WATER21

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

24 August 2026

Ebley Meadows stormwater storage installation, Stroud.

£25 Million Sewage Scheme Fails to Prevent Further Pollution

Water21 is calling for an urgent review of how sewage storm overflows are managed in Stroud District after the Wallbridge Combined Sewer Overflow dangerously discharged again; despite Severn Trent's recent £25 million sewer upgrade programme. Publicly available spill records indicate further discharges occurred recently after completion of the scheme, raising questions about whether existing approaches are delivering the public health and environmental protection the public expect.

The investment included a major underground stormwater storage tank at Ebley Meadows, enlarged sewer infrastructure and associated works designed to capture overflows and sewage pollution in the River Frome.

Water21 believes the continuing pollution demonstrates the need to urgently reconsider complementary approaches, rather than relying solely on conventional underground infrastructure.

Cont./

RESULTS

Showing history from the last 3 months. To search outside of this timeframe, please select custom dates.

5 records found

Location ID **SVT00708** is owned by **Severn Trent Water** **Export as CSV**

Event type	Event Start	Event End	Duration (hours)
False spill	23:29 on 01.06.2026	23:30 on 01.06.2026	1 min
Sewage discharge	17:13 on 14.06.2026	19:36 on 14.06.2026	2 hrs and 23 mins
False spill	19:39 on 14.06.2026	19:40 on 14.06.2026	1 min
Sewage discharge	15:17 on 15.06.2026	10:19 on 19.06.2026	91 hrs and 02 mins
maintenance	09:36 on 24.07.2026	10:40 on 23.08.2026	

Surfers Against Sewage Live Sewage Overflow Map, data for 'CSO At Wallbridge Pumping Station' *https://www.sas.org.uk/sewage-map/*

Julian Jones, Director of Water21, said:

> "Everyone wants the same outcome: healthy rivers, safe communities and reliable infrastructure. The continued overflows suggest that we should be asking whether there are safer, more effective, viable and more economical ways of achieving those objectives.
>
> For over thirty-five years we have developed and demonstrated natural treatment systems capable of treating municipal and industrial wastewaters while recovering nutrients, improving biodiversity and reducing costs. These approaches are designed to work with the landscape rather than simply move problems downstream."

What makes the current situation significant is that Water21 agreed with Severn Trent an alternative catchment-wide strategy for Stroud more than twenty years ago. The proposal combined dispersed natural water treatment, composting of sewage, flood management, wetland creation and catchment restoration into a single integrated system developed in discussion with public bodies.

The proposal outlined how multiple small treatment wetlands, upstream water storage and natural engineering techniques could work together to control sewer surcharging, improve river water quality, moderate flooding and drought, while creating wider economic, environmental and farming benefits.

While infrastructure investment has continued, Water21 believes these natural engineering principles deserve urgent reconsideration. Cont./

Jones added:

> "This is not about criticising any single organisation. Water management is becoming increasingly challenging through climate change, urban growth and unsuited concrete infrastructure.
>
> The question is whether we should now revisit proven natural engineering solutions that were available years ago and assess how they can complement existing infrastructure to provide better long-term value."

Water21 is inviting local authorities, regulators, water companies, engineers and community organisations to review the historical proposals alongside current performance data and costs to explore whether these should help the next generation of municipal water management.

Background Information

What has happened?

* Following completion of a sewer improvement programme valued at approximately £25 million, sewage discharges have continued from the Wallbridge overflow.
* Public spill records show additional overflow events after completion of the scheme.

Why is this important?

The issue extends beyond one overflow.

It raises wider questions about:

* public health protection
* engagement with local expert knowledge
* long-term value for customers
* resilience under increasing rainfall
* future infrastructure investment
* nutrient recovery rather than waste disposal

Water21's Earlier Proposal

More than twenty years ago Water21 formalised a holistic strategy for Stroud that proposed:

* dispersed reed-bed treatment systems
* upstream flood storage for farming gains
* catchment restoration

* natural filtration
* nutrient recovery
* biodiversity enhancement
* lower capital and operating costs
* community-scale implementation

The novel proposal was developed for a partnership context involving organisations including Defra, the Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water and Stroud District Council.

Why revisit these ideas?

Many of the challenges identified in the original proposal remain relevant today:

* increasing storm intensity
* ageing sewer infrastructure
* combined sewer overflows
* river pollution
* flood risk
* farming in crisis
* pressure on public finances
* increasing austerity

The report argued that working with natural processes across the whole catchment could address most of these issues simultaneously.

Key Question

Rather than asking who is to blame, Water21 believes the more constructive question is:

Should locally derived natural engineering proposals now be revisited alongside conventional infrastructure to improve future performance and reduce long-term costs?

About Water21

Water21 is an independent non-profit environmental engineering organisation with over four decades of experience developing integrated approaches to water management, wastewater treatment, flood resilience and landscape restoration.

It was formalised in 1997 upon voluntary Agenda 21 principles.

Its work spans the UK and internationally, demonstrating practical solutions that combine engineering with ecological processes to improve public health & social equality, river quality and long-term resilience.

Notes for Editors

Available for interview

* Julian Jones
* Background on the original Stroud proposals
* Historic project documentation
* Technical explanation of dispersed wastewater treatment
* Flood management and catchment restoration
* Site photography

Supporting documents available

* Original Stroud catchment proposal (2003)
* Historical design drawings
* Cost estimates
* Case studies
* Current overflow records

Suggested headlines

* £25 Million Scheme Fails to Stop Further Sewage Discharges
* Were Better Solutions Already on the Table?
* Twenty-Year-Old Natural Engineering Proposal Could Hold Answers for Stroud
* Water21 Calls for Review of Sewage Strategy After Further Overflows
* Could Nature-Based Engineering Help Solve Stroud's Sewage Problem?

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