

Matters arising

Update on Flooding in Whitstable Road and other parts of Faversham

The Head of Environment & Leisure has provided the following update:

Ground investigations works commenced on 5 December for proposed additional works. The goal of this is to see whether it will be viable to install additional soakaways at the edge of the recreation ground to reduce the amount of run-off which comes from Park Road in particular. It will also help with detailing any works within the park that could reduce the run-off from the pathways and car park.

Please find below the correspondence between Cllr Julian Saunders and Southern Water. These are set out in chronological order:

Email from Cllr Julian Saunders to Sue Cobb – 25 October 2022

Sue

Thanks for your responses to previous concerns raised. I reported your response of 20 July in relation to the capacity of the sewerage system in Faversham and future plans for improvement back to the Swale Borough Council Eastern Area Committee meeting on 29 September.

Members' general view was that the response was unsatisfactory and they asked me as the Vice Chair to write to you again to express their concerns.

In particular they were concerned that the commitment to significantly reduce the frequency of CSO discharges was a long way off, not until 2030. As you know the current inadequate arrangements require sewage discharges into Faversham Creek when there has been heavy rain and have resulted in sewage overflows into local streets and domestic systems on some occasions.

They were also concerned that although Southern Water you have determined that future sewage network capacity may be an issue in the Faversham area there appears to be no funded plan for an upgrade at the moment.

The Committee would be keen to have further information on how you will tackle the problems caused by CSOs and improve sewage network capacity locally and clearer commitments on the timescales for tackling these issues.

Regards

Cllr Julian Saunders

Email from Sue Cobb, Southern Water to Cllr Saunders – 9 November 2022

Good afternoon Julian

My apologies that it's taken me a couple of weeks to come back to you. I've split my response into two parts below.

CSOs

If we were to block up all storm overflows today, the next time the system was to become overwhelmed, wastewater would have nowhere to go but back up into people's homes and onto roads, causing major flooding and pollution for the community. We know that any untreated sewage going into our seas and rivers is unacceptable. That is why we're working hard to stop that happening, investing, and acting now. This will take many years and billions of pounds to resolve, but we are determined to achieve this as quickly as possible for our customers.

We have drafted our regional plan, which will be published next year, which has analysed the root cause of storm overflows across all our catchments. Many of the solutions required to ensure we have a sustainable system fit-for-the-future, are within the community e.g. Sustainable drainage along highways, rainwater harvesting on domestic and commercial properties, and removing hectares of hard surfaces which sees large volumes of rainwater runoff into our systems. Cross-industry partnership is therefore going to be critical. We will of course be investing in our infrastructure and community schemes, to solve the challenges long term.

We welcome Defra's Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan, which was published in September 2022, which sets targets for the water industry to eliminate storm overflows by 2050 (except for unusually heavy rainfall). We are already leading the way with some of the targets outlined. For example, we are already hitting the average number of spills per outfall per year, that other water companies are only aiming to achieve by 2025. We're therefore confident that we'll not only meet Govt. targets, but that we'll likely exceed them.

We're currently working with the regulators and our investors to understand if we can accelerate our plans, as we want to go quicker than targets set by Defra.

Local sewage network

As part of the catchment review process, models for the Faversham catchment were reviewed. The outcome of the review was that the model requires updating with new flow surveys so that the model replicate the actual flow adequately.

This will involve installing flow monitors in strategic locations in the sewers within the catchment to understand the volume of flow being drained into the public sewers during dry weather as well as during storm conditions; this can generally take 12 weeks on average but can be longer if more data is required.

The flow survey data will be used to calibrate the model which will then be used to develop options to accommodate the catchment growth. Flow surveys and model update can take up to 6 months to complete so this is likely to be summer 2023.

As soon as we have an update on the results of the flow surveys and model update, we will let you know.

I hope this information is helpful.

Best wishes

Sue

Sue Cobb