

Press release: Water company to pay a record £975,000 towards environmental improvements following sewage spills on Dorset coast

- Highest ever Enforcement Undertaking in England
- RNLI lifeboat crew complained after sailing through raw sewage
- Local community will benefit from £400,000 towards flood defence scheme
- Nature reserve, RNLI and projects to improve water quality will receive payments

More than 142,000 cubic metres of sewage was discharged into the sea during illegal spills in 2016 and 2017. The windfall will be used to fund environmental improvements in and around the coastal town of Swanage.

The package offered by Wessex Water, the highest ever in the UK, includes £400,000 towards a local authority flood defence scheme in Swanage, £400,000 to Dorset Waste Partnership to fund the development of a doorstep recycling service for domestic fat, oil and grease, £100,000 towards the Dorset Litter Free Coast and Sea Project, £75,000 to the Durlston Country Park and Nature Reserve.

The company also offered £25,000 compensation to Swanage RNLI Lifeboat Station as an impacted third party, taking the total pay-out to £1 million.

Wessex Water made the offer as part of a legal agreement known as an Enforcement Undertaking (EU) which is a form of Civil Sanction. An EU involves a company or individual offering to put right what went wrong and compensate people and the environment. After careful consideration, the Environment Agency accepted Wessex Water's enforcement undertaking on the basis that the company accepted breaching the legislation and payments totalling £975,000 would secure improvements to the environment including flood defence and measures to tackle fats, oil and grease – which can cause pollution to rivers and coastal waters if poured down the sink.

Mark Sitton-Kent from the Environment Agency said:

When water companies damage the environment by illegally polluting water the Environment Agency will take tough enforcement action against them including civil sanctions.

This record pay-out will secure a range of environmental improvements for the local community, tourism and future water quality.

Swanage town centre falls within a flood risk zone where temporary defences

are deployed to help protect local business and property. The contribution offered by Wessex Water will benefit local residents and businesses by improving the level of flood protection in the town.

The financial contribution to Dorset Waste Partnership (DWP) will fund the development of a doorstep recycling service for fats, oil and grease. The money will be used to help determine the facilities needed for the service and fund additional resources to assist with recycling. The donation to Durlston Country Park will enable provision of equipment for animal surveys and raise awareness and promote management of the rich local environment.

The financial pay-out arose from a series of unconsented discharges from Swanage Sewage Treatment Works into Swanage Bay where it is estimated more than 142,000 cubic metres of sewage was discharged into the sea.

Notes to editor

As owner and operator, Wessex Water admitted failing to comply with the site's environmental permit on various dates between 31 July 2016 and 3 August 2017. One of the sewage spills occurred during the 2016 Swanage carnival weekend and another was witnessed by a local RNLi lifeboat crew who complained to Wessex Water and the local authority after sailing through a plume of raw sewage off Peverill Point on 1 August 2016.

The continuing discharges prompted the local council to erect warning signs on Swanage beach on 5 August 2016.

The permit for the treatment works allows for discharges from 3 separate outfalls. Discharges should only occur when flows exceed limits specified in the permit. The works had previously operated to a high standard, but its performance deteriorated around the time of the discharges resulting in a loss in storage capacity.

A storm on 1 August 2016 caused extra flows to enter the works resulting in unconsented discharges into Swanage Bay. The pollution occurred because there was no where to store the incoming flows. Wessex Water failed to report the discharges until 3 days later. Swanage Sewage Treatment Works works is now operating in compliance with its permit and has been since April 2018.

The previous highest EU was £650,752 paid by Costcutter Supermarkets Group Limited to WRAP (The Waste and Resources Action Programme) charity in 2017 for offences under the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007. The highest previous financial contribution from a water company EU – which was £375,000 paid by Northumbrian Water Limited in relation to pollution incidents from one of its sewage pumping stations between 2015 and 2016 – which was formally accepted in December 2016.

The Environment Agency has previously accepted 4 other EUs from Wessex Water, the highest of which was £200,000 for an EU relating to Wick St Lawrence, Somerset. The money was split between a number of charities and organisations to help fund environmental projects.

[News story: Minister talks trade at UK's largest bio-science campus](#)

Alderley Park in Cheshire offers facilities for research & development (R&D) focused life science companies at every stage of their life-cycle, from start-up right through to becoming established as a global corporation.

Whilst on site the Minister will meet with the AMR Centre, who play a key role in the British response to global threats from anti-microbial resistance (AMR), to learn about their international projects and find out about the UK's wider trading opportunities presented by AMR.

The company is a joint private-public initiative which aims to accelerate the development of new treatments and diagnostics in the fight against the growing global impact of resistance to antibiotics.

Minister of State at the Department for International Trade, Baroness Fairhead, said:

There is an ever-increasing worldwide demand for the UK's life sciences goods and services with £33.5bn being exported last year. The AMR Centre, part of the Northern Power House, is a key part of this. It is a global centre of excellence and the work they do has the potential to save lives across the world.

Our Export Strategy aims to support their growth overseas. Indeed, we offer a range of support to businesses, large and small, which includes providing finance help through our award-winning credit agency, UK Export Finance, advice from our network of Export Champions and a wealth of resources and opportunities on [GREAT.gov.uk](https://www.great.gov.uk).

Dr Peter Jackson, Executive Director of The AMR Centre said:

It's great to be able to showcase the internationally-important centre of excellence in the fight against drug-resistant superbugs here at the AMR Centre and with our partners across the North West.

In the UK, we have a fantastic opportunity to capitalise on our world-class universities, our drug development expertise and our global leadership on the AMR agenda to make a real difference for patients around the world.

The Minister previously met with the AMR Centre on a [trade mission to the Boston BIO Conference](#) earlier this year, where businesses from across the Northern Powerhouse were able to connect with potential US buyers and like-minded firms.

To expand their international profile, the company has made use of DIT support to further their overseas contacts including help and advice on attending trade shows in the likes of Germany, Japan and the US, and has already signed antibiotic development contracts with companies in the USA and Sweden.

DIT is also helping wider businesses in Alderley Park with their exporting ambitions. The local International Trade Advisor, Sara Pomfret has set up regular drop in sessions on site to offer advice and support to any local business that needs it.

Dr Chris Doherty, managing director of Alderley Park, said:

Science crosses borders and innovation is a powerful enabler driving the UK economy forward. Alderley Park is a major science and technology location for UK Plc and key asset within Brunwood SciTech, the UK's leader in creating innovation districts.

We very much welcome the support from DIT in helping our customers take their ideas to global markets.

The government recently launched a new [Export Strategy](#) which sets out how DIT will support businesses of all sizes to make the most of the opportunities presented by markets around the world.

A collaboration with business, developed after extensive engagement with a range of UK firms – the Strategy sets a new ambition from government to increase exports as a proportion of UK GDP to 35%.

[News story: Third Courts and Tribunals Service Centre announced](#)



- Part of the £1 billion court reform programme, Courts & Tribunals Service Centres will provide easier access to justice services.
- Plans are already underway to open the first two centres in Stoke-On-Trent and Birmingham from January 2019.

Courts & Tribunals Service Centres are a key part of the transformation of courts and tribunals. They will bring together expertise under one roof and improve and modernise processes to give users of the justice system a better, seamless service. The service centres will enable users to access the support they need more quickly and easily in one place.

Loughborough has now been chosen to house the third of these centres. This follows on from those already planned to open in Stoke-on-Trent and Birmingham from January 2019.

The Loughborough service centre will hold around 200 employees, bringing the total to around 1000 across all three sites. The service centre is expected to be fully operational by May 2020 but justice services may start moving there by the end of 2019. They will deal with all aspects of handling cases including new applications, managing queries from the public and professional users; and supporting the judiciary in progressing cases and listing hearings.

Nicky Morgan, Member of Parliament for Loughborough, said:

Access to justice is extremely important, so I am delighted that the latest Courts & Tribunal Service Centre will be based in Loughborough. This is also good news for local employment, confirming that our town is a great place for many different employers to be based.

Half of our workforce will continue to be based in courts and tribunals and will work hand in hand with the new service centres.

Existing HMCTS employees who are affected by the changes will be given priority to apply for roles in service centres and will be supported through the process.

The announcement of this service centre is part of the £1bn being invested in

transforming courts and tribunals, making the justice system simpler to access, convenient to use and more efficient to run; utilising technology to bring the processes of justice into the 21st century.

Susan Acland-Hood, HMCTS CEO, said:

Our service centres will transform the services we offer to all HMCTS users, making it easier, quicker and more efficient to access support. For HMCTS colleagues, the new service centres will offer the opportunity to work in modern, well designed spaces with support available to develop their skills and expertise in the justice system.

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1. 26 November 2018 Add Welsh translation
2. 23 November 2018 First published.

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