

The Rt. Hon Philip Dunne MP
Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Nick Harris
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Highways England
Bridge House
1 Walnut Tree Close
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Dear Mr Dunne,

Environmental Audit Committee's water quality in rivers inquiry

Thank you for the opportunity to give oral evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee's inquiry into water quality in rivers on 23 June 2021. I hope my oral testimony is helpful to your consideration of this important subject.

At the session, I agreed to write to the Committee on several issues and I will be sending this to the Committee shortly. Since the session, I have reviewed the transcript and wanted to clarify one element of my testimony. In the discussion with Claudia Webbe MP we said:

Q.248 Claudia Webbe MP: "Could you tell us why there were no key performance indicators to improve water quality in the Highways Agency's latest business strategy?"

Nick Harris: "Water quality is a matter for the Environment Agency. We care very much about it. As one of England's largest landowners, we care hugely about both the environment and watercourses. We have a range of measures that we monitor. I will try to describe most of them. We know all the outfalls we have, and all the outfalls are assessed as to whether they are effectively mitigating the effect they are having on watercourses where they are discharging. We have, out of the 26,000 or so soakaways or outfalls from our roads, about 1,100 that are categorised as high risk. We monitor those on a monthly basis to understand the mitigation at those points..."

The monitoring I referred to relates to the number of outfalls in each risk category and how this is changing over time as improvements are made across the Strategic Road Network (SRN). A monthly Drainage Data Management System (DDMS) report states the number of risk category A (very high risk) to C (moderate risk) outfalls that have been addressed and are now category X (risk addressed i.e. they have either been mitigated, or verified as having no associated pollution risk). We do not routinely monitor water quality at each of the 26,401 outfalls across the SRN.

If the Committee would like further information on any of these points raised in this letter or any associated issues, please do get in touch.

I look forward to the Committee's report and recommendations.

Yours sincerely



Nick Harris
Acting CEO of Highways England