

## Written evidence submitted by Geoff Sallis to The Water (Special Measures) Bill Committee (WSMB13).

The Bill has four key aims:

- block bonuses for water company executives “who pollute our waterways”
- bring criminal charges against “persistent law breakers”
- impose automatic and “severe” fines for wrongdoing
- enable independent monitoring of every sewer overflow outlet

The government said it was already bringing in new rules ring-fencing money for investment, as well as handing Ofwat the power to ban unfair bonuses and introduce personal criminal liability for water executives responsible for pollution. A commission has also been ordered to draw up the “biggest reset in 35 years”.

**With climate change having long been predicted to bring higher rainfall levels this may be a start, but a far cry from what’s required.**

**Immediate** (bring criminal charges against “persistent law breakers”)

- **Stop dry dumping**

[Severn Trent Water](#) and [United Utilities](#); raw sewage spills from sewage treatment works in apparent breaches of permits over a 2 year period in more than 80 watercourses, according to an analysis of previously unpublished operational data. It is alleged the suspected illegal discharges were during dry weather or at times when the plants were not at capacity.

Top-rated UK water firms ‘dumped 1,374 illegal spills into rivers’

[https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/oct/13/top-rated-uk-water-firms-dumped-1374-spills-into-rivers?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/oct/13/top-rated-uk-water-firms-dumped-1374-spills-into-rivers?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

- **Prosecute dumping where there is no permit**

[Water companies](#) across England potentially broke the law thousands of times last year by dumping [sewage](#) without the legally required permits. An investigation has uncovered for the first time that over 5,500 sewage spills in England last year may have been illegal as they took place without permission from the [Environment Agency](#) (EA) watchdog, including at spots along iconic rivers like the Wye and Avon. Severn Trent currently has the highest number of outlets without a permit, with 191 unpermitted overflows responsible for 2,245 sewage spills in 2023.

[Polluting water firms face 'severe' fines, ban on bonuses and criminal charges](#)

- **Provide a definition of ‘extreme weather’**

- **Stop ‘self-regulation’**
- **Stop making the customer pay for updating infrastructure, that they have paid for multiple times in the last 35 years.**

**Short term requirements: (5 years)** (impose automatic and “severe” fines for wrongdoing)

- **Stop all illegal spills**

**Environment Audit Committee report January 2022.** Governments, water companies and regulators have grown complacent and resigned to dumping sewage in rivers.

- **Fix leaks within the wastewater system**

Nearly 4,300 sewer collapses were reported by wastewater companies in 2022/23, with United Utilities recording 1,116 collapses in its infrastructure alone. This was followed by [Severn Trent](#) (664) and [Yorkshire Water](#) (575).

Water companies across England and Wales reported 29,926 sewer collapses over a six-year period. The i paper: <https://apple.news/AGm--Vw2gTWynpynP6g0kKg>

- **As well as spills monitor and report volume of untreated discharges on each CSO (minimum 90% standard)**

The government has rejected a recommendation from MPs to make water companies measure the amount of sewage being discharged into rivers in a fresh blow to [water pollution](#) campaigners. The rejection was included in the government’s response to the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) report on water quality in rivers, : <https://apple.news/AEoCE8gYdSd62BqGJRGIJxw>

Faulty sewage spill monitors spark accusations of 'environmental cover up' by water firms. Water firms have been accused of an "environmental cover up" as fresh figures revealed one in seven sewage monitors - meant to record spills - were faulty. [https://apple.news/AzxP1ELbrT8eMpeabQ\\_kbEQ](https://apple.news/AzxP1ELbrT8eMpeabQ_kbEQ)

- **Fully fund EA (for both water companies and farm inspections)**

Since 2011, the total budget has been cut by 75%, with similar cuts taking place. As a direct consequence, environmental protection began to collapse. Essential water

quality monitoring was seriously scaled back. While instructed by the Government to re-direct funding to flood defense.

80% of Welsh dairy farms inspected, 69% of English ones, 60% in Scotland and 50% in Northern Ireland breaching regulations. Most dairy farmers 'are ignoring rules on river pollution'

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/apr/19/most-uk-dairy-farms-ignoring-pollution-rules-as-manure-spews-into-rivers>

### **Long term requirements:**

- **Update sewage works to filter out the high levels of antibiotics and other drugs have been found in water (following the Swiss and EU example) (2045)**

(High levels of antibiotics and other drugs have been found in water in the country's most treasured and protected landscapes, raising concerns over antimicrobial resistance. Switzerland is the only country that has updated its sewage works to filter out these chemicals, and following the Swiss examples, EU member states and the European Parliament have approved the final text requiring sewage treatment works serving 10,000 people or more to have micropollutant treatment in place by 2045. Pharmaceutical and cosmetic producers will largely fund the upgrades in line with the 'polluter pays' principle.)

How drug pollution flooded the UK's waterways

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/sep/27/amr-drug-resistance-england-national-parks-hidden-hazards-rivers-pollution-aoe>

- **Stop spills of untreated sewage, withdraw all permits for CSO (10% reduction each year)**

***January 2025***