South West Water

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Date: 16 April 2026 Our Reference: EIR26105

Sent via e-mail.

Dear Laura Storey,

Request for Environmental Information

Thank you for your request for information, received by South West Water ("**SWW**") on 13 March 2026, which is included below for reference.

The information you have requested is covered by the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 ("**the Regulations**") and SWW has a duty to make environmental information that it holds available on request, unless one of the exceptions contained within the Regulations applies.

SWW's Response

Sewage Treatment Capacity

Questions 1, 2 and 3: ***What is the design capacity of the sewage treatment works serving Widegates, and what population equivalent was it originally designed to accommodate? What is the current estimated load on the works in terms of population equivalent and flow levels? Has South West Water identified the works as operating at or close to capacity, particularly during peak periods or heavy rainfall?***

Calculations show that Widegates Sewage Treatment Works ("**STW**") has a design capacity PE of 548, to comply with SWW's Technical Standards 405 for the required permit of 20 mg/l BOD & 30 mg/l suspended solids.

The current Population Estimate ("**PE**") at Widegates STW is estimated to be 409, increasing to 446 when including peak tourists.

Regulatory performance over the last 12 months has shown that Widegates STW has surplus capacity to meet current demands and is compliant with regulatory permits.

There are two distinct types of capacity of a sewage treatment works; **hydraulic** capacity and **biological** (or process) capacity. The former being the ability to handle the incoming flow rates and the second being the ability to effectively treat the load contained in that flow in order to achieve our final effluent parameters that are set in the Environment Agency discharge permit site-by-site.

As the treatment process is biological, the design standards include a buffer to performance, and the treatment ability will therefore exceed the original design horizon. There are many datasets we consider when assessing the current capacity of a treatment works and its ability to handle additional flow and loads from development.

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If improvements are required to the receiving water quality, then the parameters in the discharge permit may be tightened and an improvement scheme will be undertaken in agreement with the Environment Agency.

We can confirm that the hydraulic capacity of Widegates STW has been identified as operating close to capacity. Therefore, improvements are currently scheduled to address this within Asset Management Period 10 (2035-2040) ("**AMP 10**").

The Storm Overflow operates in heavy rain but only for short durations. The site can treat up to 10l/s and has good compliance treating this figure during heavy rainfall.

With respect to discharge quality and sampling, there has only been one exceedance in the past 10 years at Widegates STW. Treated sewage discharges tend to be clear visually. All regulatory sampling data is available from the government website https://environment.data.gov.uk/water-quality, using the Sample Point ID for Widegates STW which is: SW-81310396.

Questions 4, 5 and 6: ***It has been reported that, in previous years, tankers have been used to remove sewage from the system. How frequently has this occurred? Under what circumstances has this measure been required? Does South West Water consider tanker removal to be a temporary contingency measure or an indication of insufficient treatment capacity?***

Please find the number of times tankers have been deployed to Widegates STW per year from 2020 to 2026 detailed below to remove sludge from the site.

Year	Tankers Per Year
2020	46
2021	10
2022	10
2023	170
2024	598
2025	11
2026	1

Widegates STW has routine tankering throughout the year to transfer the sludge produced at the site to a sludge treatment centre for treatment. A pile cloth filter was installed during 2024 which incurred increased tanker movements to maintain compliance during the installation period. Tankering may also be increased during routine maintenance or cleaning of assets on site.

Questions 7 and 8: What upgrades, operational changes, or investment are planned to increase sewage treatment capacity serving Widegates? What is the anticipated timeline for any such improvements, and what additional capacity will they provide?

We can confirm that a scheme to reduce Storm Overflow discharges within Widegates is currently planned for AMP 10, by 2040. This will aim to achieve no more than 10 spills per year on average. However, these improvements are unlikely to increase the capacity at the site.

Discharges and Environmental Protection

Question 9: ***Have there been any recent incidents of untreated or partially treated sewage being discharged into local watercourses in or near Widegates?***

Please find the requested data enclosed with this letter. We would like to note that this is in relation to March 2026.

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Question 10: ***Under what circumstances would the wastewater system serving the village discharge untreated sewage (for example through storm overflow events)?***

The circumstances for discharge can be found within an asset's Permit, which is issued by the Environment Agency. These are publicly available, and can be found here: Results of searching Discharges to Water and Groundwater.

The EA Permit number for Widegates STW is SWWA 1003.

Question 11: ***How many storm overflow activations associated with the Widegates system have been recorded in the past three to five years?***

We can confirm that all Event Duration Monitor ("**EDM**") data for our Storm Overflows ("**SOs**") is publicly available and published on our website. This shows all storm overflow activations for our assets. To access this data, please follow here: Storm overflow map | WaterFit Live | South West Water

Once you are on the page, please scroll down to the section called "EDM Start/Stop Data". There you will find spreadsheets containing the EDM start/stop data from 2020, as well as information about the way we collect this data. Once you have opened the desired spreadsheet, you can utilise the filter function to narrow the data to your chosen location(s).

Please also refer to WaterFit Live via our website which shares real-time data regarding SWW's SOs activations.

Question 12*: What monitoring systems are in place to record and report such discharges?*

To monitor our discharges, we use FPF (Flow Passed Forward) and EDMs. The FPF monitoring ensures we treat the right volume of sewage before overflowing to storm, which is recorded by an EDM monitor.

More detail can be found in the "*Important Information about EDM Start/Stop data*" section, here: Storm overflow map | WaterFit Live | South West Water.

Question 13*: What actions is South West Water taking to reduce or eliminate discharges of untreated sewage into local watercourses in this area?*

The current assessments and metrics do not indicate an immediate need for infiltration reduction at Widegates, nor is the area considered to be in immediate need to reducing discharges. This is measured by Dry Weather Flow Compliance, Dry Day Spills, whether the site is considered a high spiller, and IMAX assessments for infiltration reduction.

As detailed above, Widegates is currently intended to be included in the scheme for improvements to reduce Storm Overflow discharges within AMP 10, by 2040.

Question 14: ***Are there any environmental improvement schemes planned within this catchment as part of South West Water's current or forthcoming investment programmes?***

We can confirm that there are no current plans for improvements at the treatment works for nutrients (P) or Sanitary Treatment at Widegates STW in the Water Industry National Environment Programme ("**WINEP**"). We can also confirm that there is no Upstream Thinking ("**UST**"), or catchment management or Green First interventions to date in the Looe catchment.

Water Supply and Pressure

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Question 15: ***Residents in some parts of Widegates report experiencing poor water pressure. Is South West Water aware of these issues, and what investigations have been undertaken to identify their causes?***

There maybe short periods of low pressure if there is a burst water main or a power outage in the area. However, SWW is not aware of any persistent low pressures in this area. If the details of the low pressure can be provided, our Water Services Team have confirmed they would be more than happy to investigate.

Question 16: ***Are there known constraints within the local water distribution network that could affect pressure or reliability of supply?***

The village of Widegates is supplied by a pumping station which operates 24/7. If there are any issues with this pumping station there would be a risk of low pressures and water supply issues.

Question 17: ***What works or upgrades are planned or under consideration to improve water pressure in the affected areas?***

There are currently no works or upgrades planned or under consideration. Should the demand in the area change, the pumping station that supplies the area will need to be upgraded. SWW would deliver the upgrade of the pumping station before the new housing development exceeded the capacity of the existing pumps that supply the area.

Question 18: ***Is the existing water supply infrastructure sufficient to meet peak demand, particularly during the summer months?***

The water supply system that supplies Widegates has sufficient capacity to supply the current summer demands in the area.

Future Development and Infrastructure Planning

Question 19: ***What assessment has South West Water made of the potential impact of future housing development in Widegates on water supply and wastewater treatment infrastructure?***

SWW is currently assessing the Widegates area as part of the Cornwall council local plan which is currently being developed by the Council. This assessment will establish how much growth can go ahead before any upgrades to the water and wastewater systems are constructed, and any proposed upgrades would be included in the SWW business plan that would need to be approved by Ofwat.

Question 20: ***Does the current network and treatment capacity have sufficient headroom to accommodate projected population growth?***

The wastewater network has sufficient capacity to deal with the foul flows proposed from projected population growth.

Regarding the wastewater treatment, SWW received a predevelopment application for a total of 51 houses within the catchment. We have commented that the works would need to be upgraded during Asset Management Period 9 (2030 to 2035) to accommodate the high potential population increase of 35%.

Question 21: ***If additional capacity is required, what infrastructure upgrades would be necessary and how would these be funded?***

For the Widegates area, the wastewater network has sufficient capacity to deal with the foul flows proposed from project population growth. However, if all the proposed growth goes ahead in the

Widegates area, the potable water pumping station that supplies the area will need to be upgraded. SWW would carry out these upgrades if and when required under its statutory duties to meet the new housing requirements.

Upgrades to the water and wastewater networks that are required to service new housing developments are funded through the Infrastructure Charge which housing developers pay per new connection. Upgrades to treatment works are funded through the SWW's business plan which is submitted to and approved by Ofwat every 5 years.

Question 22: ***How does South West Water engage with local planning authorities to ensure that new development is supported by adequate water and wastewater infrastructure?***

Whilst SWW is not a statutory consultee to the planning process we do have regular engagement with Local Planning Authorities to advise whether we have capacity within our wastewater and drinking water networks to support the proposed development growth.

SWW, as a Statutory Undertaker, has a responsibility to facilitate new development growth and therefore we have developed long term strategic investment plans within our Drainage & Wastewater Management Plans ("**DWMP**") and Water Resources Management Plans ("**WRMP**") which include future growth requirements as dictated within Local Authority planning proposals.

SWW works closely with Local Planning authorities ("**LPAs**") as they develop their plans to ensure new housing developments will be supplied with sufficient water and wastewater services. If capacity is not available at the time the planning application is made, we work to find solutions, which might require additional investment to be included within our own capital delivery plans. We engage proactively with LPAs on their ongoing work to support the government's commitment to build new homes.

Question 23: ***Are there any long-term investment plans that include improvements relevant to the Widegates area?***

There are no current requirements for investment in the Widegates area. However, SWW has a team that reviews and assesses Local Plan documents to understand the impact of medium and long-term growth on our water supplies, water and wastewater networks, and wastewater treatment works.

In addition to this, we have to develop and maintain strategic planning documents relating to water – the WRMP, and wastewater – the DWMP. Both documents look at the long-term 25+ year strategy and consider a range of scenarios, including the impact of climate change. These plans ensure there is capacity for current and future demands for the Widegates area.

In the shorter-term, we assess planning applications and a range of enquiries from developers, specific to sites, and carry out engineering assessments to understand impact on the existing network and any upgrades required. Where there is detriment to the existing service, we will endeavour to identify this to the planners in our responses to planning applications, such that, where appropriate, conditions may be included in any permissions.

Your rights under the Regulations

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of receipt of this response and should be addressed to our Group Deputy General Counsel who can be contacted by e-mail on EIRinternalreviews@southwestwater.co.uk.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of an internal review, you may complain to the Information Commissioner here.

Kind regards

South West Water

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Your Request:

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5. *Under what circumstances has this measure been required?*
6. *Does South West Water consider tanker removal to be a temporary contingency measure or an indication of insufficient treatment capacity?*
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8. *What is the anticipated timeline for any such improvements, and what additional capacity will they provide?*

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10. *Under what circumstances would the wastewater system serving the village discharge untreated sewage (for example through storm overflow events)?*
11. *How many storm overflow activations associated with the Widegates system have been recorded in the past three to five years?*
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14. *Are there any environmental improvement schemes planned within this catchment as part of South West Water's current or forthcoming investment programmes?*

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