

Hastings - Bathing Water Quality Executive Group

Extract from 26th March Meeting for the LSP

Present

Councillor Jeremy Birch, Leader HBC (Chair)
Matthew Crabb, Southern Water
Virginia Gilbert, Head of Amenities, Resort & Leisure Services, HBC
Simon Hubbard, Director of Regeneration & Planning, HBC
Elizabeth Lewis, Senior Environment Officer, Environment Agency
Cherry Longley, HBC
Richard O'Callaghan, Environment Manager, Environment Agency
Dr. Louise Sargent, Office Manager for Amber Rudd MP
John Spence, Head of Water Quality & Environmental Policy, Southern Water
Karl Taylor, Assistant Director/Operations, East Sussex County Council
David Tyler, Wastewater & Water Strategy Manager, Southern Water
Ian Udal, Environment Agency

Apologies

Andrew Colquhoun, Hastings Community Network
Mike Hepworth, Head of Environmental Services, HBC
Paul Linwood, Wastewater Policy Manager, Southern Water
Steve Manwaring, Hastings Voluntary Action

1. DEFRA MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE 13TH JANUARY 2015 – FEEDBACK

Cllr JB/VG attended along with Blackpool and Cornwall authorities, utility companies, Environment Agency and DEFRA. The three local authorities are areas where the economic impact of failure to meet the new standard is considered to be very high. Blackpool and Cornwall have problem beaches which will definitely fail; their concerns centre around communication and explanation to the public. Only Hastings expected to meet the standard and discussions centred around what we are doing locally. The Southern Water CEO Matthew Wright expressed his confidence that Hastings would meet the 2015 designation in view of the partners' programme of improvements across the Borough.

2. SOUTHERN WATER - UPDATE

The historical monitoring information shows that from 2011 onwards there has been a gradual and consistent reduction in bacterial contamination. SW feels that Hastings will, therefore, achieve sufficient status this year.

SW has almost completed all the study work and carried out find/fix remedies relating to the dual manholes, concentrating on the upper reaches of Hastings

catchment where almost all surface water drainage feeds into the Alexandra Park Stream.

20 tonnes of river silt has been removed from the culverted section of the Alexandra Park stream (South Terrace). This section will be routinely monitored on a weekly basis.

A further crew has been deployed to continue misconnections/dual manhole works etc. which means there are now three crews as opposed to two. To date 1,000 manholes have been inspected – 356 of dual manholes were found to be capped with approx. 20 uncapped/replaced; these were located on the public system with some remaining on private system. The work to replace remaining missing caps on private networks will be undertaken by HBC. SW is not expecting to find any more significant problem manholes from the surveys undertaken.

3. SOUTHERN WATER'S CASE FOR STEP CHANGE

An application can be made to the Environment Agency stating the case for a 'step change'. This means that such significant works have been undertaken that past years' monitoring results are no longer representative and should be removed from the evaluation of water quality.

SW believes there is an opportunity for a more favourable classification for Hastings as work undertaken to date demonstrates sufficient improvements to apply for a step change. Intervention work carried out in 2012 around Old Roar Ghyll (in the region of £1m-£1.5m spend) had a significant effect. There were a high number of pollution incidents before that period which then stopped following the works. Reduction in contamination has been significant over time. SW view is that the 2012 year should be removed from the assessment as it no longer represents the current situation.

EA questioned the robustness of the data and the need to assess the SW case prior to any recommendation. EA also considers that discounting 2012 would not be risk free as there would be fewer years to mitigate a poor 2015 result. EA will provide some scenarios to that end as part of their determination/assessment.

4. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – UPDATE

Sample Point

Relocation of the sample point 200m further to the east was approved. This is another incremental change which will assist Hastings to reach sufficient standard.

5. Bathing Water Quality COMMUNICATIONS GROUP – UPDATE

The group has created and agreed a plan of actions. Partners (Clean Seas Please/SW/HBC/EA) are working together on a joint statement which will be added to the Clean Seas Please website together with a press release.

VG further advised that there will be a programme of awareness raising events such as the Big Beach Clean in May.

6. Action Plan Updates

6.1 Alexandra Park – Next Stage of Works

To recap, various engineering works and improvements have taken place in the park (at Buckshole, creation of silt traps, final treatment of ponds, planting of instream vegetation to slow down flow and filter the water etc.) The final phase of works is now imminent and will concentrate on the lower ponds and boating lake. The introduction of floating islands and other works will commence in White Pond in May with the boating lake to follow in June. At present the boating lake is cleaned every year at a cost to HBC but this will not be required in the future once the works are completed.

6.2 Assessment of End of Pipe Options: A brief has been sent to three consultants (two are used by EA and one used by HBC). All three firms have expressed an interest in the work. A meeting has been held with one firm already who has submitted a quote for £10k to undertake the feasibility. The firms will review Southern Water's assessment of the feasibility of an outfall extension or stream diversion. If their report assesses one of the options favourably, then they will provide HBC with a first stage project plan. This work will include consultation with local fishing industry, offshore groups and Coastal Users' Group regarding the 'extension' option.