Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

POLICY AND STRATEGY, DOCUMENT

Improving effluent quality and river quality: action plan

A plan for delivering evidence-based catchment solutions.

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Overview

To drive the delivery of evidence-based catchment solutions, better information is required about discharge quality from overflows and the impact on the receiving water quality. Improved effluent monitoring at targeted sites, together with event duration monitoring already in place, will enhance evidence available and enable effective targeting and prioritisation of action. Current and future overflow monitoring must also work in parallel with monitoring programmes for pollution sources from agriculture, diffuse and other sectors.

An investigative monitoring programme will be established between the NRW and the water companies to determine long-term requirements for monitoring overflows throughout Wales. The need to monitor for a wider range of pollutants including micro plastics, pharmaceuticals, and public health parameters will also be assessed.

Water companies will also investigate and promote the use of monitoring and evidence from other sources including innovative solutions and technology. Citizens and local groups can play a key role in helping tackle water quality pollution through providing monitoring intelligence and public awareness. We will actively work with citizen scientists to understand how their work forms part of our final work programme.

Our commitments

The actions being taken forward within this workstream are all aligned to the Welsh Government Programme for Government 2021-26 and the Wellbeing goals of:

- Building a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress

towards decarbonisation.
- Make our cities, towns, and villages even better places in which to live and work.
- Embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do.
- Begin to designate Wales' inland waters for recreation, strengthening water quality monitoring.

Lead Organisation	Action	Why?	By When	October 2023 Update
DCWW	Building on the data we already publish on our website from our Event and Duration Monitors (EDM), we will develop a more user-friendly interface. Following on from our provision of data to Surfers Against Sewage for real time alerts for Bathing Waters, we will ensure we have a real time monitoring system, which will report within 1 hour of discharge, installed across	To increase the openness and transparency of our environmental data to the public.	March 2025	Map of 2021 and 2022 data is available on DCWW Website. DCWW provided a programme for Map displaying real time (within 1hr) monitoring data for bathing water sites in Feb 2023. BRQTF approved DCWW real time (within 1hr) map to be available January 2024. DCWW has also included sites that were highlighted from their DCWW Open Water Swimming survey results undertaken in Feb 2023. DCWW have held stakeholder sessions in June & July 2023, to get feedback on the Map. All other sites will be available by March 2025.

Lead Organisation	Action	Why?	By When	October 2023 Update
	our asset base.			
DCWW	We will build an online portal which will allow us to share all information we gather on the ecological impact from storm overflows.	To increase the openness and transparency of our environmental data to the public.	March 2025	An information portal will be implemented by March 2025.
DCWW	We will assess all riverine storm overflows for environmental impact.	To fully understand the impact of storm overflows on the environment.	December 2027	Full assessment of impact from all storm overflows by December 2027. Review of NEPv2 to be included in PR24 submission in October 2023. SOAF is assessing overflow which discharge more than 40 times. Work at high priority sites will be completed by 2027 and the remainder will be completed by the end of March 2030.
HD	We will assess all riverine storm overflows for environmental impact.	To fully understand the impact of storm overflows on	December 2027	Ongoing. As part of our 'Cleanest Rivers Plan, we are assessing the last three years of EDM data to understand our

Lead Organisation	Action	Why?	By When	October 2023 Update
		the environment.		reported highest spilling assets, alongside ongoing SOAF investigations which will help us understand impact, and using this information to develop EDM / CSO improvement plans.
NRW	We will undertake a review of all evidence both within Wales, the UK and from wider sources to develop an evidence programme for storm overflows.	To design and understand an evidence programme we first need to analyse and review current best practice, evidence and monitoring available to help us set the parameters for future monitoring.	November 2023	The evidence review will be completed by November 2023. The findings from the review will be used to design and inform a monitoring strategy for 2024.
NRW	We will undertake local ‘bankside’ surveys (invertebrate assessment comprises of a	When overflows operate under the correct conditions any impact on the	January or April 2024 start (TBC)	The evidence review will be completed by November 2023. The findings from the review will be used to design and inform a monitoring

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	1-minute sample that looks at the different habitats within the survey area) at agreed locations to assess the biological impact of storm overflows, targeting areas of stakeholder concern as well as identified high spilling assets.	environment should be negated. Our surveys will help develop a picture of river health against the backdrop of storm overflows.		strategy to commence in early 2024.
NRW	Building from the review and working with the taskforce we will build an evidence programme that works alongside the evidence programmes of the Water Companies in Wales, identifying the parameters required to achieve better water quality.	Targeting evidence gathering at key high spilling assets and assets in sensitive locations, aligned to water company monitoring of assets will enable us to build a picture of the impact presented	November 2023	The evidence review will be completed by November 2023. The findings from the review will be used to design and inform a monitoring strategy to commence in early 2024.

Lead Organisation	Action	Why?	By When	October 2023 Update
		from storm overflows.		
Taskforce	We will develop a Framework for the use of ‘Citizen Science’ and stakeholder evidence in identifying and tackling storm overflow issues.	The public, stakeholders, and customer role in improving water quality is vital to its success. The taskforce will help develop a framework for where others outside of the regulator and water company can help develop evidence and provide a pivotal role in identifying and improving any poorly preforming assets.	December 2023	A framework for Citizen Science will be complete by December 2023. The findings from the evidence review and engagement with stakeholders will be used to design suitable experiments.
CCW	We are reviewing the clarity and transparency of	Increasing water company	Complete	A workshop was held in March 2023. Water UK are exploring how all

Lead Organisation	Action	Why?	By When	October 2023 Update
	water industry environmental information on company and other spaces.	environmental information transparency and accountability on their environmental impact to increase public trust.		environmental performance information can be published in one place. **CCW will publish research in May**.
CCW/ Afonydd Cymru	We will further consider existing (CCW) Wales specific evidence on public awareness of river water quality to help identify engagement gaps that would inform how we enhance public and stakeholder understanding on the issue of overflows in Wales.	Work with water customers to tackle sewer misuse. Work with the public and stakeholders to improve their understanding and active role in addressing the. issue sewer blockages and overflows in Wales.	Complete	Published April 2023. **Wales specific evidence on public awareness of river water quality** CCW has been calling for a national sewer misuse campaign for several years. This has partly been realised in **Water UK's BIN the Wipe campaign**.
HD	Making sure performance	To increase the openness	Complete	Data is available. Interactive map to be

Lead Organisation	Action	Why?	By When	October 2023 Update
	information is easily accessible via our website by end of 2022 so that people have greater confidence about the opportunities to enjoy the rivers across our region.	and transparency of our environmental data to the public.		available by the end of March 2024.