewage, The Rivers Trust and others) and by various policymakers around the country.

While we will not be applying for any inland bathing water designations ourselves, there are several local landowners and community groups currently considering applications for designation at locations on both of these rivers and their estuaries.

Having said this, actual proposals for designation are currently only being developed for sites on the lower reaches of the River Dart. While the River Tavy is popular with recreational river users (e.g., kayakers, anglers and swimmers) in certain locations at certain times, there are not currently any local groups who have expressed their intent to apply for bathing water designation on this river.

We are now gathering usage data at a number of sites using new innovative technology called 'Hello Lamp Post', which uses a QR codes for river users to log into a structured questionnaire on river use at each location. Over the 2023 bathing season this process will support the capture of river usage data at the potential inland bathing site.



Commitments

Make bathing water accessible, less than an hour's drive, for 100% of our residents and visitors

Provide access to our 40 inland lakes and reservoirs, so that local communities can continue enjoying them for health and recreation

Achieve the region's first bathing quality river, using learnings from our current pilots on the rivers Dart and Tavy

Case study

The Dart and Tavy pilot in a snapshot

Since the project began in 2022, we have communicated the project to many stakeholders (including riparian interests, landowners and community groups) on both rivers. Both the project team and the community groups seeking to apply for inland bathing water designations have engaged proactively with the landowners in the emerging target locations and secured their buy-in to the process.

We are delighted that over 50 stakeholders have joined our Stakeholder Steering Group for the project, and we have designed and delivered a communication and engagement campaign that is centered on using the 'Hello Lamp Post' platform. This approach will be used at the candidate inland bathing sites and in other riverside locations to raise awareness of river water quality issues and capture people's perceptions of the river throughout the year.

The first year of bathing season sampling across the Dart and Tavy catchments has been completed to create a baseline of water quality information. The monitoring programme has also been extended in certain locations throughout the winter and preparations are now underway to begin the second bathing season sampling programme. In summer 2023, we will also be using a state-of-the-art genetic monitoring technique called 'Microbial Source Tracking' to determine which types of animals are contributing bacteria to the river water at certain times.

The monitoring programme has included the use of ten near real-time river monitors and 'spot-samples' across both catchments and the data gathered is being combined with the results of the water quality modelling work also underway. We have also been working with stakeholders to help them easily understand and interpret the large volumes of highly complex information this is generating.

We are pleased to have been able to share the water quality data in advance of significant stakeholder events on the river, including the 10K swim on the Dart, and with the Dart Harbour Master ahead of specific events. This data sharing has allowed the organisers of these events to make more informed decisions on river water quality safety.

In 2023 we are planning to support inland bathing water applications by local stakeholder groups engage by tracking river usage via the 'Hello Lamp Post' platform and by providing informative and engaging water quality information to build understanding and encourage collaboration. We are also aiming to extend WaterFit Live to include real time storm overflow data relating to the four potential inland bathing sites.

We are also going to examine the performance of all storm overflows within 5km upstream of the proposed inland bathing water sites and co-develop a programme of improvements (to SWW assets and in the wider landscape) that will achieve the required target of no more than 1 spill per bathing season at these sites.





River Tavy,
West Dartmoor



Creating and restoring habitats

We continue to work with our local farmers and landowners to help create more sustainable farming practices and reduce nutrient run-off and pollutions into our rivers and streams. We use a variety of methods on a catchment-by-catchment basis in order to achieve our collective goals, including nature-based plans such as, peatland restoration which has wide benefits on the local area and society as a whole.

Commitments

Stop pollutants from 120,000 hectares of regional farmland getting into rivers and seas by 2025, working with local partners

Restore an additional 1,000 hectares of peatlands by 2025, to create new habitats, improve river quality and reduce flooding

Plant a quarter of a million trees by 2025, to help combat climate change, support river health and create new wildlife habitats



One year on...

- Delivery of our Upstream programme is ahead of target with 107,735 hectares delivered
- Peatland restoration on track as part of our Green Recovery investment on Dartmoor, with one third delivered in the first year
- 220,000 trees planted, ahead of our commitment to plant at least 250,000 by 2025

Stop pollutants from 120,000 hectares of regional farmland getting into rivers and seas by 2025, working with local partners

Upstream Thinking (UST) is South West Water's innovative and award-winning catchment management programme, focused on protecting rivers and groundwaters from harm, delivering cleaner raw water and improved biodiversity.

The range of pollutants reduced includes farming-derived nutrients, pesticides, faecal coliforms, sediment, veterinary medicines and antibiotics. The benefits of this investment are reliable clean water supplies, better wastewater dilution and natural flood management.

In the last year we delivered 12,282 hectares against an annual target of 10,000 hectares, meaning that since 2015 we have engaged with farmers managing 107,735 hectares.

Our pioneering Upstream Thinking programme has been nominated for a business charity award. Ongoing work with farmers and landowners in drinking water catchments to target improvements to land management in feeder streams and County Wildlife Sites, including additional schemes in neighbouring land surrounding our reservoirs.

Restore an additional 1,000 hectares of peatlands by 2025, to create new habitats, improve river quality and reduce flooding

Peatlands are critical in preventing floods, ensuring safe drinking water and reducing climate change. Peatlands are the largest natural terrestrial carbon store and store more carbon than all other types of vegetation in the world combined

So, we have also been restoring peatland on Exmoor, Dartmoor and Bodmin moor, making a significant difference to the quality of water in rivers, with over 300 hectares restored over the last year – and we remain on track to target 1,000 hectares by 2025.

We have improved SWW owned peatland Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) at Stannon and Crowdy reservoirs alongside scrub clearance at Phillack SSSI and removed Himalyan Balsam and scrub at Countess Wear SSSI.

Commitments

Stop pollutants from 120,000 hectares of regional farmland getting into rivers and seas by 2025, working with local partners

Restore an additional 1,000 hectares of peatlands by 2025, to create new habitats, improve river quality and reduce flooding

Plant a quarter of a million trees by 2025, to help combat climate change, support river health and create new wildlife habitats



220,000 trees
planted ahead of our target

The strength of our Upstream Thinking initiative enables us to develop partnerships that will deliver catchment and nature-based solutions, widening the benefits of the initiative beyond providing resilient water supplies.

Plant a quarter of a million trees by 2025, to help combat climate change, support river health and create new wildlife habitats

We plant trees across our own land holdings and those of our partners, including the National Trust and The Wildlife Trusts.

Working with our partners we identify sites and manage the planting programme once it is developed.

The last year was a successful year for tree planting across the South West, as we beat our annual target to plant 50,000 trees. With the help of our delivery partners we planted a total of 72,398, far exceeding our target by nearly 50%.

This brings the total to 220,000 trees planted ahead of our target of 180,000 this year and well on the way to 250,000 pledged to deliver by 2025.

This has included working in partnership to plant 12,000 trees around the river Uंबर to protect Combe Martin bathing waters and wet woodland creation on Dartmoor on the West Okement river.



Delivering our new published biodiversity strategy

In the last year, we published our Biodiversity Strategy called “Growing Nature” which is a strategy to grow nature on our land following three guiding principles:

- **Protect the best** – take action to protect the valuable biodiversity that we have on our landholdings
- **Restore and enhance the rest** – take action across our landholdings and assets to enhance biodiversity in the everyday management of our sites
- **Beyond our landholdings** – work with others across the region to ensure our sites play their role in connecting biodiversity in the wider landscape of nature recovery

We have boosted nature in line with our strategy.

We have installed more than 150 bat and bird boxes on our key sites. Many of our sites are important havens for birds and provide access to water, warmth and sustenance in the winter. A key project with Butterfly Conservation has been also to review our management of a site with the opportunity for a rare butterfly the Grizzled Skipper on Dartmoor.

We have opened access to our land to support the Green Corridor project and connect two SSSIs in Falmouth, Cornwall in partnership with a local community group and the local parish council. The space provides local residents with access to a riparian wet woodland strip and connects Swanpool SSSI and Tregonigie Community Woodland.

We have engaged with all Catchment Partnerships in the region, bringing them together to share knowledge, expertise and best practice.

We have undertaken surveys and investigations to support future biodiversity enhancements, including:

- Surveys to understand the nature and distribution of our two wild beaver populations on the rivers Wolf and Upper Tamar
- River restoration investigation on the river Camel SAC upstream of our Delank abstraction to inform a plan to deliver biodiversity enhancements
- Habitat surveys covering 6,310 hectares of land and 289km linear habitat we own, sharing our finding with the local environmental records centres, including habitat surveys and active ecological management at ten County Wildlife Sites informing active management plans delivering biodiversity improvements
- Investigation to naturalise the Bourne stream which is a designated SSSI and SAC which is historically impacted by water company operations.



Find out more on our biodiversity strategy [here](#)



Top **Installing bird boxes at Marsh Mills**
Above **Wild Beaver survey**

Delivering our new published biodiversity strategy continued

Invasive non-native species (INNS) can create havoc in the environment – and we work hard to contain the spread and reduce the numbers of these.

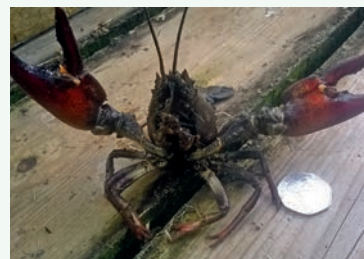
We have mounted INNS control exercises to remove and prevent Ruffe – a type of predatory fish invasive to Cornwall and Devon – from getting into the River Fowey and to remove American Signal Crayfish from Burrator to protect the historic Devonport leat and raw water transfer which links to rivers Meavy and Dart.

We have installed biosecurity and invasives awareness signage and wash-down facilities, including an angling dip-tank at Upper Tamar Lakes, across a number of sites. We have also launched a regional pathway action plan for watercraft with Bristol and Wessex Water to reduce the spread and impact of INNS through the watersports community.

We have deployed sniffer dogs to understand the distribution of non-native American Signal crayfish to complement traditional techniques for managing and controlling INNS.

In Wistlandpound catchment, we have been monitoring river fly species on the river Yeo working with citizen scientists from the local community and the Riverfly partnership to monitor the increase in biodiversity arising from our Upstream thinking investments.

Overall, we have 31 sites in the aqua biosecurity accreditation scheme standards (a range of measures to prevent the spread of INNS). Across this, we have 22 bronze, 7 silver and 2 gold schemes – and we are the only water company with a gold accreditation and the organisation with the most schemes – at 31.



Top American Signal Crayfish
Above New Zealand pigmyweed



Inspiring our local champions

We support local communities who aim to increase the health of our rivers and bodies of water. We believe it is important to educate people on how we can be more environmentally friendly with our water use, so we will support outreach programmes that target schools and the local communities.

Commitments

Donate 25% of our Community Fund to local groups that protect river and sea health

Launch our WaterFit Warriors programme, to inspire thousands of water quality champions in schools and communities across the region

Share progress with our customers through our unique WaterShare+ scheme at quarterly public meetings and our annual Customer AGM



One year on...

- Donations to 22 local communities that share our passion for rivers and seas – over one third of all donations
- WaterFit Warriors launched through our school education programme
- We have provided regular updates on our environmental performance to our WaterShare+ panel – and will share our annual WaterFit update at the customer Annual General Meeting (AGM) in July

Donate 25% of our Community Fund to local groups that protect river and sea health

Overall, we donate to a range of environmental organisations and charities each year.

These are an important source of funds for communities that are looking to:

- Protect nature and the environment for the benefit of community health and well-being
- Save water to protect our rivers and reservoirs
- Provide new opportunities for people to learn and develop
- Support the upkeep of local neighbourhood centres and facilities to keep communities strong

Last year we donated 35% of our community fund to 22 local groups with a particular passion for river and sea health. This includes organisations responsible for local wildlife, conservation and increasing the accessibility of water, such as sea pools.

Launch our WaterFit Warriors programme, to inspire thousands of water quality champions in schools and communities across the region

We have launched WaterFit Warriors as part of our community outreach and more specifically our schools education programme. Our SWW educational officer has delivered lessons in 83 schools – reaching 4,051 schoolchildren in the year.

In addition, we have teamed up with the Westcountry Rivers Trust so that 'Network Rangers' provide 250 surveys of rivers every month.

Share progress with our customers through our unique WaterShare+ scheme at quarterly public meetings and our annual Customer AGM

There is no better way to respond to or capture public sentiment than building a deep relationship with customers, making sure they are at the heart of what we do, supporting decision making and delivery by ensuring that if we benefit, customers benefit too. So, in 2020 we launched WaterShare+ to give customers a say and a stake.

WaterShare+ is our unique take on a mutual society in the water sector. Through direct access through public meetings and a dedicated AGM, customers have access to the South West Water Executive team and our special advisors from the EA, Natural England and CCW. Customers truly have a great say in our business. And by issuing shares in Pennon when we succeed, customers can truly have a stake in the business.

More households than ever before are now shareholders, with 1 in 14 in South West Water participating in WaterShare+. Over the course of the last 12 months, we have expanded WaterShare+ scheme to Bristol Water customers as well, following merger clearance, enabling all customers to have a stake and say in our business.

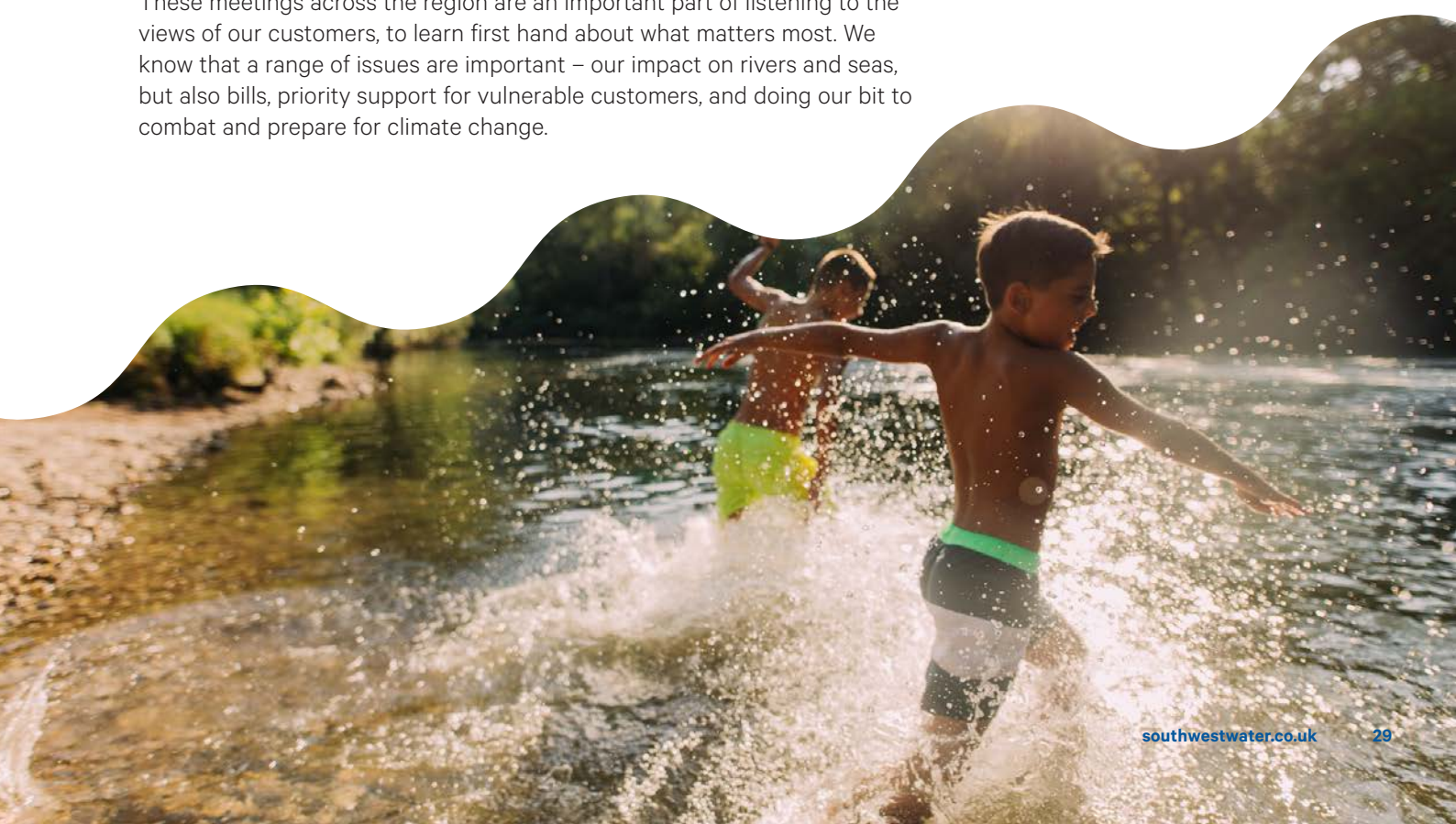
This gives new shareholders a stake in our success. And for the 1 in 14 customers that were already shareholders, the second issuance allowed them to build their holding.

WaterShare+ is supported by an independent WaterShare+ Advisory Panel, which has been established to protect the interests of our customers by being the voice of the customer. The Panel provides an independent review of our business plan commitments and Board Pledges. With the support of the Panel, we have continued to host in-public meetings across the region and our customer Annual General Meeting last summer.

These meetings across the region are an important part of listening to the views of our customers, to learn first hand about what matters most. We know that a range of issues are important – our impact on rivers and seas, but also bills, priority support for vulnerable customers, and doing our bit to combat and prepare for climate change.



WaterShare+



Creating a sustainable future

We are campaigning for measures to ensure that the only things that go down the drains are the three Ps – paper, poo and pee. When plastic-based wet wipes are flushed down the toilet or cooking fats and oils are put down the sink, these build-up in the sewers causing blockages, flooding and pollution – and this is particularly acute in tourist areas. So we are looking to educate visitors and customers alike on how to avoid blockages and alleviate stress on our sewer systems, working with local partners.

Commitments

Work collaboratively on the building of new developments in our region, to help us manage our network

Back the ban on non-flushable or plastic-containing wet wipes, to help prevent blockages

Work with our 10 million visitors, and 2.3 million customers, so they understand the important role they play in protecting our region, through our Love Your Loo campaign



One year on...

- Building partnerships to better manage our network
- Supporting the call for a ban on non flushables – and responding positively to the ongoing consultation by Defra on plastic-based wipes
- Engaging customers and visitors alike on priorities and sustainable behaviour – through our business as usual and future planning engagement processes

Work collaboratively on the building of new developments in our region, to help us manage our network

We have a highly diverse range of stakeholders – from local authorities to charities, environmental groups to investors, and businesses to household customers.

We have revolutionised our approach to stakeholder engagement and are delivering a coherent, robust, and consistent approach which has seen the volume of involvement significantly increase.

In 2022 we established our stakeholder forum. In July 2022, over 75 partners joined us at our first forum to explore the issues and opportunities around our wastewater plans.

This has been followed with regional catchment events, further online forums in December 2022, March 2023 and April 2023 each attended by over 50 stakeholders, alongside a programme of 1-2-1 meetings to explore partnership opportunities and co-create solutions.

Our engagement has focussed on environmental destination, the 25-year environment plan and catchment and nature-based solutions. These events are looking at multiple drivers and have started our thinking about how we can deliver solutions with our stakeholders at a catchment level.

Our stakeholders have told us that they want our current and future plans to align with their strategic and local delivery plans – for example Flood Risk Management Plans, River Basin Management Plans, Climate Change Risks Assessments. We support this – ensuring that our joint ways of working provide the greatest benefits and synergies.

Stakeholders are willing to be involved as delivery partners in catchment interventions building on the success of the Upstream Thinking approach, which also has the potential for attracting public and private funds to create jobs and deliver Defra’s 25 Year Environment Plan nature recovery objectives.

Commitments

Work collaboratively on the building of new developments in our region, to help us manage our network

Back the ban on non-flushable or plastic-containing wet wipes, to help prevent blockages

Work with our 10 million visitors, and 2.3 million customers, so they understand the important role they play in protecting our region, through our Love Your Loo campaign



The use of wet wipes creates **4,500 blockages** each year

In our stakeholder engagement we have reflected on lessons learnt over the past 15 years of delivering Upstream Thinking and Peatland Restoration. A key lesson is that our local environmental delivery partners can access co-funding to broaden the impact and benefits delivered by projects supported by South West Water. Environmental delivery partners and local landowners are able to access a wider range of philanthropic funding and green finance initiatives which can be used to co-fund delivery of nature-based solutions at landscape scale.

Back the ban on non-flushable or plastic-containing wet wipes, to help prevent blockages

We have long supported a ban on non-flushable or plastic containing wet wipes being flushed down the loo. Wet wipes flushed down toilets contribute to or cause sewer blockages, which leads to pollution and storm overflow spills, and cost millions each year to clear up.

The government has announced a consultation into the banning of plastic wet wipes, government said it will launch a public consultation on the measure. This is a development we welcome, and we are responding positively to the consultation. We will work with our partners to encourage them to respond positively too.

Work with our 10 million visitors, and 2.3 million customers, so they understand the important role they play in protecting our region, through our Love Your Loo campaign

Most people only flush the 3Ps – pee, paper and poo – down the loo. They recognise that this is what the sewer system is designed for, linking loos in your home with the pipe network and your local treatment works.

But some people do contribute to blocked sewers, which costs £4.5million a year and adds to bills, by inappropriately flushing baby wipes, hygiene wipes, cleaning wipes, cleansing pads and sanitary products. Blocked sewers can cause flooding, which is extremely unpleasant especially if it happens in your home, and can be easily avoided.

We continue to work hard to help people in the region to love their loo by only flushing pee, paper and poo.



Putting people in control



We know how important it is to be forthcoming about our impact on the environment. This means providing our customers with real-time information on river quality, our treatment works and storm overflows, so they can see the change we are delivering and make the right recreational choices.

Commitments

Work with partners to provide water quality information for residents and visitors, making it easily accessible on our website by the end of this year

Help people understand river health, by sharing real-time river water quality information, just as we do for our bathing waters, by 2023

Provide 100% monitor coverage at our treatment works and on our storm overflows, by 2023

One year on...

- WaterFit Live launched in March 2023 giving ‘real-time’ updates on the water quality at bathing beaches – with further updates later this year as we cover rivers
- Launched our new stakeholder forum – to foster working relationships with partners across the region
- 100% of EDMs installed ahead of our December 2023 commitment, and over 1,440 sewer depth monitors installed to ensure we put our people in control

Work with partners to provide water quality information for residents and visitors, making it easily accessible on our website by the end of this year

We know our customers and communities are passionate about the quality of our beautiful bathing waters in the South West and are rightly asking for more information. WaterFit Live is our way of giving customers and visitors the information they need when they want to visit their favourite beach.

In March 2023 we launched our WaterFit Live interactive map.

WaterFit Live is our way of giving customers and visitors the information they need when they want to visit their favourite beach. It is an important step on our journey to demonstrating transparency and providing easily accessible information to a wide audience.

- Beach information – including the local amenities and whether or not the beach has a Blue Flag
- Location data – the locations of any EDMs and outlets, and verified annual overflow release data for overflows
- Data on bathing water quality – and whether or not a bathing beach is temporarily affected by a release from an overflow
- Information about investment – on the investment we are making under WaterFit at our bathing waters. Users across the region
- Answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs)

WaterFit Live provides accessible, up to date information on bathing water quality, giving customers and beachgoers knowledge of whether storm overflows are temporarily affecting bathing water quality. It also gives more information on the work we are doing and investment we are making at beaches across the South West to improve water quality across our beautiful region

WaterFit Live provides us with the opportunity to explain overflows and provide the crucial context and information that helps inform the developing conversation around them.

We provide this much-needed context with clear explanations, easy-to-digest facts and simple animations that will allow customers to easily understand the complexities of our sewer network as well as bring clarity in a debate where it is sometimes lacking.

Through FAQs, WaterFit Live enables us to answer those questions that we so often get asked. We've sought to break down the complexity and do everything we can to give simple, straightforward answers to those pertinent questions, helping to bust myths and shed light on the realities of the challenges, as well as the opportunities we are presented with.

In customer focus groups, 22 out of 23 (96%) customers thought the site was easy to use and clear, and 18 out of 23 (78%) consider the site important to view before visiting their local beach.

By 2025, we will have invested in 48 beaches with storm overflows – and by 2030 we will have invested in all of the beaches as we separate surface water drainage from our sewer network, build storm tanks to hold more water at sewage works, and improve treatment works.

96%
customers think
WaterFit Live is easy
and clear to use

76%
consider the site
important to view
before visiting their
local beach
– SWW Customer Forum

The response to
WaterFit has been
positive



For more information
about WaterFit
click [here](#)



Commitments

Work with partners to provide water quality information for residents and visitors, making it easily accessible on our website by the end of this year

Help people understand river health, by sharing real-time river water quality information, just as we do for our bathing waters, by 2023

Provide 100% monitor coverage at our treatment works and on our storm overflows, by 2023

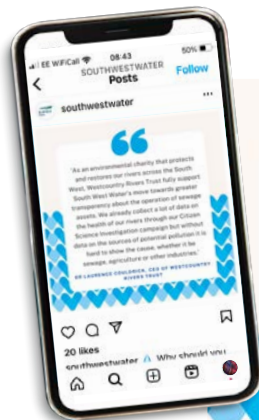
One part of WaterFit Live is our ‘Your Beach, Your Say, Our Investment’ engagement programme, where communities come together and collectively have their say to shape our future plans.

Much insight lies with our customers and beach communities. Through **#YourBeachYourSayOurInvestment** we give groups across the region the opportunity to have their voices heard, providing us with useful, evidence based input to help prioritise investment plans at our bathing beaches from 2025 to 2030 and beyond.

WaterFit Live provides a clear and defined route for groups to share their knowledge and insight with us – all they need to do is fill out a simple form and our Community Engagement team then get in touch.

The conversations that we start with communities and groups through WaterFit Live will give us the opportunity not just to help us prioritise our investment programme but to build valuable relationships and to explore how, through working together, we can better protect our natural environment.


Find out more [here](#)



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‘As an environmental charity that protects and restores our rivers across the South West, Westcountry Rivers Trust fully support South West Water’s move towards greater transparency about the operation of sewage assets. We already collect a lot of data on the health of our rivers through our Citizen Science Investigation campaign but without data on the sources of potential pollution it is hard to show the cause, whether it be sewage, agriculture or other industries.’

DR LAURENCE COULDRICK, CEO OF WESTCOUNTRY RIVERS TRUST



Commitments

Work with partners to provide water quality information for residents and visitors, making it easily accessible on our website by the end of this year

Help people understand river health, by sharing real-time river water quality information, just as we do for our bathing waters, by 2023

Provide 100% monitor coverage at our treatment works and on our storm overflows, by 2023



100%
monitored

27%
fewer
spills*

* at each location on average

Help people understand river health, by sharing real-time river water quality information, just as we do for our bathing waters, by 2023

As we move towards greater transparency, we have committed to providing near real time data for all our storm overflows, which we also intend to share via WaterFit Live. We will build and develop on this map, getting feedback and input from customers and communities to ensure we are responding to the information you want to see.

Whilst we are beginning our journey with information about bathing beaches, the next phase of WaterFit Live is to move to near real time reporting at an individual overflow level to provide even more transparency. We propose to add this to WaterFit Live at beaches once we have gained feedback and insight from users – and that is due to be in place for the bathing season. We will then extend to all storm overflows – including inland rivers by the end of the year.

Provide 100% monitor coverage at our treatment works and on our storm overflows, by 2023

During 2022 we focussed on completing the deployment of the remaining Event Duration Monitors on our storm overflows ahead of the regulatory deadline. We have now installed monitors on 100% of our storm overflows – following the installation of 230 additional monitors over the last year.

For the first time, we can now monitor and act on activity across hundreds of storm overflows across our region.

We are committed to achieving an average of 20 spills per storm overflow by 2025. Even with a greater number of storm overflows that are monitored, average spills have reduced from 38.9 in 2021 to 28.5 in 2022 – a reduction of approximately one third. Whilst weather does make a difference, over half of this reduction is due to our interventions and investments.

Storm overflow	2021	2022	Difference
Number of storm overflows with spill data	1,093	1,323	230
Number of spills	42,484	37,649	-4,835
Average number of spills	38.9	28.5	-10.4
Duration of spills (hours)	351,784	290,271	-61,513
Average duration of spills (hours)	8.3	7.7	-0.6

Concluding comments

WaterFit is our three year programme to protect rivers and seas to 2025.

One year on and we have delivered significant outcomes through c.50 initiatives across our region. Many of these have only recently been installed, and we have not seen the full benefits of yet, but will provide much needed benefits in the future.

Over this coming year we will continue to deliver WaterFit, focused on:

- Tackling high spilling overflows through further operational optimisation, configuration and improving EDM operability
- Continuing our programme of storm overflow improvements identified through WaterFit through capital investment at combined storm overflows, sewage pumping stations and sewage treatment works, to ensure our assets are resilient for the future and to meet the new standards within the Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan
- Delivering customer engagement and interactions and improving transparency through our WaterFit Live development and customer engagement initiatives such as Love Your Loo and Your Beach, Your Say, Our Investment
- Supporting new development and growth in the region and delivering improved river water quality by delivering Nutrient neutrality schemes and WINEP phosphate schemes across the region.

Alongside the delivery of WaterFit, we continue to develop our future plans. As we look to build our plans for 2025 onwards, we know that we have the opportunity to deliver long term environmental outcomes and provide for a resilient future, addressing the challenges of climate change, population growth and urban creep in line with customer and community views.

Our longer term plans will continue to deliver investment to enhance river water quality and support bathing water quality all year around. We will target zero harm, as we look to address the RNAGs associated with our operations, and bring spills down in line with targets and what our customers and communities want.

We will continue to increase network capacity, reducing storm overflows into waterways. We will upgrade works to enhance rivers and boost economic growth. We will boost the use of nature based solutions and the working relations with partners that we have across the south west, and ultimately develop adaptive approaches which deliver for the long term.

We are working with our customers and stakeholders to build our future plans, which will pick up where WaterFit ends, as we look to develop best value investment plans and use the best approaches to deliver environmental outcomes in the future.



FIND OUT MORE

You can find more detailed information about our plans and keep track of our progress by clicking [here](#)





**South West
Water**

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