

Sewerage Leaks

Freedom Of Information requests to Southern Water and the Governments Environment Agency helped identify the 'official' view of the leaks that have been occurring for many years.

Southern Water are supposed to notify The Environment Agency if significant leaks occur. They disclosed that this only happened on two occasions over the past decade. This is because people reporting leaks were probably unaware of the way in which Southern Water categorise leaks and have given different postcodes. This means the case has not been built to demonstrate a repeating problem in the eyes of Southern Water and The Environment Agency.

To help build the case that this is a problem that repeats every time there is heavy rain the proposal would be to work together on reporting.

The source sewer that overflows at the top of West Hill outside Manor Farm in Abbots Ann has the postcode **SP11 7DB**.

The Environment Agency expects water companies to prevent and reduce pollution incidents and works with them to minimise damage when these incidents occur. It says: "Incidents lead to the release of harmful substances into air, land or water, and some can cause significant harm to the environment."

The categories are:

Category 1 – has a serious, extensive or persistent impact on the environment, people or property and may, for example, result in a large number of fish deaths.

Category 2 – has a lesser, yet significant impact.

Category 3 – has a minor or minimal impact, with only a limited or localised effect on water quality.

Southern Water Response

Does Southern Water have a duty to inform the Environment Agency when sewage overflows and enters the river system?

Our aim is to comply with the self-reporting protocol laid out in the attached internal Environment Agency (EA) document (see pages 8 and 9). While we make every effort to comply, self-reporting relates only to incidents that the EA classes as Category 1, 2 or 3 pollutions. We do not have to report Category 4 incidents.

Why is there a discrepancy between the reports that the Environment Agency has noted and those of Southern Water?

The incidents at Manor Farm were on the whole Category 4 incidents and therefore we would not normally report them to the EA. Please note, also that two of the seven incidents we reported were a different postcode to the Manor Farm postcode. The EA recorded two incidents against the one incident that we recorded on 29 October 2011.

What action is Southern Water taking to ensure its sewerage system is being changed to cease this annual problem?

Our Monxton Wastewater Pumping Station discharge manhole, which is situated on the highway verge outside Manor Farm, has had additional sandbag protection added. This is to

prevent any further spills from getting to the metalled road surface and which might then track further downhill towards a watercourse.

In addition, there is a modulating penstock on the sewer line further east of Abbots Ann which is currently being manually exercised every day to ensure flows are maximised in the downstream gravity sewers which drain to Little Ann Bridge Wastewater Pumping Station. The EA are aware of the penstock and how we are currently managing it.

Environment Agency response.

Cllr Andrew Hayter
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Our ref: GE3229

Your ref:

11 June 2018

Dear Cllr Hayter

Thank you for your enquiry of 6 June 2018, which refers to your previous Freedom of Information Request submitted in April 2018. I have copied your three questions below and provided my response.

Does Southern Water have a duty to inform the Environment Agency when sewage overflows and enters the river system? *If the overflow is from a permitted site then generally the permit has a condition that requires the holder to inform the Environment Agency, if they did not inform us then this would be a breach of their permit and therefore an offence. If the overflow was from a non-permitted asset (for instance a manhole) we would expect to be informed of any pollution. This allows us to assist with any response. If we were not informed of a pollution then this would be taken into consideration during the investigation and any subsequent enforcement.*

Why is there a discrepancy between the reports that the Environment Agency has noted and those of Southern Water? *In your FOI you requested reports of any incidents in the stated area that were reported to us by Southern Water, we reported 2 instances. The discrepancy is that for the other incidents, they were reported to us by members of the public (not Southern Water), who in most cases called SW also.*

What action is the Environment Agency taking to ensure that Southern Water are held to account and remediate this annual problem? *While I completely understand your frustration at this situation, I think it is fair to say that this happens on occasions of high groundwater level and not every year. Both ourselves and Southern Water are working very hard to limit the impact of groundwater in the sewer system and are working on a Groundwater Infiltration Reduction Plan (IRP) for the affected area. Once the IRP is agreed by us it will be published on Southern Waters website.*

Impacts from groundwater infiltration into sewer systems is something that we take very seriously. I hope this answers your questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Walton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ian Walton
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