

## Anthony Browne MP

Peter Simpson  
CEO, Anglian Water Services Ltd  
Lancaster House  
Lancaster Way  
Ermine Business Park  
Huntingdon  
PE29 6YJ

23 November 2021

Dear Mr Simpson,

### **Re: Illegal sewage discharge into rivers**

Parliament and the public have made their feelings clear – sewage discharge into our rivers must end.

I am therefore alarmed to be informed by the water regulator OfWat about widespread, unpermitted release of sewage into the environment by water and wastewater companies. As you are aware, Ofwat and the Environment Agency have launched investigations into these discharges. The investigations have my full support, and I will be pressing OfWat to pursue the strongest possible sanctions against any companies found to be in breach of regulations. I urge you to cooperate fully with this investigation - water companies provide an essential public service, and they must display corporate behaviour that can build public trust.

It is urgent that residents know what has happened, and I am seeking reassurance from you that Anglian Water has not been involved in such unpermitted sewage discharges. If you have, you must be transparent about what occurred.

The Government has just legislated in the 2021 Environment Act – in an amendment that I suggested to the Secretary of State – that water companies must progressively reduce harm from sewage discharge. Water companies are now required to produce comprehensive statutory Drainage and Sewerage Management Plans over a minimum 25-year planning horizon. As part of this legislation, a power of direction was introduced for the Government to direct water companies in relation to the actions in these Drainage and Sewerage Management Plans if they are not good enough. I am assured the Government will not hesitate to use this power.

I am deeply concerned by Anglian Water's history of large fines, including historic incidents of unnecessary discharge caused by negligence and lack of maintenance at company sites. Reports that the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant has breached conditions for sewage released into the River Cam since 2015 did not offer much reassurance that such concerns are being dealt with. As part of their ongoing investigation, OfWat has also asked Boards of all water companies to explain how environmental performance and compliance with environmental obligations has been considered when deciding executive bonuses. I am calling for an iron-clad link between environmental performance and executive bonuses. Although executive pay policy is a matter for each individual organisation, OfWat have always insisted that it should be linked to the service received by customers. Customers, including

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my constituents, have made it clear that reductions in sewage discharge are an essential element of that service and should be reflected in the remuneration of your executive team.

In view of the above matters, I would be grateful to receive your response to the following questions:

1. Has Anglian Water made any unpermitted and previously undeclared discharges, including those now being investigated by OfWat? If so, please state their scale, location, and timings.
2. What plans are in place to ensure Anglia Water will be fully compliant with its new legal requirement under the Environment Act to progressively reduce harm from sewage discharges?
3. Given concerns that water companies are not providing full disclosure on the scale of any releases of sewage, legal and illegal, what processes are you putting in place to ensure full transparency on discharges?
4. Following formal letters in January 2021 from the Environment Agency, how have practices changed at the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant to ensure sewage discharges do not exceed the permitted quantity? How will such practices be put in place at the planned replacement site?
5. Will you commit to withholding executive bonuses in the event Anglian Water is found to be in breach of regulations on sewage discharge or over-abstraction?
6. Is Anglian Water committed to the goal of ending sewage discharge?

I am very keen to have a constructive relationship going forward, working with you and relevant partners to find a solution to the challenges of sewage discharge. I would welcome a meeting to discuss this, and the issues outlined above, and look forward to discussing these concerns in future. It is in your interest and the public interest that the long running scandal of sewage discharges into rivers is finally brought to an end.

With kind regards.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony Browne". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a long, sweeping horizontal line.