



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Emma Hardy MP
**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for
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10 April 2025

Dear Clean Water Alliance,

Thank you for your continued commitment and tireless advocacy in cleaning up our waterways. Your passion and persistence have helped keep water security and river health on the national agenda, and we value the important role you play in holding governments to account.

We share your commitment. Ensuring clean, secure and sustainable water resources has been one of our top priorities. That's why we've taken decisive action to improve the health of our rivers, lakes and seas, invest in critical water infrastructure, and deliver reforms that put long-term water security and environmental outcomes front and centre.

This Government has inherited a deeply flawed water system, one that in 2023 discharged record levels of sewage into our rivers, lakes and seas. For too long, customers' money has been spent on unjustified bonuses and shareholder payouts, rather than investing in new infrastructure.

This letter outlines the key actions we have delivered to date, as well as the outcomes they are achieving for communities, industry, and the environment.

In his first week in office, the Secretary of State announced that funding for vital infrastructure investment will be ringfenced and can only be spent on upgrades benefiting customers and the environment. Ofwat will also ensure that when money for investment is not spent, companies refund customers, with money never allowed to be diverted for bonuses, dividends or salary increases

The Government has also taken immediate and substantial action to address the performance of water companies who are not delivering for the environment or their customers, with the Water (Special Measures) Act providing the most significant increase in enforcement powers to the regulators in a decade, giving them the teeth they need to take tougher action against water companies.

We are also continuing to assess the wider regulatory context, and where necessary take action to strengthen the regulatory framework.

That is why, in October last year, the UK and Welsh governments launched an independent commission, led by Sir Jon Cunliffe and supported by expert advisors, to recommend reforms to reset the water sector regulatory system. On 27 February the Commission launched a wide-ranging Call for Evidence, which is open for views from all interested parties until 23 April. This will inform the Commission's recommendations to the UK and Welsh governments in June.

And finally, we have seen a record breaking £104 billion commitment from companies to invest across the sector to support development, drive economic growth, and improve environmental outcomes. This increased investment will support a 45% reduction in storm overflow spills (compared to 2021 levels) through upgrades to thousands of overflows, and it will improve water quality by upgrading over 1,700 wastewater treatment works. More than 15,000km of rivers will be improved or protected, while companies will also be required to reduce leakage by a further 17%. Nearly £8 billion will be allocated to securing future water supplies, including the development of nine new reservoirs, nine major water transfer schemes, and the installation of 10 million smart meters—together delivering an additional 374 million litres of water supply per day by 2030.

This is the beginning of the change we promised. Greater investment to restore pride in our waterways; to provide opportunities for sports and recreation in clean waters. We remain committed to working to ensure our water sector continues to deliver for people, communities and the environment.

Yours sincerely,

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

EMMA HARDY MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs