

SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT COUNCIL

2 SEPTEMBER 2020

AGENDA ITEM D2

MARTINBOROUGH WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT OVERFLOW - UPDATE

Purpose of Report

To inform councillors of the progress made in the investigation of a possible wastewater overflow event at the Martinborough Wastewater Treatment Plant on the 18th August 2020, and the Wellington Water response activities.

Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Council:

1. *Receive the Martinborough Wastewater Treatment Plant Overflow – Update Report.*

1. Executive Summary

Following a possible wastewater overflow event at the Martinborough Wastewater Treatment Plant on the 18th August 2020, Wellington Water have undertaken a number of remedial actions and are considering a revision of their operating structure for SWDC.

2. Background

On the 18th August 2020, SWDC were informed of a possible wastewater overflow event at the Martinborough Wastewater Treatment Plant. As the manager of SWDC water infrastructure, Wellington Water responded to the incident and are currently undertaking an investigation into it.

3. Discussion

The update report at Appendix 1, prepared by Wellington Water, outlines activities taken in response to the incident.

Council should note that the investigation into the possible incident is ongoing and full findings of that investigation will be provided to Council once complete.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Wellington Water – Wastewater Update SWDC – August 2020

Contact Officer: Euan Stitt, GM Partnerships and Operations

Reviewed By: Harry Wilson, CEO

**Appendix 1 – Wellington Water –
Wastewater Update SWDC – August
2020**



Wellington Water Wastewater Update

SWDC - August 2020

Ian McSherry, Chief Adviser - Service Delivery



Your public water company

Martinborough Wastewater Treatment Plant Incident

Incident Summary



We had a potential overflow incident at the Martinborough Wastewater Treatment Plant on the morning of Tuesday 18 August.

In the lead up to the incident the treatment plant had been discharging to land (via the irrigator) due to the unseasonably dry weather resulting in the river levels dropping below the consented level where discharge to water is permitted. On the evening of 17 August there was an isolation valve operation failure. Wellington Water were alerted to the potential overflow on the morning of 18 August.

Our operators went to site and manually shut the isolation valve and made a physical inspection of the constructed overflow point to the river, through which any overflow would have occurred, as well as along the river downstream of the overflow point. No evidence of discharge was found. However, due to the possibility of an overflow, Wellington Water notified Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council, other key stakeholders and the general public via social media. A seven-day water quality sampling programme was also initiated in the area, measuring E.coli and total coliform levels at three different sampling points. This testing did not detect any contamination.

The Treatment Plant is now operating normally. River levels are high enough that treated wastewater can be discharged to the river in line with the plant's resource consent. As required under the consent we are conducting an incident investigation and will share the findings with council once available.

Context

The incident occurred in the context of ongoing challenges with councils wastewater treatment plants in the district. These challenges relate to the plant's design, evolution and operation, as well as the complex consenting conditions to which they are subject.

Since taking responsibility for the operation of the plants in late 2019 we have identified vulnerabilities, and began a programme of improvements following two associated overflow incidents in January. While it is regrettable that this programme could not be fully implemented in time to prevent these incidents, best practice requires that the system upgrades be properly planned, designed and tested before being integrated. As we noted in our update to council in June Covid-19 impacted progress of this work by several months.

How we are responding to the Incident



Immediate Response

We have taken the following actions:

1. Reinforced operator protocols with staff, to ensure that all possible lessons are learned while manual operation remains necessary.
2. We are engaging with the regulator Greater Wellington Regional Council to work through the implications of the incident for the plant's consent conditions.
3. Reviewing critical control points and development of a plan for increasing all treatment plant resilience through greater automation.
4. Deploying additional resources from our regional wastewater treatment partner Veolia and our consultancy panel.
5. Providing additional Service Delivery management support on the network maintenance function to allow our local Service Delivery manager to focus on the treatment plant improvement work.

Medium Term Response

We are progressing the following:

1. Developing a plan to ramp up delivery of the Wastewater System Risk Reduction Programme as outlined in our 10 June memorandum to council.
2. Reviewing our organizational structure and how we deliver our service to SWDC and the community to ensure we can meet expectations with improving three waters infrastructure being councils number one priority.
3. Review the findings of the incident investigation report and implement any recommendations once available.

Improving three waters infrastructure is councils number one priority



- A key principle of the transition of water services to Wellington Water agreed with the last council in early 2019 was....
 - “we will provide the same level of service with no increase in costs”
- This principle shaped the organisational design of the local Wellington Water team
- With the change in council and now having unpicked the true condition of the assets this principle is no longer valid
- We now need to review our organisational structure to test if we have the best set up to deliver on councils direction
 - “improving three waters infrastructure is councils number one priority”
- The delivery on this change in strategy needs to be a balanced approach to risk reduction across safe drinking water and safe wastewater disposal
- The timing is right to do this with the opportunity provided by central government water reform funding
- We need to check we are organised in the best way to reduce risk and enable us to get the networks into a stable and reliable state as quickly and efficiently as possible