# Water sector overhaul urged to fix ‘deep-rooted’ failures and restore public trust



Britain's water sector is currently facing allegations of “deep-rooted, systemic” failures that necessitate comprehensive reform, according to an extensive review spearheaded by the Independent Water Commission. This initiative, commissioned by both the UK and Welsh governments, marks the most significant examination of the sector since its privatisation. The interim report, recently published, comes amidst rising public discontent regarding pollution, escalating bills, and excessive bonuses awarded to water company executives.

Sir Jon Cunliffe, who led the review, emphasised the complexity of the issues at hand, stating, "There is no simple, single change, no matter how radical, that will deliver the fundamental reset that is needed for the water sector." His findings pinpoint a trifecta of failures: inadequacies in governmental strategy and future planning, lapses in regulatory oversight aimed at safeguarding both consumers and the environment, and negligence by certain water companies and their owners in prioritising public interests over private gains. Cunliffe stressed the necessity of tackling these intertwined problems to rebuild public trust and ensure that the system is prepared for future challenges. He indicated that these efforts would likely require new legislation, highlighting a need for a more robust regulatory framework.

The review advocates for strengthening the role of Ofwat, the water regulator, proposing a shift towards a more supervisory approach to monitoring water firms. Additionally, it urges the Government to provide clearer, long-term guidance on the water system's future needs. Current legislation, according to the report, is in dire need of reviewing and rationalising, to meet both environmental and public demands more effectively.

Amidst this context, Giles Bristow, CEO of Surfers Against Sewage, expressed frustration over the report's findings, stating that while it conveys the dismal state of the privatised water system, it fails to propose far-reaching systemic solutions. Bristow highlighted the necessity for a paradigm shift towards prioritising public health and environmental protection over shareholder profit. He remarked, “Until it is replumbed to prioritise the public health and the environment over profit for investors, an angry public will continue to swim and surf in a deluge of sewage that is destroying our rivers, lakes and coastal waters.”

The urgency for reform resonates not only with environmental groups but also with government officials. Environment Secretary Steve Reed noted that he had commissioned this review as part of a “once in a generation” initiative to radically transform the water industry, underscoring the importance of the forthcoming final report, which is expected to be submitted later this summer. As public scrutiny and anger mount, it remains to be seen whether the anticipated recommendations will address the underlying issues effectively.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2063671/water-commission-sir-jon-cunliffe-sewage),
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2063671/water-commission-sir-jon-cunliffe-sewage), ,
* Paragraph 3 – ,

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2063671/water-commission-sir-jon-cunliffe-sewage> - Please view link - unable to able to access data