

Date: 14 July 2022

To: Lawrence Gosden, CEO of Southern Water

From: Charles Watson, Chairman, River Action

Subject: Southern Water sewage discharge in the New Forest National Park

Dear Mr Gosden,

I am writing as founder and chair of campaign group [River Action](#) regarding the sewage discharge crisis in the New Forest National Park. It was with deep concern that I have learnt from recently published Environment Agency data, in response to a Freedom of Information request, of the scale of Southern Water's sewage discharges into the Lymington and Beaulieu Rivers, the two principal river catchments of the New Forest National Park.

According to the [2022 TripAdvisor Travellers Choice Awards for Destinations](#), the New Forest has been voted the number one National Park in Europe and the tenth best National Park in the world. This summer tens of thousands of visitors will come to the New Forest to enjoy its many wonders. The Forest provides critically important habitat for its unique wildlife and the community's grazing ponies and cattle.

With over 50% of the National Park designated for its importance for nature, the New Forest is also an international ecological "jewel in the crown" for flora, fauna and fungi, hosting an estimated [2,700 species of fungi](#) and [15,000 species of insect](#) (two-thirds of the UK total). New Forest wetlands are a particularly important habitat for wildlife and biodiversity, and [significant public funds](#) have recently been invested in pioneering stream restoration work to improve the biodiversity and natural capital of rivers, streams, bogs, and valley mires.

It is therefore simply scandalous that last year raw sewage discharges into its two principal rivers could have taken place more than 250 times for almost 1,900 hours. In the case of the discharges from Lyndhurst Wastewater Treatment plant, the discharges go straight into the vulnerable headwaters of the Beaulieu River and its associated flood plain – all of which is a highly protected Site of Special Scientific Interest.

This desecration of this iconic nation park by Southern Water must end with immediate effect.

Please can you respond with details of the measures Southern Water is taking to remedy this unacceptable situation. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with yourselves to discuss the issues raised in this letter and the action Southern Water plans to take to tackle them.

Your sincerely,

Charles Watson

Chairman, River Action

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Co-signed by River Action Advisory Board

James Macpherson

George Monbiot

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