

Clean Rivers of West Dorset

Chris Loder MP: Government actions to date. 14th April 2023

Background information and general updates

14th January - Ban on single use plastics announced by Therese Coffey. To take in effect October 2023.

20th March - OFWAT announce new powers to link **Shareholder Dividends** for water companies with their **environmental performance** through modification of licenses.

20th March - South West Water launches 'Waterfit Live' - **a new reporting and monitoring tool**, providing live information on water quality and infrastructural investment across bathing water beaches within their catchment.

This is in line with requirements set out under the **Environment Act 2021**, and over a year ahead of scheduled deadline for delivering these changes.

4th April - the Government announces the new Integrated Plan for Delivering Clean and Plentiful Water.

The Plan will:

1. Transform management of the whole water system

- The new Plan announces that we will deliver new catchment plans which set out the key issues and priorities for action to improve all waterbodies, backed up with new funding.
- **Increase funding for catchment groups** and improve their capacity to deliver improvements through the right tools, data, and approaches, and unlock more green finance to manage water, removing barriers which limit investment in nature-based solutions
- Make water companies must do more to speed up the delivery of vital improvement projects to improve water quality and water resilience.
- The Plan also announces that water companies will deliver around **£1.6 billion of accelerated investment** on water infrastructure which will start in the next two years.
- This includes around **£1.1 billion on storm overflow improvements, eliminating 10,000 discharges a year.**
- This new investment will also include **£400 million** for 18 schemes to increase our nation's water resilience, and **£160 million for improvements** at 14 wastewater

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-for-water-our-integrated-plan-for-delivering-clean-and-plentiful-water/plan-for-water-our-integrated-plan-for-delivering-clean-and-plentiful-water>

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treatment works, which will significantly reduce phosphorus and nitrogen pollution in protected nature sites.

- Strengthen the Government's powers, including those of regulators, to hold water companies and other responsible parties to account for cleaning up water bodies. Through the Environment Act 2021, the government provided powers to Ofwat to make changes to water company licence conditions and link water company dividend payments to environmental performance.
- Change the law to increase the scope and **maximum amount for penalties** that the Environment Agency can issue against water companies for damaging the environment.
- Consulting now, and all options are on the table, including our preferred option to remove the cap entirely and enable the Environment Agency to issue unlimited penalties.
- Increase the permit charges on water companies to fund more Environment Agency water company inspections, with new inspection targets - building on recent work to **increase the Environment Agency's enforcement budget by an extra £2.2 million a year.**
- Plan sets out the Government's and Ofwat's intention that shareholders, not customers, will pay for bonuses where companies are unable to demonstrate their pay award decisions reflect performance expectations.

2. Deliver a clean water environment for nature and people

- Government has set new **legally binding targets to significantly reduce pollution** from farming, wastewater, and abandoned metal mines, and initiated the largest ever environmental infrastructure investment from the water sector.
- The Plan announces a new **Water Restoration Fund** where money from water company environmental fines and penalties – taken from water company profits - will be spent directly on improving the water environment.
- The Plan will bring forward proposals to **end the sale of wet wipes** containing plastic and propose new restrictions on perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS – a 'forever chemical') entering the water environment.
- The Department for Transport will also consider what actions Government can take to bring forward or reprioritise ongoing work to reduce the impacts of the Strategic Road Network on water quality, as part of developing the next Road Investment Strategy

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- Support farmers with food production by enabling them to store more water on their land and reduce agricultural pollution by more than doubling the funding for the **Slurry Infrastructure Grant to £34 million**.
- Making our EU derived farming laws clearer and more effective at improving the environment, as well as designing agricultural schemes so that farmland alongside rivers has the opportunity to create space for nature.
- Government will consult on proposals to **extend environmental permitting to dairy and intensive beef farms**, and will improve the effectiveness of environmental permitting of pig and poultry farms in reducing water pollution.
- Government is supporting the delivery of the **National Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy** and leveraging £1 million investment in chalk stream catchment partnership projects each year starting in 2023.
- Natural England has established a **nutrient mitigation scheme (NMS)** - backed by up to £30 million from DLUHC - to help restore our protected sites and reduce water pollution.