



Wildlife & Countryside Link
N101C Vox Studios
SE11 5JH

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

By email

12th August 2024

Dear Prime Minister,

Last week, it was announced that Thames Water, Yorkshire Water and Northumbrian Water will face £168 million in fines due to repeated illegal releases of sewage into our rivers.

This £168 million and any further penalties imposed as a result of Ofwat's investigation into illegal sewage discharges must be ring fenced for environmental improvement, to clean up this pollution and help recover our waterways for people and nature.

We welcomed your Government's announcement in July that water company funding for vital infrastructure investment will be ringfenced for upgrades that will benefit customers and the environment. Ringfencing penalties from Ofwat's investigation into illegal sewage discharges would further build on this commitment to clean up our rivers.

The penalties imposed by Ofwat should not be paid into general Treasury funds. Instead, they should be invested directly back into environmental and water quality improvement projects, through the existing Water Restoration Fund.

Water companies have failed to properly invest in and maintain their sewerage systems, leaving customers and wildlife to pay the price. The polluters must now pay to clean up their mess – we urge you to ringfence these fines for nature's recovery.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Benwell, CEO, Wildlife and Countryside Link

This letter is supported by the following organisations:

Angling Trust

Freshwater Habitats Trust

Friends of the Earth

Froglife

Institute of Fisheries Management

Marine Conservation Society

National Trust

Paddle UK

River Action

Surfers Against Sewage

Sustainability First

The Rivers Trust

The Wildlife Trusts

Waterwise

ZSL