# Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water faces fierce backlash over record sewage spills and rising bills



Concerns surrounding the practices of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water have escalated sharply following a series of alarming revelations shared in the Senedd, pinpointing a crisis in their water quality management and the dire consequences for environmental health in Wales. Rhys ab Owen has issued a powerful critique of the company's lack of accountability after it faced a staggering £1.3 million fine for failing to monitor water quality at 300 sites, alongside over 800 violations. This harrowing disclosure is compounded by the shocking statistic that the company discharged raw sewage more than 118,000 times in the past year—equating to a sewage spill every five minutes, the highest rate among UK water firms.

"This is a deeply disturbing reality for constituents who are understandably outraged that such negligence coincides with exorbitant executive salaries," Mr. ab Owen declared, emphasizing the striking disconnect between ballooning household water bills—a 27% increase this year, which translates to an additional £86 per household—and the apparent absence of rigorous oversight. It is clear that customers are left to shoulder the financial burden as well as the environmental fallout from the company's operational failures.

Deputy First Minister Huw Irranca-Davies has suggested that Dŵr Cymru intends to invest £6 billion between 2025 and 2030 to improve environmental standards and combat nutrient pollution. However, with £1.2 billion earmarked for tangible improvements, one must question whether such promises hold any real weight, especially in light of the company’s recent legal troubles acknowledging its failures. While a commitment to reduce the ecological impact of storm overflows by 90% and eliminate them entirely by 2032 is laudable, it remains to be seen if these lofty goals will translate into meaningful action.

Janet Finch-Saunders, the Conservatives’ shadow climate secretary, expressed disbelief that such pressing issues continue to be debated in the Senedd. She spotlighted the controversial compensation of chief executive Peter Perry, who reportedly pocketed nearly £892,000 in total remuneration, including a bonus of £91,000 for 2024. This stark juxtaposition of excessive executive pay against a backdrop of ongoing pollution incidents raises urgent questions about the ethics of corporate governance within the water sector.

Compounding these woes, data from Natural Resources Wales reveals a troubling decline in Dŵr Cymru’s performance in 2023. They reported 107 sewage pollution incidents, with serious pollution events rising from five to seven, a notable increase that includes a significant sewer pipe burst into the River Taff. In light of these troubling statistics, NRW has urged Dŵr Cymru to bolster its performance metrics and address the fundamental causes behind these environmental breaches, especially as climate change amplifies the challenges faced by wastewater systems.

The company has attributed the recent surge in sewage spills—over 105,000 incidents reported in 2023, a shocking 68% rise from the previous year—to severe weather conditions that included ten named storms and relentless rainfall. Peter Perry, during a session with the Welsh Affairs Committee, acknowledged the ageing infrastructure and climate-related impediments but claimed that Dŵr Cymru has "nothing to hide." Nevertheless, plans for a £1.4 billion investment to upgrade the wastewater system must be rigorously scrutinized to determine if they will genuinely mitigate these environmental failures.

Despite these avowed commitments, the effectiveness of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water's proposed solutions remains in serious doubt. Experts from organizations such as Afonydd Cymru point out that while emergency overflow discharges may be legally permissible during severe weather, the company's assets reportedly meet legal limits only 1% of the time. This staggering statistic underscores the immediate need for comprehensive infrastructure improvements and adherence to environmental mandates.

As the situation continues to unfold, relentless pressure now rests on Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water to deliver on its promises. The public and environmental advocates are watching closely, eager to see whether the balance between corporate responsibility and environmental integrity can be restored, or whether it will succumb to the same failures that have marred the company’s reputation.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25184211.senedd-hears-welsh-water-customers-get-a-raw-deal/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-68683708> - In 2023, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water reported 105,943 sewage spills totaling over 916,000 hours, a 68% increase from the previous year. The company attributed this rise to exceptionally wet weather, noting that 2023 was one of the wettest on record in Wales, with 10 named storms and above-average rainfall in eight months. These spills accounted for about 20% of all discharge hours across Wales and England. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has called for improvements in performance and a reduction in spills. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-68683708?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2023-11-22/water-company-has-nothing-to-hide-over-sewage-spills-says-ceo> - Peter Parry, CEO of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, stated that the company has 'nothing to hide' regarding sewage spills. During a session with the Welsh Affairs Committee, he acknowledged the challenges posed by climate change and an aging sewer system, which contribute to increased spills. The company plans to invest £1.4 billion in its wastewater system over the decade to 2025 to address these issues. ([itv.com](https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2023-11-22/water-company-has-nothing-to-hide-over-sewage-spills-says-ceo?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.herald.wales/national-news/further-decline-in-dwr-cymru-performance-outlined-in-nrw-annual-review/> - Natural Resources Wales (NRW) reported a decline in Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water's performance in 2023, with the company responsible for 107 sewage pollution incidents. The number of serious pollution incidents rose from five to seven, including a major incident involving a burst sewer pipe on the River Taff at Pontypridd in March. NRW expressed concerns about a decline in water discharge permit compliance, dropping to 98%. ([herald.wales](https://www.herald.wales/national-news/further-decline-in-dwr-cymru-performance-outlined-in-nrw-annual-review/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://corporate.dwrcymru.com/en/news-media/2024/good-progress-made-on-reducing-phosphorous-in-rivers-as-dwr-cymru-spend-483m-to-improve-services> - Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water invested £483 million in 2023/24 to improve services and protect the environment. This included seven investment schemes totaling £53 million to enhance the quality of the River Wye, completed ahead of schedule. The company plans to invest £840 million in the five years to 2025 and a further £2 billion between 2025 and 2030 to improve its wastewater network and protect the environment. ([corporate.dwrcymru.com](https://corporate.dwrcymru.com/en/news-media/2024/good-progress-made-on-reducing-phosphorous-in-rivers-as-dwr-cymru-spend-483m-to-improve-services?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://northwalesriverstrust.org/news/welsh-water-publish-2024-storm-overflow-data> - Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water released its 2024 storm overflow data, showing 112,589 spills lasting 929,168 hours. This reflects a similar pattern to the previous year, with extreme weather events contributing to the spills. Afonydd Cymru analyzed the data and found that, while overflows are legally permitted during exceptional rainfall, many assets operated within legal limits only 1% of the time. The primary cause of high-spilling sites was linked to failures at wastewater treatment works. ([northwalesriverstrust.org](https://northwalesriverstrust.org/news/welsh-water-publish-2024-storm-overflow-data?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-67077510> - Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water admitted to illegally spilling untreated sewage at dozens of treatment plants for years. Analysis revealed that the Cardigan plant in west Wales had been spilling untreated sewage into an environmentally protected area near a rare dolphin habitat for at least a decade. The company acknowledged the issue and stated it is working to tackle the problems, with plans for a new £20 million treatment plant in Cardigan starting in 2025. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-67077510?utm_source=openai))