# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Local authorities continue to put pressure on Southern Water

Local authorities across the south coast are continuing to put pressure on Southern Water in light of pollution and flooding concerns.

The Southern Water Stakeholder Group, initiated and co-ordinated by Wealden District Council and including representatives from more than 24 local authorities from Chichester to Folkestone, is also to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment calling on more resources for the Environment Agency to hold the water company to account.

At its recent meeting this week, the Stakeholder Group was joined by representatives from the Environment Agency - the regulator for water quality and the ecological health of rivers and coastal waters and which manages the risk of flooding.

Simon Moody, the Environment Agency's area director for Solent and South Downs, said the organisation is holding water companies – including Southern Water - to account to reduce pollution, tackle storm overflows and invest more of their profits into the environment.

Southern Water - responsible for waste water across the region and for drinking water in other parts of the south east - performs poorly in a national rating scheme with two stars out of four and has previously had to apologise for a catalogue of issues including flooding, sewage seeping into people's homes, gardens and roads, the ongoing problem of discharges into rivers and waterways and the inability to deal with additional development."

Some of the steps the water company says it has taken to alleviate flooding so far includes reducing storm overflows and pollutions and improving communications to keep customers regularly informed during water outages and flooding incidents.

It has also fitted pressure sensors to manholes across its network, which trigger when full – and this can also be reported by members of the public to an incident hotline.

Councillor Rachel Millward, said, “There has never been such public interest in an issue as there is over the pollution and flooding concerns we have here in the south east.

“We are all hugely concerned at the fact that Southern Water is ranked so poorly and has such a high number of pollution incidents. It is also concerning that cuts now mean that the Environment Agency’s enforcement team has only one regulatory offices to cover 100kms of coastline.

“It is fair to say that we are appalled and frustrated at the issues and concerns which lead back to Southern Water’s failings and will continue to work in partnership with other stakeholders to hold Southern Water to account.”

The next meeting of the Southern Water Stakeholder Group will be held early next year.

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