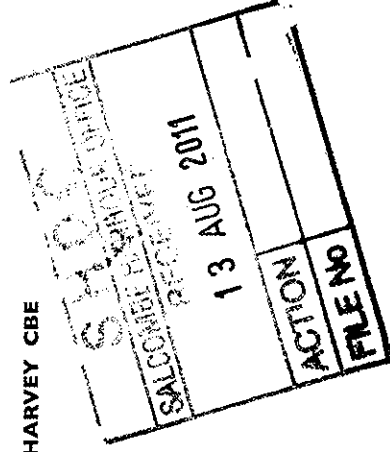


Peninsula House, Rydon Lane, Exeter, Devon, England EX2 7HR Telephone 01392 443004 Fax 01392 444175

FROM THE CHAIRMAN - KEN HARVEY CBE

Cllr J Carter  
Chairman Salcombe Harbour Board  
Salcombe Harbour Office  
Whitestrاند  
Salcombe  
Devon  
TQ8 8BU



11 August 2011

Dear Cllr Carter

## **SALCOMBE SOUTH SANDS BATHING WATER, BEACH LIVE & ESTUARINE WATER QUALITY**

Thank you for your letter of 13 July 2011 regarding the above issues. Please be assured that I recognise the concerns you have raised and believe that my comments below demonstrate that South West Water are progressing those aspects that are relevant to the Company.

### **Beach Live Trial**

As you will be aware, "Beach Live" is part of a national trial under the sponsorship of the Defra Cleaner Seas Forum. The trial is assessing the wider public benefits of advising beach users, in as close to real time as possible, as to the potential risks to bathing water quality, of which storm overflows are only one. This is being undertaken in preparation for the wider implementation of the new Bathing Waters Directive, which requires such public advice from 2015 onwards.

The trial, initially pioneered in the South West, has been recognised nationally and South West Water and the other stakeholders involved have been praised by the Environment Minister for this innovative work. I would therefore also like to express my thanks to both the Salcombe Harbour Board and South Hams District Council for their support during the trial at South Sands beach.

Whilst appreciating the environmental quality concerns you raise in your letter, it is important to recognise that storm overflows are an essential part of the sewerage network. They are designed to protect houses and property from flooding during wet weather. Many have already been improved (by the provision of increased storm storage and better screening) through the Clean Sweep Programme, in order to protect bathing water quality and their operation is regulated by the Environment Agency, through environmental permits, which prescribe the volumes of storage and levels of screening required. To date over £2b has been invested

around the Devon and Cornwall coast to enable the region to boast some of the finest bathing waters in Europe. As you are aware, Salcombe already benefits from ultra violet disinfection and storm storage protection as part of this investment.

Given the above, the recording of overflow events at bathing waters is a recent requirement enabled by installing event and duration monitoring (EDM) equipment. This equipment was initially installed to facilitate audited end of season reporting to the Environment Agency of any significant spill events. This means that although the spill events were to be reported retrospectively, the information would still be available publicly. However, what South West Water is now doing, is extending the application of the EDM technology to provide automated 'real time' spill warnings. It is for this development of the reporting system, that we have been recognised.

Unfortunately using raw data derived straight from site is, in a number of locations, subject to some equipment limitations. This can result in some false spill events being reported and one of the Salcombe overflows is affected in this way. Clearly wherever possible we are analysing the data and advising relevant stakeholders as promptly as possible so that, if a spill event turns out not to be real, public warnings are not posted. Obviously the company does not wish for false spill events to be notified and we are working with the Environment Agency to understand the causes and wherever possible resolve them. Mobile telecommunications signals and individual asset locations however sometimes combine to make this a challenge at times.

Whilst your feed back and comments are welcome, I would like to re-emphasise that this is a trial and it is worth noting that Defra, as part of its assessment of the trial, is looking for feedback from all interested parties on its usefulness and limitations. In conjunction with other partners in the Cleaner Seas Forum, Defra are therefore developing an electronic feedback questionnaire for the public which will be supported on their web site and the link circulated to all relevant stakeholders once completed. I will endeavour to ensure that once established, the link is made available to your Board, so that they can seek views on the matters covered in the questionnaire.

Furthermore I fully expect the trial to be discussed at the regional Beach Liaison Group meeting planned for the autumn and would welcome your organisations input and attendance.

### **Estuarine Water Quality**

I note your letter also touches on algal blooms in the estuary and I am happy to update you on the work undertaken in this area.

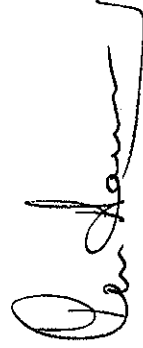
In 2007, the Company funded investigations, promoted by Natural England and the Environment Agency, into the sources of nutrients in the upper estuary and their impact on macro- algal mats and in turn their impact on the Salcombe and Kingsbridge Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Our investigation focused on the potential effects that discharges into the upper estuary and in particular the Kingsbridge sewerage system and

Gerston sewage treatment works (STW) were having. This survey work also placed the potential effects of these discharges in the wider context of other diffuse pollution sources prevailing in the catchment.

The outcome of these studies concluded that there was a need to provide for the seasonal removal of nitrogen at Gerston STW, whilst recognising that there remained significant diffuse sources in the catchment not related to our assets. This requirement will benefit water quality by reducing nutrient inputs and therefore reduce the potential for algal mats to develop. The agreed implementation date for the scheme is 31 March 2015 and the funding for these improvements is in place.

I hope the above information has helped clarify the position and highlighted the wider benefits of both our participation in the "Beach Live" trial and our future investment plans for improving the wider estuarine water quality.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Harvey', written in a cursive style.

Ken Harvey  
Chairman