

Update for the Local Strategic Partnership Bathing Water Quality (Hastings)

Actions since your last meeting:

Misconnections:

The February-March investigation into misconnected households and sewer faults uncovered 30 instances of houses with foul drainage wrongly connected into storm water sewers and around 50 missing or broken caps on sewer pipes. The HBC Environmental Health team has worked with the contractor and residents to correct all of the misconnected households. Southern Water agreed to replace all missing or faulty sewer caps and now report that this has been completed.

A survey of a further 5 areas, centred around the Ore Valley Stream, is now underway. Upon completion in August, we anticipate another list of households where drainage corrections will be needed.

Southern Water will begin their contribution to the investigations and rectifications this month. They will be addressing problems in their network as they are uncovered and reporting any misconnections they find to HBC.

By the end of this programme, all the main catchments along the Alexandra Park Stream and Ore Valley Stream will have been assessed.

Alexandra Park

I attach a map summarising the wetland creation works in Alexandra Park to filter the stream as it passes through parkland. Works at Buckhole Ponds 1 and 2 have been completed as has the planting of vegetation in areas of the stream. The remaining project for this summer is the widening of the stream in the lower lawn. All of these works are designed to slow the flow of water and filter the contents of the stream as it passes over silt traps and wetland vegetation.

Engineering solutions

Southern Water is assessing the feasibility and cost of two engineering solutions: the extension of the current outfall to various points further out to sea and the diversion of the Alexandra Park stream into the storm sewer in periods of dry weather. The outfall extension, if it is viable, will be a longer term solution; only the stream diversion is possible within the timeframe necessary to help us meet the deadline for the new EU standard. We expect to have the results of Southern Water's investigations in August.

Bathing Water Results for the 2014 Season

Water quality monitoring results so far this year, continuing the improving trend of 2013, are very good and would meet the new EU standard. Until we

experience some severe weather, however, it is not clear whether enough has yet been done to minimise pollution in wet weather. Also, as results against the new standard are assessed on a 4 year average (2012-2015), there is still a risk that periods of poor weather this year or next, added to a poor 2012, would result in failure. If we are able to demonstrate continuing improvement through the rest of 2014 as a result of actions explained above, possibly including stream diversion, then we can apply to DEFRA in early 2015 for a 'step change', dropping earlier poor year results because we have demonstrated significant corrective action resulting in marked improvement in water quality monitoring results.

Conclusion

Although the situation is encouraging, the risk of failure has not yet been removed. Actions and monitoring results from now through November will be critical. The Bathing Water Executive Group, through the Leader of the Council and the MP, will be monitoring closely and ensuring that the public agencies and the utility all continue to meet their commitments to a positive result for Hastings.

Virginia Gilbert
Hastings Borough Council
16 July 2014