

Action on Storm Overflows Our plan to 2050



We're making improvements to reduce the impact of storm overflows in our region. This report gives an overview of work to date, how we are prioritising investment from 2025 to 2030, and our longer-term plans to 2050.

Our vision for 2050 is that storm overflows are no longer required.

This report has been published in conjunction with our Storm Overflow Action Plan. In it, every single one of the 1,471 storm overflows across our network has a detailed improvement plan that will see discharges significantly reduced by 2050. You can view our plan, and the storm overflow action plans for all water companies in England and Wales, on the WaterUK website [here](#).

Investing to reduce storm overflows

We recognise the need to go further, and work faster, to address public concerns on storm overflows. That's why we've pledged an additional £50 million to tackle even more storm spills over the next year to 2025. This builds on our current Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP), being delivered through to 2025, which will see £10.7 million invested to reduce spills at 11 of our highest priority sites, bringing average spills down in line with our long-term aspirations.

In the five years from 2025 we have proposed a significant package of investment – approximately £1 billion – on storm overflow monitoring and improvements, while our total enhancement spend on the environment will double to £4 billion.

Our current environmental investment programme is one of the biggest in the sector. More than 300 schemes have been completed early, realising benefits for the environment sooner. We are installing more storm tanks and increasing the capacity of our water recycling centres to address storm overflows.

How we're prioritising our Action Plan

We recognise customers want us to take swift action to end storm overflow discharges. We intend to meet these expectations and have geared our plan to action the highest priority overflows soonest. We are also focussed on completing the schemes earlier than the 2050 deadline.

To triage work for the next five years (2025-2030) we carried out a thorough prioritisation process, reviewing our storm overflows against criteria defined by Defra and the Environment Agency.

This was used alongside feedback from local stakeholders, including local Rivers Trusts and Natural England on other social and environmental criteria to create a weighted prioritisation matrix for all Anglian Water storm overflows that considers:

- current spill frequencies and impact
- watercourse type, prioritising chalk streams
- areas of known wild swimming

This four month triage process took place from September 2022 to January 2023. It was supported by external workshops led by Anglian Water with attendees including representatives from the Environment Agency, Natural England, and Rivers Trusts, who collectively agreed the prioritised list of overflows that has formed our investment programme for 2025-2030.

Our prioritisation matrix ensures we are delivering against the legal obligations of the Environment Act alongside addressing the feedback from local partners.

Spotlight on our Storm Overflow Action Plan

The Storm Overflow Action Plan covers every single storm overflow on our network and details the planned interventions and improvements that will be taken to meet the 2050 obligations. A target date for completion is included though the workplan and timeline beyond 2030 is still to be finalised with our regulators. The examples below provide a sample of the breadth of activity planned, and required, to make storm overflows a thing of the past.



Storm overflows near sensitive environments

Storm overflows located near sensitive environments such as a Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) or chalk stream are prioritised in our business plan for 2025-2030. One such example is our storm overflow on Norwich Road in Fakenham, where we will create additional storage to manage rainwater until levels reduce in the sewers. This investment will help reduce spills and ultimately render the storm overflow permanently inactive.



High priority overflows

We are prioritising storm overflows that discharge more frequently than expected. Some of these are covered by our high priority plan for 2020-2025 which targets the 11 highest discharging storm overflows with specific investment. Beyond this, various solutions tend to be required to solve the multi-faceted issues causing the storm overflow to activate so often. Solutions in our Storm Overflow Action Plan include creating sustainable drainage to reduce rainwater entering the sewers and instead allow it to drain into the soil naturally, operational improvements, and regular jetting of nearby sewers to keep them clear of blockages and debris build-ups. In combination, actions like these will help keep sewers flowing freely, reduce overloading and the likelihood of a storm overflow discharge.



Storm overflows near bathing waters and beaches

We want to ensure 100% of coastal bathing waters will be classed as Good or Excellent by 2030 and have included investment to achieve this as part of our 2025-2030 business plan. Each bathing water approach is bespoke, but partnership working is key to address the many factors that affect coastal water quality. In Southend, we are working with the City Council on its City Beach Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme to reduce the amount of surface water getting into the foul sewer system. This will reduce the likelihood of storm overflows triggering. This initiative is part of our wider, industry-leading programme of partnership funding to improve waterways across our region. Other initiatives to reduce storm overflow spills in coastal locations include reducing sewer blockages caused by fats, oils and greases, which in turn reduces the likelihood of a storm overflow activating. By working with food serving establishments, we're encouraging them to dispose of cooking fats responsibly and keep sewers free-flowing.



Inland bathing waters

Over the next five years we will build on our Get River Positive commitments to ensure 90% of customers live within an hour of an inland bathing water. We're supporting local groups to help them achieve inland bathing water designation, which unlocks investment and ensures regular water testing. In 2023, four of the five new inland bathing water designations were in our region. The River Stour in Sudbury is one example, which is expected to achieve official bathing water designation by 2027. With this in place, proposed investments as part of our Storm Overflow Action Plan will include building additional storm water storage that prevents overloading of the sewers and reduce the likelihood of storm overflows activating. Investment in new assets like this storm tank will effectively decommission the storm overflow. Installing additional ultraviolet disinfection at Sudbury Water Recycling Centre will further support the river water quality around this popular inland swimming location.

Get River Positive

In 2022 we launched Get River Positive, our commitment to act now to protect and revitalise rivers. This initiative is setting the standard for the industry and based on five commitments to:

Commitment 1



Ensure storm overflows, water recycling centres and abstraction do not harm rivers

Commitment 2



Create more opportunities for everyone to enjoy our region's rivers

Commitment 3



Support others to improve and care for rivers

Commitment 4



Enhance our rivers and create new habitats so wildlife can thrive

Commitment 5



Be open and transparent about our performance and our plans

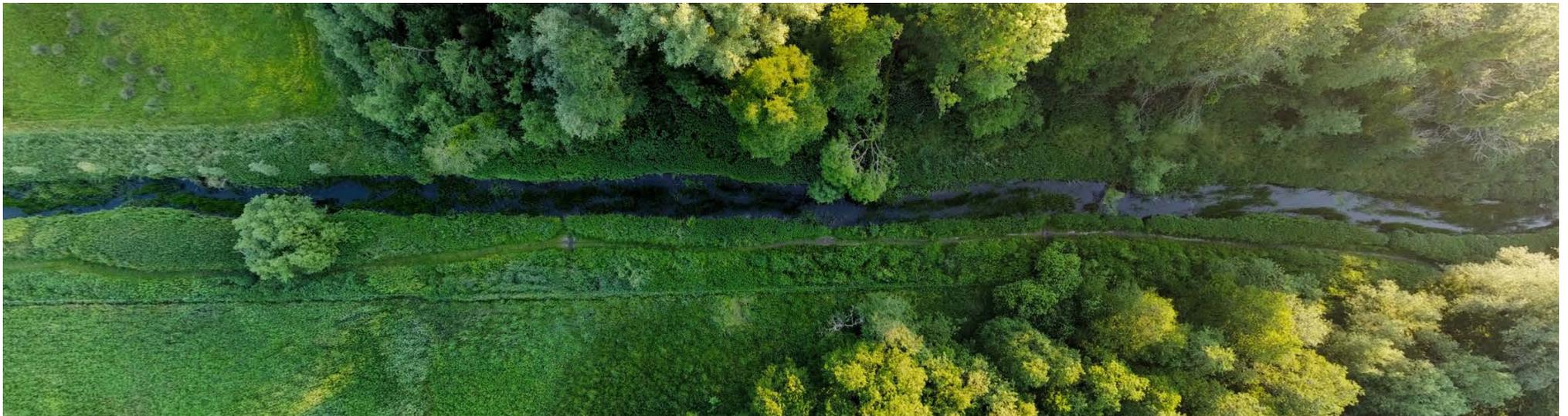
Through our Get River Positive programme we've already made improvements to the way we operate to reduce storm overflows.

Central to this has been the introduction of Event Duration Monitors (EDMs), which ensure we have the data and insight needed to address and reduce storm overflow activity.

100% of storm overflows across our region are monitored. This supports us with additional data and insight to target and reduce spills.

In addition, at the time of publication more than 10,000 'smart' sewer monitors have been installed across our network, giving us greater visibility of performance in real time and helping us to proactively detect potential sewer blockages.

Read more about our Get River Positive programme in our [River Water Quality Report](#).



Our plan for 2025-2030

We recognise the need to invest further to address public concerns about storm overflows. Our five-year plan to 2030 proposes a package of significant investment – nearly £1 billion – to reduce spills further to meet customer expectations. These plans have been submitted to Ofwat.

We plan to deliver outcomes that go beyond our regulatory commitments. We're aiming to:

Achieve a 17% reduction in discharges from storm overflows, taking us one third of the way to the Government's target for 2050 in five years.

Meet new storm discharge targets

of 10 discharges on average per year for inland rivers, reducing to 2-3 discharges per bathing season for bathing water locations (in wetter years spills may exceed 10 but averages taken over the five year regulation period).

Add new storm screening

to prevent the aesthetic impact of storm discharges.

Make further improvements

ensuring no adverse environmental impact to high priority watercourses.



We're planning to deliver improvements at 278 storm overflows between 2025 and 2030, carefully prioritised in partnership with Rivers Trusts, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

In addition, we are:

- Working with the Environment Agency and Ofwat to develop a partnership Centre of Excellence to enable a nature-first approach for reducing storm overflow discharges
- Undertaking 1,500+ investigations to improve our understanding of the environmental impact of storm overflows.
- Continuing to leverage our proven track record of partnership working, developing new approaches to surface water removal in key areas to influence storm overflow operation, alongside other shared issues.

Our vision for 2050

By 2050 our vision is that storm overflows will no longer be required. In addition to that we'll achieve a number of related ambitions around environmental resilience and performance, including:



Eastern England will be resilient to drought and flooding

- Our customers never experience internal or external sewer flooding.
- Surface water is prevented from entering our waste water network through innovative partnership working and nature-based infrastructure.



Working with others, we will have delivered significant improvements in ecological quality across our catchments

- Pollutions are consigned to history.
- We will enable early delivery of government targets around river health: there will be no additional Reasons for Not Achieving Good Ecological Status (RNAGs) associated with our operations.
- River health across our region will be continuously monitored.
- We will be 'nature positive': our operations will actively enable nature recovery and biodiversity enhancement.
- No blockages will occur in our network as a result of customer or food service establishment behaviour.
- No effluent will be discharged into the marine environment, it will be recycled to support environmental enhancement or to support sustainable growth.
- Coastal and inland bathing water locations thrive due to their excellent water quality.



Our long-term ambitions and proposed Business Plan for 2025-2030 is summarised [here](#).

Further reading and resources

Click the links for each of the below to find out more.

View our Storm Overflow Action Plan on the WaterUK website [here](#).

For detailed information on what storm overflows are and how they work please [visit our website](#).

Our [live storm overflow dashboard](#)

Our [Pollution Incident Reduction Plan \(PIRP\)](#) sets out the actions we are taking between 2023 and 2025 to improve our pollution performance.

Our [Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan \(DWMP\)](#) has now been published and covers our long-term plan to manage risks from 2025-2050, including how we propose to deliver improvements leveraging our track record of green infrastructure and partnership working.

[Long Term Strategic Direction Statement](#)

[Business Plan for 2025-2030](#)

The Government's Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan, republished September 2023, sets out targets all water companies must meet.

These include:

By 2035 – Water companies will have improved all storm overflows discharging near every designated bathing water; and improved 75% of storm overflows discharging into or near 'high priority sites'.

By 2045 – Water companies will have improved all remaining storm overflows discharging into or near 'high priority sites'.

By 2050 – No storm overflows will be permitted to operate outside of unusually heavy rainfall or to cause any adverse ecological harm.