

Anthony Mangnall MP
Conservative Club
Station Road
Totnes
TQ9 5HW

Our Ref: AD21/DCIS/12551

ENQ21/DCIS/236562

Date: 15 October 2021

Via email: anthony.mangnall.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Mr Mangnall,

Thank you for your email dated 17 September, regarding Salcombe Harbour Board's concerns of the water quality in and around Salcombe and Kingsbridge. As per our email dated 8 October, we have been unable to locate a record of the email from Salcombe Harbour Board to Helen Dobby's email address on 9 July.

Bathing Waters

For the 2021 bathing season, we planned for a near-normal programme of bathing water quality monitoring. In some instances, our samplers might not have been able to safely access a site if it was particularly busy. If this happened, every endeavour was made to collect a sample at a different time.

I can confirm that for Salcombe South Sands, Salcombe North Sands and Blackpool Sands, we were able to carry out our full scheduled programme of monitoring. The results of these samples are available to view on our [SWIMFO](#) website. The 2021 classification will also be available on SWIMFO, once confirmed.

Eutrophication of the Kingsbridge estuary and associated nitrate vulnerable zone (NVZ)

The land draining to the Kingsbridge waterbody (GB520804609000) is designated as an NVZ, as the Kingsbridge waterbody is considered to be eutrophic due to inputs of nitrogen from the land. 'Eutrophic' means that there has been excessive growth of opportunistic macroalgae (e.g., the green seaweed *Enteromorpha*) or large phytoplankton booms, along with elevated levels of nutrients (nitrogen) in the estuary. Farmers must comply with Farming Rules for Water and any action taken to reduce run-off of slurry will help to reduce inputs of faecal indicator organisms to the Kingsbridge estuary. Reducing inputs of faecal indicator organisms from agriculture will benefit people undertaking any immersive water sports in the estuary and will also benefit the designated bathing waters and shellfish waters.

Data Requests

An EIR request has also been opened under reference ENQ21/DCIS/236562, to provide the following data that Salcombe Harbour Board have requested:

- 1) Data the Environment Agency holds on the impact of the work to separate rainwater and household drains in Salcombe.
- 2) Salcombe Harbour water data held by the Environment Agency for the last five years (namely relating to the upper harbour).

We respond to requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Please refer to [Open Government Licence](#) which explains the permitted use of this information.

1) Data the Environment Agency holds on the impact of the work to separate rainwater and household drains in Salcombe

The duty to make information available to you under EIR Regulation 5(1) does not arise because in accordance with EIR Regulation 3(2) we do not hold the information you have requested. Regulation 12(4)(a) also applies – we cannot supply the information because we do not hold it. This information is held by South West Water (SWW).

The surface water separation scheme SWW have implemented in Salcombe was primarily to address frequent flooding issues experienced in the town. These works have been successful with regards to decreasing the frequency of flooding in the town and the volume of surface water entering the combined drainage system. The combined drainage system in Salcombe is complex and compounded by the operation of a tidal balancing valve which aims to manage the sea water ingress into the drainage system.

We publish information on the number of spills from this combined drainage system to support our understanding of water company compliance. The Environment Agency has now made the Event Duration Monitoring (EDM) data from each of the 10 water and sewerage companies operating in England available on [Gov.uk](#).

The Environment Agency has been pivotal in driving the implementation of EDM to not only capture and better understand the performance of storm overflows, which are a necessary part of the sewerage system, but to hold water companies to account and work with them to address their environmental impact.

Whereas the EDM data has always been available through information request, the proactive publication, and the increased visibility and scrutiny it provides, is an important step in further addressing the overuse of storm overflows.

How the data is used

The Environment Agency uses the EDM data to not only inform compliance and investigation work, but also the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP), which we have developed. This provides a clear framework to prioritise where water companies need to improve and where they should focus their investment.

EDM monitoring evidence has already been used to drive around £1.1 billion of water company investment, which will see 800 investigations and nearly 800 improvements to storm overflows over the next four years.

The same data assessments that brought about this investment will now be applied to the 2020 data for the next round of water company environmental improvements between 2025-2030.

What we are doing in Devon and Cornwall

We have been using the 2019 EDM data to help inform our local investment programme (WINEP) to protect the rivers, estuaries and coastal waters in Devon and Cornwall.

We are working in collaboration with SWW to improve the quality of the data provided so we can have more assurance of the data's value and enable improvements. This has included

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the recalibration of Salcombe Sewage Pumping Station EDM and relocation of EDM equipment at East Allington wastewater treatment works.

Where our investigations have highlighted permit non-compliance for significant discharges, we will assess all the evidence and take the appropriate action, which could include enforcement action against the water company.

We are now reviewing the 2020 EDM data. This will involve a 2-phase strategy. Firstly, to assess the data's assurance and quality and to prioritise the sites. Then, we will work with SWW to improve 2021's data quality and assign the available resource to interrogate the highest priority sites.

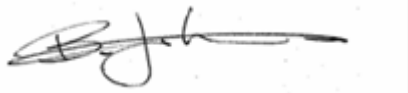
Of course, we continue to monitor water quality, and if any specific sources of pollution are identified we will do everything possible to prevent further impact.

2) Salcombe Harbour water data held by the Environment Agency for the last five years (namely relating to the upper harbour).

The water quality data from Salcombe and Kingsbridge for the last five years is available [here](#). Please note, the Sharefile link will expire after 30 days. However, any required data can be searched and downloaded from our [website](#).

If you would like to discuss this further please contact our Customers and Engagement Team, who will be happy to help you. You can contact the team on 02084 747 914 or at DCISEnquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Ben Johnstone
Acting Area Director – Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly



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