

## Text for letter to regional MPs supporting Sewage (Inland Waters) Bill

Philip Dunne MP: Private Members Bill

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Dear xxx,

### RE: Sewage (Inland Waters) Bill – 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading debate on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> March

I am writing in advance of Philip Dunne MP's Private Members Bill being debated in the House of Commons on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> March. As Anglian Water provides wastewater services to your constituency I thought you might be interested to hear the steps we are taking to improve river water quality.

**We welcome the emphasis the bill places on government, water companies, developers and communities working together to improve the ecological health of our inland waterways.** Whilst our operations only account for one fifth of the reasons why inland waters are below 'good' status in our region, there is the potential for water companies to do much more in partnership with others such as agriculture and industry, if it is made a priority by the government and funding is available.

Storm overflows are a designed part of our sewerage system that act as 'pressure-release-valves' to avoid the network backing up and flooding properties when there is heavy rain. Sewers have not been designed like this for many years, but urban creep, changing rainfall patterns with climate change, and a lack of natural drainage, are all increasing pressures on these systems.

As part of our [Pollution Incident Reduction Plan](#) we have committed to end serious pollution incidents and reduce all pollutions by a minimum of 40% by 2025. Managing and reducing the use of storm overflows is just one component of this. Whilst this plan is new it is built on our previous strategy that resulted in us meeting our pollution targets for the last five years. Alongside our investment to reduce storm overflows - and to limit their impact if they do occur- we are developing longer-term options with the government's *Storm Overflows Taskforce* and as part of our [Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan](#). Some relevant measures within our Pollution Incident Reduction Plan include:

- We already have the **largest telemetry network in Europe**, and are rolling out Event Duration Monitors (EDMs) and other in-system monitoring in order to achieve 100% coverage. This will allow us to better understand how our network behaves, to target investigations, proactively spot issues ahead of an incident, and decide where best to invest.
- Unique amongst water companies **we give Environment Agency staff access to our pollutions app and live dataset**. This means there is complete transparency in the east of England on our pollution performance.
- Last September we relaunched our [Pollution Watch](#) campaign to increase the reporting of incidents through both our staff and members of the public. The public can call our customer service centre, report online, or contact us through social media.
- We are improving how we **respond to potential pollution incidents**. The faster we can pinpoint an incident, arrive on scene, and take action, the less the impact on the environment.
- We are also increasing our investment in **planned, preventative maintenance (PPM)**, specifically targeting pumping stations that are particularly prone to blockages.

**We are also embarking on our most ambitious five-year Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP)**, the largest of any company, with double the number of commitments we agreed to and delivered during the 2015-2020 period. We were recently given approval by the Secretary of State to accelerate schemes worth more than £300 million as part of our [Green Recovery](#)

[Plan](#). The projects include 34 new constructed wetlands to help treat wastewater before it returns to the environment, building on the success of our [award-winning scheme with the Norfolk Rivers Trust at Ingoldisthorpe](#).

**We welcome the various measures in the bill to improve surface water management and to reduce the volume of sewage, including through water conservation measures (see 17ZC(3) and (4)).** In particular, water companies strongly support mandatory water efficiency labelling and minimum product standards being introduced for taps, showers, dishwashers and washing machines. As well as saving water, this step would cut carbon and reduce energy bills as around a fifth of household energy is used to heat water in the home. We also strongly support Building Regulations being tightened so that new homes use as little as water as possible. In severely water-stressed parts of the country like the east of England, the planning system should require no extra water to be taken from the environment to serve housing growth. At present new housing is the greatest source of pressure on our long-term supply/demand balance.

**We also fully support the measures within the bill that would help to tackle the polluting content of sewage (see 17ZC(5)).** 80% of blockages are avoidable, caused by sewers being clogged by wet wipes, sanitary products and other non-flushables combining with discarded fats, oil and grease. We spend around £20 million a year clearing these fatbergs and other blockages. We strongly support the bill's proposals to ban wet wipes containing synthetic fibres, and to regulate food service establishments to make sure they capture and recycle fats and oils as part of a circular economy rather than dispose of them into the sewer.

An alternative to banning wet wipes containing plastic would be to use clauses in the Environment Bill to apply extended producer responsibility to wet wipe manufacturers (clauses 49 and 50). Ideally, manufacturers would need to modify their products to meet the water industry's *Fine to Flush* standard. Natracare [Safe to Flush](#) wipes and Andrex [Washlets](#) already meet the standard, and it is time that all manufacturers followed their lead.

Please be assured that we are doing everything we can to reduce pollutions, address incidents early, and minimise their impact on the environment. We are also committed to tackling storm overflows where these have a detrimental environmental impact. We see this as central to [our purpose as a water company](#) which is *"to bring environmental and social prosperity to the region we serve through our commitment to Love Every Drop"*. Having achieved the best leakage performance in the UK, and reduced customer bills by 17% in real terms in recent years, we know that with the support of government and our regulators we can take further decisive action on this front too.

I would be delighted to provide further briefing should you find that useful.

With every best wish,

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Head of Public Affairs

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