

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2021

REPORT

SUBJECT: Bathing Water Quality

REPORT AUTHOR: Neil Williamson, Environmental Health Team Manager

DATE: 18 August 2021

EXTN: 01903 737676

AREA: Technical Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Environment Agency (EA) is responsible for monitoring and classifying bathing water quality at designated bathing waters. They also provide daily pollution risk forecasting which Arun District Council (ADC) utilises to install signage advising against bathing, when appropriate.

Residents have raised concerns about storm and wastewater discharges by Southern Water and the impact this may have on bathing water quality. Pollution risk forecasting by the EA does not directly consider such discharges. The EA regulate the activities of the sewerage undertakers, including permitted releases, and have powers to take enforcement action in relation to pollution of waters. These powers are not available to ADC.

ADC has previously worked with Southern Water to improve bathing water quality through their bathing water enhancement programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That Arun District Council write to Southern Water and request they:
 - a. confirm the reasons for the storm and wastewater discharges within Arun
 - b. outline their proposals, including timescales, for improving the existing infrastructure and reducing the frequency of discharges within Arun
 - c. outline their proposals to ensure their infrastructure will adequately accommodate future demand due to increased housing
 - d. extend the bathing water enhancement programme to additional designated bathing waters within Arun
 - e. establish a system to notify Arun District Council when a sewage overflow occurs

- (ii) That ADC write to the Environmental Agency seeking a commitment to integrate sewerage infrastructure discharges into their pollution risk forecasting models.
- (iii) That this Committee support any work that the Planning Policy Committee recommend be commissioned to understand waste water infrastructure capacity and water quality issues in Arun.

1. BACKGROUND

The Environment Agency (EA) carry out monitoring of the water quality of designated bathing waters (DBW), between May and September each year. DBW are given a classification of Excellent, Good, Sufficient or Poor, indicating the water quality based on water quality monitoring results over previous years.

Samples are taken by the EA and provide a point in time indication of quality by looking for bacteria which indicate the presence of faecal contamination. There are a range of potential sources for these bacteria including sewage, livestock, birds and road drainage. Current bathing water signage and sample locations are shown in Appendix 1.

Arun District Council (ADC) DBW are currently classified as follow:

Pagham - Excellent

Bognor Regis (Aldwick) – Good

Bognor Regis East – Good

Felpham – Good

Middleton-on-sea – Excellent

Littlehampton – Good

Further information regarding bathing water quality, water quality assessments and pollution risk forecasting is published by the EA at the following website:

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/help-understanding-data.html>

The EA provides ADC with daily pollution risk forecasting information relating to four of Arun's DBW; Bognor Regis, Bognor Regis East, Felpham and Littlehampton. When a short-term pollution warning risk is issued, we display warning signs to enable to public to make informed choices about using bathing waters. Appendix 2 shows an example of the bathing water quality and short term pollution signage from Felpham Beach.

The EA also publishes information to enable to public to view locations where advice against bathing has been issued. This information can be accessed from the following link.

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/index.html>

Concerns have been raised by residents regarding Southern Water's releases and the potential impacts this may have on bathing water quality and public safety. Pollution forecasting models used by the EA do not currently utilise information regarding sewerage infrastructure discharges. However, such discharges are typically linked to heavy rainfall, which is considered in the forecasting. Integrating sewerage system information into the modelling would ensure this is directly considered and offer greater confidence.

Information on Southern Water stormwater and wastewater releases is publicly available at the following website however ADC is not required to be notified when releases are made. The EA regulate the activity of the sewerage undertakers, including permitted releases, and have powers to take enforcement action in relation to pollution of waters. These same powers are not available to ADC.

<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/water-for-life/our-bathing-waters/beachbuoy>

Southern Water has provided public information outlining the reasons that releases are made, and can be found at the following link. This reports that releases are necessary in wet weather because combined sewers can become overwhelmed and to prevent homes flooding and to protect wastewater treatment works.

<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/the-news-room/the-media-centre/2019/july/protecting-homes-and-managing-storms>

ADC has previously worked with Southern Water supporting its Bathing Water Enhancement Programme, in relation to Middleton and to a lesser extent Bognor Regis (Aldwick), however this has not been extended to other DBW within ADC.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

- (i) That Arun District Council write to Southern Water and request they:
 - a. confirm the reasons for the storm and wastewater discharges within Arun
 - b. outline their proposals, including timescales, for improving the existing infrastructure and reducing the frequency of discharges within Arun
 - c. outline their proposals to ensure their infrastructure will adequately accommodate future demand due to increased housing
 - d. extend the bathing water enhancement programme to additional designated bathing waters within Arun
 - e. establish a system to formally notify Arun District Council when a sewage overflow occurs
- (ii) That ADC write to the Environmental Agency seeking a commitment to integrate sewerage infrastructure discharges into their pollution risk forecasting models.
- (iii) That this Committee support any work that the Planning Policy Committee recommend be commissioned to understand waste water infrastructure capacity and water quality issues in Arun.

(1) OPTIONS:

- (i) Do not write to Southern Water
- (ii) Write to Southern Water with modified requests
- (iii) Do not write to the Environment Agency
- (iv) Write to the Environment Agency with a modified request
- (v) That this Committee do not support any work that the Planning Policy Committee recommends commissioning in relation to waste water infrastructure

4. CONSULTATION:		
Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		X
Relevant District Ward Councillors		X
Other groups/persons (please specify)		X
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)		
Financial		X
Legal		X
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		X
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act	X	
Sustainability		X
Asset Management/Property/Land		
Technology		X
Other (please explain)	X	
6. IMPLICATIONS:		
<p>If storm discharges are not adequately managed there is potential that this will impact bathing water quality, leading to increased public safety risks to bathers.</p> <p>This could also impact the classification of Arun's designated bathing waters, leading to loss in public confidence in our designated bathing waters and ultimately economic impacts should less people choose to visit Arun as a result.</p>		

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:
 To improve public safety and public confidence in Arun's designated bathing waters

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:
 INSERT LINKS TO BACKGROUND PAPERS HERE
[Water quality | Arun District Council](#)
[BWEF-Middleton-On-Sea.pdf \(southernwater.co.uk\)](#)
[Environmental Services and Leisure Working Group 01 November 2016 Agenda, Item 7: Short Term Pollution Event Forecasting at Bathing Waters](#)
[ICM Cabinet Member Decision - Bathing Water Enhancement Programme - 17 May 2018](#)
 Appendix 1: Bathing Water Signage and Sample Locations
 Appendix 2: Bathing Water Quality and Short Term Pollution Signage