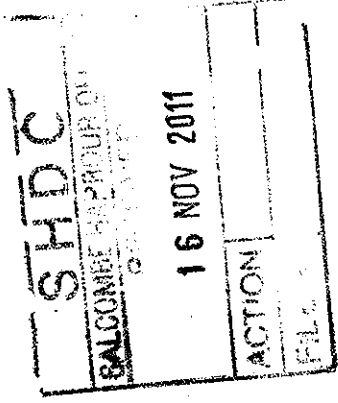


FROM THE CHAIRMAN - KEN HARVEY CBE

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



14 November 2011

Dear Cllr Carter

SALCOMBE SOUTH SANDS BATHING WATER, BEACHLIVE & ESTUARINE WATER QUALITY

Further to your letter of the 27 October 2011, I am grateful that the harbour board is encouraged by both the improvements proposed at Gerston Sewage Treatment Works (STW) and our continued support for wider environmental schemes around the estuary. We hope these initiatives will continue to help deliver water quality benefits into the future.

I am sorry to hear about your further concerns and I note your comments in respect of the BeachLive notifications. I have outlined below the discussions we have had with both South Hams District Council (SHDC) and the Environment Agency (EA) on this issue.

Through the development of the EA bathing water profiles, required under the revised bathing waters directive, three combined storm overflows were identified as potentially impacting on the bathing water quality at South Sands. These were Quillets, South Sands pumping station and Malborough Village pumping station. All three overflows have had event and duration monitoring equipment installed as a requirement under the revised directive. This equipment records the start and stop times for overflow events.

As part of BeachLive we developed criteria with the EA by which we could assess how long a discharge would have to operate for before it potentially affected bathing water quality. We then used this criteria and the event and duration data and recorded signals from the sites to generate the BeachLive emails.

In order to ensure that risks to the public are minimised, potentially significant overflow events are reported directly from site with no audit check to make the information available as close to real time as possible. It is for this reason that the emails have disclaimers in respect of the final audited reporting of overflow events.

We have reviewed the Salcombe data, I am pleased to report that South Sands pumping station and Malborough Village pumping station did not spill during the bathing season. Furthermore a review of the 9 reported events up to the 18 August 2011 from Quillets overflow, has also confirmed that all of these events were due to spikes. These were caused by 'electronic noise' and the way in which the data was recorded on site. Consequently we do not believe that they were real overflow events. Given this we reviewed the configuration and reporting criteria at Quillets overflow and agreed improvements with the EA. Subsequently no further significant spill events occurred through the rest of the bathing season.

Clearly we fully appreciate and share the Harbour Boards' concern regarding the risks to bathing water quality and are grateful that you recognise that storm overflows are an essential component of the sewerage system (for the protection of homes and property from flooding). However it is also important to recognise that storm overflows are not the only risk to bathing and stream water quality with diffuse agricultural and urban drainage, private discharges and illegal connections to surface water drains also contributing to potential risks.

Given the above it is important to note that there are no bacteriological standards for stream water quality (only bathing waters) and that background conditions will mean that some risk will always be present. It is for this reason that streams in Cornwall are permanently signed to advise against playing in them. It might also be worth noting that the EA did not monitor Combe Stream in 2011 as they do not consider it a significant risk to bathing water quality.

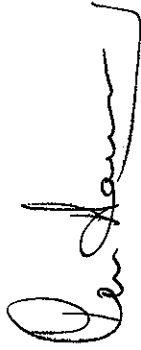
As to future improvements this would be driven by the EA through their assessment of the likely compliance of South Sands under the revised bathing waters directive. The new directive sets four standards 'poor', 'sufficient', 'good' and 'excellent'. Based on the 2008-11 data the EA indicated that South Sands is likely to be classified as 'good' under the new standards. The Governments target for 2015 for all bathing waters is the 'sufficient' standard. Consequently further improvements are unlikely unless there is a significant negative shift in the likely compliance of South Sands bathing water with the future standards.

In light of the above we are pleased to report that Defra have confirmed that South Sands bathing water has met the UK guideline (excellent) standards again this year 2011, with only one sample (out of 20) marginally exceeding the guideline standard. Consequently water quality should not be a limiting factor for any application for Blue Flag status for the 2012 season.

I hope that the information above fully qualifies any concerns you may have had in respect of the performance of our assets and bathing water quality at South Sands. Once again I would like to extend my thanks for your co-operation in the BeachLive trial. Your feedback on the processes involved have helped shape the future development of BeachLive which South West Water is committed to expanding in 2012.

I trust this reply has been helpful to you and in keeping with South West Water's correspondence guidelines, I have enclosed Our Customer Promise and Complaints and Compliments leaflets which explain the standards of service we aim to provide. If I can be of any further help in this matter please do not hesitate to contact me. For all general enquiries, please call our free Helpline on 0800 169 1144.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Adams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.