

Questions to South West Water

Questions posed by the Town Council and members of Porthleven Surf Club / Salty Sisters (wild swimming group). Please note that this is a summary of the answers provided by representatives of South West Water.

1. Please can you explain to the council how the sewage system works in Porthleven in layman's terms? Where it goes from a house to the pumping station, then to the plant and where is the treated waste released?

SWW: Porthleven works on a typical system made up of 85% combined, 12% surface water and 3% foul only based on a gravity system. Two storage tanks, one on Breagside (15 hour dry weather storage capacity) and one on the Commercial Road (11 hours dry weather storage capacity) which are then pumped to the sewage treatment works (STW) which uses state of the art technology, with a primary biological tank and secondary settlement tank, using UV treatment before being pumped out to sea on the western side of the pier.

All surface water fed back to the sea on the eastern side of the harbour, via the stream and to the east of the pier.

2. SWW water have acknowledged a number of incidents of sewage releases throughout this year, how and why did this happen?

SWW: Unfortunately, without specific dates on incidents we cannot comment. Noted that no raw sewage is pumped into the sea unless there is a problem such as blockages / hydraulic overload.

SWW will attend all pollution alerts with dedicated teams to investigate

3. What triggers the storm release of sewage when we have rainfall? What is the level it needs to get to trigger that release? Is it automated or done on human judgement?

SWW: The storage tanks are able to hold 15 hours / 11 hours during which time SWW will and manually empty the storage tanks as per their protocols. The levels of the tanks are monitored automatically to ensure that alerts can be addressed asap.

4. How many sewage overflows are used in Porthleven to release untreated sewage? Is it safe to go in the water after these overflows have released untreated sewage?

Answered above

5. Will the proposed additional replacement pipework section, planned for February 2023, result in all pipework leading to the Porthleven STW being of adequate standard to cope?

SWW: First phase of replacing old pipework to the STW complete additional work to replace additional pipework planned for February 2023

6. The Safer Seas App is a quick and easy way of determining whether it is safe to bathe in our seas, please can you provide an alternative link to receive layman notifications to be used to determine a pollution incident? How can the TC monitor these alerts and follow progress to determine their impact on water quality, ecology etc post investigation by the EA?

SWW: Although SWW used to run their own app this has been discontinued and Safer Seas app is very useful, however alerts are kept live for 48hrs whereas the cases are closed by SWW, following investigation, in 12 hours.

7. Will the current Porthleven STW infrastructure cope with additional housing being connected to the system, please note the approved Neighbourhood Plan has allocations for 200+ new houses?

SWW: More details will be forwarded via email. Noted that only foul water would be connected to the system for new developments.

8. What are the plans of SWW to improve the service / modernise their systems to negate the need to or accidental sewage dumping into the sea, making it safe for all water users and the environment?

SWW: Work to commence to update pipework next year. Noted that SWW are currently investigating a number of misconnections, of the 26 identified to date 19 have been rectified.

9. What changes are SWW implementing to improve on its 1-star rating that it received for water pollution in 2021 during the UK's annual Environmental Performance Assessment?

SWW: Increased investment in capital projects to improve systems to achieve targets set by both EA and SWW

10. How would you rate the performance of SWW in keeping the community safe when they use the sea at Porthleven?

SWW: SWW are improving systems with capital investment, investing in technology to monitor flows, improved systems, misconnection works and educating users on what to flush / what not to flush