

# Thanet Public Meeting Summary Report

21 April 2022

Royal Harbour Academy, Ramsgate



from  
**Southern  
Water** 

## Overview

A public meeting was held during the evening of Thursday 21 April 2022 at the Royal Harbour Academy in Ramsgate. The meeting was set up to provide customers in the area the opportunity to talk with members of the Executive Leadership Team about Southern Water's activities, operations, and the steps being taken to increase the resilience of our local infrastructure, whilst reducing their impact on the local environment.

Around 130 people attended the meeting which was chaired by Craig Mackinlay MP and included a discussion panel comprised of: Ian McAulay, CEO and Dr Toby Willison, Chief Environment and Sustainability Officer for Southern Water; Cllr Ash Ashbee, Leader of Thanet District Council; Cllr Karen Constantine, Kent County Councillor for Ramsgate; and Sally Harvey, Area Director at the Environment Agency, Kent & South London.

## Format

After introductions from the panel, Ian McAulay addressed the meeting followed by a question and answer session from attendees.

## Meeting summary

### 1. Introduction from Ian McAulay

Key points:

- An apology was made to the people of Thanet for past mistakes
- Details of the work being carried out to improve services to customers and strengthen the resilience of local assets and reduce pollution incidents
- No dividends paid to shareholders since 2017
- Collaboration between SW and local authorities, highways and agriculture addressing issues such as nutrient and surface water sources and pathways that are causing pollution and flooding.
- The South East is water stressed with areas of outstanding natural beauty and rare chalk streams that need to be protected. In addition, the area has a high population and dense housing
- Surface water running into sewers is a huge issue and this is being addressed by SW's ground-breaking Pathfinder projects that are being trialled in five different areas in the region, including Margate and Swalecliffe, to explore ways of reducing pressure on the sewer system and storm overflow use
- Building unnecessarily large treatment works, storage, pumps, and pipes to deal with rainwater is costly and creates a huge amount of carbon emissions. SW wants to avoid this approach, which has been described as "environmental vandalism" by some, in the future, favouring a combination of conventional infrastructure with surface water management and more nature-based solutions

## 2. Snapshot from Q&A session

Summary of topics covered during the Q&A, including links to further information:

- Investment in local infrastructure [Margate and Broadstairs Resilience Scheme \(southernwater.co.uk\)](https://www.southernwater.co.uk/margate-and-broadstairs-resilience-scheme)
- Long term planning – accounting for housing growth / climate change - [Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan](#)
- Addressing storm overflows - [Storm Overflows Task Force](#)
- Use of water efficient devices in homes - [How to save water in your home \(southernwater.co.uk\)](#)
- Taking responsibility for what goes into the sewage system - [Keep It Clear \(southernwater.co.uk\)](#)
- Water quality and testing - [Our bathing waters \(southernwater.co.uk\)](#)
- Drinking water quality - [Drinking water quality \(southernwater.co.uk\)](#)
- Engagement with the local community - [Community \(southernwater.co.uk\)](#)
- Water consumption - [Target 100, together let's hit target 100. \(southernwater.co.uk\)](#)

## 3. Outcomes and actions

What we will do	Why we're doing it	By when
Organise a meeting with Ramsgate Town Council with Dr Toby Willison	To address concerns over water quality	Sept 2022
Continue to liaise with SOS Ramsgate	To establish trust between both organisations	Ongoing
Engage in further discussions with The Friends of Botany Bay	To consider further support with beach cleaning initiative	Complete
Set up a 'Thanet Community Stakeholder Group' in liaison with Cllr Karen Constantine	To engage with the local community	Sept 2022

## Here to help

The best way to contact us is to call - we're here to help 24 hours a day on **0330 303 0368**.

Alternatively, you can use the live chat function on our website [[Contact Us to get in touch](#)] or email us on [customerservices@southernwater.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@southernwater.co.uk)

Further information on the extra help and support we can provide to customers requiring additional assistance can be found here - [Extra help and support](#)



# Annex – Supporting Materials

The following information posters and leaflets were on display at the venue:



# Wastewater Treatment in Thanet



from Southern Water



## Minster Wastewater Treatment Works

Serving Minster, Monkton and St Nicholas at Wade



Serves **4,300** people



**43.2km** of sewer pipes



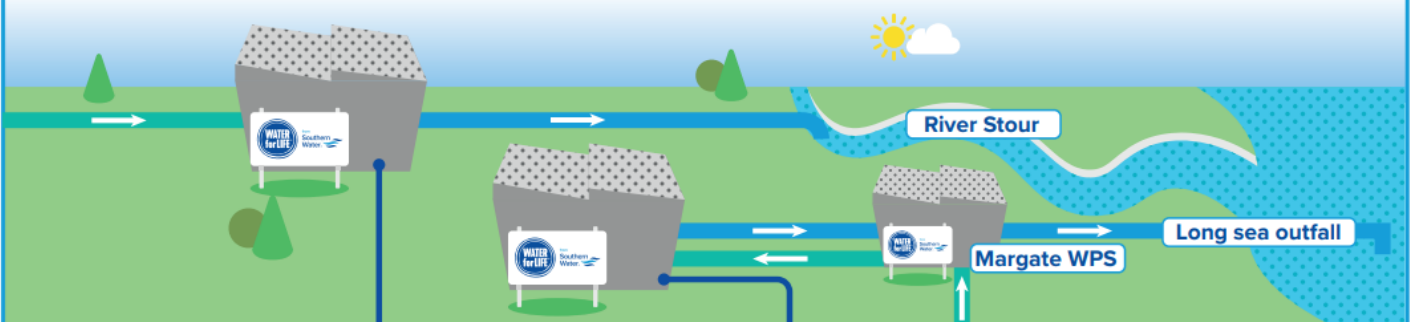
Average flow of **13l/s**



The site is fed by 4 pumping stations and a gravity sewer

## Weatherlees Hill Wastewater Treatment Works

The works serves more than 180,000 people across Margate, Broadstairs, Ramsgate, Sandwich and Deal, split into two sister sites which run side by side.



### Weatherlees Hill 'A'

Serving Ramsgate, Sandwich and Deal



Serves **99,000** people



**643km** of sewer pipes



Takes flows up to **890l/s**

Treated effluent is released to the tidal River Stour which flows into Pegwell Bay.

### Weatherlees Hill 'B'

Serving Margate and Broadstairs



Serves **93,000** people



**607km** of sewer pipes



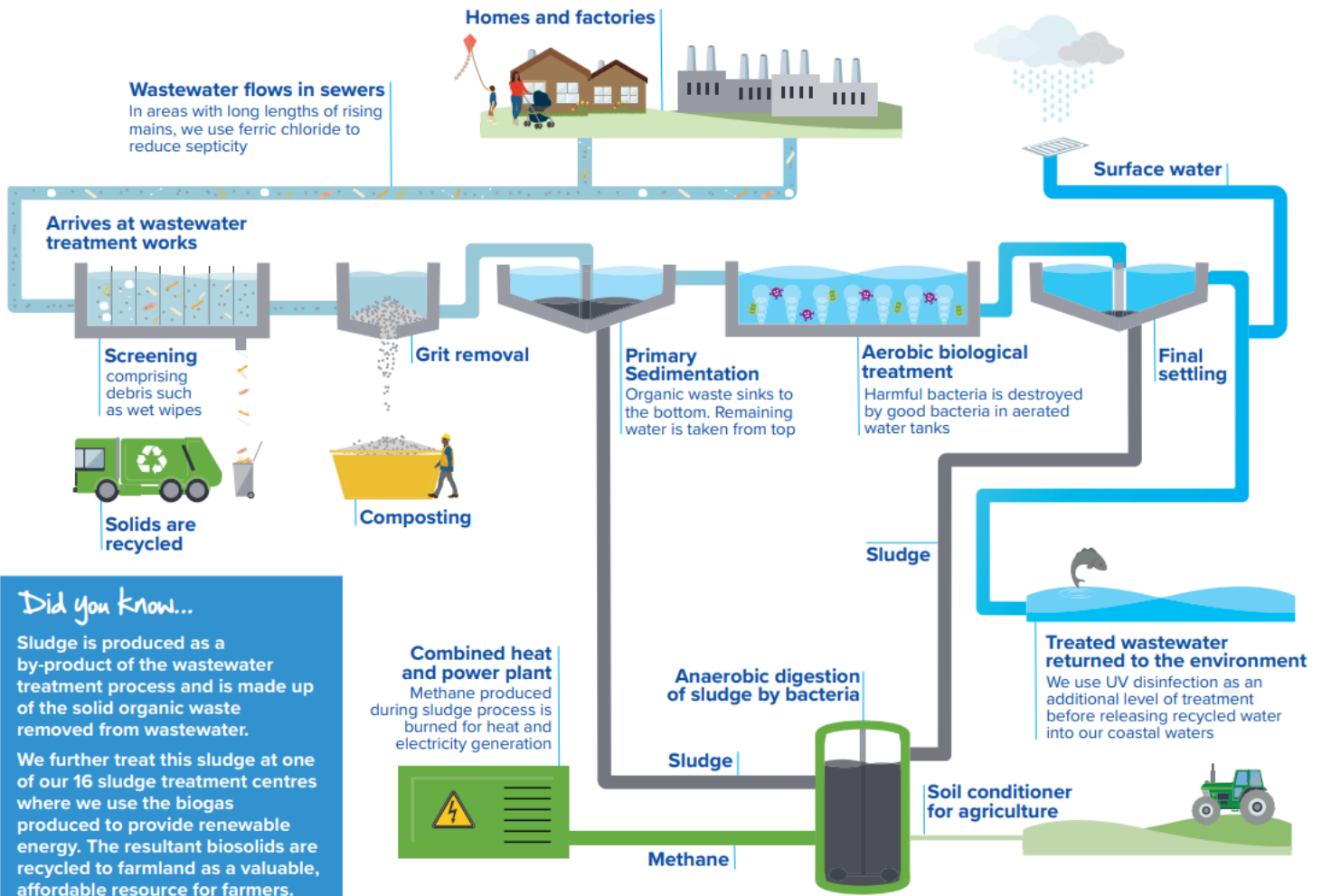
Takes flows up to **809l/s**

Primary treatment and grit removal is undertaken at Margate Wastewater Pumping Station (WPS), 11km away. Wastewater undergoes additional UV disinfection before being pumped back to Margate WPS and released via the long sea outfall.

# Wastewater Treatment Process



from Southern Water



**Did you know...**  
 Sludge is produced as a by-product of the wastewater treatment process and is made up of the solid organic waste removed from wastewater.  
 We further treat this sludge at one of our 16 sludge treatment centres where we use the biogas produced to provide renewable energy. The resultant biosolids are recycled to farmland as a valuable, affordable resource for farmers.

**Did you know...**  
 The Environment Agency (EA) sets limits on the quality and quantity of recycled water that can be released from our treatment works. The EA issues discharge permits to ensure the recycled water we release meets legal requirements.  
 The permit ensure that the quality of the receiving water is protected and that discharges do not cause an unacceptable impact on the environment.

**Bin it, don't flush it!**

Every month we remove **EIGHT** skips of unflushable items from our sites at Weatherlees Hill and Margate

This includes approximately **64 TONNES** of wipes and sanitary items that should be disposed of in the bin

*Remember the 3ps*  
**Only flush toilet paper, pee and poo down the loo.**

# Margate Wastewater Pumping Station



from Southern Water.

Margate Wastewater Pumping Station (WPS) is one of 3,339 pumping stations in Southern Water's region that stretches across Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.



Margate WPS has an underground footprint about the size of a football pitch and serves nearly **89,000 people**.



It's connected to over **606kms of sewers** in the area – that's longer than the distance from here to Newcastle.

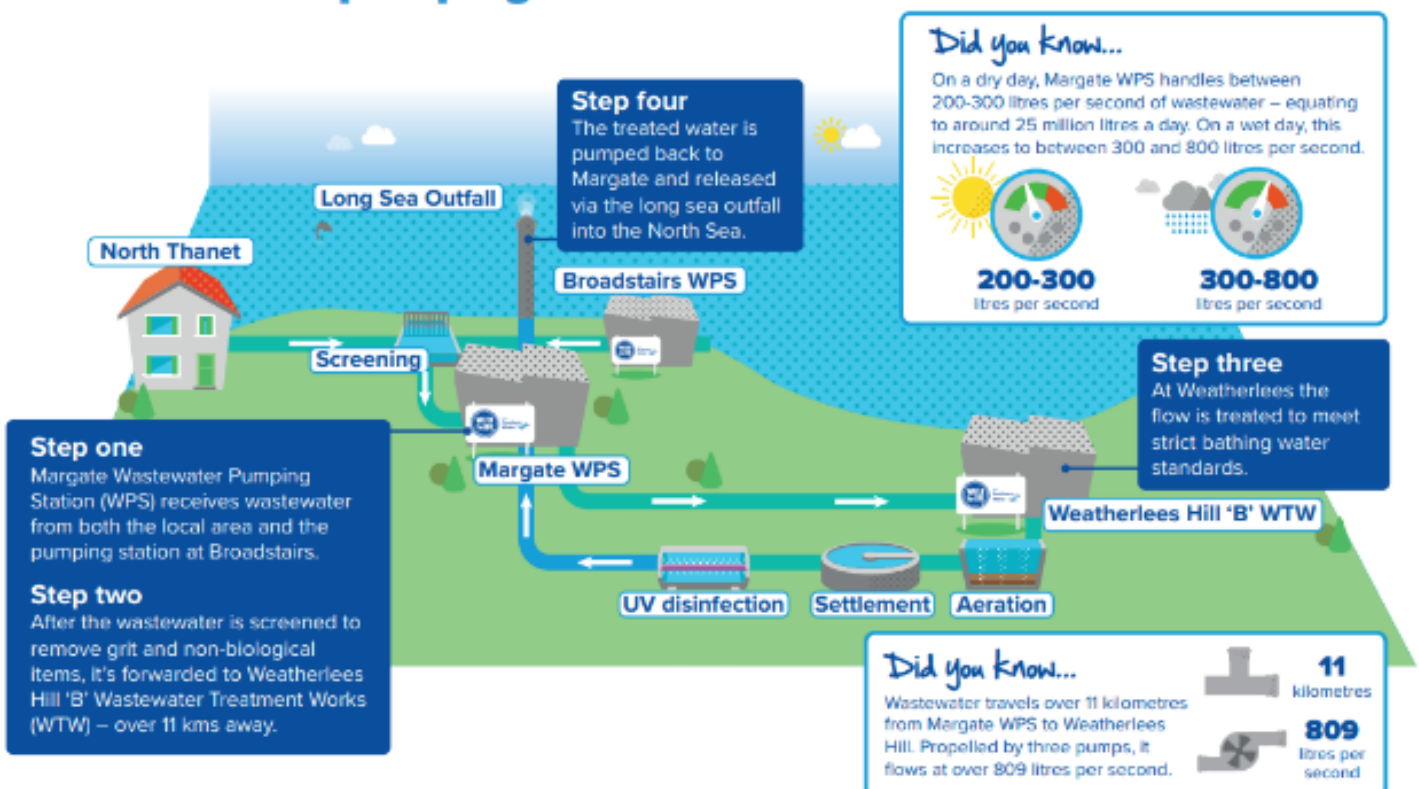


Many parts of the local sewer system were laid in hand-dug tunnels over a hundred years ago, recently upgraded as part of a **£100 million (15 year) programme**.



Since 2014, we've **spent over £11 million** improving and upgrading our pumping stations at Margate and Broadstairs and our treatment facilities at Weatherlees Hill.

## What does this pumping station do?



# What happens during a storm?



from Southern Water. 



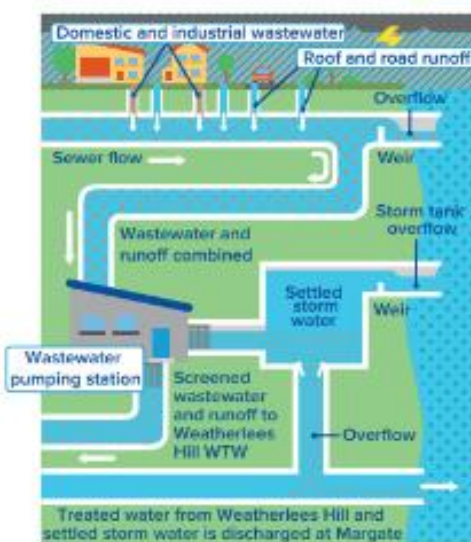
## No rainfall or small showers

During dry weather the flow of wastewater from domestic and industrial properties is treated at the wastewater treatment works and then released into rivers or the sea.



## Heavy showers

In wet weather, rain runoff is combined with wastewater in the sewer. Any water that arrives too quickly to be treated straight-away is stored in a large storm system, which includes a 8,000m<sup>3</sup> tank that runs from the works to The Ridings, plus a 30 metre-deep tank that can hold up to 4,000m<sup>3</sup> of stormwater.



## Severe storm

Although this storage is about as big as 10 double-decker buses, it can fill up in just 15 minutes during a heavy storm.

If the storage becomes full, the screened water is released into the sea through the storm overflow. This control mechanism is designed to prevent water backing-up in the system and flooding homes and businesses. This is legally permitted and monitored closely by the Environment Agency.





from  
Southern  
Water. 

# What causes sewer problems?

Over the years, a combination of local development, rapid population growth and the impact of climate change have added significant pressure to the sewer network.

## Wipes block pipes

Every wipe, tissue or sanitary product flushed down the loo could block your pipes and cause flooding in homes and damage the environment.



### Remember the 3ps

Only flush toilet paper, pee and poo down the loo. Everything else goes in the bin. Use nappy sacks for items that might smell.



### Clear your plates

Scrape any leftover food or grease and fat residue from plates, pans or cooking utensils into the bin.

## You wouldn't flush a carrier bag...

Unflushables are not just harmful to your pipes. Many of them contain large amounts of plastic that can cause pollution to seas and rivers, harming wildlife.

One sanitary pad contains as much plastic as **five carrier bags**



Many wipes are made of **90% plastic**



**1 million** marine animals are killed by plastic pollution each year



## Improving Margate WPS

2008



The pumping station was upgraded so that grit and everything non-biological could be removed from wastewater to prevent sewer blockages that can damage property and cause harm to the environment.

**At Margate, these items fill two skips every week.**

2013



Between 2013 and 2020, Southern Water invested **£15 million** in the pumping station – including replacing or upgrading pumps, screens, tanks and control systems – with a **further £5.5 million to be invested between 2021 and 2025.**

The resilience of Broadstairs WPS has also been increased by the installation of new pumps.

2020



**Southern Water has set an ambitious target to reduce pollution incidents to zero by 2040.**

In 2019–20, 434 pollution incidents occurred across the region. By 2025, the aim is to reduce this to fewer than 80.

We're also adopting a new approach to plan for the future of drainage, wastewater and environmental water quality. As part of this, we're currently developing 11 Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans across our entire region. These long-term plans span more than 25 years and will provide an opportunity to improve water quality and drainage systems and will reduce flooding and pollution.

The future



# How we're tackling storm overflows



We have set up a Storm Overflows Task Force to take action and help us to reduce the use of storm overflows in our area. **We have set ourselves an ambitious target of reducing the use of storm overflows by 80% by 2030.**

We believe that the most efficient, cost-effective and environmentally beneficial way to eliminate the use of storm overflows is to reduce and/or slow the amount of surface water which enters sewers during a storm.

To do this, we want to work in collaboration with partners, across all industries, to develop new and innovative solutions and delivery routes to reduce pressure on the sewer network and the use of storm overflows. Work is already under way in five areas across our region in Deal, Margate and Swalecliffe in Kent, Pan Parishes in North Hampshire, and on the Isle of Wight, delivering change for customers now.

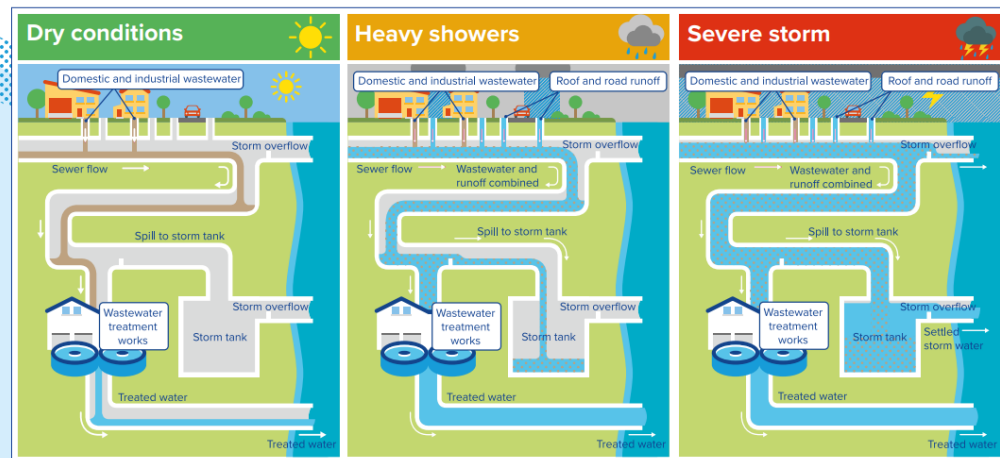
During heavy rain, local sewer networks can struggle to cope with the amount of water entering pipes and storage tanks. When they fill up, we use pressure relief valves built into the network, known as storm overflows, to stop homes and businesses from flooding. These overflows release excess water through outfalls into rivers and the sea.

Storm overflows are part of the design of the sewers and are regulated by the Environment Agency. They're used in areas where the sewers were built to carry both wastewater, from homes and businesses, and rainwater from roofs, gardens and roads.

## How do storm overflows work?

Climate change and urban creep are adding more pressure to our networks. As global temperatures rise, the number of extreme rainfall days is increasing.

**Did you know?** Storm overflows typically occur during periods of heavy rainfall and can be around **95%** rainwater.



▲ How sewers are impacted by different types of weather

## How often are storm overflows used?

- We own and maintain around 1,000 outfalls from storm overflows across our region.
- We use monitors to tell us when a storm overflow has been in use.
- We display our storm release data in near real-time via our Beachbuoy service.



▲ Beachbuoy

## Providing a system fit for the future

To reduce the amount, or slow the flow, of surface water entering the sewer during a storm, we need to:

- Remove and/or slow the flow of rainwater
- Make better use of existing pipes, storage tanks and pumps, or
- Build bigger pipes, storage tanks and pumps.

We want to prioritise sustainable area-specific and nature-based solutions such as ponds and wetlands, soakaways and rain gardens, before increasing storage.



▲ There are many ways to slow the flow of rainwater into sewers

**“ We know that with good targeting, optimisation and partial removal of rainwater significant reduction in overflow use can be achieved. ”**

## Water run-off for a development of 10,000 homes:

Based on 900mm of rainfall per year

