

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

**30 May** Daily Record Scottish ministers worst-hit by sewage dumping nightmare in their constituencies revealed. First Minister Humza Yousaf topped the 'revolting' list with his Pollok constituency facing 8.3million cubic metres of sewage discharged into waterways last year.

**24 May** Scotsman reports crisis of sewage in rivers and at beaches was entirely predictable, with overflowing sewers made part of the system and climate change ignored.

**22 May** Daily Mail (Scotland) I'd think twice about swimming in the sea after heavy rainfall due to sewage...says Scottish Water boss. [headline misrepresents BBC interview where Simon Parsons indicated he would follow SEPA's guidance before swimming]

**19 May** BBC, Herald, The Times and Scottish Daily Express report on Marine Conservation Society call for greater monitoring of sewage spills in Scotland and spill reduction targets to be set by SG.

**18 May** Alex Cole-Hamilton submitted a motion (S6M-08949) calling on Parliament to note Scottish Water's 14k sewage spill figures for 2022 and every sewage dump to be properly recorded and published, and for the upgrading of Scotland's ageing sewage system.

**16 May** Water UK apologised for performance in E and W sewage spills, announcing creation of an environmental info. hub and bringing forward a storm overflow plan this summer with fast-tracking £10bn of funding [does not apply to Scotland – action we are taking is outlined in note below].

### TOP LINES

**We take very seriously the issue of sewage pollution incidents, and the former Minister for Environment and Land Reform's statement in Parliament in December 2021 set out comprehensive plans to reduce sewage spills over the coming decade.**

- As published by Scottish Water, the reportable discharges in my constituency (127) are all from a settled storm sewage overflow at Shieldhall Wastewater Treatment Works, which is treated to protect Clyde estuary's water quality.
- 47% of Scottish Water's total reported sewage discharge events in 2022 are treated to protect the environment. [*settled storm sewage overflows receive settlement or primary treatment before discharge*].
- It is important to note that less than 1% of these spills is sewage and the rest is largely rain water. These overflows represent huge volumes of rainwater being safely transferred away from homes and businesses to prevent flooding during times of excessive rainfall.
- Scottish Water's Improving Urban Waters Route Map (December 2021), sets out a programme of continued action to reduce wastewater pollution and sewage litter over the coming decade backed by investment of up to half a billion pounds (*rebuttal to ACH claim that there is no strategy for upgrading Victorian sewers*).
- The first annual update to the route map was published in December 2022:
  - 54 projects have already been initiated to address issues caused by high priority CSO discharges by 2027 in line with Scottish Water's capital investment process.

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- Priority locations have been identified for 1,000 new spill monitors, with installation programmed over 2023 and 2024 at a value of £70m. The methodology for deciding these locations is on the Scottish Water website.
- Spill data which is reported to SEPA has already been published on Scottish Water's website.

### **Scottish Water is in the process of developing detailed solutions for 104 high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) due to their impact on water quality or sewage related debris.**

- Plans are already in place to address 24 high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) by 2027 as set out in the third River Basin Management Plan.
- Scottish Water is also developing solutions for 39 waste water treatment works which are included as water quality improvement measures.

## SCOTLAND'S WATER QUALITY

### **87% of Scotland's entire water environment is assessed by SEPA as having a 'high' or 'good' classification for water quality – up from 82% six years ago.**

- SEPA reports that 66% of Scotland's water environment meets 'good' ecological status overall, whereas, Environment Agency figures for England are only 16% (*rebuttal to ACH claim that England has 'more of a handle' on sewage issue*).
- The upgrade in water quality reflects improvements made through Scottish Water's investment programme, and work by a range of stakeholders to improve rural land management practices to reduce diffuse pollution.
- SEPA's data indicates that 56% of rivers are in overall good condition, and for water quality the figure is much higher at 85%.

## OVERFLOW MONITORING

### **Rather than permanent monitoring, which is the common approach for water companies in England, Scottish Water carried out a more comprehensive Scotland-wide environmental study programme to assess the impacts of its assets on water quality during the 2015 to 2021 investment period costing £40m (rebuttal to ACH claim that Scotland does not monitor sewage outflow)**

- English water companies have not yet undertaken the detailed environmental assessments that have been completed in Scotland.
- SEPA regularly monitors the water environment to ensure it is not impacted by sewage spills.
- In 2019, it took around 19,000 monitoring samples across Scotland to safeguard the water quality of our rivers, lochs and coastal areas.
- SEPA licences and regulates 345 sewer networks operated by Scottish Water carrying out inspections on a rolling basis.
- In 2019 there were 7 out of 100 found not to be compliant with their licence conditions. SEPA took action to ensure compliance was achieved.
- Scottish Water's Improving Urban Waters Routemap outlines the significant investment underway to increase data monitors on our overflows by the end of 2024. As part of this work, data capture and availability is being reviewed to allow further enhancements.

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- Scottish Water will publish information on the number of days for which monitors are unavailable to support the reporting of 2023 overflow events in January 2024.
- Comprehensive monitoring of water bodies is undertaken by SEPA to assess water quality, water resources, physical condition and aquatic ecology which are combined to produce an overall classification of the water environment.
- Increasing the monitoring of sewage outflow pipes would not change the classification of the water environment under the current system by SEPA, Scotland's independent environmental regulator.

## ROLE OF COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOWS (CSOs)

**Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are an integral part of Scotland's sewer networks, ensuring sewers don't back up and flood homes, streets and sewage works during periods of heavy rainfall.**

- It's not accurate to call CSO spills from the waste water network sewage spills. What is spilled is largely rain water as the toilet sewage element is less than 1% of the total volume.
- Scottish Water has reduced environmental pollution incidents by 60% over the last decade from 800 each year to fewer than 300, in spite of increasingly challenging weather patterns.
- Scottish Water's national campaign 'Nature Calls' raises awareness of sewer blockages caused by inappropriately-flushed items such as wet wipes containing plastic and other personal hygiene products.
- SEPA is required by law to identify unsatisfactory CSOs, primarily for water quality or sewage related debris impacts, in order to reduce those impacts on the water environment.
- Scottish Government recognises the multiple benefits that blue and green infrastructure provides to support climate and water resilience, including combined sewer overflow spill reduction, and published the Water Resilient Places Policy Framework in February 2021.
- Scottish Water, SEPA and the local authorities support the framework and we will continue to see increased use of blue and green infrastructure in future as this becomes the primary method for managing surface water.

## BATHING WATERS

**98% of Scotland's bathing waters currently achieve the bathing water quality standards with more being rated excellent than ever before.**

- Scottish bathing water season started on 1st June with two new designations and more bathing waters rated excellent than ever before. This brings the total number of Bathing Waters in Scotland to 89.
- In line with globally recognised guidance, SEPA advises against bathing for up to 48 hours after heavy rainfall due to the increased risk of poor water quality.
- SEPA's monitoring of Bathing Waters shows water quality can be impacted by a range of bacterial sources following heavy rain and not just sewage spills including agricultural land runoff, urban runoff, and dog and seagull faeces.
- There are no sewage spills into Peterhead Lido bathing water and SEPA classifies the water quality there as excellent.

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

- Portobello beach designated bathing waters currently meet the stringent bathing water quality standards set by Europe and recommended by the World Health Organisation.
- Scottish Ministers designate bathing waters where a large number of people bathe considering past trends, facilities and infrastructure provided and promotion of bathing.
- The interpretation of a large number of bathers of around 150 daily bathers in Scotland is in line with those across Europe where the maximum figure used is 300 daily bathers.

## WILD SWIMMING

### **Rivers and other open water locations that are not designated as bathing waters are managed for the purpose of protecting fish and wildlife.**

- Water in these locations may contain levels of pathogens which are harmless to wildlife, but would not meet designated bathing waters standards.
- The UK Health Security Agency advises that anyone can become unwell from swimming in any open water, as there will always be micro-organisms present.

## WATER OF LEITH

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

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

## RIVER ALMOND

### **Scottish Water is planning to invest up to £50m to deliver water quality improvements to the River Almond by 2027 to meet Scottish Government's River Basin Management Planning objectives.**

[redacted]

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

**16 May** Embargoed announcement expected today (Thursday) from Water UK apologising for performance in England and Wales sewage spills, announcing the creation of an environmental info. hub and bringing forward a storm overflow plan this summer with fast-tracking £10bn of funding [does not apply to Scotland – action we are taking is outlined in note below].

**15 May** iNews Alex Cole-Hamilton asks why sewage is regularly being discharged into sites with special environmental protections in place and calls on the FM to intervene.

**9 May** The Times urges Scottish Water to tackle sewage 'menace'- Scotland's waterways are being polluted by "unacceptable" numbers of sewage spills.

Campaigners claim that new Scottish Water data show that more than 9 million litres of raw sewage was discharged into the River Eden, Forth Estuary and the North Sea in Fife last year. The total volume of recorded waste released across Scotland was 47.1 million cubic metres, enough to fill almost 19,000 Olympic swimming pools.

**30 Apr** Alex Cole Hamilton BBC Radio Scotland The Sunday Show interview 'Sewage on Scottish Beaches, rebuttal lines provided below (underlined and italicised).

**25 Apr** Scot Lib Dems on Twitter: *"Across Scotland there were 14,008 disgusting sewage overflows like this. The Scottish Government are neglecting our rivers and waterways. The new Environment Secretary must ensure monitoring of is ramped up so we get a true picture of the scale of this disgusting problem."*

**8 Apr:** Record highlights that Feargal Sharkey demands answers after stretch of Scotland's most famous salmon fishing river deteriorates. A popular 20-mile section of the world-renowned River Spey has been classed as in 'poor ecological condition' since 2019.

**5 Apr:** The Ferret highlights a green charity has complained to Environmental Standards Scotland about the Scottish Government's allegedly "unlawful" approach to protecting bathing waters from sewage leaks, claiming it is the weakest in the UK.

**30 Mar:** Record highlight authorities in Scotland only required to monitor 4% of overflows, in comparison to 89% requirement in England. Highlight SEPA stats

### **We take very seriously the issue of sewage pollution incidents, and the former Minister for Environment and Land Reform's statement in Parliament in December 2021 set out comprehensive plans to reduce sewage spills over the coming decade.**

- Scottish Water's Improving Urban Waters Route Map (December 2021), sets out a programme of continued action to reduce wastewater pollution and sewage litter over the coming decade backed by investment of up to half a billion pounds (*rebuttal to ACH claim that there is no strategy for upgrading Victorian sewers*).
- The first annual update to the route map was published in December 2022:
  - *54 projects have already been initiated to address issues caused by high priority CSO discharges by 2027* in line with Scottish Water's capital investment process.
  - Priority locations have been identified for 1,000 new spill monitors, with installation programmed over 2023 and 2024 at a value of £70m. The methodology for deciding these locations is on the Scottish Water website.
  - Spill data which is reported to SEPA has already been published on Scottish Water's website.

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**Scottish Water is in the process of developing detailed solutions for 104 high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) due to their impact on water quality or sewage related debris.**

- Plans are already in place to address 24 high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) by 2027 as set out in the third River Basin Management Plan.
- Scottish Water is also developing solutions for 39 waste water treatment works which are included as water quality improvement measures.

## SCOTLAND'S WATER QUALITY

**87% of Scotland's entire water environment is assessed by SEPA as having a 'high' or 'good' classification for water quality – up from 82% six years ago.**

- SEPA reports that 66% of Scotland's water environment meets 'good' ecological status overall, whereas, Environment Agency figures for England are only 16% (*rebuttal to ACH claim that England has 'more of a handle' on sewage issue*).
- The upgrade in water quality reflects improvements made through Scottish Water's investment programme, and work by a range of stakeholders to improve rural land management practices to reduce diffuse pollution.
- SEPA's data indicates that 56% of rivers are in overall good condition, and for water quality the figure is much higher at 85%.

## ROLE OF COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOWS (CSOs)

**Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are an integral part of Scotland's sewer networks, ensuring sewers don't back up and flood homes, streets and sewage works during periods of heavy rainfall.**

- Scottish Water has reduced environmental pollution incidents by 60% over the last decade from 800 each year to fewer than 300, in spite of increasingly challenging weather patterns.
- SEPA is required by law to identify unsatisfactory CSOs, primarily for water quality or sewage related debris impacts, in order to reduce those impacts on the water environment.

## OVERFLOW MONITORING

**Rather than permanent monitoring, which is the common approach for water companies in England, Scottish Water carried out a more comprehensive Scotland-wide environmental study programme to assess the impacts of its assets on water quality during the 2015 to 2021 investment period costing £40m (rebuttal to ACH claim that Scotland does not monitor sewage outflow)**

- English water companies have not yet undertaken the detailed environmental assessments that have been completed in Scotland.
- SEPA regularly monitors the water environment to ensure it is not impacted by sewage spills.
- In 2019, it took around 19,000 monitoring samples across Scotland to safeguard the water quality of our rivers, lochs and coastal areas.
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- In 2019 there were 7 out of 100 found not to be compliant with their licence conditions. SEPA took action to ensure compliance was achieved.
- Scottish Water's Improving Urban Waters Routemap outlines the significant investment underway to increase data monitors on our overflows by the end of 2024. As part of this work, data capture and availability is being reviewed to allow further enhancements.
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## BATHING WATERS

**Scottish Ministers designate bathing waters where a large number of people bathe considering past trends, facilities and infrastructure provided and promotion of bathing. Two new bathing waters were designated in 2022 increasing the number of bathing waters across Scotland to 87 in total.**

- 98% of Scotland's bathing waters currently achieve the bathing water quality standards with more being rated excellent than ever before.
- The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Just Transition will announce the list of designated bathing waters prior to the 1 June.
- The interpretation of a large number of bathers of around 150 daily bathers in Scotland is in line with those across Europe where the maximum figure used is 300 daily bathers.
- The River Almond at Almondell, West Lothian has been the only bathing waters application in recent years that has been unsuccessful in meeting the large number of bathers criteria.
- In 2022, the former Minister for Environment and Land Reform responded in writing to local River Almond stakeholders and the Environment Rights Centre for Scotland, who represented them, explaining why the River Almond was not designated as a Bathing Water and the bathing waters designation process.
- There are no sewage spills into Peterhead Lido bathing water and SEPA classifies the water quality there as excellent.

## WATER OF LEITH

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**8 Apr:** Record highlights that Feargal Sharkey demands answers after stretch of Scotland's most famous salmon fishing river deteriorates. A popular 20-mile section of the world-renowned River Spey has been classed as in 'poor ecological condition' since 2019.

**5 Apr:** The Ferret highlights a green charity has complained to Environmental Standards Scotland about the Scottish Government's allegedly "unlawful" approach to protecting bathing waters from sewage leaks, claiming it is the weakest in the UK.

**5 Apr:** STV News highlights Sewage released into Scottish waters more than 14,000 times last year.

**30 Mar:** Record highlight authorities in Scotland only required to monitor 4% of overflows, in comparison to 89% requirement in England. Highlight SEPA stats showing 10799 overspill events in Scotland in 2021, but volume not recorded for 5219 of these.

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- This comprehensive Scottish Water environmental study programme contributed significantly to 654 out of 3,614 CSOs being identified as unsatisfactory by SEPA.
- SEPA regularly monitors the water environment to ensure it is not impacted by sewage spills.
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- 98% of Scotland's bathing waters currently achieve the bathing water quality standards with more being rated excellent than ever before.
- The interpretation of a large number of bathers of around 150 daily bathers in Scotland is in line with those across Europe where the maximum figure used is 300 daily bathers.
- The River Almond at Almondell, West Lothian has been the only bathing waters application in recent years that has been unsuccessful in meeting the large number of bathers criteria.
- In 2022, the former Minister for Environment and Land Reform responded in writing to local River Almond stakeholders and the Environment Rights Centre for Scotland, who represented them, explaining why the River Almond was not designated as a Bathing Water and the bathing waters designation process.

## RIVER SPEY

**A section of the River Spey was reclassified from moderate to poor for its physical condition in 2019 following a detailed field assessment by SEPA rather than any changes to the river. This did not relate to water quality as this section of river is currently classified at high status.**

- Overall, 93% of the River Spey catchment is classified by SEPA as good or better for its physical condition and for water quality it's at 97%.

## WATER OF LEITH

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

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

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

### LOCH LOMOND AND THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK

**Scotland's River Basin Management Plan sets objectives aiming to improve Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park's water environment from 50% to 70% at good or better overall status by 2027.**

- SEPA currently classifies 80% of the water environment at good or better water quality within the National Park and the River Basin Management Plan objectives aim to get to 92% by 2027.

### RIVER ALMOND

**Scottish Water is planning to invest up to £50m to deliver water quality improvements to the River Almond by 2027 to meet Scottish Government's River Basin Management Planning objectives.**

### LOCH LEVEN

**The former Minister for Environment and Land Reform recently wrote to the leader of Perth and Kinross Council, Grant Laing responding to its concerns setting out the ongoing River Basin Management Plan objectives aiming to reduce phosphorus pollution in Loch Leven.**

- The most recent independent scientific study concluded that 86% of the phosphorus load to Loch Leven was from rural diffuse pollution.
- SEPA's planned priority catchment work with land managers and farmers began in November 2022 and aims to reduce rural diffuse pollution to improve Loch Leven's water quality.

[redacted]

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

**18 March** i (The paper for today) (Scotland) **No new monitors installed since promise in 2021** Scotland's publicly owned water company has yet to install a single new river sewage monitor more than a year after promising 1,000 would be fitted *by the end of 2024*. In December 2021, Scottish Water announced plans to dramatically increase the number of monitors on Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) on the national sewage network. Article also cites campaigners specific concerns that **Scottish Water failing to monitor river pollution** on Water of Leith

**27 Feb** i (The paper for today) (Scotland) **Twenty waterways face high threat of pollution** The River Wye, the River Severn and the River Clyde are among 20 rivers across the UK that the Wildlife Trusts have pinpointed as facing a particular threat from pollution linked to human illnesses and the death of wildlife.

**27 Feb** i (The paper for today) (Scotland)/ The Scotsman **Sewage overflow problem 'underestimated'** The monitoring of sewage discharges into Scotland's rivers must be dramatically improved amid fears official figures are underestimating the problem, conservationists say. Data published by Scottish Water, the publicly owned company in charge of the nation's sewage system, show that between 2017 and 2021, sewage has overflowed into rivers and water courses 54,289 times - equal to almost 30 times per day.

**27 Feb** Lib Dems re-tweeted the iNews article.

**3 Nov** PQ- S6O-01493 Alex Cole-Hamilton: To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on what action it is taking to address the discharge of sewage into rivers, lochs and waterways.

### **TOP LINES**

#### **We take very seriously the issue of sewage spills, and the Minister for Environment and Land Reform's statement in Parliament in December 2021 set out comprehensive plans to reduce sewage spills over the coming decade.**

- Scottish Water's Improving Urban Waters Route Map (December 2021), sets out a programme of continued action to reduce wastewater pollution and sewage litter over the coming decade backed by investment of half a billion pounds.
- The first annual update to the route map was published in December 2022.
- DEFRA has refuted claims made in a previous iNews article as figures quoted were not factually correct. [<https://deframedia.blog.gov.uk/2023/02/13/coverage-from-the-save-britains-rivers-campaign/>]
- Previous iNews articles also presented incorrect information on the position in Scotland. [claim of 40% of Scotland's **rivers** in overall good condition when the figure is actually 56%]
- 66% of Scotland's overall water environment meets 'good' ecological status.
- Scottish Water has identified the first programme of around 250 Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) monitors that will be delivered to meet its commitment to invest up to £70m to install 1,000 new monitors, including those at bathing waters, and will provide this spill information online to the public by December 2024.
- Scottish Water is in the process of developing detailed solutions for 104 high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) due to their impact on water quality or sewage related debris.

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- 24 high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are included as water quality improvement measures in the third River Basin Management Plans.
- Scottish Water is also developing solutions for 39 waste water treatment works which are included as water quality improvement measures.
- Scottish Water confirm that 24 Unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) that discharge into the Water of Leith have been assessed as High Priority by Scottish Water and are in the solution development phase.
- Minister for Environment recently wrote to local MSPO, Ben McPherson responding to SaveOurShore Leith's concerns

## SCOTLAND'S WATER QUALITY

**87% of Scotland's entire water environment is assessed by SEPA as having a 'high' or 'good' classification for water quality – up from 82% six years ago.**

- This upgrade in water quality reflects improvements made through Scottish Water's investment programme, and work by a range of stakeholders to improve rural land management practices to reduce diffuse pollution.
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- A monitor only indicates whether an asset is spilling; it does not confirm if there is an environmental impact.
- Rather than permanent monitoring, which is the common approach for water companies in England, Scottish Water carried out a more comprehensive Scotland-wide environmental study programme to assess the impacts of its assets on water quality during the 2015 to 2021 investment period costing £40m.
- This comprehensive Scottish Water environmental study programme contributed significantly to 654 out of 3,614 CSOs being identified as unsatisfactory by SEPA.
- SEPA regularly monitors the water environment to ensure it is not impacted by sewage spills.
- In 2019, it took around 12,000 monitoring samples across Scotland to safeguard the water quality of our rivers, lochs and coastal areas.
- SEPA licences and regulates 345 sewer networks operated by Scottish Water carrying out inspections on a rolling basis.
- In 2019 there were 7 out of 100 found not to be compliant with their licence conditions. SEPA took action to ensure compliance was achieved.

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- Scottish Water's new national campaign 'Nature Calls' urges customers not to flush wet wipes (and other items) down the toilet.
- We encourage the UK Government and other administrations to work with us to bring forward a ban on wet wipes containing plastic, and to ensure that products on the market meet the Fine to Flush standard.
- Scottish Water have confirmed that 90 CSOs in Edinburgh have been identified for monitoring.

## RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLANS

**Scotland's third River Basin Management Plans, published in December 2021 by SEPA, set out our aims and objectives to improve the water environment to good ecological status by 2027.**

- The Plans include a wide range of measures which aim to ensure that 92% of Scotland's water environment has a classification of 'good' or better water quality by 2027.
- The River Basin Management Plans are complemented by Scottish Water's 'Improving Urban Waters Route Map', which describes how Scottish Water will take further action to reduce wastewater pollution and sewage litter over the coming decade.

## LOCH LEVEN

**Following an incident on 8 September, SEPA inspected the location and found no evidence of sewage debris or pollution in the watercourse before it entered Loch Leven.**

- There was no discharge of untreated raw sewage from Kinross sewage works into the adjacent watercourse as the storm tanks only discharge effluent that has been treated. This was set out in the letter from the Scottish Government to Councillor Robertson on the 19 October.
- Recent inspections of the sewer network and sewage works in Kinross and Milnathort by SEPA showed compliance with licence conditions.
- Scottish Water has committed investment in recent years to improve infrastructure within Kinross sewage works.

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**Scottish Water is planning to invest up to £50m to deliver water quality improvements to the River Almond by 2027 to meet Scottish Government's River Basin Management Planning objectives.**

## BATHING WATERS

**This year, 98% of designated bathing waters (87) achieved the bathing water quality standards.**

- The findings presented in the Ferret article were not produced by SEPA and do not in SEPA's opinion reflect how advice on water quality should be provided to the public during the bathing season.
- Bathing Water classification in Scotland is undertaken by SEPA following strict EU standards as set out in the Bathing Waters (Scotland) Regulations 2008.

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

- These standards were reviewed by the World Health Organisation in 2018, which concluded they were fit for purpose.
- Bathing Waters classification gives an overall indication of expected water quality, but there can be short term fluctuations in water quality driven by heavy rainfall.
- SEPA investigates poor water quality sample results to seek overall improvements to bathing water quality.
- SEPA's monitoring of Bathing Waters shows water quality can be impacted by a range of bacterial sources following heavy rainfall and not just sewage spills, including agricultural land runoff, urban runoff, dog and seagull faeces.
- A small number of 'poor' monitoring results at each designated Bathing Water does not mean that water quality is continually poor on all days. SEPA has analysed 1,297 water quality samples from 87 designated Bathing Waters this season and 93% were found to be at safe levels.

## WILD SWIMMING

### **Rivers and other open water locations that are not designated as bathing waters are managed for the purpose of protecting fish and wildlife.**

- Water in these locations may contain levels of pathogens which are harmless to wildlife, but would not meet designated bathing waters standards.
- The UK Health Security Agency advises that anyone can become unwell from swimming in any open water, as there will always be micro-organisms present.

[redacted]

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

**25 Apr** Scot Lib Dems on Twitter: *"Across Scotland there were 14,008 disgusting sewage overflows like this. The Scottish Government are neglecting our rivers and waterways. The new Environment Secretary must ensure monitoring of is ramped up so we get a true picture of the scale of this disgusting problem."*

**25 Apr** Scot Lib Dems on Twitter: *"Stop Sewage Dumping campaign petition: Sewage was released into our rivers and waterways more than 14,000 times in Scotland last year"*.

**8 Apr:** Record highlights that Feargal Sharkey demands answers after stretch of Scotland's most famous salmon fishing river deteriorates. A popular 20-mile section of the world-renowned River Spey has been classed as in 'poor ecological condition' since 2019.

**5 Apr:** The Ferret highlights a green charity has complained to Environmental Standards Scotland about the Scottish Government's allegedly "unlawful" approach to protecting bathing waters from sewage leaks, claiming it is the weakest in the UK.

**5 Apr:** STV News highlights Sewage released into Scottish waters more than 14,000 times last year.

**30 Mar:** Record highlight authorities in Scotland only required to monitor 4% of overflows, in comparison to 89% requirement in England. Highlight SEPA stats showing 10799 overspill events in Scotland in 2021, but volume not recorded for 5219 of these. Alex Cole Hamilton: *"There is every reason to believe the current volumes are a significant underestimate. The next Environment Secretary must listen to .. calls.. for targets to be set to reduce discharges, for enhanced monitoring to be backed up with transparent reporting, and for the acceleration of measures to upgrade sewage systems and tackle overflows"*.

### **We take very seriously the issue of sewage spills, and the former Minister for Environment and Land Reform's statement in Parliament in December 2021 set out comprehensive plans to reduce sewage spills over the coming decade.**

- Scottish Water's Improving Urban Waters Route Map (December 2021), sets out a programme of continued action to reduce wastewater pollution and sewage litter over the coming decade backed by investment of half a billion pounds.
- The first annual update to the route map was published in December 2022:
  - 54 projects have been initiated to develop solutions and support delivery of all high priority CSO discharges by 2027.
  - These projects will develop over the next two years, in line with Scottish Water's capital investment process.
  - priority locations have been identified for the 1,000 spill monitors, with installation programmed over 2023 and 2024.
  - Spill data which is reported to SEPA has already been published on Scottish Water's website.

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

### **66% of Scotland's overall water environment meets 'good' ecological status.**

- To meet its commitment to invest up to £70m to install 1,000 new monitors, including those at bathing waters, Scottish Water has prioritised where these will be installed and has published this methodology on its website.
- Installation is programmed over 2023 and 2024 and spill information will be provided online to the public by December 2024.

### **Scottish Water is in the process of developing detailed solutions for 104 high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) due to their impact on water quality or sewage related debris.**

- 24 high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are included as water quality improvement measures in the third River Basin Management Plans.
- Scottish Water is also developing solutions for 39 waste water treatment works which are included as water quality improvement measures.

## SCOTLAND'S WATER QUALITY

### **87% of Scotland's entire water environment is assessed by SEPA as having a 'high' or 'good' classification for water quality – up from 82% six years ago.**

- This upgrade in water quality reflects improvements made through Scottish Water's investment programme, and work by a range of stakeholders to improve rural land management practices to reduce diffuse pollution.
- SEPA reports that 66% of Scotland's water environment meets 'good' ecological status, whereas, Environment Agency figures for England are only 16%.
- SEPA's data indicates that 56% of rivers are in overall good condition, and for water quality the figure is much higher at 85%.

## ROLE OF COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOWS (CSOs)

### **Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are an integral part of Scotland's sewer networks, ensuring sewers don't back up and flood homes, streets and sewage works during periods of heavy rainfall.**

- Scottish Water has reduced environmental pollution incidents by 60% over the last decade from 800 each year to fewer than 300, in spite of increasingly challenging weather patterns.
- SEPA is required by law to identify unsatisfactory CSOs, primarily for water quality or sewage related debris impacts, in order to reduce those impacts on the water environment.
- A monitor only indicates whether an asset is spilling; it does not confirm if there is an environmental impact.

## OVERFLOW MONITORING

### **Rather than permanent monitoring, which is the common approach for water companies in England, Scottish Water carried out a more comprehensive Scotland-wide environmental study programme to assess the impacts of its assets on water quality during the 2015 to 2021 investment period costing £40m.**

- This comprehensive Scottish Water environmental study programme contributed significantly to 654 out of 3,614 CSOs being identified as unsatisfactory by SEPA.

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

- SEPA regularly monitors the water environment to ensure it is not impacted by sewage spills.
- In 2019, it took around 19,000 monitoring samples across Scotland to safeguard the water quality of our rivers, lochs and coastal areas.
- SEPA licences and regulates 345 sewer networks operated by Scottish Water carrying out inspections on a rolling basis.
- In 2019 there were 7 out of 100 found not to be compliant with their licence conditions. SEPA took action to ensure compliance was achieved.

## BATHING WATERS

**Scottish Ministers designate bathing waters where a large number of people bathe considering past trends, facilities and infrastructure provided and promotion of bathing. Two new bathing waters were designated in 2022 increasing the number of bathing waters across Scotland to 87 in total.**

- 98% of Scotland's bathing waters currently achieve the bathing water quality standards with more being rated excellent than ever before.
- The interpretation of a large number of bathers of around 150 daily bathers in Scotland is in line with those across Europe where the maximum figure used is 300 daily bathers.
- The River Almond at Almondell, West Lothian has been the only bathing waters application in recent years that has been unsuccessful in meeting the large number of bathers criteria.
- In 2022, the former Minister for Environment and Land Reform responded in writing to local River Almond stakeholders and the Environment Rights Centre for Scotland, who represented them, explaining why the River Almond was not designated as a Bathing Water and the bathing waters designation process.

## RIVER SPEY

**A section of the River Spey was reclassified from moderate to poor for its physical condition in 2019 following a detailed field assessment by SEPA rather than any changes to the river. This did not relate to water quality as this section of river is currently classified at high status.**

- Overall, 93% of the River Spey catchment is classified by SEPA as good or better for its physical condition and for water quality it's at 97%.

## WATER OF LEITH

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

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

## LOCH LOMOND AND THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK

**Scotland's River Basin Management Plan sets objectives aiming to improve Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park's water environment from 50% to 70% at good or better overall status by 2027.**

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

- SEPA currently classifies 80% of the water environment at good or better water quality within the National Park and the River Basin Management Plan objectives aim to get to 92% by 2027.

### RIVER ALMOND

Scottish Water is planning to invest up to £50m to deliver water quality improvements to the River Almond by 2027 to meet Scottish Government's River Basin Management Planning objectives.

### LOCH LEVEN

The former Minister for Environment and Land Reform recently wrote to the leader of Perth and Kinross Council, Grant Laing responding to its concerns setting out the ongoing River Basin Management Plan objectives aiming to reduce phosphorus pollution in Loch Leven.

- The most recent independent scientific study concluded that 86% of the phosphorus load to Loch Leven was from rural diffuse pollution.
- SEPA's planned priority catchment work with land managers and farmers began in November 2022 and aims to reduce rural diffuse pollution to improve Loch Leven's water quality.

[redacted]

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

**25 Jun** STV reports that 'sewage dumping' is going undetected in nine Scottish council areas.

**30 May** Daily Record reports a list of Scottish ministers whose constituencies are worst-hit by sewage discharge. Your constituency was at the top of this list with Pollok reported as discharging 8.3 million cubic metres of sewage into waterways last year (relating to outflow from the Shieldhall treatment works).

**24 May** Scotsman report suggesting that a 'crisis' of sewage in rivers and at beaches was entirely predictable, due to overflowing sewers made part of the system and climate change ignored.

**22 May** Daily Mail reports Scottish Water boss Simon Parsons as saying "I'd think twice about swimming in the sea after heavy rainfall due to sewage" – this misrepresents a BBC interview where Simon Parsons indicated he would follow SEPA's guidance before swimming.

**19 May** BBC, Herald, The Times and Scottish Daily Express report on Marine Conservation Society call for greater monitoring of sewage spills in Scotland and spill reduction targets to be set by SG.

**18 May** Alex Cole-Hamilton submitted a motion (S6M-08949) calling on Parliament to note Scottish Water's 14k sewage spill figures for 2022, for every sewage dump to be recorded and published, and for the upgrading of Scotland's ageing sewage system.

**16 May** Water UK announce creation of an environmental info. hub and bringing forward a storm overflow plan this summer with fast-tracking £10bn of funding [does not apply to Scotland – action we are taking is outlined in note below].

## TOP LINES

### SCOTLAND'S WATER QUALITY

**87% of Scotland's entire water environment is assessed by SEPA as having a 'high' or 'good' classification for water quality – up from 82% six years ago.**

- SEPA reports that 66% of Scotland's water environment meets 'good' ecological status overall.
- The upgrade in water quality reflects improvements made through Scottish Water's investment programme, and work by a range of stakeholders to improve rural land management practices to reduce diffuse pollution.
- SEPA's data indicates that 56% of rivers are in overall good condition, and for water quality the figure is much higher at 85%.

**We take the issue of sewage pollution incidents very seriously. Scottish Water's Improving Urban Waters Route Map update demonstrates the work underway to reduce spills.**

- 47% of Scottish Water's total reported sewage discharge events in 2022 are treated to protect the environment. [*settled storm sewage overflows receive settlement or primary treatment before discharge*].
- [redacted]
- It is not correct to say that 8.3 million cubic metres of sewage was discharged; less than 1% of these spills is sewage and the rest is largely rain water. These overflows represent huge volumes of rainwater being safely transferred away from homes and businesses to prevent flooding during times of excessive rainfall.

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

### **The Improving Urban Waters Route Map sets out a programme of continued action to reduce wastewater pollution and sewage litter over the coming decade backed by investment of up to half a billion pounds**

- The first annual update to the route map was published in December 2022.
- 54 projects have already been initiated to address issues caused by high priority CSO discharges by 2027 in line with Scottish Water's capital investment process.
- Priority locations have been identified for 1,000 new spill monitors, with installation programmed over 2023 and 2024 at a value of £70m. The methodology for deciding these locations is on the Scottish Water website.
- Spill data which is reported to SEPA has already been published on Scottish Water's website.

### **Scottish Water is in the process of developing detailed solutions for 104 high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) due to their impact on water quality or sewage related debris.**

- Plans are already in place to address 24 high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) by 2027 as set out in the third River Basin Management Plan.
- Scottish Water is also developing solutions for 39 waste water treatment works which are included as water quality improvement measures.

## OVERFLOW MONITORING

### **Rather than permanent monitoring, which is the common approach for water companies in England, Scottish Water carried out a more comprehensive Scotland-wide environmental study programme to assess the impacts of its assets on water quality during the 2015 to 2021 investment period costing £40m**

- English water companies have not yet undertaken the detailed environmental assessments that have been completed in Scotland.
- SEPA regularly monitors the water environment to ensure it is not impacted by sewage spills.
- In 2019, it took around 19,000 monitoring samples across Scotland to safeguard the water quality of our rivers, lochs and coastal areas.
- SEPA licences and regulates 345 sewer networks operated by Scottish Water carrying out inspections on a rolling basis.
- In 2019 there were 7 out of 100 found not to be compliant with their licence conditions. SEPA took action to ensure compliance was achieved.
- Scottish Water's Improving Urban Waters Routemap outlines the significant investment underway to increase data monitors on our overflows by the end of 2024. As part of this work, data capture and availability is being reviewed to allow further enhancements.
- Scottish Water will publish information on the number of days for which monitors are unavailable to support the reporting of 2023 overflow events in January 2024.
- Comprehensive monitoring of water bodies is undertaken by SEPA to assess water quality, water resources, physical condition and aquatic ecology which are combined to produce an overall classification of the water environment.
- Increasing the monitoring of sewage outflow pipes would not change the classification of the water environment under the current system by SEPA, Scotland's independent environmental regulator.

Commented [BM1]: As above -s imilarly can we start with something more current e.g. We are making progress with our Improving Urban Waters Route Map. The most recent update showed XYZ

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

### ROLE OF COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOWS (CSOs)

**Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are an integral part of Scotland's sewer networks, ensuring sewers don't back up and flood homes, streets and sewage works during periods of heavy rainfall.**

- It's not accurate to call CSO spills from the waste water network sewage spills. What is spilled is largely rain water as the toilet sewage element is less than 1% of the total volume.
- Scottish Water has reduced environmental pollution incidents by 60% over the last decade from 800 each year to fewer than 300, in spite of increasingly challenging weather patterns.
- Scottish Water's national campaign 'Nature Calls' raises awareness of sewer blockages caused by inappropriately-flushed items such as wet wipes containing plastic and other personal hygiene products.
- SEPA is required by law to identify unsatisfactory CSOs, primarily for water quality or sewage related debris impacts, in order to reduce those impacts on the water environment.
- Scottish Government recognises the multiple benefits that blue and green infrastructure provides to support climate and water resilience, including combined sewer overflow spill reduction, and published the Water Resilient Places Policy Framework in February 2021.
- Scottish Water, SEPA and the local authorities support the framework and we will continue to see increased use of blue and green infrastructure in future as this becomes the primary method for managing surface water.

### BATHING WATERS

**98% of Scotland's bathing waters currently achieve the bathing water quality standards with more being rated excellent than ever before.**

- Scottish bathing water season started on 1st June with two new designations and more bathing waters rated excellent than ever before. This brings the total number of Bathing Waters in Scotland to 89.
- In line with globally recognised guidance, SEPA advises against bathing for up to 48 hours after heavy rainfall due to the increased risk of poor water quality.
- SEPA's monitoring of Bathing Waters shows water quality can be impacted by a range of bacterial sources following heavy rain and not just sewage spills including agricultural land runoff, urban runoff, and dog and seagull faeces.
- There are no sewage spills into Peterhead Lido bathing water and SEPA classifies the water quality there as excellent.
- Portobello beach designated bathing waters currently meet the stringent bathing water quality standards set by Europe and recommended by the World Health Organisation.
- Scottish Ministers designate bathing waters where a large number of people bathe considering past trends, facilities and infrastructure provided and promotion of bathing.
- The interpretation of a large number of bathers of around 150 daily bathers in Scotland is in line with those across Europe where the maximum figure used is 300 daily bathers.

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

### WILD SWIMMING

**Rivers and other open water locations that are not designated as bathing waters are managed for the purpose of protecting fish and wildlife.**

- Water in these locations may contain levels of pathogens which are harmless to wildlife, but would not meet designated bathing waters standards.
- The UK Health Security Agency advises that anyone can become unwell from swimming in any open water, as there will always be micro-organisms present.

### WATER OF LEITH

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

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

### RIVER ALMOND

**Scottish Water is planning to invest up to £50m to deliver water quality improvements to the River Almond by 2027 to meet Scottish Government's River Basin Management Planning objectives.**

[redacted]

[redacted]

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

**30 May** Daily Record Scottish ministers worst-hit by sewage dumping nightmare in their constituencies revealed. First Minister Humza Yousaf topped the 'revolting' list with his Pollok constituency facing 8.3million cubic metres of sewage discharged into waterways last year.

**24 May** Scotsman reports crisis of sewage in rivers and at beaches was entirely predictable, with overflowing sewers made part of the system and climate change ignored.

**22 May** Daily Mail (Scotland) I'd think twice about swimming in the sea after heavy rainfall due to sewage...says Scottish Water boss. [headline misrepresents BBC interview where Simon Parsons indicated he would follow SEPA's guidance before swimming]

**19 May** BBC, Herald, The Times and Scottish Daily Express report on Marine Conservation Society call for greater monitoring of sewage spills in Scotland and spill reduction targets to be set by SG.

**18 May** Alex Cole-Hamilton submitted a motion (S6M-08949) calling on Parliament to note Scottish Water's 14k sewage spill figures for 2022 and every sewage dump to be properly recorded and published, and for the upgrading of Scotland's ageing sewage system.

**16 May** Water UK apologised for performance in E and W sewage spills, announcing creation of an environmental info. hub and bringing forward a storm overflow plan this summer with fast-tracking £10bn of funding [does not apply to Scotland – action we are taking is outlined in note below].

### TOP LINES

**We take very seriously the issue of sewage pollution incidents, and the former Minister for Environment and Land Reform's statement in Parliament in December 2021 set out comprehensive plans to reduce sewage spills over the coming decade.**

- [redacted]
- 47% of Scottish Water's total reported sewage discharge events in 2022 are treated to protect the environment. [*settled storm sewage overflows (ie 47% and at Shieldhall WwTW) receive settlement or primary treatment before discharge*]
- Scottish Water's Improving Urban Waters Route Map (December 2021), sets out a programme of continued action to reduce wastewater pollution and sewage litter over the coming decade backed by investment of up to half a billion pounds (*rebuttal to ACH claim that there is no strategy for upgrading Victorian sewers*).
- The first annual update to the route map was published in December 2022:
  - *54 projects have already been initiated to address issues caused by high priority CSO discharges by 2027* in line with Scottish Water's capital investment process.
  - Priority locations have been identified for 1,000 new spill monitors, with installation programmed over 2023 and 2024 at a value of £70m. The methodology for deciding these locations is on the Scottish Water website.
  - Spill data which is reported to SEPA has already been published on Scottish Water's website.

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

### **Scottish Water is in the process of developing detailed solutions for 104 high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) due to their impact on water quality or sewage related debris.**

- Plans are already in place to address 24 high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) by 2027 as set out in the third River Basin Management Plan.
- Scottish Water is also developing solutions for 39 waste water treatment works which are included as water quality improvement measures.

## SCOTLAND'S WATER QUALITY

### **87% of Scotland's entire water environment is assessed by SEPA as having a 'high' or 'good' classification for water quality – up from 82% six years ago.**

- SEPA reports that 66% of Scotland's water environment meets 'good' ecological status overall, whereas, Environment Agency figures for England are only 16% (*rebuttal to ACH claim that England has 'more of a handle' on sewage issue*).
- The upgrade in water quality reflects improvements made through Scottish Water's investment programme, and work by a range of stakeholders to improve rural land management practices to reduce diffuse pollution.
- SEPA's data indicates that 56% of rivers are in overall good condition, and for water quality the figure is much higher at 85%.

## OVERFLOW MONITORING

### **Rather than permanent monitoring, which is the common approach for water companies in England, Scottish Water carried out a more comprehensive Scotland-wide environmental study programme to assess the impacts of its assets on water quality during the 2015 to 2021 investment period costing £40m (rebuttal to ACH claim that Scotland does not monitor sewage outflow)**

- English water companies have not yet undertaken the detailed environmental assessments that have been completed in Scotland.
- SEPA regularly monitors the water environment to ensure it is not impacted by sewage spills.
- In 2019, it took around 19,000 monitoring samples across Scotland to safeguard the water quality of our rivers, lochs and coastal areas.
- SEPA licences and regulates 345 sewer networks operated by Scottish Water carrying out inspections on a rolling basis.
- In 2019 there were 7 out of 100 found not to be compliant with their licence conditions. SEPA took action to ensure compliance was achieved.
- Scottish Water's Improving Urban Waters Routemap outlines the significant investment underway to increase data monitors on our overflows by the end of 2024. As part of this work, data capture and availability is being reviewed to allow further enhancements.
- Scottish Water will publish information on the number of days for which monitors are unavailable to support the reporting of 2023 overflow events in January 2024.
- Comprehensive monitoring of water bodies is undertaken by SEPA to assess water quality, water resources, physical condition and aquatic ecology which are combined to produce an overall classification of the water environment.

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

- Increasing the monitoring of sewage outflow pipes would not change the classification of the water environment under the current system by SEPA, Scotland's independent environmental regulator.

### **ROLE OF COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOWS (CSOs)**

**Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are an integral part of Scotland's sewer networks, ensuring sewers don't back up and flood homes, streets and sewage works during periods of heavy rainfall.**

- It's not accurate to call CSO spills from the waste water network sewage spills. What is spilled is largely rain water as the toilet sewage element is less than 1% of the total volume.
- Scottish Water has reduced environmental pollution incidents by 60% over the last decade from 800 each year to fewer than 300, in spite of increasingly challenging weather patterns.
- Scottish Water's national campaign 'Nature Calls' raises awareness of sewer blockages caused by inappropriately-flushed items such as wet wipes containing plastic and other personal hygiene products.
- SEPA is required by law to identify unsatisfactory CSOs, primarily for water quality or sewage related debris impacts, in order to reduce those impacts on the water environment.
- Scottish Government recognises the multiple benefits that blue and green infrastructure provides to support climate and water resilience, including combined sewer overflow spill reduction, and published the Water Resilient Places Policy Framework in February 2021.
- Scottish Water, SEPA and the local authorities support the framework and we will continue to see increased use of blue and green infrastructure in future as this becomes the primary method for managing surface water.

### **BATHING WATERS**

**98% of Scotland's bathing waters currently achieve the bathing water quality standards with more being rated excellent than ever before.**

- In line with globally recognised guidance, SEPA advises against bathing for up to 48 hours after heavy rainfall due to the increased risk of poor water quality.
- SEPA's monitoring of Bathing Waters shows water quality can be impacted by a range of bacterial sources following heavy rain and not just sewage spills including agricultural land runoff, urban runoff, and dog and seagull faeces.
- There are no sewage spills into Peterhead Lido bathing water and SEPA classifies the water quality there as excellent.
- Portobello beach designated bathing waters currently meet the stringent bathing water quality standards set by Europe and recommended by the World Health Organisation.
- Scottish Ministers designate bathing waters where a large number of people bathe considering past trends, facilities and infrastructure provided and promotion of bathing.

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

- The interpretation of a large number of bathers of around 150 daily bathers in Scotland is in line with those across Europe where the maximum figure used is 300 daily bathers.

### **WILD SWIMMING**

#### **Rivers and other open water locations that are not designated as bathing waters are managed for the purpose of protecting fish and wildlife.**

- Water in these locations may contain levels of pathogens which are harmless to wildlife, but would not meet designated bathing waters standards.
- The UK Health Security Agency advises that anyone can become unwell from swimming in any open water, as there will always be micro-organisms present.

### **WATER OF LEITH**

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

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

### **RIVER ALMOND**

#### **Scottish Water is planning to invest up to £50m to deliver water quality improvements to the River Almond by 2027 to meet Scottish Government's River Basin Management Planning objectives.**

[redacted]

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

**31 Jan P&J** (Aberdeenshire) Thousands of plastic sewage filters were dislodged from the Ellon Waste Water Treatment Works in November, and have been turning up along the River Ythan all the way to Newburgh ever since.

**29 Jan** The Herald: 'Filthy river is branded a health hazard' Campaigners state that the Water of Leith (which featured in BBC's recent Winterwatch) is littered with plastic waste and an accumulation point for silt and sewage. Save our Shore (SOS) Leith are calling for full monitoring of the sewage overflows in this stretch of the Water of Leith and increased monitoring across Scotland.

**3 Nov** PQ- S6O-01493 Alex Cole-Hamilton: To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on what action it is taking to address the discharge of sewage into rivers, lochs and waterways.

**26 Oct** The Scotsman: 'Scottish Government lets untreated sewage pour into protected loch' An investigation by the Scottish Liberal Democrats has revealed the Scottish Government's environmental protection agency (SEPA) is allowing untreated sewage to be diverted into Loch Leven.

**26 Oct** S6M-06148: Alex Cole-Hamilton: Sewage and Scotland's Waters motion that the Parliament notes the view that the natural environment deserves the highest possible protection; noting previous media reports re sewage spills and bathing waters; and notes the calls from campaigners for targets to be set to reduce discharges, for enhanced monitoring to be backed up by transparent reporting, and for the acceleration of measures to upgrade sewage systems and tackle overflows.

### TOP LINES

#### **We take very seriously the issue of sewage spills, and the Minister for Environment and Land Reform's statement in Parliament last December set out comprehensive plans to reduce sewage spills over the coming decade.**

- Scottish Water's Improving Urban Waters Route Map (December 2021), sets out a programme of continued action to reduce wastewater pollution and sewage litter over the coming decade backed by investment of half a billion pounds.
- Scottish Water is in the process of developing solutions for 90 (of 108 identified) high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) due to their impact on water quality or sewage related debris.
- 26 high priority unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are included as water quality improvement measures in the third River Basin Management Plans.
- Scottish Water is also developing solutions for 40 waste water treatment works which are included as water quality improvement measures.
- Scottish Water has identified the first programme of around 250 Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) monitors that will be delivered to meet its commitment to invest up to £70m to install 1,000 new monitors, including those at bathing waters, and will provide this spill information online to the public by December 2024.
- Scottish Water confirm that 24 Unsatisfactory Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) that discharge into the Water of Leith have been assessed as High Priority by Scottish Water and are in the solution development phase.
- In an unrelated incident, SEPA has received reports from members of the public of oil pollution in the Water of Leith on 21 January which they are investigating.

# SEWAGE SPILLAGES

## SCOTLAND'S WATER QUALITY

**87% of Scotland's entire water environment is assessed by SEPA as having a 'high' or 'good' classification for water quality – up from 82% six years ago.**

- This upgrade in water quality reflects improvements made through Scottish Water's investment programme, and work by a range of stakeholders to improve rural land management practices to reduce diffuse pollution.
- SEPA reports that 66% of Scotland's water environment meets 'good' ecological status, whereas, Environment Agency figures for England are only 16%.

## ROLE OF COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOWS (CSOs)

**Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are an integral part of Scotland's sewer networks, ensuring sewers don't back up and flood homes, streets and sewage works during periods of heavy rainfall.**

- Scottish Water has reduced environmental pollution incidents by 60% over the last decade from 800 each year to fewer than 300, in spite of increasingly challenging weather patterns.
- SEPA is required by law to identify unsatisfactory CSOs, primarily for water quality or sewage related debris impacts, in order to reduce those impacts on the water environment.
- Rather than permanent monitoring, which is the more common approach for water companies in England, Scottish Water carried out a more comprehensive Scotland-wide environmental study programme to assess the impacts of its assets on water quality during the 2015 to 2021 investment period costing around £40m.
- This comprehensive Scottish Water environmental study programme contributed significantly to 654 out of 3,614 CSOs being identified as unsatisfactory by SEPA.
- SEPA regularly monitors the water environment to ensure it is not impacted by sewage spills.
- In 2019, it took around 12,000 monitoring samples across Scotland to safeguard the water quality of our rivers, lochs and coastal areas.
- SEPA licences and regulates 345 sewer networks operated by Scottish Water carrying out inspections on a rolling basis.
- In 2019 there were 7 out of 100 found not to be compliant with their licence conditions. SEPA took action to ensure compliance was achieved.
- Scottish Water's new national campaign 'Nature Calls' urges customers not to flush wet wipes (and other items) down the toilet.
- We encourage the UK Government and other administrations to work with us to bring forward a ban on wet wipes containing plastic, and to ensure that products on the market meet the Fine to Flush standard.
- Scottish Water have confirmed that 90 CSOs in Edinburgh have been identified for monitoring.

## RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLANS

**Scotland's third River Basin Management Plans, published in December 2021 by SEPA, set out our aims and objectives to improve the water environment to good ecological status by 2027.**

## SEWAGE SPILLAGES

- The Plans include a wide range of measures which aim to ensure that 92% of Scotland's water environment has a classification of 'good' or better water quality by 2027.
- The River Basin Management Plans are complemented by Scottish Water's 'Improving Urban Waters Route Map', which describes how Scottish Water will take further action to reduce wastewater pollution and sewage litter over the coming decade.

### **ELLON SEWAGE WORKS RIVER YTHAN POLLUTION**

**Following the Ellon sewage works flooding incident last November that released plastic bio-filters into the River Ythan, Scottish Government officials have been liaising with Scottish Water and SEPA to ensure any environmental impacts are minimised.**

- Scottish Water immediately launched an extensive clean-up operation along the River Ythan and several kilometres of the coastline working closely with SEPA and NatureScot.
- Regular checks are still being carried out across the affected area and a further clean-up along the riverbank and nature reserve is planned.

### **LOCH LEVEN**

**Following the incident on 8 September, SEPA inspected the location and found no evidence of sewage debris or pollution in the watercourse before it entered Loch Leven.**

- There was no discharge of untreated raw sewage from Kinross sewage works into the adjacent watercourse as the storm tanks only discharge effluent that has been treated. This was set out in the letter from the Scottish Government to Councillor Robertson on the 19 October.
- Recent inspections of the sewer network and sewage works in Kinross and Milnathort by SEPA showed compliance with licence conditions.
- Scottish Water has committed investment in recent years to improve infrastructure within Kinross sewage works.

### **RIVER ALMOND**

**Scottish Water is planning to invest up to £50m to deliver water quality improvements to the River Almond by 2027 to meet Scottish Government's River Basin Management Planning objectives.**

### **BATHING WATERS**

**This year, 98% of designated bathing waters (87) achieved the bathing water quality standards.**

- The findings presented in the Ferret article were not produced by SEPA and do not in SEPA's opinion reflect how advice on water quality should be provided to the public during the bathing season.
- Bathing Water classification in Scotland is undertaken by SEPA following strict EU standards as set out in the Bathing Waters (Scotland) Regulations 2008.
- These standards were reviewed by the World Health Organisation in 2018, which concluded they were fit for purpose.