



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Dear Helen,

Thank you for your email of 19 October regarding your concerns about water treatment chemical shortages. I apologise for the delay in responding. Defra is currently dealing with high volumes of correspondence.

There is no shortage of chemicals required for wastewater treatment, and production levels remain normal.

The Environment Agency (EA) issued a Regulatory Position Statement (RPS) to enable Water and Sewerage Companies (WaSCs) to apply to the EA to reduce chemical dosing levels. This is intended to mitigate any delays resulting from the shortage of haulier drivers. The RPS - which expires on 31 December - is strictly time-limited, and there are robust conditions in place to mitigate risks to the environment.

No water company has made use of this position statement.

If any company wishes to make use of this RPS they must contact the EA beforehand and obtain written approval. This allows the EA to check and agree that the risk assessment has been completed correctly and the application of the RPS is appropriate.

To use the RPS companies must demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to comply with their discharge permit. They must also demonstrate a low environment impact.

In the worst case that the RPS is used, the effluent will still have secondary treatment which reduces the organic polluting load of the discharge. Most wastewater treatment works in England only have secondary treatment, and it is the main form of treatment for domestic sewage. No discharge of untreated sewage is allowed under the RPS.

The most sensitive and high-risk watercourses will not be affected, and any company planning to make use of this short-term measure must first agree its use with the EA, which always acts with the protection and enhancement of the environment in England as its primary goal.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact me about this important issue.



REBECCA POW MP