



#END SEWAGE POLLUTION

[v1 - 2025]

ACTION GUIDE - GET YOUR MP TO SPEAK OUT



**SURFERS
AGAINST
SEWAGE**



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INTRO

The UK's seas, lakes and rivers are being choked by a broken water system built for profit, not people. Since privatisation, water companies have handed billions to shareholders, piled on debt, and let vital infrastructure rot. Nature is suffering. Communities are paying the price. And the regulators that are meant to be cleaning up this sh*t show? Still looking the other way.

This is where you come in.

From community cleanups to citizen science, people power is already making waves to protect our blue spaces. But to truly turn the tide against the polluters and profiteers, we need to make our voices heard in Parliament. MPs have the power to rewrite the rules - but they won't act unless we actively push for change. Loudly. Relentlessly. Together.

We made this guide to help you do just that. Step-by-step. Scenario-by-scenario. So you can get your MP to listen, act, and fight for clean water.

Don't feel like you must read this guide all in one go. If you already have a bit of experience engaging MPs, feel free to jump ahead to the bits that are most relevant to you. Equally, if you're brand new and unsure where to start, get going with the basics before moving on. Use it in whatever way works for you!

Sound good? Let's dive in...



THE PROBLEM IN NUMBERS



994,499

The estimated total number of sewage discharges across the UK in 2024 – when accounting for underreporting in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

1 every 30 seconds

The average frequency of sewage discharges into UK waters last year.

1,853

The number of sickness reports submitted to Surfers Against Sewage by water users in 2024. Most cases of sickness from sewage still go unreported.

3,425

The number of sick days linked to the sickness reports we received, showing the real impact of sewage pollution on people's health and daily lives.

£493,200

The estimated cost of lost productivity linked to the sickness reports we received in 2024 alone.

£74.2 billion

The total dividends paid out to shareholders by water companies in England and Wales since privatisation.

£69.2 billion

The amount of debt those same water companies have racked up, raising serious questions about financial mismanagement.

36%

The minimum expected rise in water bills over the next five years, meaning customers will be paying on average £160 more for their water in 2030 than they were in 2024.

0

The number of water company executives facing criminal prosecution for illegal pollution events and public harm.



To learn more about the broken water system, check out our

WATER QUALITY REPORT '25



OUR VISION FOR WATER



Let's face it, the sewage scandal won't be fixed with a quick PR spin or half-measures. It demands bold action, real expertise, and system-wide reform. That means smart, targeted solutions across every part of the broken water industry.

But no matter the policy detail, the transformation must be guided by these **five key principles to end sewage pollution**:



Legal priority to protect public and environmental health

Water companies provide an essential public service. Protecting people and nature must come before profit. It's time to put public and environmental health at the top of the legal agenda, where it belongs. No more excuses.



Tough independent regulators

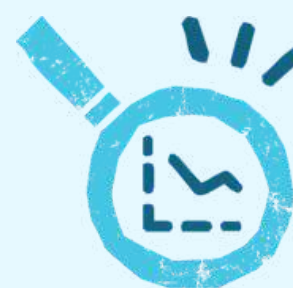
Regulators must do what they're there to do: uphold the law and protect people and planet. That means shutting down illegal sewage dumping, ending rewards for polluters, and coming down hard on poor performance.

No more cosy relationships or toothless watchdogs - regulators must be fully independent, fully funded, and fully fearless.



Democratic decision making

Decisions about our water shouldn't be made behind closed doors. Power must shift to the people. Local communities, councils, engineers, environmental groups, and everyday water users – those who actually understand what's at stake. And that power must be real, not just a tick-box exercise



Transparency

The public deserves to know what's really going on. Water companies must come clean about their pollution, profits, and pay-outs - with clear, accessible data that protects people's health and shows us where the money is going.

If you're hiding something, you shouldn't be in the business.



Value for money

Bill payers deserve better. That means a system where money goes where it's needed: into fixing infrastructure, not lining pockets. Long-term investment must be tied to real delivery, and nature-based solutions must lead the charge, bringing climate and biodiversity wins with them.

OVERVIEW: WHAT DO MPs DO?



MPs (Members of Parliament) sit in the UK Parliament at Westminster and represent one of **650 constituencies across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland**. Their job – in theory – is to speak up for the people in their area and help shape the laws that govern the country.

MPs deal with UK-wide issues like foreign policy and the economy, but they also have the power to make laws that apply just in England – including crucial areas like **health, education, transport and the environment**. That means if you're in England, your MP is the person to influence and get to act on sewage pollution.

They can raise your concerns in Parliament, question ministers, grill water company bosses, push for tougher laws on polluters – and they're much more likely to act if they know their constituents are watching. MPs can also sit on committees that scrutinise government policy and spending, introduce or support new legislation and speak in parliamentary debates to highlight local or national issues.

Outside of Westminster, MPs hold local surgeries and respond to casework, dealing with issues raised by people in their constituencies. Sewage pollution, beach closures, or public health impacts are all issues they can and should take up directly with government ministers, regulators, or water companies.

Even if you're in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, your MP still has a role to play. They can raise and investigate your concerns, push for stronger UK-wide environmental standards, and call for more resources for devolved governments – so that they have the tools they need to monitor and stop sewage pollution.

In short: your MP is meant to work for you and the interests of your community. So, let's make sure they do!



#ENDSEWAGEPOLLUTION

STEP-BY-STEP: HOW TO INFLUENCE YOUR MP



In the 4 steps laid out in this section, we are going to walk through the process of **finding out a bit about your MP, getting in touch, meeting with them** and then – most importantly – making sure you **follow up afterwards to keep them accountable**.

If you are at the start of your journey influencing your MP to take action on sewage pollution, following these 4 steps is a good way to get going. If you're a little bit further along in engaging your MP on the sewage scandal or aren't sure if a meeting is the best first tactic to use, consider jumping ahead to the next section, '**Dive Deeper – Finding the Best Strategy to Influence Your MP**' on page 16.

1 - Do Your Homework – Who is your MP and what makes them tick?

Action Summary:

- *Search your postcode on [They Work For You](#) to find your MP's profile.*
- *What is your MP's name?*
- *What party do they belong to?*
- *What is the name of your constituency?*
- *What does your MP's voting summary say about their interests?*

You'd never get in the water without first checking the conditions and thinking about the best spot to dip – we hope! Similar rules apply when thinking about how to influence your MP. You need to know who it is you want to influence, and a little bit about their interests so you can employ the best strategy to win them over.

The quickest way to find out who your MP is to visit ['They Work For You'](#) and enter your postcode in the search bar. This will let you know who your MP is and the name of the parliamentary constituency you live in – this is useful information particularly if you want to get other residents in your constituency involved in your campaigning.

As an example, let's imagine you live in the centre of Worthing on the south coast of England. Entering your postcode should bring up the profile for Beccy Cooper MP.



Beccy Cooper
Labour MP for Worthing West  UK Parliament Profile

[Send a message](#) [Get email updates](#)

[Search](#)

[Overview](#) [Voting Summary](#) [Recent Votes](#) [Register of Interests](#) [2024 Election Donations](#)

As we can see, the first page already gives us some useful information to note down. We now know that Beccy Cooper represents the **Worthing West constituency** and is a member of the **Labour Party**. Knowing your MP’s party affiliation is crucial, because this can help give you an idea of their beliefs as well as who they’re accountable to, besides their constituents – MPs are often expected to hold their party’s official line on certain issues and may face repercussions if they don’t, though this doesn’t mean they will never disagree with their party’s leadership.

If you click on the ‘**voting summary**’ tab, you will find a summary of how likely your MP is to vote in line with their party. You will also find a comprehensive breakdown of how they have previously voted on different subjects in Parliament. This information combined can help you anticipate how they might respond to you engaging them on sewage pollution.

Beccy Cooper’s voting in Parliament
Beccy Cooper is a Labour MP, and on the **vast majority** of issues [follow instructions from their party](#) and vote the **same way** as other Labour MPs.
In the last year, Beccy Cooper has an alignment score of 97% with other MPs of their party (over 266 votes). [Find out more.](#)

How Beccy Cooper voted on Environmental Issues #
For votes held while they were in office:

Generally voted for measures to **prevent climate change**
1 vote for, 1 absence, in 2025. Comparable Labour MPs consistently voted for. [Show votes](#)

Generally voted for financial incentives for **low carbon** emission **electricity generation methods**
1 vote for, 1 absence, in 2025. Comparable Labour MPs consistently voted for. [Show votes](#)

Consistently voted for increasing **windfall tax on oil and gas companies**
4 votes for, 1 absence, between 2024 and 2025. Comparable Labour MPs consistently voted for. [Show votes](#)

Last updated: 2 April 2025. [Learn more about our voting records and what they mean.](#)

In Beccy Cooper’s voting summary, we can see that she mostly votes in line with other Labour MPs but has a record of voting for measures to tackle climate change and reduce fossil fuel consumption – which might indicate to us that she is environmentally-conscious generally.

Topics of interest
Department of Health and Social Care, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Department for Education, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Obesity: Children, Infectious Diseases: Diagnosis, Gambling: Taxation, Special Educational Needs, School Meals: Standards
Currently held offices
Member, Health and Social Care Committee (since 21 Oct 2024)

Scroll down the ‘overview’ section of your MP’s profile and you will also find a **general list of their interests**. From Beccy Cooper’s profile, we can see that she has a strong interest in health – and that she sits on a Parliamentary committee for Health and Social Care. This could be a useful indication that leading with the public health impact of sewage pollution might be a good way to broach the subject with her.

2 - Get In Touch

Action Summary:

- **Find your MP's contact information.**
- **Set out the key points for your first message to your MP: 'you, your community, the immediate issue'.**
- **Clarify whether you would like a slot at their drop-in surgery or a separate, longer meeting.**

Now you've got an idea of who your MP is and what might be the best way to approach them, it's time to reach out! This can feel daunting, but it's easier than you might think. Remember, it's your MP's job to represent your views as one of their constituents.

The most straight forward way to get in touch with your MP is to **send an email** or **give their office a call**. You can also **send them a letter** if you want, but MPs often prefer it if you email them.

As we mentioned previously, you can also introduce yourself to your MP in a quick session at one of their drop-in surgeries – this can be a good way to break the ice and then follow-up with a longer meeting. However, you will likely still need to get in touch by email or phone to book a slot at the drop-in.

Where to Find Your MP's Contact Information

There should be a contact form to send your MP an email on their *They Work For You* profile. Alternatively, your MP should have all of their contact details listed on their website. Here is an example from Beccy Cooper MP's website:

I can help constituents on various issues, such as education, the environment, health and social services, highways, transport, and housing.

I would love to hear from you about what you think my priorities should be as your MP and what matters most to you.

Please use the contact form to get in touch with me or book an appointment for my surgeries ([here](#)). Please remember to provide as many details as possible, including your name, address, telephone number and issue.

Alternatively, you can write to us at: Dr Beccy Cooper
MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.



01903 496390



beccy.cooper.mp@parliament.uk

As we can see, Beccy Cooper has helpfully set out the things she welcomes constituents contacting her about. However, keep in mind that not all MPs will list this kind of information.

The Key Things to Communicate

As tempting as it may be to fill your first message to your MP with complex, heavily detailed information, this isn't always the best way to influence them. Your MP and their team will likely be receiving lots of long policy briefings every day from many different sources. That doesn't mean you can't get into sharing and discussing the deeper detail with them too, it's just always a good idea to try and build a rapport first.

When it comes to communication from their constituents, your MP will usually want to prioritise people who need help of some kind. So, if you want to cut through the noise, your initial contact should focus on **you, your community** and the **immediate issue**:

You

Who are you? What has motivated you to get in touch? Opening with some concise points about your own experience is a great way to communicate the problem - bringing it to life in a way that can't be easily dismissed.

Remember, MPs can only act on behalf of people living in their constituency. So, it's important to specify that you are one of your MP's constituents. Making sure to include details like your address and postcode will allow your MP to verify they're able to take up your concerns.

Your community

How has sewage pollution impacted the wider community? Have there been cases of sickness caused by sewage in your area? Have local businesses been impacted in some way? Any information that demonstrates how the issue you want to discuss with your MP has wide-reaching implications for their constituency will really help get their attention.

The immediate issue

What is the specific thing that has pushed you to get in touch with your MP? It may be the number of sewage discharges at your local spot or a vote coming up in Parliament on an important bill. Or maybe you've just gotten sick after using the water and you want to raise the alarm. Whatever it is, don't forget it! This information is crucial to framing what action you would like your MP to take.

Lastly, do make sure to specify what kind of meeting you would like – whether that is a quick slot at their next drop-in surgery, or a longer, separate meeting so you can go into a bit more detail.

If it helps, we've made a template email that you can customise and use to get in touch with your MP!



GET THE TEMPLATE EMAIL!

3 - Meet Your MP

Action Summary:

- *Prepare your case ahead of meeting your MP – think about breaking it down into: Personal introduction, immediate problem, wider problem, solution.*
- *Find common ground by giving space to your MP to respond to your concerns. Use gentle questioning to really figure out their position, if necessary.*
- *Make sure that you have a clear ask for your MP that includes a concrete action they can take that would help tackle sewage pollution. If they're not so onside, then be strategic - start small and work up to bigger asks.*

The time has come to meet your MP! It's normal to be anxious, but it's important at this stage to try and leave any pre-conceived ideas you may have about your MP at the door. By going into the conversation prepared and open-minded, you'll have a greater chance of getting your MP to lower their defences and really hear what you have to say.

When you're preparing to meet your MP, try keeping things as simple as possible. A successful MP meeting can be broken into 3 parts: **Setting out your case, finding common ground** and **clarifying your ask**:

Setting Out Your Case

Often, when an MP is feeling under pressure in a meeting, they may try to control the conversation. This is a common defensive behaviour. The best way to try and prevent this from happening is to have what you want to say well prepared. This should recap and expand on the information you put in your first message to your MP.

Here's how you can structure your case to highlight your connection to the problem and show your MP why they should care:

Personal introduction

"I love wild swimming, it's one of the best things about living here, and so many in our community feel the same."

The immediate problem

"But sewage dumping at our local spot means we've had to cancel swims, and local businesses renting paddleboards and kayaks are losing income."

The wider problem

"This isn't just local, it's national. Sewage is being poured into waters across the UK, people are getting sick, and water companies are rewarding bosses with bonuses instead of fixing the problem."

The solution

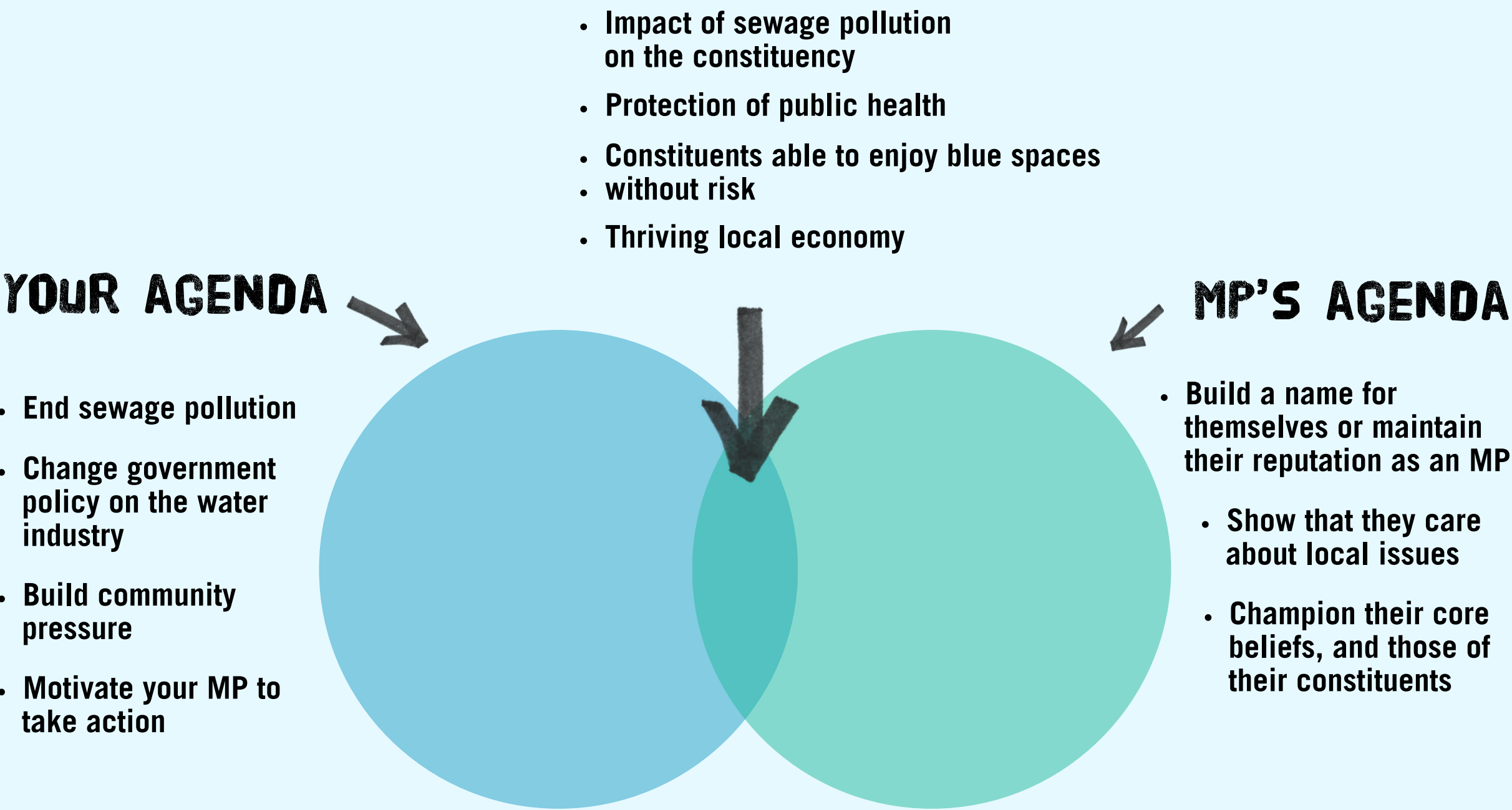
"This has to change. We need full transparency, proper monitoring of sewage overflows, and real consequences for polluters, so our community can enjoy clean, safe waters again."

Try to back your story up with stats and figures to show the scale of the problem. You don't need to be an expert – the **Safer Seas & Rivers Service (SSRS) app** and **SAS Data HQ** have everything you need, from sewage discharge data to local sickness reports, ready to use to help make your case stronger!

Finding Common Ground

Now that you've explained the problem and how it has impacted you, it's time to listen up. This part's about active listening. If your MP dodges the issue or starts waffling (another classic MP defensive behaviour), don't be afraid to ask clear, direct questions. Just remember, this is about gauging their position **so you can find agreement and move forward.**

How does the information you've presented make them feel? Do they share your concern about people being made sick and not being able to enjoy the area's natural blue spaces?



Even if it seems like your MP really isn't on side, it's still possible win them over - it just takes a smart approach and a bit of patience. Think about what drives them: most MPs want to be seen as responsive, effective, and popular in their patch. This is where you might start to find a place where your own agenda, as a campaigner, and your MP's agenda can overlap.

No MP wants to be seen ignoring public health or wrecking the local economy. Even MPs lukewarm to the idea of holding the water industry to account will claim they care about these basics. So, take note of any shared ground - even if it feels vague - then build from there. Use solid facts to show how sewage pollution threatens exactly the things they say they stand for. Do it calmly, not combatively. This isn't about catching them out - it's about connecting the dots.

Clarifying Your Ask

Many MP meetings fall flat at the end because the key action gets lost in general discussion. Don't let that happen. This final step is your chance to make sure its crystal clear what you want your MP to do next. Here are a few things you can do to ensure there is zero confusion:

- **Be specific**

There are probably lots of things you want your MP to do! However, it's a good idea to be clear on what the priority is - what is the first thing you want your MP to do? You can always start simple and build up to bolder actions later.

Example: *"I would be grateful if you could write to the water company and the regulators to ask for a full account of why the problem has become so bad locally, as well as how they plan to investigate and fix the issues."*

- **Ask for a response**

Make sure you phrase your ask in a way that gets a verbal response from your MP, this helps you confirm that your ask has been understood, and it creates a polite but important expectation of accountability.

Examples: *"Is that something you'd be willing to do?"*

"Can I count on your support for this?"

"Will you commit to taking this step and update me when you've done it?"

- **Leave it in writing**

Summarise your main points and ask in a short note or email for your MP, that way you can be sure that they have an accurate record of what you have discussed. This could also be a good opportunity to detail any facts or findings you have on the impact of sewage pollution in your area so that your MP is able to refer back to those for any further action they take – however, if you're not able to bring together a large amount of detail, don't stress! The main points will be enough.

Need support? We've made an **MP briefing template** that you can use to clearly set out your ask and the facts that support it.



GET THE MP BRIEFING TEMPLATE!

4 - Follow Up

Action Summary:

- **Go to your MP meeting prepared with a plan to follow up and keep the pressure on.**
- **Have a think about your follow up timeline: 1 week later, 1 month later, 3 months later, 6 months later.**

This might just be the **most important step**, and the one most people forget: **follow up**. If you want your MP to become a real ally on sewage pollution, your first meeting isn't the end, it's just the beginning!

Following up doesn't mean pestering them every day. It means having a clear plan to **stay in touch, keep up the pressure**, and make sure they *actually do* what they said they would.

At the end of your meeting, make it clear that you'll be checking in on the key points discussed. How often you then communicate with your MP can depend on the context and how time-sensitive your ask is. However, as a rough guide, here's what your follow-up plan could look like:

- **1 week after the meeting**

Within 1 week following the meeting, send your MP an email thanking them for their time and confirming your ask/what your MP has agreed to do. This is a good way to be respectful of your MP's time but also reaffirm that they have committed to doing something.

- **1 month after the meeting**

Within 1 month of meeting your MP, get back in touch to check whether they have completed their agreed action – especially if your MP or their team have not already been in touch with updates.

- **3 months after the meeting**

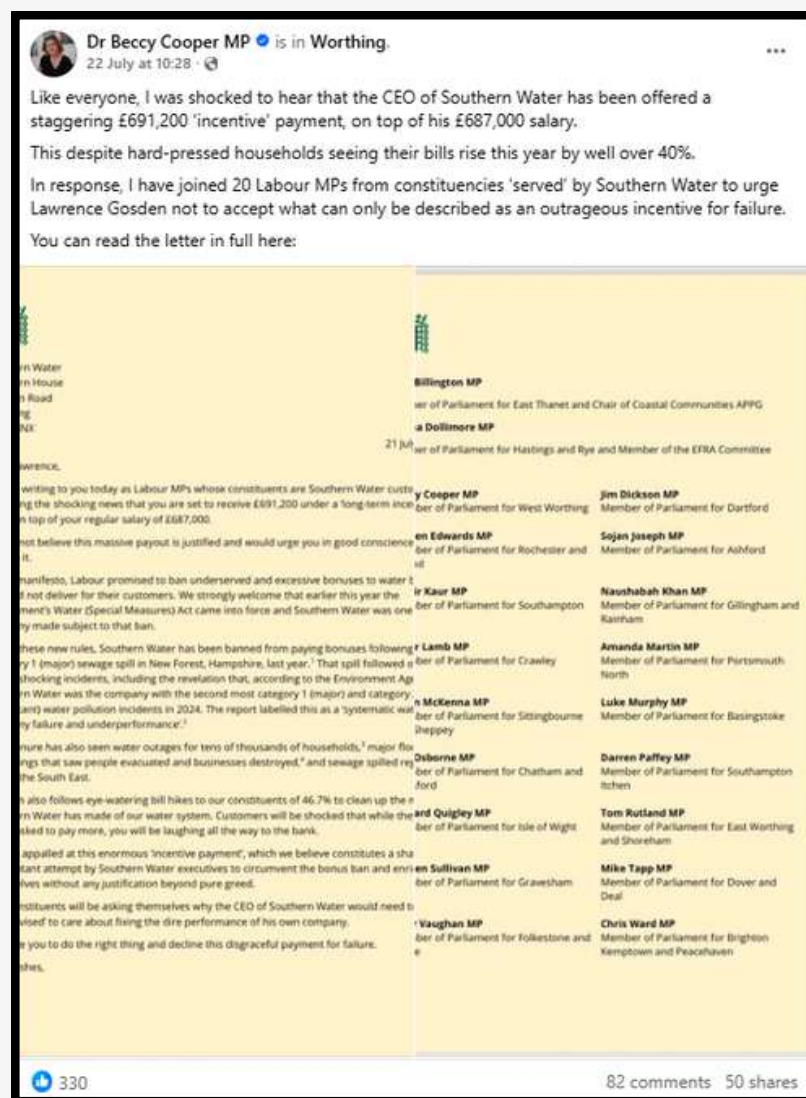
Roughly 3 months after your meeting, it might be helpful to check what your MP has been up to – what they've been doing in Parliament, what they might have been saying in the press or elsewhere. Have they continued to address sewage pollution and the water industry? If so, what further actions have they taken?

Do make sure to keep your MP and their team updated during this time with any new stats and facts about sewage discharges, sickness reports or dodgy dealings in the water industry.

- **6 months after the meeting**

If it's been around six months, your MP followed through on your ask and they're open to updates, it's time to raise the bar. Book a follow-up meeting and think about your next move: what fresh, timely action could you ask for that pushes them to go further and be bolder?

On the flip side, if your MP hasn't acted and has gone quiet, it's time to switch tactics. Turn up the pressure with creative community protest, make noise on social media, and get the local press talking - whatever it takes to make them sit up and pay attention.



Consistent follow-up and clear communication made all the difference for **Surfers Against Sewage Rep Colin McHale** when he took action in **Worthing**. After it was revealed that **Southern Water's CEO** was handed a huge "incentive payment" on top of an already bloated salary - despite ongoing sewage discharges - Colin contacted his local MP, **Beccy Cooper**, asking that she take action.

Crucially, he kept his ask simple and focused: **write to the CEO to express the outrage of local residents**. Beccy Cooper MP responded quickly and went further. She rallied other MPs from her party representing areas served by Southern Water to co-sign a letter, piling on the pressure.

Meanwhile, in other constituencies served by Southern Water, **Liberal Democrat MPs** were also moved to act, writing a joint letter to government ministers slamming the CEO's reward package given the company's dire environmental performance.

The result? **Cross-party political pressure**, [national media coverage](#), and MPs from both government and opposition publicly condemning the pay deal as "outrageous." Suddenly, the spotlight was back on Southern Water - and it all started with a **grassroots campaigner making a well-timed, targeted ask**.





DIVE DEEPER: FINDING THE BEST STRATEGY FOR YOUR MP



In this section, we'll dig a little deeper into what makes an MP ready to take real action on sewage pollution - and how you can tell where yours stands. We'll look at the clues: **what action your MP may have already taken, where their party sits on the issue, the extent to which sewage pollution is a live concern in your constituency, and how tuned-in your MP is to their constituents' concerns.**

For each of these factors, you'll find simple criteria to help you score your MP. Go through each and add up your score to see whether they're already primed to lead the charge for clean water in Parliament or whether it's time to turn up the public pressure and get them moving.

PAST ACTION ON SEWAGE

Scoring:

0 = **Nothing at all**

1 = **Mild Concern** - e.g. has mentioned issue once or twice

2 = **Vocal** – e.g. consistent public statements

3 = **Vocal and Active** – e.g. e.g. led debates, proposed reforms, campaigned locally

What to look for:

We're looking for anything that might give us an indication of whether your MP sees tackling sewage pollution as a priority and what they believe the solutions are.

On **They Work For You**, you can use the search bar in the top right-hand corner of your MP's profile to search for key words that might have made an appearance in any speeches or questions they've raised in Parliament. Make a note of the times your MP has spoken about sewage pollution in Parliament – **though don't go on quantity alone, make sure to check what it is they've been saying about the issue.**

If we go back to our example of Beccy Cooper, MP for Worthing West, and do a **key word search for 'sewage pollution'**, we can see that it brings up just one comment she has made in Parliament. However, we should take into account that she has only been an MP since July 2024.



Beccy Cooper
Labour, Worthing West

Raw **sewage** was discharged into our rivers and seas for a shocking 4 million hours last year. Will the **Minister** reassure our coastal communities, including my own in **Worthing West**, that water companies will be held accountable for the necessary investment to address the systemic and chronic **pollution** of our waters?

Link to this speech

[In context](#)
[Individually](#)

[Tweet](#)
[Share](#)

(Citation: HC Deb, 12 September 2024, c951)

From Beccy Cooper’s comment in Parliament, we can see that:

A) She has drawn a connection between tackling sewage pollution and representing a coastal community.

B) She sees sewage as a systemic issue and thinks that water companies should be held to account.

We now know that if we wanted to talk to Beccy Cooper about our campaign to end sewage pollution, we would likely find some common ground to build on.

MPs will also often have **websites** and **social media accounts** where they post regular updates. These, alongside any **local news outlets** can be good places to find out what your MP might have been saying or doing about sewage outside of Parliament.

PARTY POSITION

Scoring:

0 = Party opposes real change

1 = Party neutral or unclear

2 = Party generally supportive

3 = Party strongly supportive and campaigning on issue

What to look for:

When it comes to weighing up a political party’s position on sewage, we’re looking for clear commitments to transform the way the water industry works, not just vague promises to reduce sewage discharges.

If it helps, you can refer back to the 5 key principles that we set out in our **Vision for Water**. When you are looking at a party’s official policies, think about whether these policies would:



Put in place a legal priority in the water industry to protect public and environmental health.



Open up the industry to democratic decision making.



Create value for money for customers.



Ensure that industry regulators are tough and independent.



Make the practises of the water companies fully transparent.

To find out a party’s policies, the first places to check are their **manifesto from the most recent general election** or any **updated policy positions** available on their website.

Britain’s coasts, rivers, and lakes are being polluted by illegal sewage dumping. Labour will put failing water companies under special measures to clean up our water

Clean water
Britain’s coasts, rivers, and lakes are being polluted by illegal sewage dumping. The Conservatives have turned a blind eye and weakened rather than strengthened regulation with serious damage being done to our countryside, our tourism industry, and people’s health.

Labour will put failing water companies under special measures to clean up our water. We will give regulators new powers to block the payment of bonuses to executives who pollute our waterways and bring criminal charges against

classified as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’, up from 76% in 2010. But we must go further. That is why we set out an ambitious Plan for Water, bringing historic levels of transparency and investment, while keeping bill increases affordable for consumers. Our plan includes:

- Working with the regulator to further hold companies to account, including banning executive bonuses if a company has committed a serious criminal breach. This will build on our legislation for unlimited fines.
- Extending the £50 water rebate for those in the South West across the Parliament.
- Using fines from water companies to invest in river restoration projects, including linking up thriving habitats to multiply the benefits for wildlife and water quality. This will create a river recovery network, modelled on our nature recovery network, and create new destinations for people to enjoy across England. It will take a more local, tailored approach like the plan for the River Wye.

The next five years will see transformational investment and change in the water sector on a scale never seen before, thanks to the introduction of 100% monitoring – up from 7% under the last Labour Government – and targets on leaks and pollution. To deliver our ambitious plan for water beyond 2030, we will reform the ‘Price Review’ regulatory process for water companies. This will consider how we move to a more localised catchment-based and outcome-focussed approach, that better utilises nature-based solutions and further strengthens sanctions for water companies that fail to deliver for the public, coasts and rivers.

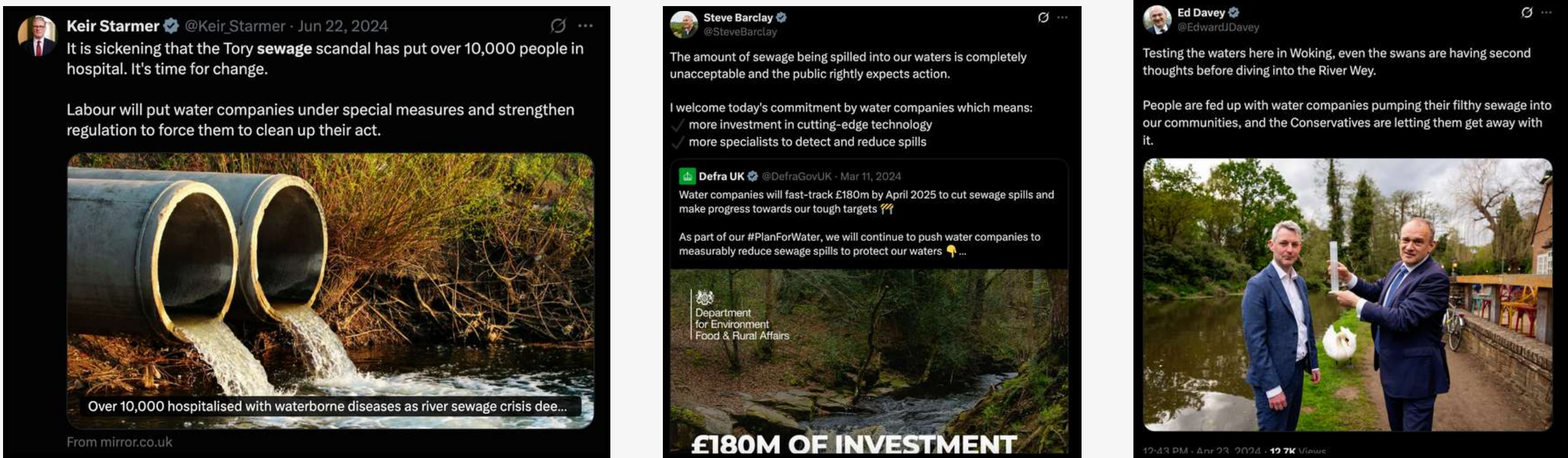
Natural Environment

In addition, we will:

- Tackle the national scandal of sewage-polluted rivers, waterways and beaches, and make water companies work for people by:
 - Introducing a Sewage Tax on water company profits.
 - Enforcing existing laws to ensure that the storm overflows only function in exceptional circumstances.
 - Setting legally binding targets to prevent sewage dumping into bathing waters and highly sensitive nature sites by 2030.
 - Embracing nature-based solutions to tackle the problem of sewage dumping.
 - Strengthening the powers of local authorities to monitor the health of our rivers, lakes and coastlines, restore our natural environment and tackle climate change.
 - Introducing a ‘blue corridor’ programme for rivers, streams and lakes to ensure clean and healthy water and setting new ‘blue flag’ standards.
 - Improving the quantity and quality of bathing waters and sensitive nature sites with more regular and robust testing of water quality.
 - Giving local environmental groups a place on water companies’ boards.
 - Introducing a single social tariff for water bills to help eliminate water poverty within the next Parliament.
 - Implementing Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act to require sustainable drainage systems in new developments.
 - Mandating all water companies to publish accessible real-time data on any sewage they dump.

As an example, here are the relevant sections of the manifestos published by the three biggest parties in Parliament – **Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats** – for the last general election in 2024. *In your opinion, what do they tell us about the approach and beliefs each party has on sewage pollution and the water industry?*

Other good sources of information on a political party’s position are **social media accounts, websites, news interviews** or **opinion pieces** connected to important figures within the party. These figures will often be the party’s lead for environmental issues, or even the party leader themselves.



Above are X/Twitter posts from shortly before the 2024 General Election – written by the **Labour Party leader, Keir Starmer**, the **Liberal Democrat leader, Ed Davey** and the (now former) **Conservative Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Steve Barclay**. *What, if anything, do these posts tell us about those parties’ positions on sewage and the water industry? In your opinion, do they match up with what was in their party’s manifesto?*

CONSTITUENCY RELEVANCE

Scoring:

0 = **No known relevance**

1 = **Low relevance**

2 = **Moderate relevance**

3 = **High relevance** - e.g. coastal/river community or known sewage hotspots locally

What to look for:

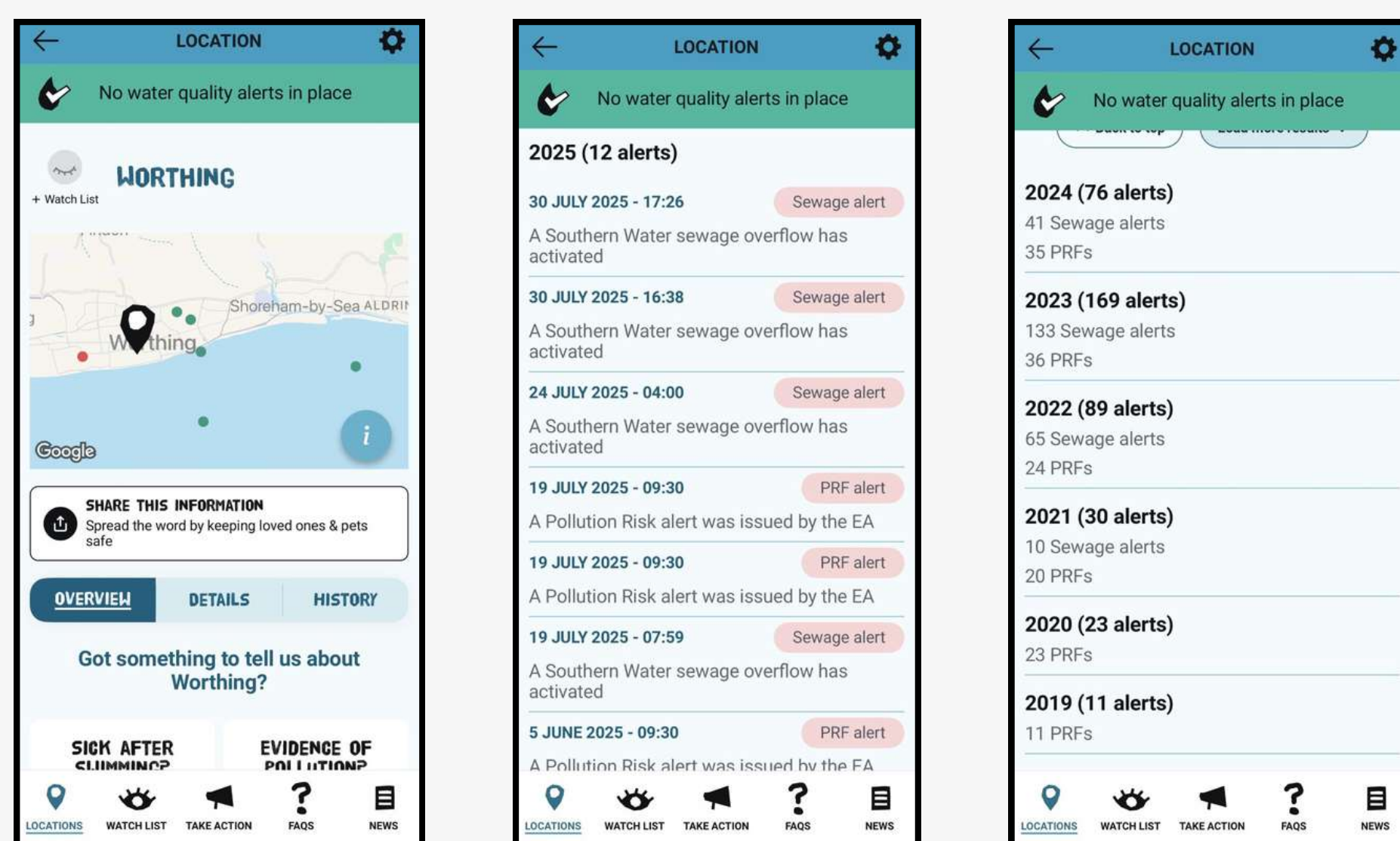
Since your MP is meant to represent the interests of your constituency, it's important to think about whether there are any specific, localised problems with sewage or issues with the way the water industry operates in your area. Here are some points to consider first:

- Are there any bodies of water in your constituency that people are regularly dunking themselves in?
- If there is, how often is sewage being discharged into that body of water? Is anyone getting sick?
- Are people in your area struggling with rising water bill costs?

You may also want to consider whether any waters in your area have bathing water designation or if your area is well-known for any particular kind of water sport - or even local tradition that involves people getting in the water.

To find out if any of the waters near you have bathing water designation, click on your nation: [England](#), [Wales](#), [Scotland](#), [Northern Ireland](#).

The **Safer Seas and Rivers Service App** is a great source of information to find out how regularly sewage is being dumped in the waters near you. Looking at Worthing as an example, it's clear to see why Beccy Cooper MP might be concerned about sewage impacting her constituency.



By adding your spot to your ‘watchlist’ on the app, you can get live alerts when sewage is dumped there. On the location profile page for your spot, you can also look at the number of **sewage discharges** and ‘**Pollution Risk Forecasts**’ (PRFs) there have been in the recent past by clicking on the ‘History’ tab.

Use the QR codes to download the SSRS app!

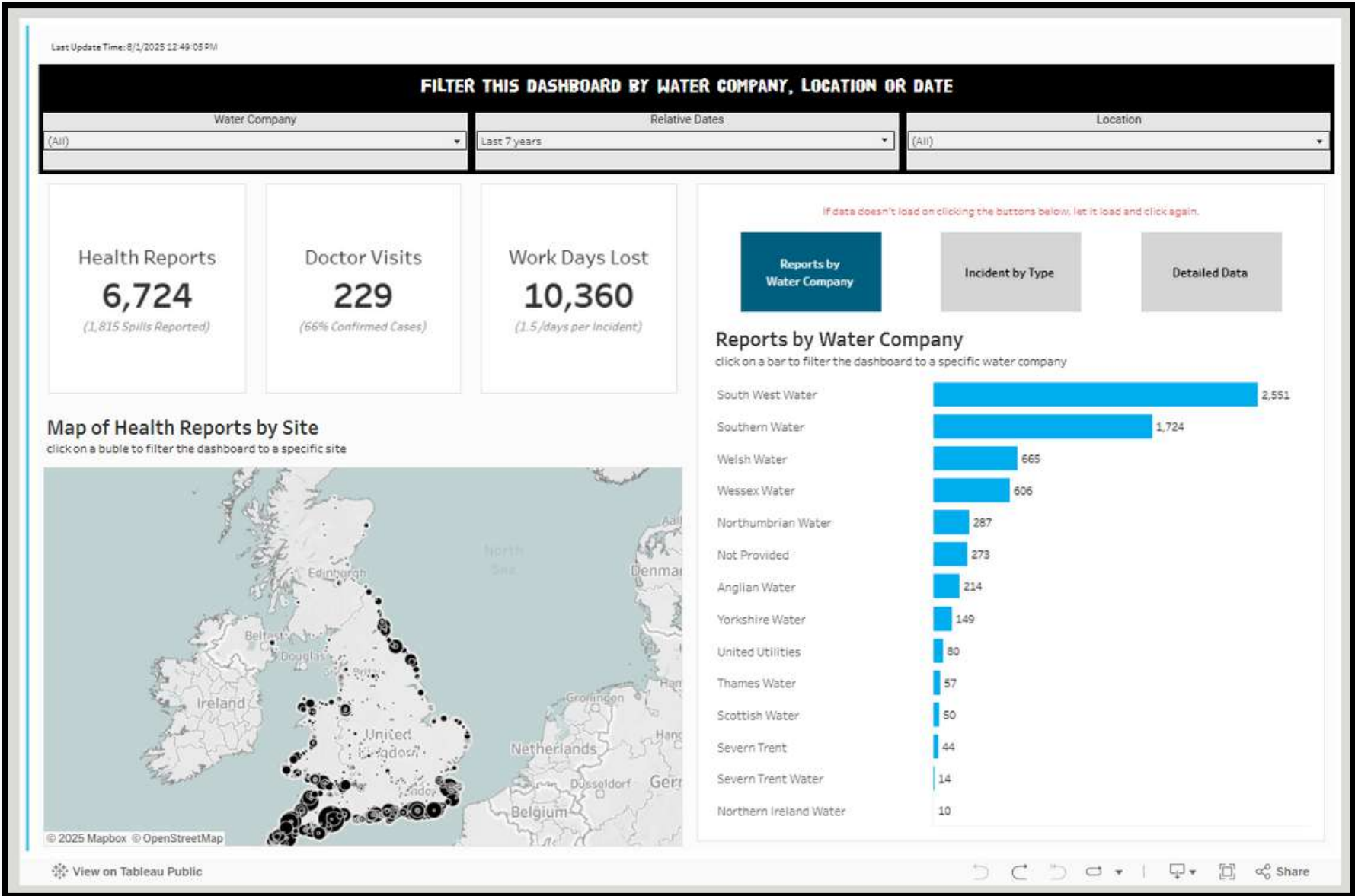
iPhone



Android



To find out about how many people in your area have been made sick as a result of coming into contact with sewage pollution, have a look at our [Sickness Figures dashboard](#) on the **SAS Data HQ**.



On the dashboard, you can search through the cases that we have recorded over the last 7 years by water company, date and location. This will also give you information on the types of illness water-users have experienced, and how much time off they have had to take due to getting sick.

Beyond the direct impact of sewage pollution, think about the noise your community is already making. MPs are far more likely to act when they sense real pressure from the people they represent. Petitions, protests, media coverage, or even a vocal local group can all turn up the heat.

Not sure if there’s much happening? Have a quick scan of local news, community Facebook groups, or nearby surf and swim clubs. Even if there isn’t a formal campaign yet, online discussions or letters in the paper often signal a growing wave of concern.

ACCESSIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS

Scoring:

0 = **No known relevance**

1 = **Low relevance**

2 = **Moderate relevance**

3 = **High relevance** - e.g. coastal/river community or known sewage hotspots locally

What to look for:

How much of a physical presence your MP has in your constituency will be a big factor in figuring how much effort you might need to put in to getting their attention. Some MPs are known for being open, responsive and active in their communities – others are more elusive or only respond under sustained pressure.

Remember, with this point, we're not just thinking about how often an MP is responding to queries from their constituents, but the quality of the response as well. Here are some key factors to consider:

- **Have you already contacted your MP about an issue previously?**

If you have, did you get a timely response from them to your query? Did the response feel generic and dismissive, or was it personalised and engaged? If you haven't contacted your MP before, has anyone you know done so? Don't worry if you've never reached out to an MP before, we're going to go into a bit more about how to do that in the next section.

- **Does your MP run regular constituency surgeries or drop-in sessions?**

Most MPs will run regular 'surgeries' or drop-in sessions to hear directly from constituents about the problems they're facing – which should be advertised on any websites, social media platforms or newsletters they manage. These sessions will usually work on a by-appointment basis and last 10-15 minutes per constituent. This isn't quite long enough to have an in-depth discussion with them, but it can be a good way to make introductions and arrange a follow-up meeting.

- **Are they active online/on social media?**

It can be useful to check if your MP is regularly posting online, particularly on social media platforms. Though, don't be fooled with this one, some of the MPs most active on social media might also be the least engaged in their communities! What we're looking for here is posts engaging with local issues and events or maybe even comments responding to constituents.

- **Is your MP present in your community?**

If your MP can be regularly found in constituency attending events, speaking at meetings or briefing the local press, then that could be an indication that they're accessible. How do residents and journalists in your area speak about your MP, do they describe them as 'hands-on' or 'hard to reach'?

TOTAL SCORE:

0-3

Your MP may need serious pressure to get moving on tackling sewage pollution. You may want to think about using the media and creative action to amplify public concern and expose the problem – prompting your MP to take up a position. Just make sure you do also communicate with them directly while you're building public pressure.

4-6

Your MP could be persuaded to shift their opinion with a bit of effort. Combine building public pressure with direct engagement with your MP focused on evidence-based arguments and real-life impact stories. Just make sure to keep communication with your MP focused and your asks polite but firm.

7-9

Your MP is likely to be sympathetic, so don't hesitate in asking for a meeting and using that as an opportunity to start encouraging them to do more. They may need a little push to get them to go further and speak out, but when they do, they could be turned into a real ally!

10-12

Your MP is a potential champion for the cause! Activate them. Encourage public statements, media action, and policy leadership – they could make all the difference helping secure outcomes that help transform the water industry.



COMMON SCENARIOS



In this section, we'll look at some of the most common sewage-related situations that might prompt you to reach out to your MP. Whether it's a fresh sewage dump at your local beach, evidence emerging of your water company breaking environmental rules, shareholder profiteering or an upcoming parliamentary vote, each scenario offers a different opportunity to push for change.

Use the examples and tips below to tailor your approach, build your case, and help your MP move from words to action.

"There has been a sewage discharge at my local spot"

Tips on how to broach this with your MP:

Be clear about what has happened and the impact -

Start by clearly explaining what happened. Back it up with evidence – sewage alerts from the Safer Seas & Rivers Service app, Data HQ stats, water-testing results, photos, news reports, or witness accounts.

Make it personal. MPs respond best when they see the impact on their constituents. Tell them if this is your regular swim or surf spot, how it matters to you, or how it's hitting local tourism, wildlife, or businesses. If people have fallen sick, or clubs had to cancel activities, highlight that too – real stories carry weight.

Offer support with further fact-finding but be clear about boundaries -

Offer to help your MP dig deeper – for example, by sharing details of the sewage outfall, the length of the discharge, or by inviting them to visit the site and meet affected residents. But don't let things get bogged down in endless investigations. Most MPs will have caseworkers who can also help investigate issues in your constituency. Be polite but persistent and keep pushing for action.

Some key actions your MP can take:

Request a formal briefing or site visit from the water company or the Environment Agency -

Your MP can demand answers from the water company and regulators. It won't solve everything, but it puts pressure on them to explain what went wrong, share their plans to fix it, and set the stage for stronger action.

Go public and support constituents pushing for accountability -

Your MP can use their platform to shine a spotlight on the issue - pressuring water companies and regulators, warning the public, and backing community action. Whether it's complaints, calls for investigations, or legal challenges, their support can open doors and boost your chances of getting results.

"My water company has been dumping sewage illegally"

Tips on how to broach this with your MP:

Use clear and measured language -

This aren't just 'unfortunate accidents' - if your water company has broken the law, say so! UK law is clear on what constitutes an illegal 'dry day spill'. [Make sure you understand what this means](#) before getting in touch with your MP, and if you're unsure whether a particular incident was illegal, make sure to use terms like 'suspected breach of environmental law'.

Make sure there is clear evidence to support the need for action -

There's plenty of public sources of evidence on illegal sewage dumping – from the SAS Data HQ and watchdog reports to news articles and Environment Agency findings. Focus on what's timely and relevant to your area. You can also note weather conditions during sewage discharges in your area to flag a possible illegal dry spill. If you raise this with your MP, be clear it's a suspicion that needs further investigation.

Some key actions your MP can take:

Raise the issue in Parliament -

In Parliament, your MP has several tools at their disposal to spotlight illegal dumping, and sewage pollution more broadly. They can call an Adjournment Debate – which happen at the end of every Parliamentary 'sitting' - to press ministers directly, raise the issue at Prime Minister's Questions, or submit written or oral questions to key figures like the Environment Secretary. Each action piles pressure on the government to act.

Push for tougher regulations and enforcement -

Your MP can also use their position to grill the regulators directly and demand that they present a plan to address the damage done. They can also use their voting power to help pass new laws that will tighten up the regulations around illegal sewage dumping and introduce more severe penalties for water companies caught breaking the law.

“My water company has been making massive payouts to shareholders.”

Tips on how to broach this with your MP:

Be clear on the facts -

The dividends that water companies pay out to their shareholders are often reported in the media, so it could be helpful to refer to any stories or reports you see in the news. If you want to dig deeper, you can also search for your water company's annual report on '[Companies House](#)' - a government website where companies must submit their financial reporting. However, this is a bit more time intensive!

Be prepared to shift your MP's position strategically -

While some MPs may be totally opposed to water companies being 'for-profit' businesses, some may think that this is fine. If this is the case, then see if they at least agree that it is wrong for shareholders to be rewarded while the company fails to meet its environmental obligations. It's worth considering which debate is the most strategic to have right now – and what arguments might help shift your MP's position in the long run.

Some key actions your MP can take:

Write to water company bosses and government ministers -

Your MP can write directly to water company bosses, challenging them on why shareholder payouts come before investment in public and environmental health. They can also press government ministers to end profit from pollution – and join forces with like-minded MPs to amplify the pressure with a stronger, united voice.

Push for policy change -

Your MP can champion transformation of the water system by voting for stronger laws, amending weak bills, and tabling Early Day Motions (EDMs) to spotlight profiteering from pollution. They can also use media interviews, opinion pieces, and social media to rally public support and make the case for a water industry that puts people and planet first.

“There's a vote on an important new sewage law coming up soon in Parliament”

Tips on how to broach this with your MP:

Highlight the urgency of your ask -

Be clear about why the new law requires your MP's immediate attention. If it is passed, how would it positively impact you and your community? Equally, if new laws fail to bring real change, what would be the negative impact? Don't be afraid to press the point that there is an opportunity to change things that won't easily come again if missed.

Reinforce your expectations -

Be polite but be firm. The evidence of the harm being done by sewage pollution and the way the water industry operates is overwhelming. You and your community are counting on your MP to act in their best interests. So, make sure to be clear about what you feel is at stake in this vote.

Some key actions your MP can take:

Vote for changes to law that transform the water industry -

As it says on the tin! If there is a strong new bill that could help transform the water industry, then all possible votes are needed in Parliament to make sure that that bill becomes law. It's worth considering the position of your MP's party on any new bills, as this will let you know whether your MP will be able to vote for the new law comfortably, or whether they might have to go against their party, which can be a trickier ask!

Play an active role in designing new laws to tackle sewage pollution -

Depending on what party they belong to and what other positions they may hold in either their party or the government, MPs can also play an active role in writing new or amending existing legislation that can help bring about change. They can also join relevant 'All Party Parliamentary Groups' (APPGs) - which act as special interest groups for particular policy areas – and help guide the research and debate that leads to new laws.

“My MP hasn't said anything about sewage pollution EVER”

Tips on how to broach this with your MP:

Start with the basics -

Your MP won't be an expert on everything, so keep it simple: explain what's happening, who's responsible, and how sewage impacts health and the environment. Research their interests too - if they focus on healthcare, the economy, or community issues, show how sewage pollution connects to those priorities.

Try to resist making assumptions -

Don't assume silence means disinterest. Your MP may not have spoken up on sewage pollution yet, but that doesn't mean they won't care. With so many issues competing for their attention—especially if they're new to Parliament—they may simply not have had the chance. Give them the facts, raise the issue, and keep an open mind. If they dismiss you outright, that's your cue to switch tactics and apply pressure in other ways.

Some key actions your MP can take:

Speak out -

If your MP hasn't raised sewage pollution before, their first step can be simple: use their platform. A post on social media, a statement on their website, or a comment in the press can shine a light on the damage caused by sewage pollution and water industry failings. Speaking out is the gateway to taking real, concrete action.

See the impact first hand -

Nothing hits harder than reality. Invite your MP to witness the impact of sewage pollution where it happens - at discharge sites, pipes, or outflows. Encourage them to meet water users who've fallen ill or local businesses losing trade. Seeing the damage up close makes it harder to ignore and harder to deny.

RESOURCES



USEFUL LINKS

- [The Water Quality Report 2025](#)
- [They Work For You](#)
- [The Surfers Against Sewage Data HQ](#)

TEMPLATES

- [MP Email](#)
- [MP Briefing](#)
- [MP Follow-Up Plan](#)