

End sewage discharges to rivers by water companies

Since I and others raised this in the Commons last week during the passage of the Environment Bill the Minister has supplied additional information about how they are proposing to get rid of bad discharges to rivers as we all want:

- “Between 2020 and 2025, water companies will invest £7.1bn on environmental improvements in England.
- Of this, £3.1 billion will be invested in storm overflow improvements specifically.
 - We have also made our expectations crystal clear in our draft Strategic Policy Statement to Ofwat where, for the first time, the Government will tell the industry’s economic regulator that we expect water companies to take steps to “significantly reduce... storm overflows”, and that we expect funding to be approved for them to do so.
 - In August 2020 we established the Storm Overflows Task Force to bring together key stakeholders from the water industry, environmental NGOs, regulators, and Government in order to drive progress in reducing sewage discharges.
- The Task force has agreed a long-term goal to eliminate harm from storm overflows.
 - We have committed to reviewing the case for implementing Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 in England, which would set mandatory build standards for sustainable drainage schemes on new developments, and which many have called for. This action has the potential to markedly reduce quantities of water unnecessarily entering the sewerage system. The significant action I have detailed will deliver real reductions in the harm caused.”