

# Jonathan Ashworth responds to figures showing NHS trusts are already in a deficit of £886m

**Jonathan**

**Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary**, responding to quarter three figures showing NHS trusts are already in a deficit of £886m, said:

"Theresa

May's sustained underfunding of the NHS is stretching the finances of NHS hospitals beyond their limits. Even with the £1.8bn that was set aside in the 'financial reset' last summer hospitals have already run up a deficit of £886m

this year. It will take a heroic effort by NHS staff to meet even the predicted

year-end target in the face of chronic neglect by the Government.

"The

Government needs to be honest about what this crisis means for patient care. It

means cuts to frontline staff, longer waits for treatment and services at risk

of closure. The money which had been set aside for NHS transformation funding,

which should be improving services and bringing the deficit down in future, has

instead had to be used to manage this year's figures.

"Ministers

are in denial, but the staggering decline in the NHS's financial performance is

a direct result of decisions they made. Cuts to social care have driven up hospital attendances while the Government's inept workforce planning has forced

hospitals to drain resources on expensive agency staff.

"The

simple fact is that Tory Ministers have failed to come up with a workable solution to these problems. Their agency cap which was meant to help has been breached more than 2.7 million times already. The Government urgently need to provide a long-term, sustainable financial package to guarantee the NHS services which patients need for the future."

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## Press release: Environment Agency receives applications for Palmers Wood oilfield

The Environment Agency has received 2 applications for environmental permits at the Palmers Wood oil and gas site.

These applications have been submitted by the site operator to bring the site into line with the current regulations for conventional oil and gas sites. This is part of the Environment Agency's review of all oil and gas permits granted prior to October 2013.

In deciding whether or not to issue the permits, the Environment Agency will take into account all relevant considerations and legal requirements.

[You can find further information on the application and details of how to comment online.](#)

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

An environmental permit sets out stringent conditions that a site must adhere to. We will not issue an environmental permit for a site if we consider that activities taking place will cause significant pollution to the environment or harm to human health.

We are in the process of determining the applications to re-permit this site and we want to hear from the public and understand people's views. Everybody has the chance to see what the permit may look like and to raise any additional concerns before we make any final decision.

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## China's H7N9 bird flu mutates, no immediate added threat to human

The H7N9 bird flu has mutated to a new strain in south China, which is proven more dangerous to poultry but poses no new threat to humans, the country's disease control and prevention authorities said Sunday on its website.

The mutation was found in January in two people who had contracted H7N9 bird flu in Guangdong Province. Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) has lately confirmed the finding and reported the case to the

World Health Organization (WHO), according to China CDC's website.

The agricultural sector has also found the mutation in four poultry samples from Guangdong, China CDC said.

On the basis of joint study with experts from the agricultural sector, China CDC has concluded that the mutation "does not make the virus more infectious to human at the moment."

Chinese health and agricultural authorities will continue to study the mutated strain's source and its impact while intensifying monitoring to detect H7N9's further mutations, according to China CDC's website.

China has stepped up prevention of H7N9 avian flu transmission. It has been linked to at least 88 deaths since January. About 271 human infections cases were reported.

Most infected humans have had contact with poultry or dead birds. Among them were the two patients from Guangdong.

Bird flu is known to easily mutate. The public are concerned that a mutation might make it more infectious to humans, China CDC said on its website.

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## **Press release: South West Water fined for sewage pollution near shellfish beds**

South West Water has been ordered to pay £205,000 in fines and costs for discharging sewage into the Fal estuary in Cornwall. The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

On 26 August 2013 untreated sewage overflowed from the water company's Newham sewage treatment works near Truro into the Fal, an internationally important shellfishery, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The illegal spill occurred after a piece of redundant grating fell and partially blocked an inlet at the works, causing sewage to back up and overflow into the estuary via a storm storage outfall. The spill continued for about 9.5 hours, during which time enough sewage escaped to fill 4,563 bath tubs (730,000 litres).

The discharge occurred close to mussel and oyster beds at Malpas and Grimes Bar. As a precaution, these shellfisheries were temporarily closed by Cornwall Port Health Authority because of the possible risk of contamination

by harmful viruses and bacteria such as Norovirus and e.coli.

The decision to close the shellfish beds was taken just before the start of the commercial harvesting season (1 October). Although most harvesting is done during the commercial season, there is a risk small quantities of shellfish may be hand-picked by individuals outside of this time and there would have been a potential risk to those consumers.

Sewage at the Newham treatment works normally undergoes a high level of treatment (tertiary) including ultra violet (UV) that kills bacteria and disinfects effluent. An UV disinfection system is required at this site because of the Fal estuary's designation as a shellfishery.

The sewage discharged over a bank holiday on 26 August was settled and screened, but otherwise untreated and occurred outside of a storm event. This would have resulted in a significant increase in levels of bacteria in parts of the Fal estuary and meant the treatment works was in breach of its Environment Agency permit.

Mark Pilcher, team leader for the Environment Agency in west Cornwall, said:

It is essential large sewage works bordering estuaries with conservation designations and also containing shellfish beds are operated and inspected to a high standard to prevent unpermitted sewage spills posing risks to public health and the environment.

In this case an inspection programme or removal of a redundant grating structure would have removed the risk of this grating falling into the sewage works and blocking it leading to the spill of sewage.

South West Water Limited was fined £185,000 plus £20,000 costs after pleading guilty to 2 offences under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2010 including, on 26 August 2013, causing pollution of the Fal estuary through the illegal discharge of sewage and failing to maintain a saline tank valve at its Newham sewage treatment works. The water company was fined £175,000 for the first offence and £10,000 for the second. The case was heard at Truro Crown Court on 15 February 2017.

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## [Charity group launches Belt and Road first-aid project](#)

The Chinese Red Cross Foundation (CRCF) Monday launched a first-aid project under the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative in Beijing.

The project will offer first-aid resources, including ambulances and medical professionals, and public health services along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a 3,000-km network of roads, railways and pipelines linking Kashgar in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and southwest Pakistan's Gwadar Port.

The first emergency medical center under the project will be built in Gwadar Port, according the CRCF.

The project is sponsored by the CRCF Silk Road Bo'ai Fund, a non-profit program which aims to contribute to the Belt and Road Initiative by providing humanitarian services. The fund was also launched Monday.

As part of the fund, a project on helping children with congenital heart disease in Afghanistan was announced by the CRCF on the same day.