

Isles of Scilly consultation responses from private individuals

✂ indicates information that could be used to identify a private respondent has been redacted.

Response 1

We are private residents on St. Martins and currently use a combination of rainwater with the back-up of a managed borehole. Although all this water is filtered and UV'd we use bottled water for drinking.

It is likely that we would ask to be connected to a new water supply should S.W.W be granted a licence.

We would support S.W W.'s application to vary its licence and look forward to a commencement of work to supply this island.

Response 2

I am a local, potential future customer of the proposed. I am a farmer with a food business and self catering holiday lets. The issues surrounding water and sewerage on the islands are considerable and I do not believe that the current smaller private systems and the council systems are sustainable in to the future.

I am in full support of extending southwest water's license to include Scilly as I believe that it is the best way to ensure that the water and sewerage in Scilly is brought up to acceptable current standards and at a cost that is accessible to all that live here. This will ensure the future of Scilly and protect our most vital resource.

Response 3

As residents of the Isles of Scilly, we would like to register our support for the proposal.

We earn our living from tourism, as do most residents, and see this proposal as vital to the future of tourism, and the whole economy, on the islands.

Response 4

I am very much in support of the plans for SW water to take over the supply of water to St Martins as I hope they have a greater expertise to providing a quality water supply consistently. Hopefully they we be able to provide training for technical support of the teams who will maintain the water quality on the island.

I am keen that they also take on the wastewater system, which is not in a good state of repair and we are concerned as parents that it may be affecting the water supply.

Response 5

As a year round resident and seasonal business owner with a private water supply living on St. Martin's, Isles of Scilly I would like to register my interest as a potential future South West Water customer.

It is essential however that the proposal to vary South West Water's area of appointment to include the Isles of Scilly, should give everyone on the islands the opportunity to connect to the public water supply and become customers of South West Water should they wish to do so, including residents and businesses currently on private water supplies

Response 6

We have had to fit a reverse osmosis unit to purify the drinking water at our property, [~~&~~address] before that we were drinking bottled water, as the tap water is undrinkable, especially in tea.

Response 7

My wife and I live on St.Martin's Isles of Scilly. We have a bore well for supplies. The water tastes fantastic, we treat it according to recommendations from the DWI and have it tested by our local council on a regular basis.

During the summer school holidays we can have over 100 people using this supply, we would very much like for South West Water to take over the responsibility of our supply, as with regulations getting more and more stringent it would not be viable for us to maintain this supply.

Response 8

As you can see from our email address, we run not one but two businesses on the Isles of Scilly and we ourselves have lived here for nearly 40 years, with relatives initially moving to the islands in 1965 to create a new business and make a life for themselves. In our forty years of residence, it has become very clear to us that life on Scilly simply would not exist as it does without the all-important provision of water and sewage treatment.

One of our current businesses is self catering holiday accommodation and there is a VERY stark difference between the guest house we ran from 1980 to 2000 and the holiday apartments we have now. No longer is it acceptable to have two toilets and one bathroom shared between twelve or more guests, in fact even a wash handbasin in the bedroom was considered revolutionary in the mid 1980s! Consequently water usage by tourism businesses on the islands was manageable (just!) over those two decades, despite the droughts of the early 1980s.

Contrast that with tourism over the last two decades and today when every tourist expects an ensuite bathroom or shower with their room and the amount of water used per head has sky-rocketed. Self catering accommodation is expected to have a water-guzzling washing machine AND dishwasher as well to make life as easy and convenient as possible for visitors. Consequently Scilly will always suffer from extreme disparity between the height of the tourist season, when the islands' population triples or even quadruples, and the winter months when the population drops to much lower resident-only levels. This places huge strains on the Council-run water department which is (and has been for many years frankly!) not up to the job.

This huge tourism-fuelled demand for water coupled with the enormous increase in the summer population, means that Scilly has been struggling (and sometimes failing) to provide for its residents and holiday visitors. We have suffered from sub-standard water quality and totally inadequate sewage treatment on the islands for decades. Current and future legislation will find Scilly falling far short of expected standards with the distinct possibility of health-threatening consequences for its population.

Scilly desperately needs proper funding, oversight and well-designed improvements to both the water and sewage provision which will bring it into line with the rest of the UK. It needs engineers to tackle the decades-old problems that have plagued the islands and allow island residents and visitors to have legislation-compliant water and sewage systems.

We attended the Scilly Business Week forums last week and were very interested to learn of the various options for recycling and recycling waste on Scilly. We were also very impressed with plans to treat and use sewage sludge locally to produce fertiliser that farmers can use on their fields to increase crop yields without shipping it all back to the mainland.

We understand that Scilly and its population is very small in comparison with the wider South West and that it will require significant future funding to bring us up to current standards, but we are as entitled to clean water and safe sewage treatment as anyone in the UK. This is simply not deliverable under the current system run by the Council of the Isles of Scilly. South West Water is our only option for expert input and future funding to improve the situation.

We hope for more secure water provision and sewage system in the future when South West Water takes Scilly under its wing.

Response 9

I am writing, having read the consultation, to support the transfer of Scilly water to South West Water.

Response 10

As a resident on the Isles of Scilly I very much support the move to grant an extension of the license to SWW to take over both water and some waste water activities across the islands.

I also support SWW to be appointed as the water and wastewater company for the IoS to deliver the following:

- installing a wastewater treatment facility on St Mary's so raw sewage is no longer discharged direct to the marine environment;
- implement long-term planning and investment of water resources to ensure that there are sufficient drinking water supplies for all five islands, including potential new connections for existing customers on private supplies and future new development;
- a new chlorine contact tank on St Mary's to address water quality issues, and to replace old cast iron mains in Hugh Town that are causing discolouration of water;
- on Bryher, improvement of treatment works to remove high levels of organics and coliforms; and
- on St Agnes and St Martin's, improvement of water treatment to address issues of microbiological quality, acidity caused by dissolved metals, chloride, nitrate, iron, manganese and aluminium as well as water colour issues.

I welcome the move to bring our water quality levels in line with the standards set in the rest of the UK.

I also very much welcome the investment that will help us move away from pumping raw sewage into the sea resulting in damage to our wildlife and environment as well as polluting our beaches with sewage waste.

Response 11

Please register my agreement for South West Water to take over the water and waste water facilities on the IOS. I am a permanent resident of St. Mary's and have long believed that the IOS do not have the resources, finance and expertise to deliver the water quality enjoyed by other areas of the country covered by the WIA 1991.

Response 12

As a resident and council payer of water rates I welcome the fact the islands will receive much needed investment in its infrastructure.

I hope the charges will remain equivalent or lower than current even with a water meter.

Response 13

I am writing to register my support for South West Water to take over water and any other relevant services on the Isles of Scilly.

Please note my interest.

Response 14

I wish to record my support for the proposed extension of South West Water's licence allowing for the much needed investment in our water and waste water services to bring them up to an acceptable standard.

Response 15

Section 2.1

"The majority of the land and nearly a third of the residential buildings on the IOS are owned by the Duchy of Cornwall. The whole of the Island of Tresco is let on a long-term basis to the Tresco Estate."

It is imperative that the Duchy of Cornwall (Duchy) land ownership issue is fully understood, as it may have significant financial implications for consumers and SWW.

The Duchy is a Crown entity, but market themselves as being a private estate with its servants bound by the Official Secrets Act. Unlike SWW the Duchy is exempt from FOI requests. The overriding concern is that the Duchy will use its monopoly land owning position and exemption from FOI to impose charges/permission fees that may impact upon the costs of services to consumers and/or stifle capital investment by SWW in the islands.

All the untenanted land has been leased by the Duchy to the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust at one daffodil per year with the Duchy maintaining the rights to use the land for any other purpose. This could have implications for the costs of pipelines and treatment facilities etc.

The off islands and the Garrison on St Mary's are leasehold residential housing. The Duchy continue to deny enfranchisement rights in these areas and on many properties impose onerous ground rents and permission fees on leaseholders. Hence new equipment pipelines etc may require Duchy approval and given their approach to modern ground rents, there could be significant financial implications for the consumer and SWW.

The private water supplies are on land owned by the Duchy, with the tenant leasing the facilities, it is imperative that those with private supplies fully understand any financial implications for transfer to SWW as the Duchy may impose permission and rental fees for their facility which are outside the agreement with SWW.

The issue on St Mary's (excluding the Garrison) is more complicated, there being a mixture of freeholders and property under Duchy ownership.

The involvement of SWW in the Isles of Scilly is **most welcome** as despite significant charges imposed by the Duchy on householders, investment in water and sewage services has not kept pace with development and environmental standards.

It is reported that the Duchy are to make a significant contribution. What will the Duchy expect in return? Will this contribution figure be made public?

Response 16

I am responding on behalf of the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, a locally-run independent charity responsible for more than 50% of the Islands.

The charity is based on the Isles of Scilly and will be a SWW customer. The charity would also aim to work alongside SWW on management of the land within the Trust's tenancy, particularly on the two wetland SSSI sites on St Mary's.

The Trust wholeheartedly supports the proposal for SWW to vary its area of appointment to include the Isles of Scilly.

The current situation here on the Islands where the DWI and EA have no independent oversight and limited enforcement powers in relation to water quality on the islands, meaning that public health and environmental protections standards are not as stringent as elsewhere in England is totally unacceptable. SWW being responsible for the Islands water supply will allow vital investment in infrastructure, provide much needed industry expertise and also resilience in the face of climate change and increased visitor season demand. Such initiatives as water saving/grey water/rain water harvesting are very welcomed by the Trust.

The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust looks forward to working alongside SWW to ensure that the wetland SSSI's are managed sustainably to provide benefits to biodiversity and people and beyond.

Response 17

I would like to express my support for SWW becoming the water and waste provider for Scilly. I live on St Martin's with my husband and currently our water is supplied by the Duchy of Cornwall. I think the proposal will secure drinking water supplies for all the islands and will greatly improve the natural environment by having sewerage correctly treated.

Response 18

I have been following this issue since a public meeting on St Agnes in 2014 when I was resident there. I now live on St Mary's.

I fully support the proposal to vary the licence of SWW to become the appointed water and wastewater company for the Isles of Scilly.

It is vital that the necessary legislative process for this is completed as soon as possible, regardless of Brexit or a change in Government.

The off islands of St Agnes (including the 2 residences on Gugh), Tresco, Bryher and St Martin's I feel require particular attention as their needs may differ from those on St Mary's, and requires commitment to partnership working from the Duchy of Cornwall and (for Bryher) the Council. Desalination plants on some of those islands may be an option.

It is important for the islands, given their dependency on tourism since the 1960s that our water and wastewater supplies are sufficient to deal with considerable variance in demand, and be sympathetic with regard to the rich natural and historical heritage that draws many people to the islands year after year. I welcome performance commitments (and the financial evaluation) as we need to satisfy the expectations of all to deliver the step-change improvements required.

I would expect also that the potential impacts of climate change be factored into the long-term plan. We are also very poor at rainwater harvesting (also 'grey water' collection) to make the most of our Atlantic climate and reduce pressure on aquifers.

Clearly Rome will not be built in a day, and continuing conversations and appropriate gateways will no doubt be required. Given the commitment to date from SWW, including the secondment of a highly capable IOS water manager from SWW, I am confident that this will be carried out effectively. I hope that the recent departure of the Chief Executive will not hamper relationships and progress.

Response 19

I am writing with regard to the proposal that SW Water is given permission to take on various issues regarding potable water supply here in the Isles of Scilly and adequately manage sewage here on the Islands.

I am a resident of St Martins.

Four years ago I proposed to open a new restaurant here on St Martins.

It was after a year of research, talking to the planning department, submitting drawings, creating a business plan and researching equipment and menu's only to be told at the last moment that the water supply to serve the restaurant was not potable for human consumption.

We were offered a sizeable grant by the Isles of Scilly voucher scheme, who supported this venture and to enable it to be realised.

This project has been now temporarily shelved until these issues have been solved and then we can proceed, within the law.

I realise this make some time, but I also realise that many food businesses here on St Martins are operating outside of regulation as it stands and a new water system would also benefit each and every business here on the Island.

Response 20

Having read the consultation document and attended associated meetings, I write in support of the proposals set out for South West Water to be appointed supplier to the Isles of Scilly

Response 21

I would like to make the following comments:

Scilly has been largely dependent on tourism since the 1960s and it is crucial that the water and wastewater supplies are sufficient to deal with considerable variation in demand, whilst having regard to the natural and historical heritage that is so important to the many visitors to the islands, many of whom return year after year. Commitments to improvements in

performance are a vital base for developing the financial case for the large-scale, long-term improvements that are needed.

I believe it is very important that the needs of the off-islands (Tresco, Bryher, St Martin's, St Agnes and Gugh) are considered separately from the needs of St Mary's, as the approach on these islands, with their small populations, could well need be different. Such an approach is likely to benefit from working in partnership with the local population and all stakeholders.

The potential impacts of climate change must be factored into any long-term plan. Scilly does not have much rainwater harvesting or 'grey water' collection, which the Atlantic climate should facilitate, thereby reducing pressure on the aquifers.

Response 22

1. [✕private information]

2. Our property shares a deep borehole and associated septic tank arrangement with a neighbouring second-home. However, when the pump packed up for the second time, we were advised that the borehole was becoming blocked at depth so a joint decision was taken to transfer on to the Duchy supply. This is still the situation today.

3. Realistically, Hugh House's hand-holding role, given the present regulatory environment, can only be a temporary solution. Its customer base on Scilly was always going to be far too tiny to absorb essential infrastructure costs without causing tenants significant and continuing financial pain. So confirmation that Ofwat is prepared to sanction a spend of £53m of capital expenditure in the islands by SW Water over the next 10 years and that the company's plan to spread the costs equally over all its customers has been accepted by users on the mainland, is GOOD NEWS indeed.

4. Currently the Council on Scilly is the one remaining municipal water provider in England. But Tresco does its own thing and on St Agnes and St Martin's there is no public drinking water supply. It has long stretched credibility that England's smallest and most isolated Local Authority could continue to service even two islands - Bryher or St Mary's - for many more years. Laid down in the 1930s, the sewers in Hugh Town were inherited from the Duchy and are way overdue for replacement. They've been regularly patched up but can still overflow at key junctions while the fallibility of the so-called Mermaid Run is an open secret.

5. Up until a few years ago the powers-that-be in the Town Hall would invoke the Isles of Scilly clause to shelter the archipelago from the facts of mainland life. Thus a nationwide consultation in 2009 on private water supplies by-passed the islands while infrastructure sagged. A little bit of DEFRA money did recently help fund new desalination plants on St Mary's and Bryher but subsequent electricity and replacement filter costs have apparently been sky high.

6. Way back the Council would test not only its own water supply but all private supplies as well. It hasn't done the latter for 20 years or more. Belatedly a little 85 year old reservoir on St Mary's at the top of Buzza Hill and working at 30% capacity was finally upgraded, but only when DEFRA dipped briefly into its pockets.

7. Over the years the Town Hall has installed meters on business premises but not residential properties. They pay in accordance with Council Tax Bands. The Duchy though has metered all its customers. It has drilled its own boreholes too on St Agnes and St Martins and spent money on installing and protecting its own water storage tanks there. Its consultant has talked about elaborate schemes for desal plants on St Agnes while back in 2002 the eco firm H2O, courtesy of the Duchy, produced a pricey plan to cover the island with bio-digesters. Tenants were due to be billed for a big part of the expenditure. This followed a report from Camborne School of Mines, part of Exeter University, that raised questions about the long term viability of the water supply on St Agnes.

8. Bearing in mind the difficulties caused last year by the summer drought, not least on St Agnes, it is gratifying to hear that SW Water is ready to update hydrological data on the island as part of a £5m package earmarked for spending on the island by 2030. The raw data from the DWI survey in 2016 showed that the quality of private water supplies was actually better than anticipated.

9. SW Water's lab facilities in Exeter are already responsible for testing water samples on Scilly. The company's readiness now to commit more than £50m overall in infrastructure investment on the archipelago along with Hitachi's involvement in the pioneering Smart Islands Scheme show that Scilly is far from being a dead end socially and economically. It may be an isolated community in an amazing natural environment but it can show itself to be an enthusiastic exemplar for other remote areas in terms of sustainable development. It's starting to happen already.

10. Just take St Agnes: it has a population of only 80. It has a trio of cheerful residents well into their 90s. But it can also boast a new community-created and architecturally award-winning Island Hall that houses a quartet of currently thriving craft workshops. It's home to Scilly's only dairy herd which produces St Agnes-branded ice cream, butter and milk. It has a 35 year-old farmer with 300 chickens who supplies eggs to all the islands. Another youthful farming couple have their own cured beef business. Yet another successful St Agnes local was pronounced Cornwall's Young Businessman of the Year in 2018 for developing and successfully marketing his amazing range of seasonal gins flavoured by botanicals that bloom on the family's own modest island tenancy.

11. Triumph in adversity ? None of these enterprises, nor yet the tide of summer visitors, are damaging this island's unique environment. But however committed the community continues to be in conserving water resources, looking forward it will need the resources of someone like SW Water to provide a degree of certainty in an increasingly regulated future. Existing Duchy customers on St Agnes are going to be taken on board. And once the company has conducted its own up-to-date aquifer analysis, we may well be in for more and better boreholes, more water storage or maybe one or more desal plants. Current non-Duchy customers could well be running to join up.

12. A word about wastewater: when it comes to emptying septic tanks on St Agnes the Island Hall community bio-bubble has proved a huge boon. But is it clear exactly who's responsible for its upkeep ? SW Water has not formally committed to taking on any wastewater role on St Martins, Bryher or St Agnes. Yet as its 10 year spending programme progresses, I would like to think that the company would feel it made sense and be in its interests overall to do so. There is more than a hint in the last paragraph on p14 of the Ofwat consultation document that SW Water does actually reckon it could happen after April 2025. It would definitely be more good news for Scilly.

Response 23

I am writing to wholeheartedly support South West Waters proposals to include the Isles of Scilly into appointment areas. I am supporting this as it will improve the well being of the people on the Isles of Scilly including tourists by improving quality and sustainability of our water supply. We live on St. Martin's where the provision is disjointed and variable in quality and quantity. We have attended with many others the consultation meetings on St. Martin's and S.W. Water have been very open and professional in approaching the issues the Island faces.

Response 24

I am a potential user of the proposed SWW takeover of our water distribution and agree that this should take place.