

FAO: Emma Rourke, Acting National Statistician for the Office for National Statistics

Our ref: SL03537 – please quote in all correspondence

Dear Emma,

Recent Usage of ONS Data by The Rt Hon Steve Reed MP

I hope this email finds you well.

I am contacting you in relation to recent comments made by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and his usage of ONS data.

The Minister has cited the attached statistics regarding water monitoring in Scotland to argue that pollution in Scotland is worse than in England and that nationalised water systems in general perform worse than privatised systems.

The Minister's initial comments in the Chamber can be found [here](#).

I also link to [comments made in the chamber by the Secretary of State](#) citing these figures (published on social media here: <https://x.com/SteveReedMP/status/1948728494973661243/photo/2>), which he claimed yesterday he "stood by".

This seems to be at odds with other statistical analysis done by SEPA and the Independent Water Commission. SEPA reported that 87% of Scotland's entire water environment as having a 'high' or 'good' classification for water quality – up from 82% in 2014. The Independent Water Commission found that 66% of Scotland's water bodies are of good ecological status as compared with 16.1% in England and 29.9% in Wales.

I should be grateful if you would provide me with a view of your interpretation of these ONS statistics and whether you consider the Minister's conclusion as a reasonable interpretation in light of the wider context and statistics.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Seamus Logan MP
Member of Parliament for Aberdeenshire North & Moray East

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Rt Hon. Stephen Flynn MP
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24 July 2025

Dear Stephen,

I am writing to you to set out the facts following our exchange in the House of Commons on Monday about water quality in Scotland.

Official statistics, available on ONS and gov.uk (attached below), show several areas where Scotland's water quality underperforms relative to England. There were 35.8 incidents per 10,000 km of sewer in Scotland versus 35.4 incidents per 10,000km of sewer in England and Wales reported in 2023-24. Storm overflow monitoring coverage in Scotland was 28% in 2024, while England has 100% coverage.

Average household water use is also significantly higher in Scotland (178 litres per person per day), compared to England (137 litres in England). 25% of total water supplied in Scotland is lost to leakage compared to 19% in England (2023-24).

These statistics confirm my assertion in the House that nationalisation does not result in better outcomes.

Yours sincerely,

THE RT HON STEVE REED OBE MP

Summary of key performance metrics in England, Wales and Scotland

Performance metric	England (Privatised model)	Scotland (Nationalised)
Water Resource Management		
Water usage (household), litres per day per person (2025) ¹	137	178
Water meter coverage, % of all households (2024)	60% ²	3% ³
Leakage, litres of water leaked per person per day (2023/24) ⁴	49	84
Leakage, litres of water leaked per household per day (2023/24) ⁵	118	183
Leakage, proportion of total water supplied lost through leaks, % of supply (2023/24)	19% ⁶	25% ⁷
Environmental		
Storm Overflows monitoring	100% ⁸	Approximately 28% coverage ⁹

¹ [Long Term Strategy - Scottish Water](#)

² [Appendix A: Smart metering in revised draft water resources management plans - GOV.UK](#)

³ - [Scottish Water](#). There are a total of 2,681,000 households in Scotland; Scottish Water provides unmetered water supply to 2,607,000 (97% of households)

⁴ Per person leakage figures were calculated by dividing total daily leakage by mid-year population estimates for each region. Leakage data for England and Wales was sourced from [Ofwat's June 2025 leakage dataset](#), and for Scotland from the [Scottish Water Performance Report 2023–24](#). Population estimates were taken from the [ONS dataset for England and Wales](#) and the [ONS timeseries for Scotland](#). Mid-2023 population was used for 2023/24 leakage.

⁵ Per household leakage figures were calculated by dividing total daily leakage by mid-year population estimates for each region. Leakage data for England and Wales was sourced from [Ofwat's June 2025 leakage dataset](#), and for Scotland from the [Scottish Water Performance Report 2023–24](#). Household estimates were taken from the [2023 Edition ONS dataset on Household size for England, Wales and Scotland](#). [ONS timeseries for Scotland](#). Mid-2023 population was used for 2023/24 leakage.

⁶ [Water resources 2023-2024: analysis of the water industry's annual water resources performance - GOV.UK](#)

⁷ [2023-24 B tables | WICS](#)

⁸ [Storm overflows monitoring hits 100% target - GOV.UK](#)

⁹ Scotland has approximately 3,614 Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) within its 50,000 km sewer network, sourced [Microsoft Word - Improving Urban Waters - Route Map - FINAL \(002\) \(2021\)](#). Plans to install 1,000 monitors by December 2024 were confirmed here: [Scottish Water](#). This equates to approximately 28% coverage ((1,000 ÷ 3,614) × 100).