***\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE TO SEND OUT ON LAUNCH DAY (Wednesday 15th May)\*\*\****
***[Your town]*** Friends of the Earth press release.
For immediate release: Wednesday 15th May 2024

**New research reveals how sewage pollution is blighting beaches in [YOUR AREA], as comedian Nish Kumar joins calls for stronger environmental protections**

* *New analysis from Friends of the Earth reveals that* ***[Insert your worst affected local beach]*** *was found to be the most impacted for [****insert your local area]****, with* ***[insert number of relevant hours sewage spilled]*** *hours of sewage dumped within 3km.*
* *Other beaches across the area, including X, X and X also saw a combined X hours of sewage spills in 2023.*
* *New analysis from Friends of the Earth reveals that sewage was pumped directly into England’s seas for 440,446 hours last year. Over a quarter of these spills occurred within 3km of bathing sites.*
* *It comes as critically acclaimed comedian Nish Kumar teams up with Friends of the Earth for a spoof video – Sh\*t Beach – featuring an intrepid reporter embracing the new norms of a trip to the British seaside.* The draft video and assets can be found [here.](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/ru2698s474qqnq9kcuah9/ALZLmMERlL6QaJG8UE7W6vI?rlkey=k81w5b67aj68yv355ifs47a06&e=1&st=2q4sstta&dl=0)

**The analysis found that [insert number of hours sewage spilled] hours of sewage were spilled in [insert your local area], with [insert hours spilt at worst beach] of sewage alone within 3km of [insert beach name] beach.**

Nearly half a million hours of sewage was dumped along England’s coastlines last year, new analysis reveals. More than one quarter of this was dumped within 3km of bathing waters, researchers at the environmental campaign group Friends of the Earth found.

Using the latest Environment Agency sewage overflow figures from 2023, Friends of the Earth's data scientists calculated the number and duration of sewage discharges directly into the sea and within the vicinity of bathing waters. This was then cross-referenced with pollution warnings for each site given by the Environment Agency last year.

With record levels of raw sewage being dumped into the UK’s seas and rivers, iconic British comedian Nish Kumar is fronting a new film with Friends of the Earth, taking a satirical slant on the pollution scandal.

In a spoof news clip, Kumar plays a presenter on BS News introducing a segment exploring the opening of a new tourist attraction – Sh\*t Beach *–* a seaside town’s attempt to embrace the new reality of a sewage ridden beach.

The camera pans to a reporter at a beach populated with hazmat suit-wearing tourists, who can ‘rent-a-bog’ instead of deck chairs and enjoy turd-shaped ice creams.

**Comedian Nish Kumar said:**

“Record-breaking amounts of sh\*t and pollution clogging up our rivers and seas is no joke. If we don’t act now, we’ll all be swapping our swimmers for hazmat suits and packing an E. coli testing kit before hitting the great British seaside this summer.

“We can’t let water companies have the last laugh, as their shareholders pocket huge payouts while our bills increase. We need to show that we give too much of a sh\*t about our beaches and rivers to let them end up being a national health hazard.”

With the country’s favourite swimming spots plagued with ‘no bathing’ or E-coli warnings, Sh\*t Beach highlights the very real threats facing our much-loved seaside getaways and putting wildlife and nature at risk.

The environmental group believes everyone deserves the right to a healthy environment. That’s why Friends of the Earth is campaigning to enshrine this in law as part of a new Environmental Rights Act, which would empower communities to hold regulators and public bodies to account for failing to protect our precious waterways and allowing companies to pollute with impunity – risking the health of British people, wildlife and our environment.

**[YOUR NAME], campaigner at [YOUR TOWN] Friends of the Earth, said:**

“Last year saw the worst sewage spills on record, after years of polluters’ blatant greed and negligence.

“In doing nothing, the government and regulators are letting water companies leave our seas in such a state that many will think twice about swimming at what used to be pristine ***[insert local area]*** beaches.

“It is not right that failure of adequate government intervention and regulation means the people and wildlife of **[YOUR TOWN]** suffer.

“We urgently need to enshrine the right to a healthy environment in UK law, to give communities the power to take back their local seas and beaches, to hold polluters to account, and ensure this never happens again.

“Friends of the Earth’s *Sh\*t Beach* video is a spoof but based on the latest shocking sewage stats, it could be a taste of what’s to come if the government doesn’t force water companies to clean up their act.”

**Ends**

For more information, or to request an interview or photographs, please contact: **[add contact name, role, telephone number, email address]**.

**Notes to Editors:**

1. In 2023, it was found there were **[insert local area individual spills]** totalling **[insert local area sewage spill hours]** of sewage dumped along the coast. Of these **[insert local area individual spills]** were within the vicinity of bathing spots, totalling **[insert local area sewage spill duration]** hours (data sources in the methodology below).
2. League Table of top 10 coastal bathing areas most affected by sewage pollution – please [visit this link](https://friendsoftheearth.uk/nature/sewage-outflow-statistics) for the full list of areas:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Beach**  | **Water company** | **Local authority** | **Summer ‘no bathing’ pollution warnings** | **Number of summer sewage warnings**  | **Duration of all sewage spills within 3km (hours)** |
| 1. | Cowes | Southern Water | Isle of Wight | 4 | 0 | 4,979 |
| 2.  | Meadfoot | South West Water  | Torbay | 1 | 2 | 3,885 |
| 3.  | Plymouth Hoe West  | South West Water | City of Plymouth | 6 | 1 | 3,885 |
| 4.  | Gurnard | Southern Water | Isle of Wight | 12 | 0 | 3,523 |
| 5. | Plymouth Hoe East | South West Water | City of Plymouth | 7 | 1 | 3,593 |
| 6.  | Exmouth | South West Water | East Devon | 8 | 7 | 3,208 |
| 7. | Colwell Bay  | Southern Water | Isle of Wight | 6 | 0 | 2,927 |
| 8. | Seaton Carew North Gare | Northumbrian Water  | Hartlepool | 4 | 0 | 2,708 |
| 9.  | Ryde | Southern Water | Isle of Wight | 11 | 0 | 2,598 |
| 10. | Blyth South Beach | Northumbrian Water | Northumberland | 5 | 0 | 2,503 |

**Methodology:**

We identified all sewage outflows located in coastal and estuary waters or within 500m of the coastline and thus deemed to be flowing directly into the sea. The outflow statistics from these were summarised to identify the total number of spills and duration of spills that directly entered England’s coastal waters in 2023.

We also used the locations of all coastal bathing waters (i.e. beaches) to summarise sewage statistics from coastal outflows within 3km of England’s bathing spots.

Finally, we looked at Environment Agency data on water quality in bathing waters, which enabled us to identify all beaches which had warnings of either water quality being reduce by sewage or warnings to not swim due to pollution concerns in 2023. For each of these locations affected by sewage or pollution, we then summarised the annual sewage outflow statistics from all overflows within 3km of each beach, which enabled us to estimate which beaches had the most sewage released into their waters in 2023.

* We did not use data on ocean currents to predict where sewage outflows end up, but considered 3 km to be in the vicinity of bathing spots and thus likely to degrade water quality at these locations.
* Bathing water quality is monitored between May and September through weekly sampling, whereas sewage data covers all months of the year. Sewage can therefore impact on other beaches not flagged in the water quality alerts through the winter months when water quality monitoring is not taking place.

## **Data sources:**

* Sewage outflows locations and statistics, Environment Agency: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/dataset/21e15f12-0df8-4bfc-b763-45226c16a8ac>
* Bathing water monitoring locations, Environment Agency: <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/dcb8bd46-c4cf-4749-bad0-7663da96845c/bathing-waters-monitoring-locations>
* Bathing water quality, Environment Agency: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/data.html>

**About Friends of the Earth:** Friends of the Earth is an international community dedicated to the protection of the natural world and the wellbeing of everyone in it. We bring together more than two million people in 75 countries, combining people power all over the world to transform local actions into global impact. For more information visit:<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/> follow us at @friends\_earth, or like our Facebook page. Save paper and send an e-card today, available at<http://foe.uk/ecogifting>.