



Lower Char Community Project CAMPAIGN 2023

March 2023

We are delighted to report that Wessex Water has told us that:

- ✓ It will now install improved screens at Newlands Bridge SPS this summer
- ✓ It has identified a significant reason for the unlicensed spills at Newlands Bridge and is working on a spill elimination project there
- ✓ It now considers the Long Sea Outfall as a “high priority” site for improvement and hopes, by 2030, to reduce annual spills to <10 a year, summer spills to <2, and to ensure the discharge causes no adverse ecological harm.
- ✓ It will publish, by the end of 2023, near-real time information showing the frequency and duration of all discharges from its Long Sea Outfall and all storm overflows.

Here is the full text of the Statement by Wessex Water in response to our campaign

“We welcome the opportunity to work with the Lower Char Community Project and commend the organisers of the project for their challenging yet collaborative approach to achieving their objectives.

We are committed to doing our part to protect and improve the quality of the river and coastal water in the area, and to meet the environmental protection obligations set out for us by the Environment Agency and Defra.

Our appraisal of options for a spill elimination project at Newlands Bridge SPS is well underway starting with investigating the cause of the overflow operation, which is confirmed as being due to significant rainwater ingress into our sewerage network during storm conditions.

Site investigations, impermeability surveys and identification of opportunities to disconnect roofs, roads and hardstanding areas from discharging rainwater into our network are ongoing. Alongside this we are investigating the condition of both the private and public drainage in the area to prevent against groundwater infiltration into our system. Our initial investigations have already identified a large source of potential water ingress and we are grateful for the support of the local community in assisting us with our work.

In addition, we are bringing forward plans to install a 6mm screen at Newlands Pumping station as a matter of urgency. This is over and above the requirements of our permit obligations. Our estimated completion date for this work is the end of Summer 2023.

Following the storm overflow discharge reduction hierarchy our focus at this time is on reducing or eliminating storm overflow discharges through separation and preventing rainwater being mixed with sewage. We believe that rainwater is a resource and should be used on site or returned to the environment close to where it fell. In this regard while we welcome the offer by LLCPP to work with us to construct wetlands to treat storm overflow or surface water discharges we are not considering this option at this time.

Regarding the storm overflow discharge from the Long Sea Outfall, we are not aware of any evidence of it having impact on bathing water quality at Charmouth. In the last two bathing seasons, EA samples have coincided with storm overflow discharges on 13 occasions. The results showed:

- 12 enterococci results met the 95 percentile Excellent quality standard*
- 1 enterococci result only met the 95 percentile Good quality standard*
- 13 e-coli results met the 95 percentile Excellent quality standard*

The above notwithstanding, in developing our draft plans for our next 5 year investment cycle for 2025 – 2030 (AMP8), we are considering the Long Sea Outfall as a “high priority” site for improvement. Subject to regulatory approval, our plan is to design and deliver a solution by 2030 that reduces annual spills to less than 10 a year, reduces summer spills to less than 2, and to ensure the discharge causes no adverse ecological harm.

Our work will consider options such as repurposing of the existing storm tanks, and also perhaps more likely the construction of new storm storage assets. Whatever we choose we will ensure that it meets our regulatory obligations and if it is possible to complete the project before 2030, we will.

Finally, in respect of providing open and transparent access to our data, we will be providing on our website by the end of this year, near-real time information showing the frequency and duration of all discharges from our Long Sea Outfall and all our storm overflows. Our new storm overflow data platform is being developed now and we will share this with you and others when it is ready.”