

Largest overhaul of sewer system to tackle storm sewage discharges

Water companies will face strict limits on when they can use storm overflows and must completely eliminate the ecological harm any storm sewage discharges cause to the environment and significantly reduce discharges to protect public health under new plans unveiled by the Government today (31 March).

The [consultation on the Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan](#) outlines a step change in how water companies tackle the number of discharges of untreated sewage, which the Government and the public have made clear are completely unacceptable.

A growing population, Victorian infrastructure and an increase in extreme weather events has increased pressure on our sewer system, bringing the frequency of discharges to an unacceptable level.

Under the proposed plan:

- By 2035, the environmental impacts of 3,000 storm overflows (75%) affecting our most important protected sites will have been eliminated;
- By 2035, there will be 70% fewer discharges into bathing waters –(using last years figures that would have equated to 4,620 fewer discharges into our bathing waters during the bathing season;)
- By 2040, approximately 160,000 discharges, on average, will have been eliminated (40% of the total); and by 2050, approximately 320,000 discharges, on average, will have been eliminated (80% of the total).
- The consultation outlines how water companies are expected to achieve these targets, including mapping their sewer networks, reducing surface water connections and engaging in long-term collaborative planning.

It also details how government will hold to account those companies who do not meet expectations, including a new monitoring and reporting framework as legislated for in the Environment Act which will significantly improve the ability of both Ofwat and the Environment Agency to take enforcement action where needed.

Views are sought from the public on the targets as part of a suite of measures to be considered for the final Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan, which will be published in September.

The main measures under consultation are:

- Time-bound targets for water companies to achieve the complete elimination of ecological harm from storm overflows, further protect public health and limit storm overflow use;
- Details of how water companies will be expected to achieve these targets;
- An outline of wider options to reduce the strain on our sewer system,

- such as mandatory sustainable drainage systems; and
- Commitments to revise guidance on applying for a new bathing water designation, and to publish responses to a call for evidence on options to eliminate the use of wet wipes and ensure they are biodegradable where needed.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

We are the first government to set out our expectation that that water companies must take steps to significantly reduce storm overflows. Today, we are setting specific targets to ensure that those storm overflows are used only in exceptional circumstances – delivering on our Environment Act and building on wider work on water quality.

Today's consultation follows significant action to date on tackling the critical issue of storm overflows. The Strategic Policy Statement for Ofwat, in which the Government has for the first time set a clear expectation that the industry's economic regulator should prioritise action by water companies to protect the environment, is now in force.

A raft of measures have also been brought forward in the [Environment Act 2021](#) to tackle sewage discharges, including the requirement for greater transparency from water companies on their storm overflow data, meaning there are now more protections in place for our water environment than ever before.

Between 2020 to 2025, water companies are investing £7.1 billion to protect and improve the environment. Of this, £3.1 billion is being invested specifically in storm overflow improvements. This includes £1.9 billion investment on the Thames Tideway Tunnel super sewer.

Environment Agency Chief Executive Sir James Bevan said:

Water companies need to go further and faster in tackling the damage caused by storm overflows, so these targets aimed at drastically reducing the number of harmful discharges are a welcome development.

The Environment Agency will continue to work with government, the water industry, the other regulators and the NGOs to ensure we have healthier sewers, cleaner rivers and a better environment for all.

Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England, said:

Separating sewage from water people drink is one of the greatest public health triumphs of the last 200 years.

The discharge of raw sewage, including from storm overflows into waters used by the public, should be an exceptionally rare event and we need to take action to reduce it substantially.

The consultation is open from today for six weeks, until 12 May.

Background:

- Complete separation of sewage and rainwater systems would remove the need for storm overflows, however this would cost between £350 billion and £600 billion. It would also cause significant disruption.
- For example, most of the combined system runs under our towns and cities and would have to be dug up. Reducing discharges to zero in an average year at all inland waters using other options, such as building storage tanks to capture excess water during heavy rainfall, would cost between £160bn and £240bn. The cost of each of these options would have an impact on consumer water bills.

Foreign Secretary in India as part of diplomatic push on Ukraine

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss is in India today (Thursday 31 March) as part of a wider diplomatic push following Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine last month.

In a meeting with India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, the Foreign Secretary will say Russia's invasion of Ukraine underlines the importance of democracies working closer together to deter aggressors, reduce vulnerability to coercion and strengthen global security.

She wants to counter Russia's aggression and reduce global strategic dependence on the country ahead of key NATO and G7 meetings next week.

During her trip, Truss will progress talks to develop defence-related trade, including innovative security technology, strengthening defence ties with the world's largest democracy.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

Deeper ties between Britain and India will boost security in the Indo-Pacific and globally, and create jobs and opportunities in both countries.

This matters even more in the context of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and underlines the need for free democracies to

work closer together in areas like defence, trade and cyber security.

India is an economic and tech powerhouse, the world's largest democracy and a great friend of Britain, and I want to build an even closer relationship between our two nations.

She will also work to deepen cyber security and defence co-operation between the two countries, and will announce a new joint cyber security programme.

The programme will aim to protect online infrastructure in both countries from attacks. India and the UK will work together to increase cyber security and carry out joint exercises to practise combatting threats from cybercriminals and ransomware.

The UK and India will also agree to closer maritime co-operation in the Indo-Pacific. The UK will join India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative and become a lead partner on maritime security issues, coordinating work with key partners in Southeast Asia.

This stronger partnership on maritime security builds on the visit to India last year by HMS Queen Elizabeth and the Carrier Strike Group (CSG) – a symbol of the UK's world leading defence capability. The CSG took part in the most demanding exercise ever undertaken between the UK and India, involving all 3 military services.

Strengthening ties with India has been a priority for the Foreign Secretary since taking up the role. This is her second trip to the country as Foreign Secretary following [her visit last October](#) and her third as a Secretary of State in 13 months.

Since the [2030 Roadmap](#) was agreed last year, the UK and India have launched free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations.

On her trip the Foreign Secretary will also confirm £70 million of British International Investment (BII) funding to support renewable energy use in India. This will help build renewable energy capacity and develop solar power in the region. She will also confirm plans for a new platform to allow British investors to bid for green infrastructure, technology, and business opportunities in India.

Current volatility in oil and gas prices and energy security concerns, as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, underscore the importance of India's green transition and move towards energy self-sufficiency.

- in May 2021, Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an historic commitment to strengthen work between the UK and India over the next decade. The new [Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and the '2030 Roadmap'](#) will bring our countries, economies, and people closer together and boost cooperation in areas that matter to both countries

- the new cyber programme is part of our Enhanced Cyber Partnership, as endorsed by Prime Minister Johnson and Prime Minister Modi in the UK-India 2030 Roadmap
- the Foreign Secretary and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar will address the India-UK Strategic Futures Forum later today (Thursday, March 31) to set out their vision for the long-term relationship between the 2 countries.
- the Foreign Secretary will also confirm plans to hold the first Strategic Tech Dialogue, a ministerial-level summit on emerging technology

[Australian investors commit £28.5bn in major economic boost for UK](#)

- Top Australian investors announce £28.5 billion for clean energy, technology and infrastructure projects across the UK
- Today's investment commitments will create thousands of jobs and support major developments from Orkney to Southampton
- PM hails transformative investment which will help level up, boost quality housing stock and drive the green energy transition

Leading Australian businesses have announced major new investments totalling £28.5 billion in projects across the United Kingdom, as the Prime Minister hosts a UK-Australia investment roundtable at Downing Street this evening [Wednesday 30th March].

Today's announcements follow from the Global Investment Summit hosted by the PM in October and the creation of the new Office for Investment. They underline the growing appeal of the UK's dynamic economy and workforce for foreign investment.

The strategic investments will create thousands of jobs initially with many more expected, supporting the Government's agenda to level up across the UK, improve the quality of our infrastructure and housing and drive a green industrial revolution.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I'm proud that some of Australia's leading businesses have chosen to invest in the UK, recognising opportunities across the globe in

our dynamic and forward-looking economy.

The fantastic schemes announced today will turbocharge the Government's efforts to create jobs and growth in every part of the country, and put the UK at the cutting edge of the green industrial revolution. This is Global Britain in action – building new partnerships with friends and allies around the globe to create prosperity at home.

New investments announced today include:

- Top Australian financial services firm Macquarie Group plans to support £12bn of investment by 2030 in infrastructure projects across the UK, including in offshore wind in Lincolnshire and north Scotland, gigabit broadband in rural England and hydrogen hubs in Southampton and Orkney. Macquarie Group has supported more than £50bn of investment in the UK in the last 15 years, backing half of the country's existing offshore wind capacity.
- Pension fund AustralianSuper forecasts a further £8bn in investments across the UK over the next five years. Among other projects, the funding will support a joint venture with British Land to develop their Canada Water master plan, estimated at £5bn in value on completion.
- Real estate and investment group Lendlease and its partners plan to deliver £5.5bn of investment across its major regeneration projects in London and Birmingham over the next five years, subject to planning permission. This investment is expected to deliver thousands of new low carbon homes, training and employment opportunities for local communities.
- IFM Investors intend to deliver £3bn in investment into the UK over five years. The funding will help maintain existing assets, including the M6 toll and Manchester, Stansted and East Midlands airports, and its new net zero fund will support large-scale infrastructure energy transition projects – including in electrification, carbon capture and solar power.
- Energy, chemicals and natural resources experts Worley will expand their UK operations, supporting the energy transition and drive for NetZero creating over 1,000 highly-skilled professional jobs in the next 18 months in areas including Humberside, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow and Aberdeen.
- Global green renewable energy company Fortescue Future Industries (FFI) plans to create up to 1,000 new jobs at Williams Advanced Engineering in Oxford, which they acquired in March. The investment will support decarbonisation initiatives and build on the UK's excellence in engineering.

The Prime Minister hosted ten Australian CEOs and senior executives for a hybrid roundtable at Downing Street this evening alongside the International Trade Secretary, to welcome today's investments and discuss opportunities for further collaboration and investment.

The UK and Australia have close and historic economic, political and cultural ties, which are set to be bolstered by our new Free Trade Agreement.

Macquarie Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Shemara Wikramanayake, said:

The UK was our first destination when we expanded internationally in 1989, and has remained a strong focus for our investment activity ever since.

The UK has been a world leader in the positive utilisation of private capital to meet essential infrastructure needs of communities, including as a global leader in investment in the energy transition. We look forward to building on our track record of investment of capital and expertise to deliver the next generation of UK infrastructure.

The Department for International Trade is boosting inward foreign investment – securing almost £10 billion in new investment at October's Global Investment Summit and lining up a pipeline of future funding partnerships – and supporting UK businesses to grow their exports, including to new markets in the Asia-Pacific.

Investment Minister Lord Grimstone, who also attended the roundtable, said:

The UK is one of the best investment destinations in the world. Global businesses invest here for many reasons, not least our stability, commercial openness and financial services credentials, as seen when we hosted the Global Investment Summit last year, which brought over

The investment announced today not only builds on the UK-Australia Free-Trade Agreement but will help level up every part of the UK. Investment is a driving force for the creation of jobs and higher living standards, and I'm delighted we'll see this right across the country.

Lendlease Global Chief Executive Officer, Tony Lombardo, said:

"We stand shovel ready with the British Government and our partners to deliver vital new homes, parks, offices and jobs for the UK and its people. In line with our world-leading decarbonisation targets, we'll be striving to make these places and neighbourhoods some of the most sustainable in the UK."

IFM CEO David Neal said:

IFM is owned by pension funds and invests, over the long term, on behalf of pension funds, their members, and other long-term investors. We have been investing in core UK infrastructure for decades and now are planning to almost double our investment over the next five years.

We believe the deployment of pension capital in partnership with the UK government will be critical to supporting the UK's energy transition and net zero ambitions over the next 25 years.

Notes to Editors:

- For more details on the individual investments, please contact the relevant company directly.
- In 2020, the UK was both Australia's second-largest destination for foreign investment and the second-largest investor in Australia.

[Defence publishes its Zero Tolerance approach to sexual offences](#)

Press release

As part of Defence's commitment to crack down on unacceptable sexual behaviour and sexual offences, a new Zero Tolerance policy has been announced.



This policy aligns the Royal Navy, RAF, and Army under one approach to dealing with incidences, that will be implemented across the UK Armed Forces to enable services to better support victims and secure justice for them.

Key changes to existing policies include that those found guilty of sexual offences are to be administratively discharged from service with no option to serve elsewhere. The policy also stipulates that sexual relationships between instructors and trainees are unacceptable and will result in discharge of the instructor.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Leo Docherty said:

Sexual offences and sexual relationships between instructors and

trainees have no place in Defence, or wider society, and a zero tolerance approach will ensure our commitment to providing a better working environment for our serving personnel is met.

We are sending a clear message that the women and men of the Armed Forces must uphold our values and standards.

As we set out in our response to the House of Commons Defence Committee's Report into "Women in the Armed Forces: From Recruitment to Civilian Life", it is a Defence-wide goal to stamp out sexual offences and ensure that the Armed Forces continues to be a place where people are proud to work and have faith in their justice system.

The Zero Tolerance policy is one of a range of measures intended to tackle unacceptable sexual behaviour in the Armed Forces. It is intended to improve the career experiences of serving personnel, providing clearer, tri service direction to those in a position to prevent and address instances of sexual offence. We have already taken important steps to ensure that all reported offences are subject to prompt, thorough, efficient, and independent investigation. The policy also sends a clear signal to everyone in the Armed Forces that these offences will not be tolerated.

Where proven, personnel convicted of a sexual offence will be discharged from the Armed Forces.

The policy has been produced with input and consultation from a wide range of stakeholders across Defence and the Service Justice System and is just one on a number of new policies being introduced this year to stamp out unacceptable behaviours.

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[Oligarchs' aircraft and ships targeted through new legal powers](#)

- UK puts in place new legal powers to prevent Russian oligarch access to UK aviation and maritime technical services
- sanctions strengthened on oligarchs Eugene Shvidler and Oleg Tinkov
- sanctions imposed in relation to Crimea will be extended to non-government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions

The UK has today (Wednesday 30) made new legislation to prohibit maintenance on aircraft or ships belonging to specific sanctioned Russian oligarchs or their businesses.

Through these new powers, laid in parliament through a Statutory Instrument (SI), the UK can now prohibit sanctioned oligarchs from benefitting from the UK's world leading aviation and maritime industries and engineers.

The new laws have been used immediately to sanction Russian businessmen Eugene Shvidler and Oleg Tinkov.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

There is no doubt that Putin and his elite have been surprised by the strength of our sanctions.

We will continue to ramp up the pressure so long as Russian troops are in Ukraine, targeting not only the businesses of oligarchs but also their assets and international lifestyles.

Tough sanctions will help Ukraine get the best possible peace settlement and ultimately ensure Putin's invasion fails. That is our focus.

Secretary of State for Transport Grant Shapps said:

Today's legislation adds new routes at our disposal to deprive oligarchs' access to their luxury toys.

Our economic and transport sanctions are working to suffocate those most complicit in Putin's regime ensuring that no one on UK soil can support Putin's inhuman assault in Ukraine.

The new legislation has also extended the finance, trade and shipping sanctions imposed on Crimea to non-government controlled territory in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, on 24 February, the UK has sanctioned banks with £500 billion of global asset value and more than £150 billion of net worth from oligarchs and their family members.

The UK government will continue to utilise deeper and broader measures to cripple those who support Putin's regime and his callous war, working in lockstep with the G7 and our international allies.

Background

- asset freeze – An asset freeze prevents any UK citizen, or any business in the UK, from dealing with any funds or economic resources which are owned, held or controlled by the designated person and which are held in the UK. It will also prevent funds or economic resources being provided to or for the benefit of the designated person.
- travel ban – A travel ban means that the designated person must be

refused leave to enter or to remain in the United Kingdom, providing the individual to be an excluded person under section 8B of the Immigration Act 1971.

- transport sanctions – Recently introduced powers make it a criminal offence for any Russian aircraft to fly or land in the UK and give the government powers to remove aircraft belonging to designated Russian individuals and entities from the UK aircraft register, even if the sanctioned individual is not on board. Russian ships are also banned from UK ports.

Notes to editors

The UK and our international partners have imposed the largest and most severe package of sanctions ever on any major economy. The government has designated over 1,200 individuals and entities close to Putin – including 76 oligarchs and 16 banks with a global net worth of £150 billion and £500 billion respectively.

The new Government Information Cell (GIC) identifies and counters Russian disinformation which enables the government to negate the Kremlin's attempts to target and undermine democratic societies via disinformation campaigns.