from Southern Water

Alison Griffiths MP
Member of Parliament for Bognor Regis and Littlehampton

By email: alison.griffiths.mp@parliament.uk Date: 16 September 2026

Dear Alison,

Commitments made to Bognor Regis and Littlehampton

When we met with you and local residents in April, the message we heard was clear. Many people in Bognor Regis feel let down by Southern Water and have lost confidence in our ability to protect the local environment and provide honest, transparent information about our performance.

I understand why people feel that way.

Residents are angry about the quality of their local bathing waters, sewage spills, and years of debate about the condition of local waterways. Too often, communities have heard promises about future improvements without seeing change happen quickly enough on the ground. Rebuilding trust will take more than words, meetings or reports. It will be judged by the results we deliver.

We are not asking residents to simply take our word that things are improving. We need to show the evidence, be transparent about where problems remain, and be prepared to answer difficult questions when progress is not happening quickly enough.

Since April, we have continued work to identify and remove sources of pollution, improve the performance of our wastewater network, progress major investment at Lidsey Wastewater Treatment Works, and better understand the factors affecting bathing water quality across Bognor Regis. There is still a great deal more to do, and I would not pretend otherwise, but I believe it is important that we share openly both the progress that has been made and the challenges that remain.

This update sets out that work in detail. It explains what we have done since our last meeting, what we have learned, what actions are underway, and what residents should expect to see happen next.

I am also pleased that we will be returning to Bognor Regis on 12 November. That meeting is not about presenting a finished story, because the work is far from finished. It is an opportunity for residents to challenge us directly on our performance, scrutinise our plans, and hold us to account for the commitments we are making.

I look forward to that discussion.

Bathing water quality

Challenge

Bathing water quality at Bognor Regis East and Aldwick remains a significant concern for residents.

The Environment Agency assesses bathing water quality using two types of bacteria, E. coli and Intestinal Enterococci. Classifications are based on a rolling four-year assessment, so individual elevated samples do not determine the final classification on their own.

So far during the 2026 bathing season, Bognor Regis Aldwick and Bognor Regis East have recorded three elevated samples. These results do not currently indicate a sustained deterioration, but they reinforce the need to continue investigating and addressing the causes of pollution.

The challenge is that there is no single source. Water quality can be affected by drainage misconnections, damaged sewers, surface water drainage and other sources across the wider catchment.

What we're doing about it

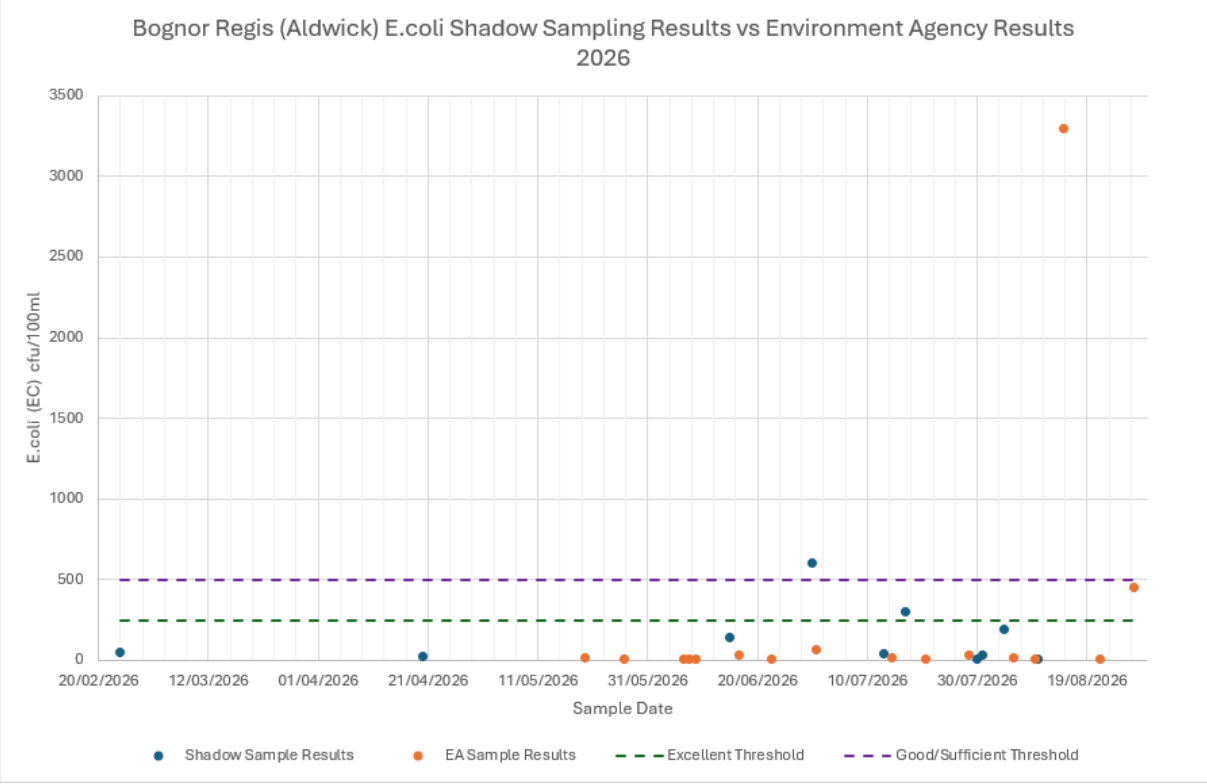
Alongside the Environment Agency's statutory monitoring, we have undertaken extensive additional shadow sampling to build a more detailed understanding of what is affecting water quality. The shadow sampling programme is intended to supplement and enhance our understanding of bathing water quality and does not undermine or replace the statutory monitoring undertaken by the Environment Agency.

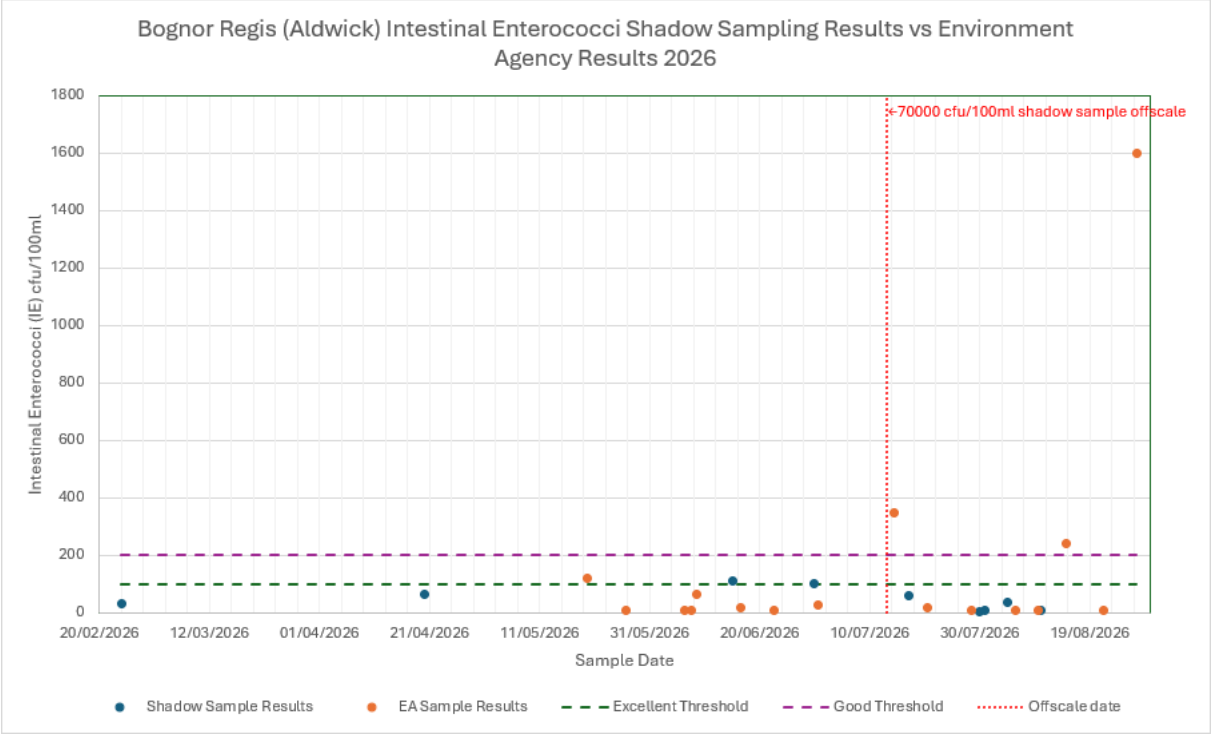
Below are tables that show our shadow sampling results compared with Environment Agency monitoring for both areas. This is targeted investigative sampling, focused on areas of concern, rather than a representative measure of overall bathing water quality.

For Intestinal Enterococci, the reference lines indicate the Excellent (100 cfu/100 ml) and Good (200 cfu/100 ml) classification thresholds. The Sufficient threshold has not been shown because it is derived using a different percentile-based assessment methodology. No Poor threshold line is presented, as a Poor classification is assigned when the Sufficient standard is not achieved, rather than by comparison with a separate threshold value.

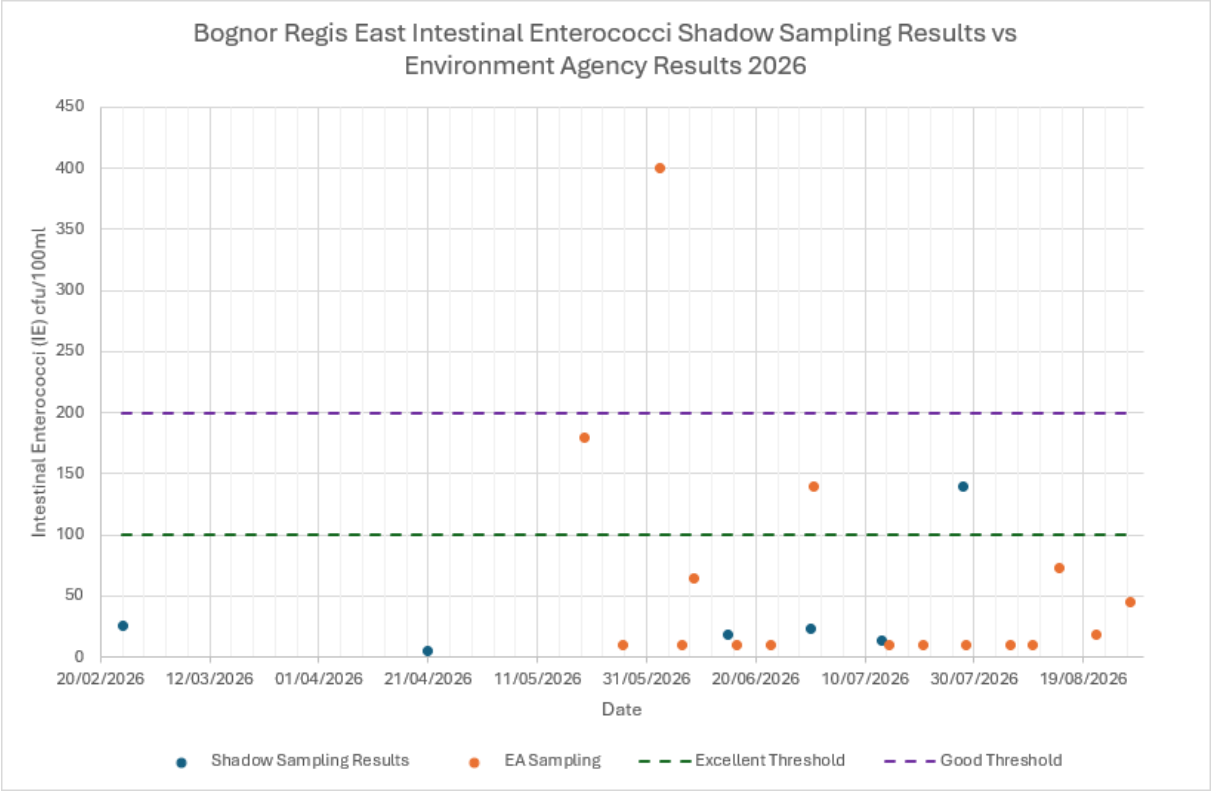
For E. coli, the reference lines indicate the Excellent (250 cfu/100 ml) and Good (500 cfu/100 ml) classification thresholds. The Sufficient threshold has not been shown because it is derived using a different percentile-based assessment methodology. No Poor threshold line is presented, as a Poor classification is assigned when the Sufficient standard is not achieved, rather than by comparison with a separate threshold value.

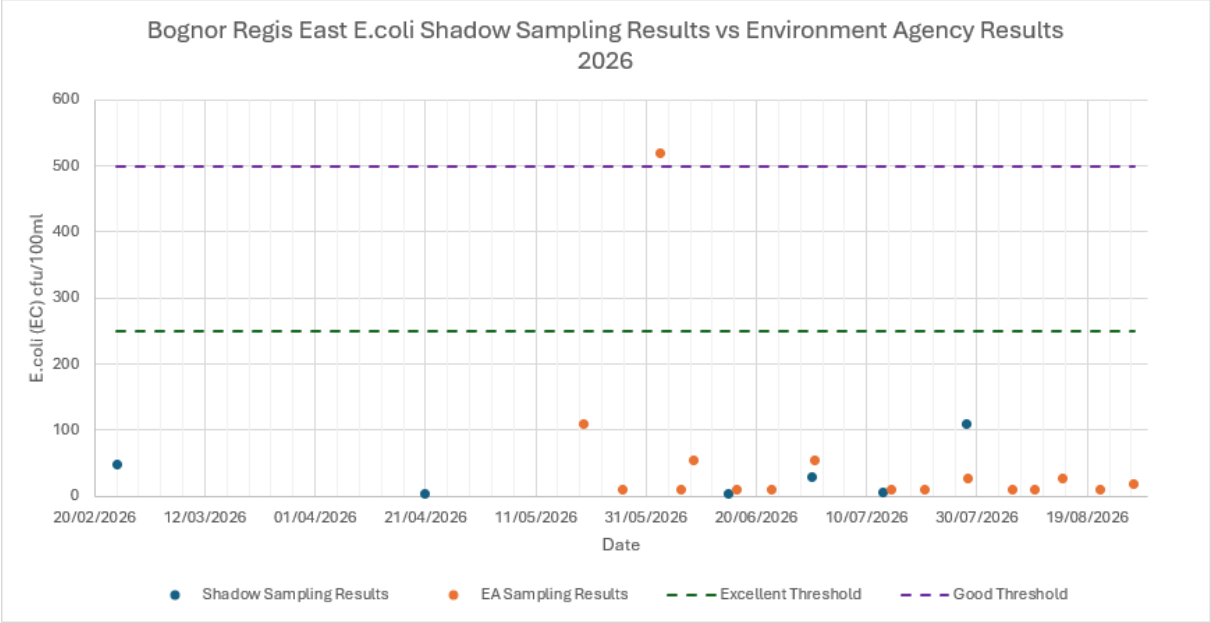
At Bognor Regis Aldwick, 99 samples were collected between February and August 2026, with 33 returning elevated bacterial results.





At Bognor Regis East, 47 coastal samples were collected between February and July, with 10 returning elevated results.





The results suggest rainfall is unlikely to be the main cause of elevated bacterial levels at either bathing water, as many of the higher readings occurred during dry weather. Elevated results were found at both coastal and inland locations, indicating that several sources and pathways may be contributing.

We are continuing targeted sampling and investigations and increasing the resources dedicated to this work so that priority areas, including Bognor Regis East and Aldwick, can be monitored more consistently.

What the outcome will be and when you will see it

Residents will continue to see investigation, monitoring and remediation work throughout 2026 and 2027.

Our aim is to identify and remove recurring sources of pollution and support sustained improvements in bathing water quality. Progress will be measured independently through the Environment Agency's bathing water assessment programme, with results published on Swimfo.

Addressing illegal connections and sewer defects

Challenge

Our investigations have identified a number of localised sources of contamination across the Bognor catchment that have the potential to affect bathing water quality.

What we're doing about it

To date, we have identified and corrected 21 drainage misconnections and repaired four defective sewers, including at Nelson Road, Pevensey Road and Dark Lane. Drainage concerns at Chipley Court have also been addressed.

At Aldwick, leaking sewers were identified in Nelson Road, Hawthorne Road and Park Road, alongside two incorrectly connected properties in Pevensey Road. These defects have been repaired and the misconnections corrected.

At Bognor Regis East, two further potential sources remain under investigation. Weekly checks also continue at Bognor Pier so that any new issues can be identified and addressed quickly.

We have doubled the size of our Illegal Connections Team and widened its investigations to include operational issues, recurring sewer problems and other potential sources of pollution, not only property misconnections.

What the outcome will be and when you will see it
Residents should continue to see targeted investigations and repairs across the catchment. Each source we identify and remove reduces the risk of local pollution reaching bathing waters, although sustained improvement will depend on addressing the combination of sources affecting the area.

Reducing discharges into Aldingbourne Rife

Challenge
The storm overflow at Shripney Road Pumping Station discharges into Aldingbourne Rife during periods when the sewer network is under pressure.

Shripney Road forms part of our 2030 improvement programme. The Government deadline requires spills from this overflow to be reduced to fewer than 10 a year on average by 2030.

What we're doing about it
We have already begun work in the wider catchment to reduce the amount of water entering the sewer network and improve its performance ahead of the main scheme.

This includes heavy jetting and cleansing of around 1.8 kilometres of sewer, installing and replacing non-return valves along Aldingbourne Rife, and mapping drainage at Riverside Caravan Park to identify opportunities to reduce surface water entering the foul sewer.
We are also working with West Sussex County Council and Network Rail to explore sustainable drainage opportunities around Bognor railway station. Together, these schemes could manage surface water from around 1.4 hectares, slowing its entry into the sewer network or removing it entirely in some locations.

The formal delivery date for the Shripney Road improvement remains 2030. However, we are actively looking at whether the work can be accelerated and delivered sooner, and will do this if we can.

What the outcome will be and when you will see it
Residents will continue to see investigation and improvement work across the catchment during 2026 and 2027.

The required outcome is fewer than 10 spills a year on average by 2030. That remains the formal commitment, but our intention is to go faster if we can. We will provide a clear update once the review of options to accelerate the work is complete.

Upgrading Lidsey Wastewater Treatment Works

Challenge
Lidsey Wastewater Treatment Works requires major investment to increase treatment capacity and improve environmental performance.

What we're doing about it
Preparatory work is already under way. This includes ecological and environmental surveys, removal and relocation of the existing cake bay, preparation of the construction compound and site infrastructure, and work to secure the upgraded power supply needed for the new facilities.

The project team is also progressing detailed design, contract arrangements, land agreements, planning and environmental approvals, and procurement of key long-lead equipment.

What the outcome will be and when you will see it
The current programme is:

- September 2026: enabling works commence.
- Early 2027: main construction begins.
- July 2029: new treatment facilities are commissioned.

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Residents should begin to see more visible progress on site, including major new structures, from around summer 2028. The completed upgrade will provide increased treatment capacity and improved environmental performance.

Keeping residents informed

Challenge

Residents have told us they want clearer and more accessible information about bathing water conditions, including when water quality may be temporarily reduced.

What we're doing about it

Arun District Council has already installed digital displays at Aldwick, Littlehampton, Felpham and Bognor Regis East. These displays show Environment Agency Pollution Risk Forecasts, which indicate when factors such as rainfall, tidal conditions and weather patterns may temporarily affect bathing water quality.

Separately, Bognor Regis will be included in Southern Water's pilot of a new generation of bathing water information screens.

Example of a screen in New Zealand

The pilot screens are intended to bring together information from several trusted sources, including bathing water status, Environment Agency Pollution Risk Forecasts, recent storm overflow activity, weather conditions and tide information.

What the outcome will be and when you will see it

Pilot installations are planned across our region during autumn and winter 2026, with Bognor Regis included in that pilot.

The aim is to give residents and visitors a clearer and more complete picture of local bathing water conditions in one place, rather than requiring them to consult several different sources.

Working with local communities

Challenge
When we met in April, residents told us they wanted more regular engagement, greater transparency and clearer accountability for the commitments Southern Water is making in Bognor Regis.

What we're doing about it
We will establish a new Bognor Community Steering Group. It will bring local stakeholders together to receive regular updates on our operations, environmental performance and investment programmes, while providing a forum to challenge our performance, raise concerns and help inform our work.

The Steering Group will provide oversight of the wider programme across Bognor Regis. It will sit alongside the Bognor Bathing Water Group, which we launched in March 2026 to focus specifically on local water quality and improvement work.

The Bathing Water Group has already met twice, bringing together local councils, sea swimmers, flood groups and residents. The next meeting is planned for January 2027, subject to confirmation.

We will also continue wider community engagement through the Yellow Fish campaign, the Coastal Rangers education programme with the RNLI and the rollout of Hello Lamp Post in Bognor Regis.

What the outcome will be and when you will see it
We are developing the arrangements for the new Bognor Community Steering Group and will share details once they are finalised.

Together, the Steering Group and Bathing Water Group will give residents regular opportunities to hear directly from Southern Water, scrutinise progress, track commitments and hold us to account for delivery.

There are a further two schemes we thought you might be interested in.

Coastal Rangers Education Programme

Coastal Rangers is our joint education programme with the RNLI, focused on water safety and protecting designated bathing waters, particularly in key and poor-performing areas. It gives primary school pupils practical lessons on staying safe around open water and helping to keep local beaches clean.

Five primary schools across Bognor Regis have taken part so far, with more sessions planned. The programme includes assemblies, workshops and teacher-led resources, reinforcing the RNLI's "Float to Live" message alongside wider environmental awareness.

Hello Lamp Post: Bognor Regis rollout

We are also rolling out Hello Lamp Post in Bognor Regis, building on the scheme already operating in Worthing. It allows people to use their phones to interact with signs and street assets, providing quick feedback and real-time insight.

The Bognor rollout will focus on key and poor-performing designated bathing waters, helping us understand local concerns and how people use the coast. Since March, the Worthing scheme has recorded 410 interactions. Bognor will follow the same model, with prompts and locations tailored to the local area. We will share the timetable once it has been agreed.

I recognise that the test of all this work is whether residents see a sustained improvement in the local environment and in the information we provide. We will continue to report openly on progress, including where delivery is taking longer than we would like, and I look forward to discussing this with you and residents on 12 November.

Yours sincerely,

Lawrence Gosden
Chief Executive Officer