

The Environment Agency's land and water regulatory role in Dorset

Wessex Area covers catchments across Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire, plus some of Hants

Pollution incident response

Compliance activity across agricultural sector

Regulating water resources via abstraction licence compliance and enforcement

Regulation of water industry:

Water supply companies, like Bristol Water

Water and sewerage companies, like Wessex Water

- Permit compliance, pollution incidents,

- Environmental services

- Planning and investment

Wessex Water environmental performance annually reported via EPA. Currently a 4-star company, meaning 'industry-leading', which is typical of last 5 years or so.

Recent media headlines about combined sewer overflows and flow to full treatment highlight the level of interest government, the media and the public have in water company operations.

EA water quality monitoring

- Bathing Waters
 - 19 designated bathing waters in BCP area
 - Sampled from May to September
 - Samples analysed for *E. coli* and intestinal enterococci (faecal indicators)
 - Results published online
- Water Framework Directive surveillance
 - Monthly monitoring at 5 sites in Poole Harbour
 - Monitoring for nutrients (N and P) and phytoplankton
- No monitoring specific to shellfish water protected areas
- Assessments of bacteriological quality in shellfish water protected areas are made using data collected by BCP and provided by Cefas.

Water Company Planning – ‘who’s involved?’

- The **Price Review** (PR) is Ofwat's process of determining what Water Companies can charge their customers over the next five years based on the business plans Water Companies submit. This has been carried out in five-year cycles for more than 25 years.
- Part of a Water Company’s business plan includes environmental enhancements as well as capital maintenance, supply/demand balance etc. The environmental enhancements are detailed in a **Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP)**. This is a list of improvement schemes and investigations devised to rectify non-compliance with environmental legislation or national targets. Defra provide guidance on what should be included in this programme and schemes/investigations identified are costed by the Water Companies.
- The delivery phase of the WINEP is called the **Asset Management Plan (AMP)**, which is the 5 year period in which the WINEP is delivered by the Water Company.
- We are currently in the AMP7 delivery phase (2020-2025) and have just started the PR planning process (PR24) for the next AMP which will be delivered 2025-2030 and will be known as AMP8.
- Ofwat and the EA scrutinise these solutions and associated costs to ensure customers do not pay too much for the required improvements. Defra make the final decision on what should be included in the WINEP.
- The Final Determination is Ofwat's final report on what will be included in a Company’s business plan and how much money each water company needs to fund its business over the next five years.

The Environment Agency's role in Water Company Planning

Environment Agency Area teams take ownership of the Price Review process and AMP sign off with advice from Natural England as required and Water Companies manage delivery on the ground. This includes discussion regarding what to include in the WINEP provided there is both evidence and certainty that a Water Company is causing a problem.

Where there is an uncertainty that a Water Company discharge is the cause of a problem in the environment, an investigation can be included to understand the problem better. Investigation outcomes in one AMP period are often used to drive improvements in the subsequent AMP period.

The WINEP is in effect, a lengthy shopping list of environmental outcomes that will either lead to an improvement in the environment, prevent deterioration in the environment or investigate an environmental issue.

Where Water Companies have customer support which can be evidenced, they can include schemes or investigations that don't fit all of the criteria set by Defra.

Each scheme within the WINEP requires a new, modified or varied permit which is issued by the EA. The permits reflect the changes that have been made as a direct result of an AMP scheme.

Finally, the EA provide an annual update to Ofwat detailing which schemes/investigations have been signed off as complete for audit purposes.

BCP-specific investment and improvements to assets/discharges

There has been considerable Water Company investment over several AMP cycles driven by Shellfish Water Directive (and other Directive) standards to improve discharges to the harbour, as well as monitor and investigate Water Company impacts. These include:

- the application of UV disinfection at a number of STW's in the PH catchment which discharge directly to the harbour
- A reduction in storm spill frequency of intermittent discharges
- increased storm storage capacity in the upper catchment
- installation of event duration monitoring (EDM) at all intermittent discharges to the harbour

In the current AMP, Wessex Water is undertaking a comprehensive investigation of the performance of all Wessex Water assets (both continuous and intermittent) in the Poole Harbour catchment in order to identify those that may be impacting on the SFW's. This will include apportioning through modelling, Wessex Water assets' microbial load in the context of other (diffuse) sources in the catchment to understand the Water Company contribution to the failure to achieve the microbial standard. This investigation will also look at how the impacts of climate change are interacting with the impact of water company assets and identify any future improvements required.