



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

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Baroness Bakewell of
Hardington Mandeville MBE

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-
on-Trent

28 September 2023

Dear Baroness Bakewell and Baroness Anderson

It has come to my attention that during the debate on the Environmental Civil Sanctions (England) (Amendment) Order 2023 on Wednesday 13th September I inadvertently misspoke. When speaking about storm overflows I said that “we are eliminating all storm overflows” and I want to be clear that we are reducing storm overflow discharges.

Our Plan for Water, published in April this year, marks a step-change in how we manage our waters, for water quality and water resources. As part of this over £2.2 billion of new, accelerated investment will be directed into vital infrastructure to improve water quality and secure futures supplies, with £1.7 billion of this being used to tackle storm overflows.

We have increased the number of storm overflows monitored across the network from 7% in 2010 to 91% now monitored, and we will reach 100% by the end of this year. We have also been consistently clear with water companies that they must act rapidly to prioritise action on sewage overflow pollution. The Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan sets stringent targets on water companies for the reduction of storm overflows. This means that by 2050, discharges can only happen if there is unusually heavy rain, and if there is no immediate adverse effect to the local environment.

Following consultation in summer 2023, the Government published an expanded Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan on 25 September 2023 to cover coastal and estuarine overflows. This Plan will drive the largest infrastructure programme in water company history – estimated at £60 billion capital investment over 25 years.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Benyon.

THE RT HON LORD BENYON