

News story: South West Water fined for Devon sewage spill

South West Water has been ordered to pay £86,000 in fines and costs for discharging sewage into Dawlish Water over a bank holiday weekend. The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

On 28 August 2015 an automatic alarm was triggered in Brook Street after a blockage in a pipe caused sewage to leak into nearby Dawlish Water, a stream that runs through the centre of the town.

The alarm sounded at 8.15am, but the water company didn't dispatch an emergency crew to deal with the problem until 11.40am. Instead of going to Brook Street, it went to Brook House in another part of Dawlish and reported nothing was wrong. It wasn't until a second team arrived, some 6 hours after the alarm sounded, that the discharge was discovered and steps were finally taken to stop the pollution.

The problem was caused by a brick which had somehow entered and blocked the sewer causing it to overflow.



This combined sewage overflow pipe was blocked and discharged into Dawlish Water

Dawlish beach was busy with holidaymakers at the time of the incident. Bathers were advised by an official from Teignbridge District Council to stay

out of the sea and wash their hands . The Environment Agency declared an 'abnormal situation' and the bathing water was closed for more than 24 hours.

Levels of E.coli bacteria in Dawlish Water increased significantly as a result of the discharge, from 990 per 100ml upstream of the sewer pipe to 4,800,000 at the point of discharge. Further downstream in the walled section by the viaduct the level had reduced to 70,000, however children had been seen playing in the water in this area. Dilution in the sea meant there were safe levels of E.coli in the town's bathing water.

South West Water said it had tried to get a team to Dawlish as soon as possible, but their response time was increased because a crew was unavailable having attended sewer flooding of a property elsewhere overnight. A second crew was unable to attend due to technical problems with their vehicle.

Nigel Thomas-Childs, for the Environment Agency, said:

Water companies must respond promptly to emergencies to minimise any pollution or harm to the environment. This discharge occurred over an August bank holiday when Dawlish was particularly busy. South West Water lost valuable time and took too long to find the blockage and deal with the overflow to the brook.

Appearing before Exeter Crown Court, South West Water Ltd was fined £80,000 and ordered to pay £6,202 costs after pleading guilty to discharging polluting material into Dawlish Brook, an offence under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010.

Policy paper: Yate and Chipping Sodbury: reducing the risk of flooding

Updated: Updated with feedback from consultation, preferred option and next steps.

This document explains how the Environment Agency is investigating ways to offer flood protection to 100 homes and 40 businesses at risk of flooding from the River Frome and its tributaries.

UK-Italian earthquake collaboration gets a Royal audience

A seismologist from the British Geological Survey (BGS) and another from the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology in Italy (INGV) met with Prince Charles in Amatrice today. The scientists were among the international team that updated him on the on-going collaboration and reconstruction efforts since the earthquake struck in August last year.

Official Statistics: Residues of veterinary medicines in food: 2017

Updated: Updated results paper

This document contains information on substances found in the UK where the level of concentration of a residue in an animal product is above the action point. Where a Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) is set, this is the concentration used. Where no MRL has been set, the Limit of Quantification (LOQ) is used which is the smallest analyte concentration for which a method has been validated with specified accuracy and precision to enable quantification.

The first table is a summary of the following detailed results table with outcomes of investigations into non-compliant samples and what action is being taken to avoid unacceptable residues in the future.

Official Statistics: Planning Performance Statistics, Quarter 3 2016/17

Latest release of planning performance data