

Pollution Incident Report: Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and Hafren Dyfrdwy 2024

Contents

Introduction	2
Pollution incident data	2
What this report covers	2
Dŵr Cymru data	3
Total pollution incidents	3
Actual pollution incidents	3
Normalised pollution incidents	4
Asset analysis	5
Wastewater asset analysis	6
Water supply asset analysis	8
Serious incidents	9
Self-reported incidents	9
Hafren Dyfrdwy data	10
Total pollution incidents	10
Actual pollution incidents	10
Normalised pollution incidents	11
Asset analysis	12
Wastewater asset analysis	13
Water supply asset analysis	14
Serious incidents	14
Self-reported incidents	14
Our response	15
Enforcement	15
Dŵr Cymru	15
Hafren Dyfrdwy	16
Our regulatory action on pollution incidents	16

Introduction

We are Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the environmental regulator for water companies in Wales. This report presents pollution incident data for Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and Hafren Dyfrdwy.

Dŵr Cymru operates in both Wales and England. The data in this report covers the company as a whole unless stated otherwise. For Hafren Dyfrdwy, which was established in July 2018, we include relevant historic data from Severn Trent Water and Dee Valley Water.

This is our first dedicated Pollution Incident Report. It focuses specifically on pollution data and does not replace our annual environmental performance reports, which will be published in Autumn 2025.

[View Dŵr Cymru annual environmental performance reports](#)

[View Hafren Dyfrdwy annual environmental performance reports](#)

Pollution incident data

As regulators, we respond to pollution incidents, including those from water company assets. We record and assess these incidents to track trends and drive better performance, aiming to reduce pollution and eliminate serious incidents. Each incident is classified using four environmental impact categories:

- **Category 1 (Major):** Major, serious, persistent or extensive adverse effect or damage to the environment, people or property, or to NRW's assets, operation or reputation;
- **Category 2 (Significant):** Significant adverse effect or damage to the environment, people or property, or to NRW's assets, operation or reputation;
- **Category 3 (Minor):** Minor or minimal adverse effect or damage to the environment, people or property, or to NRW's assets, operation or reputation;
- **Category 4 (No impact):** An incident/occurrence that had no environmental or organisational impact.

Category 4 incidents have been excluded from the data used in this report.

What this report covers

This report uses data from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2024 and focuses on three key areas:

1. Total pollution incidents

An overview of all pollution incidents caused by water company sewerage and water supply assets, including wastewater treatment works (WwTW), water treatment works (WTW), combined sewer overflows (CSO), pumping stations (PS) and rising mains.

2. Serious pollution incidents

Focus on Category 1 and 2 incidents that caused major or significant effects or damage to the environment, people, or property.

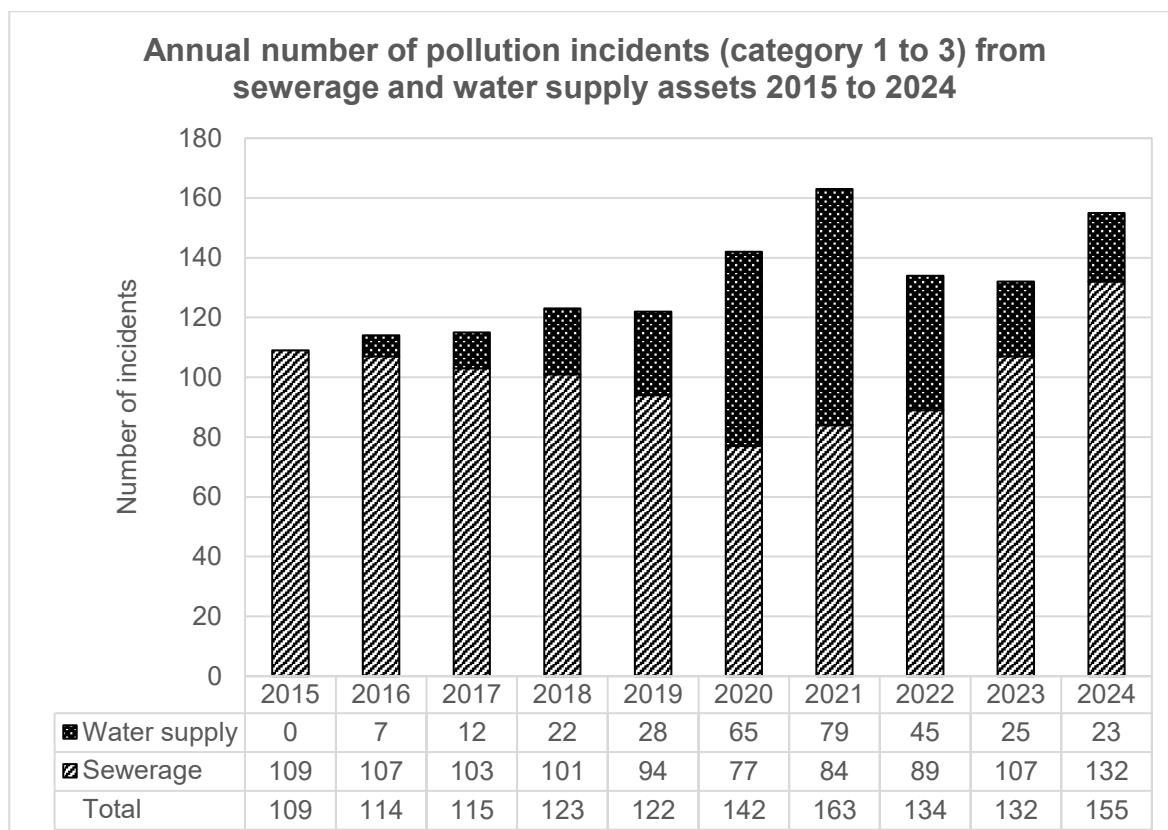
3. Self-reporting of incidents

Assessment of the percentage of incidents reported by the water companies themselves. We expect water companies to self-report as many pollution incidents as possible. High self-reporting rates show they understand their networks, monitor them effectively, and can respond quickly to minimise environmental harm.

Dŵr Cymru data

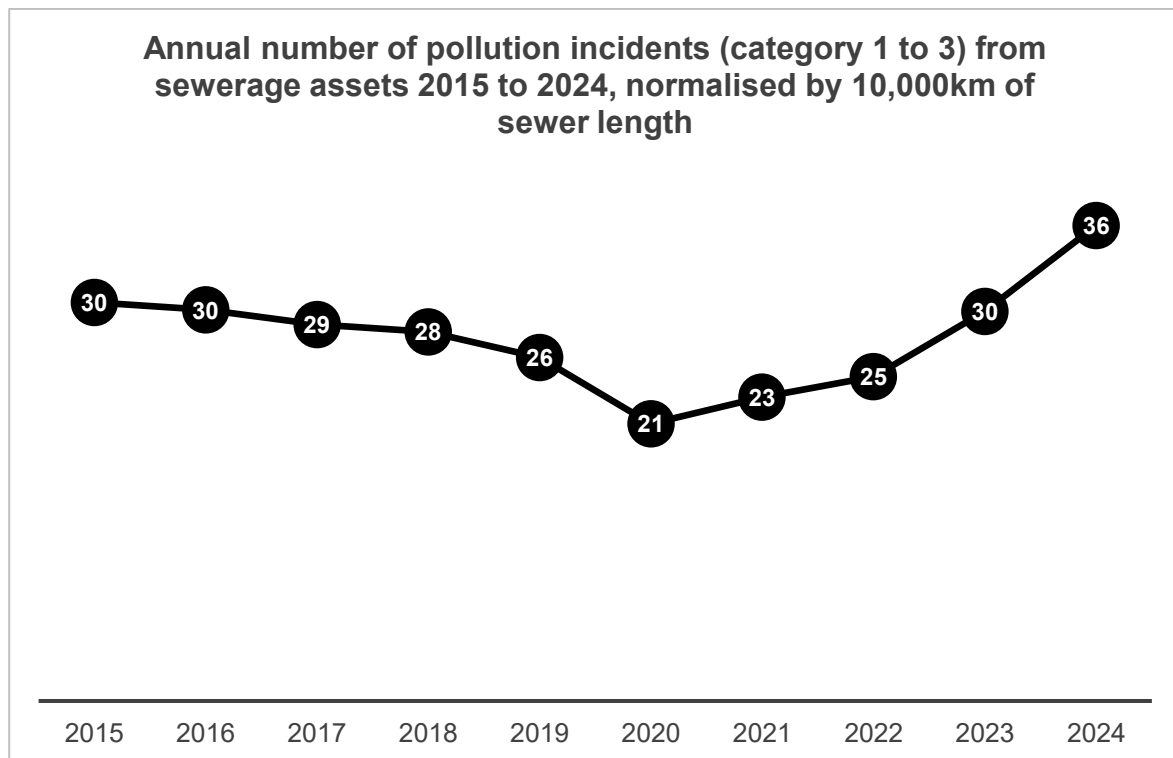
Total pollution incidents

Actual pollution incidents



Over the past decade, the number of pollution incidents caused by Dŵr Cymru in England and Wales has generally increased. In 2024, the company experienced the highest number of sewage pollution incidents since 2015, as well as the second-highest overall total of pollution incidents during this period.

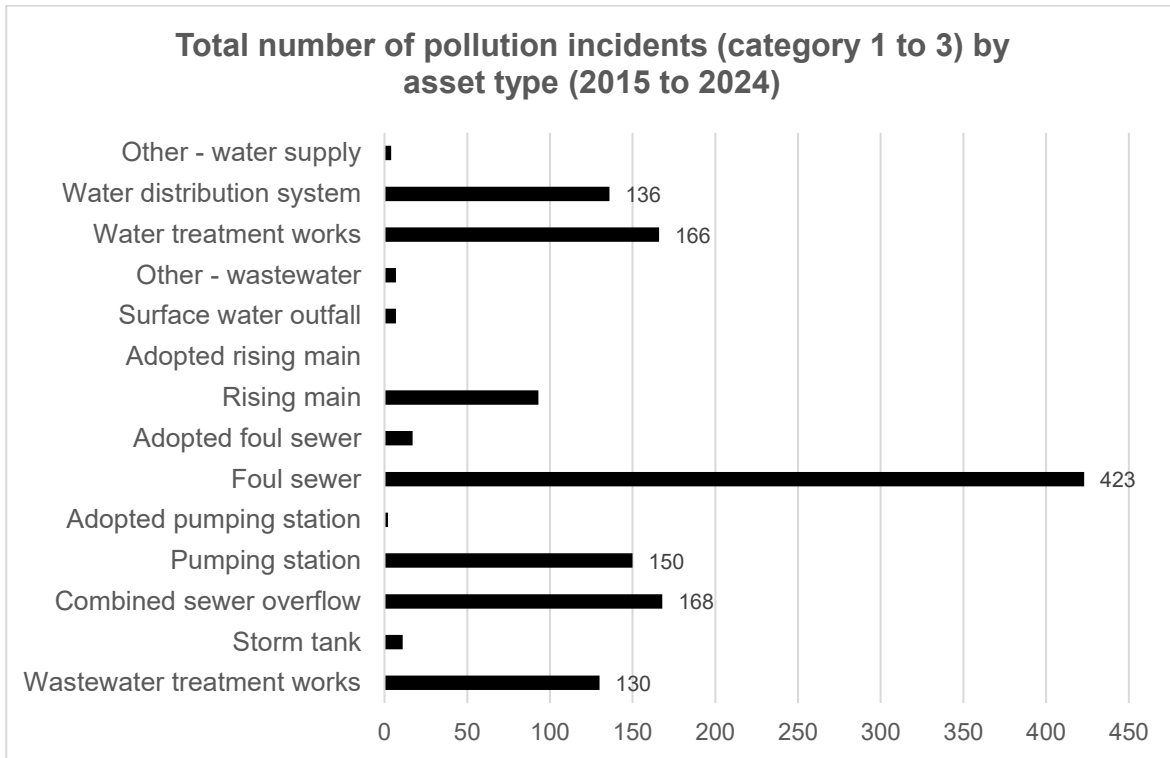
Normalised pollution incidents



This graph highlights pollution incidents caused solely by Dŵr Cymru's sewerage assets. The number of incidents is normalised by Dŵr Cymru's total sewer length, which was 36,259 km in 2017/18 across England and Wales. Normalising the data allows for a fair comparison with other water companies that operate over different-sized areas.

Between 2015 and 2020, pollution incidents per unit of sewer length decreased, but have risen each year over the past four years, reaching a ten-year high of 36 incidents per 10,000 km of sewer in 2024.

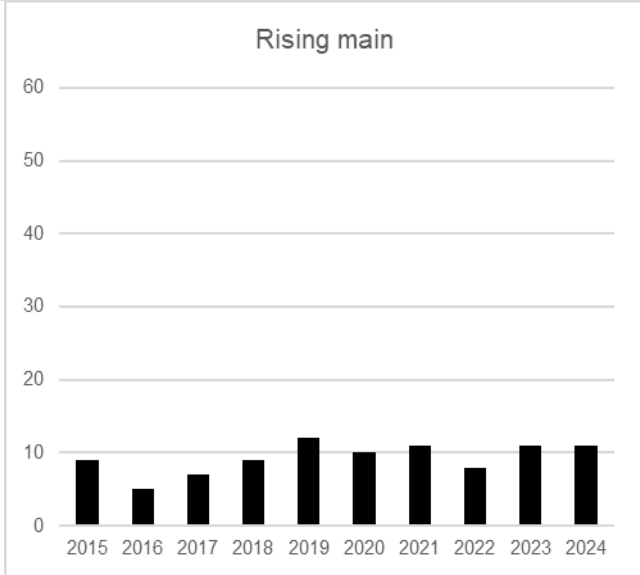
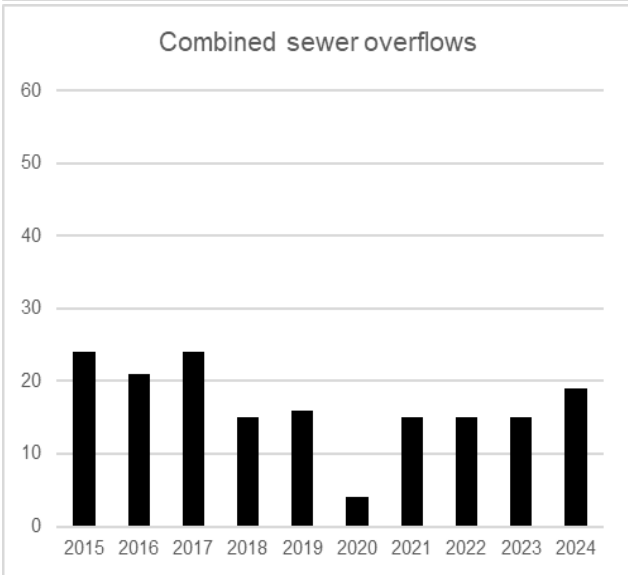
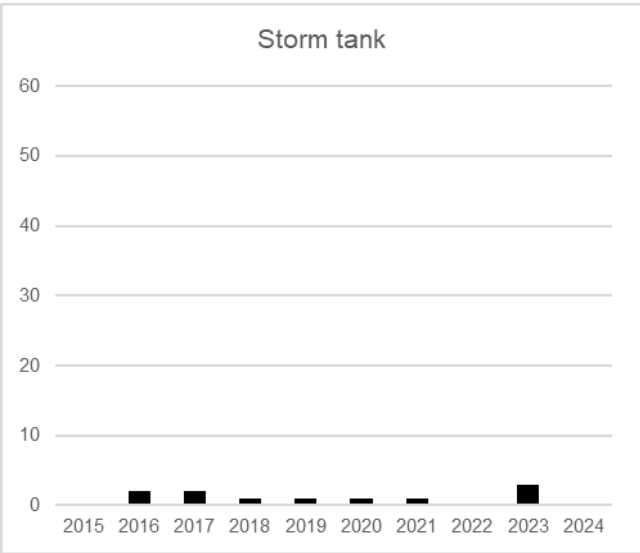
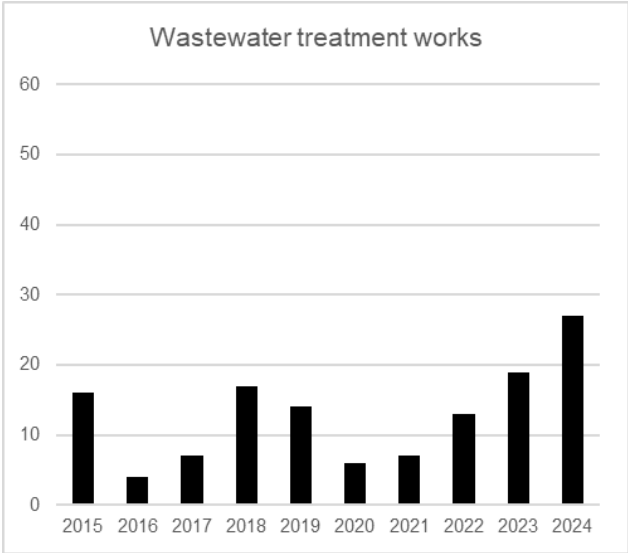
Asset analysis

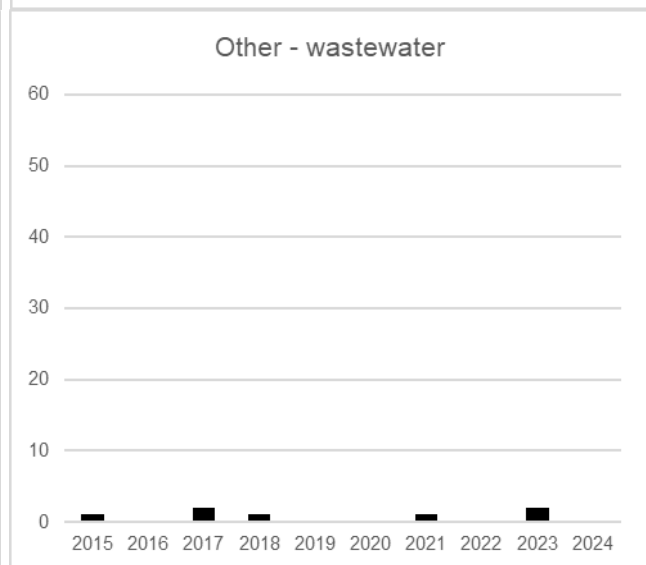
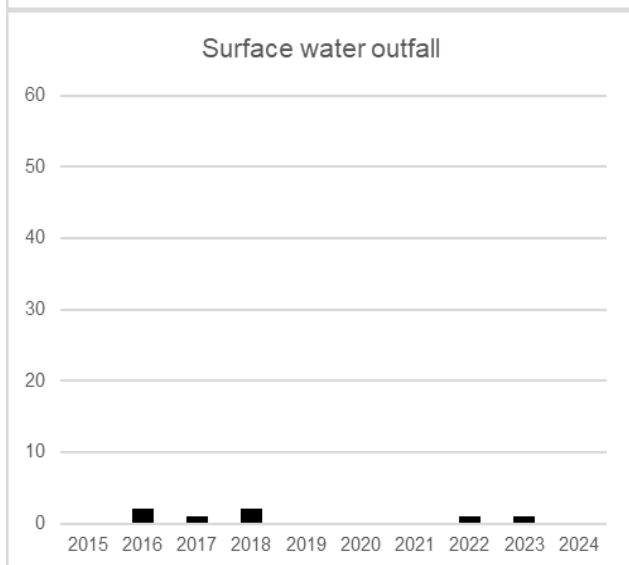
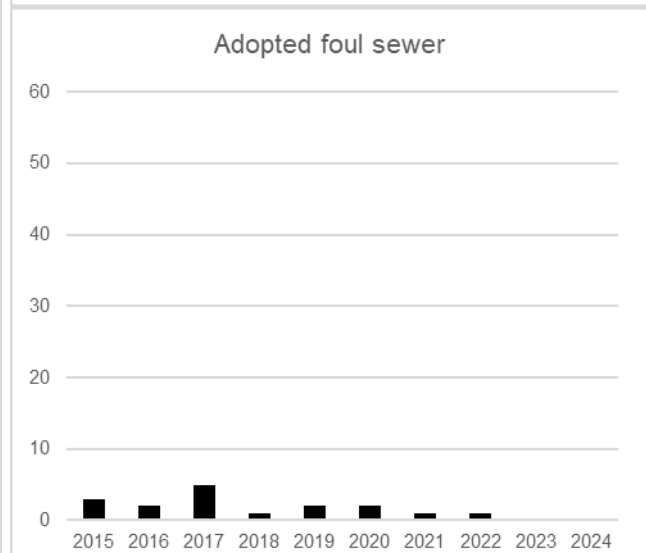
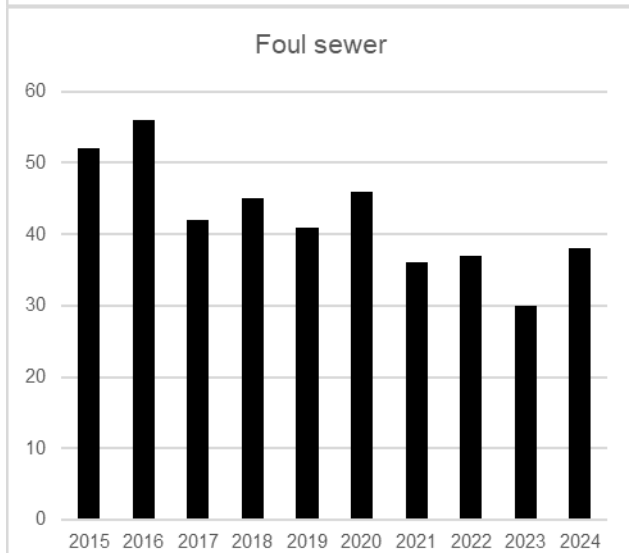
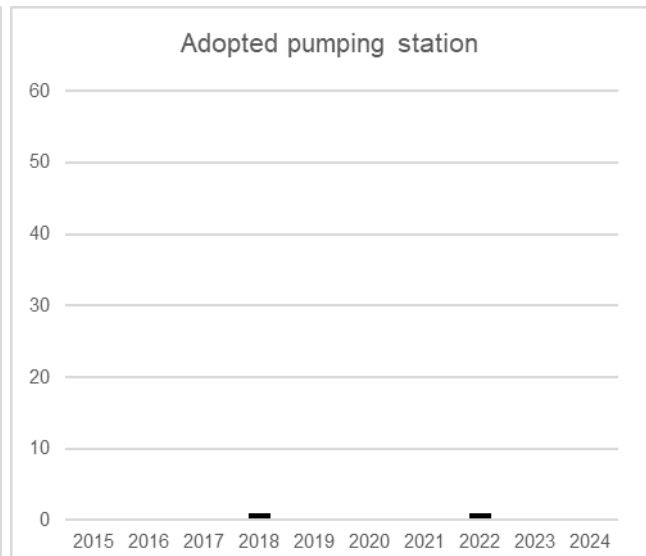
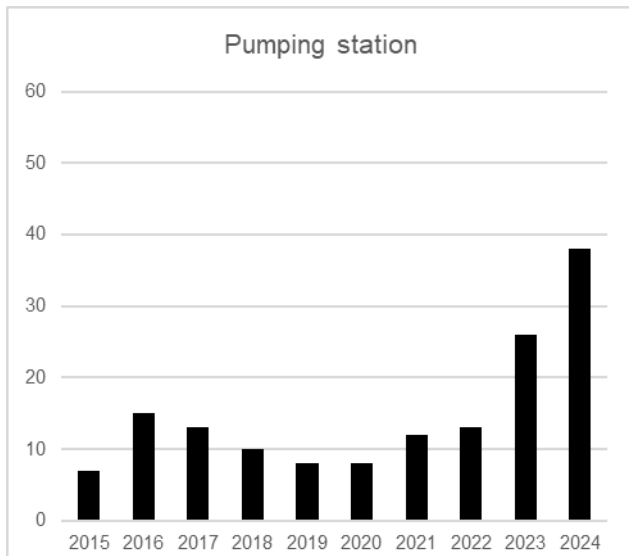


Dŵr Cymru's asset analysis above shows that foul sewers, combined sewer overflows (CSOs), water treatment works (WTWs), pumping stations (PSs), and the water distribution system are the top five sources of pollution incidents over the past decade.

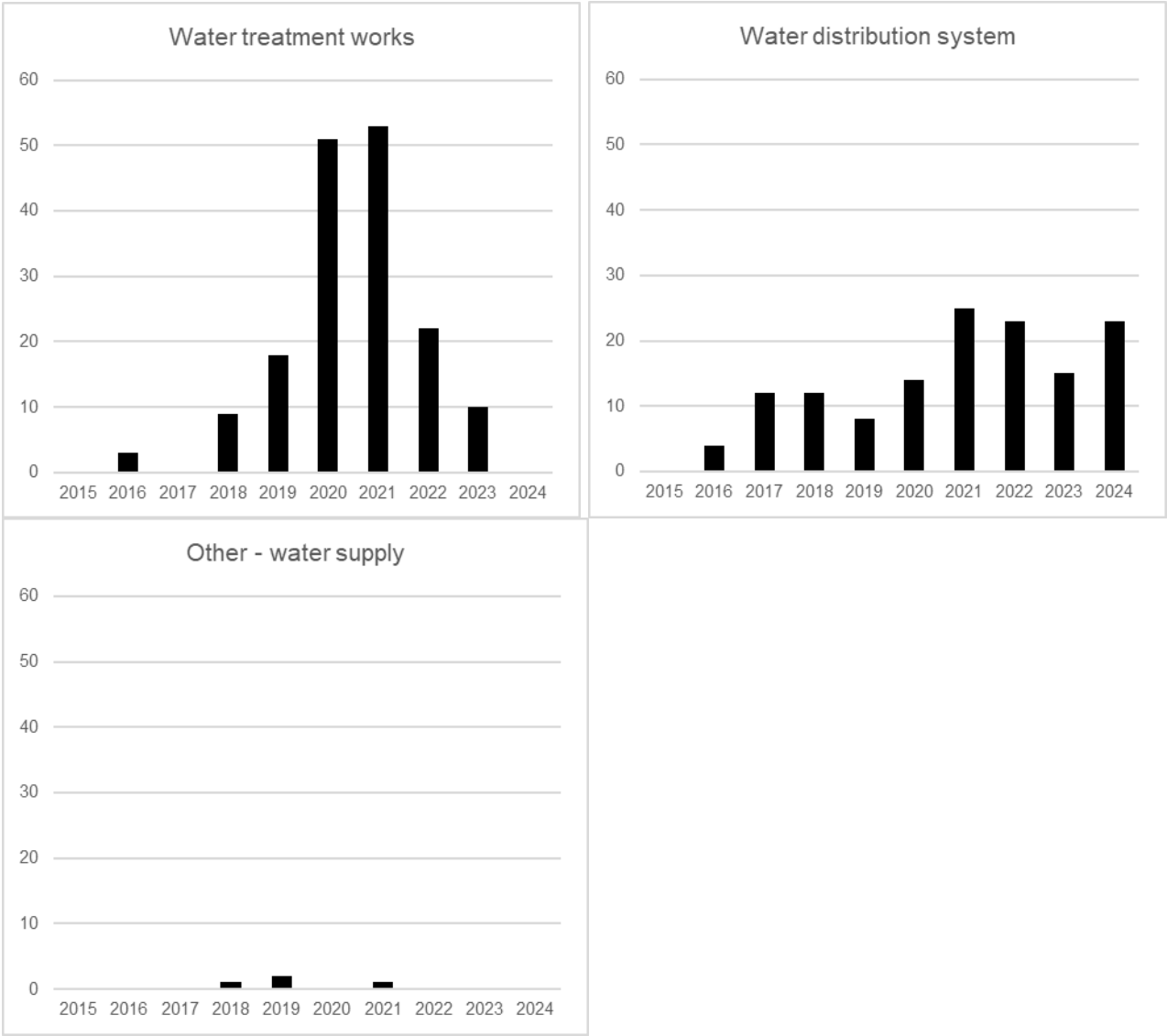
The asset graphs below show that while incidents from foul sewers and WTWs have generally declined, pollution from CSOs, PSs, and the water distribution system is rising.

Wastewater asset analysis

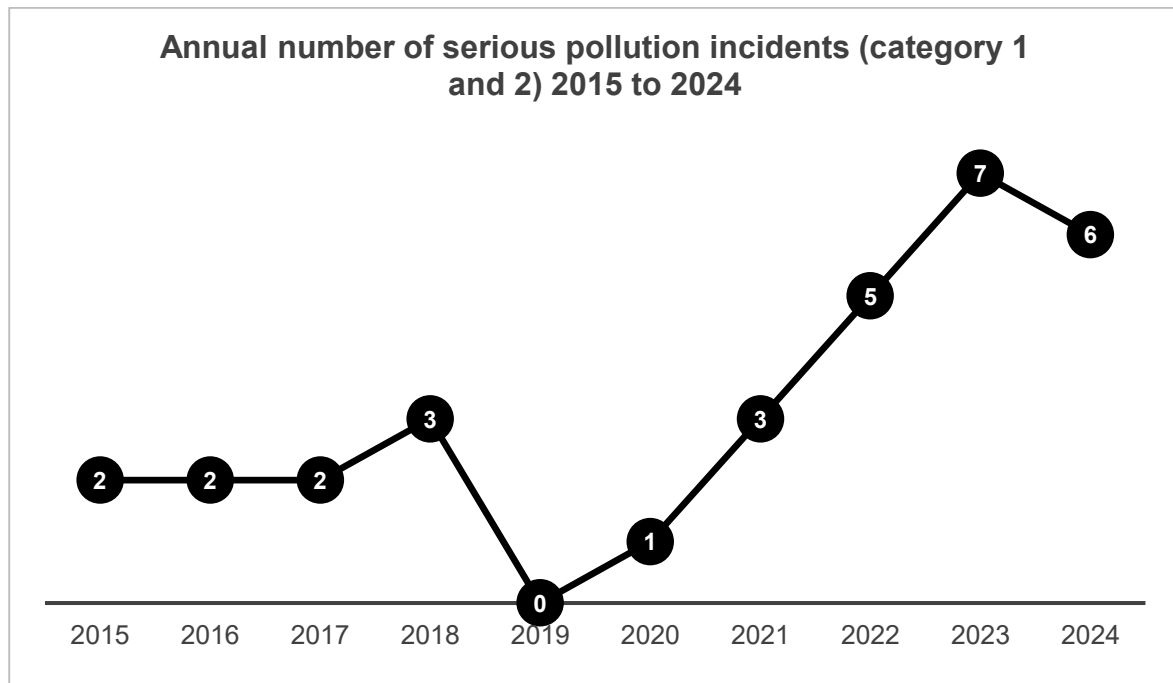




Water supply asset analysis

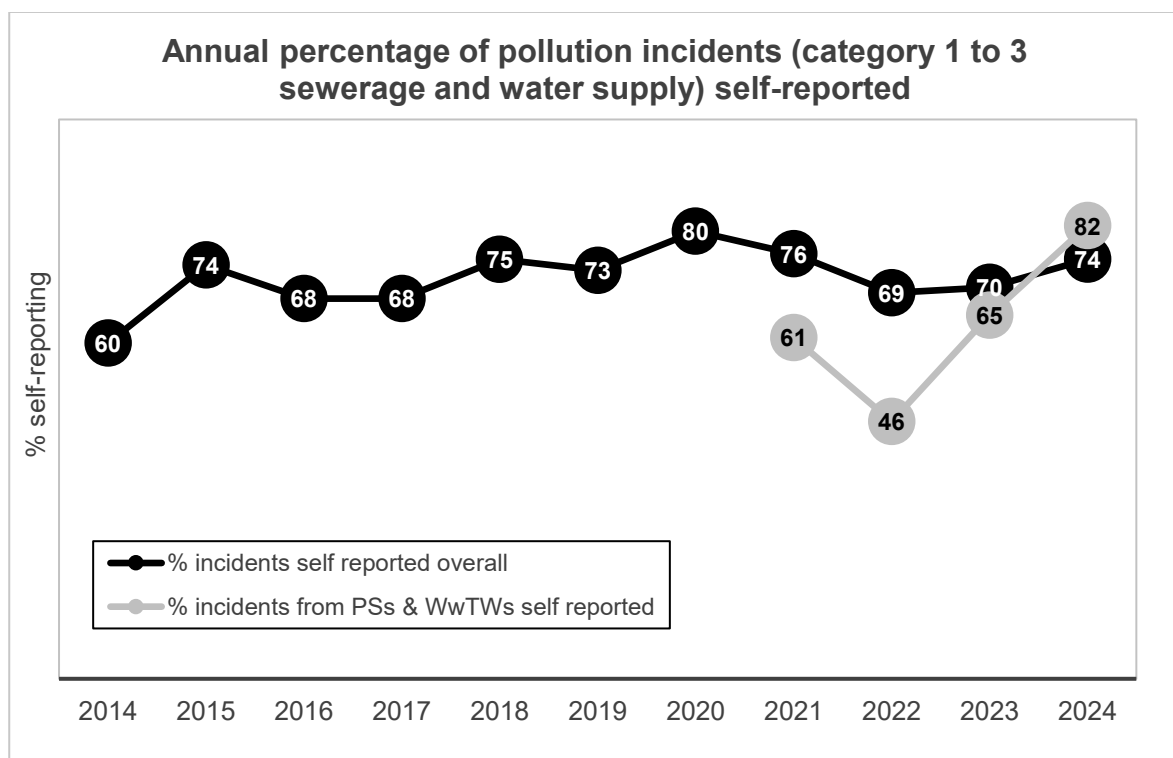


Serious incidents



Despite a reduction in serious incidents, by one in 2024, over the last five years there has been a rising trend in serious incidents for Dŵr Cymru.

Self-reported incidents

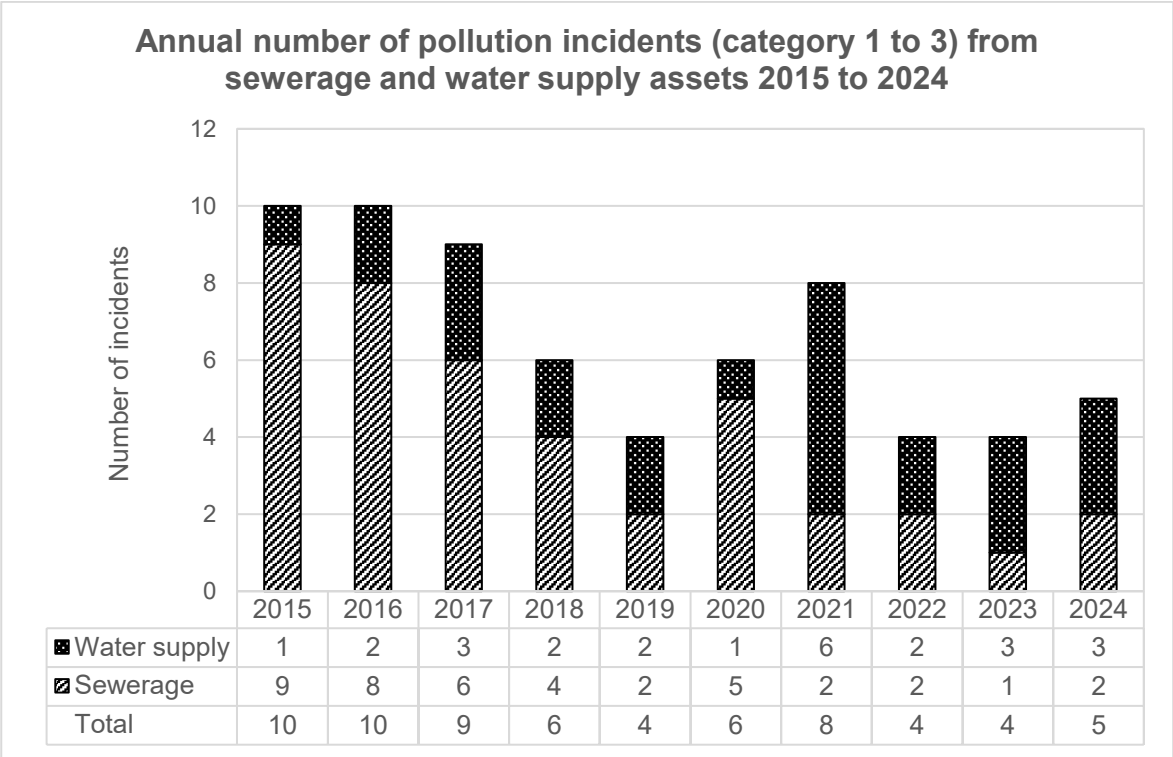


Over the past ten years, incident self-reporting has fluctuated, peaking at 80% in 2020 before declining afterward. However, self-reporting for PSs and WwTWs has shown steady improvement in recent years.

Hafren Dyfrdwy data

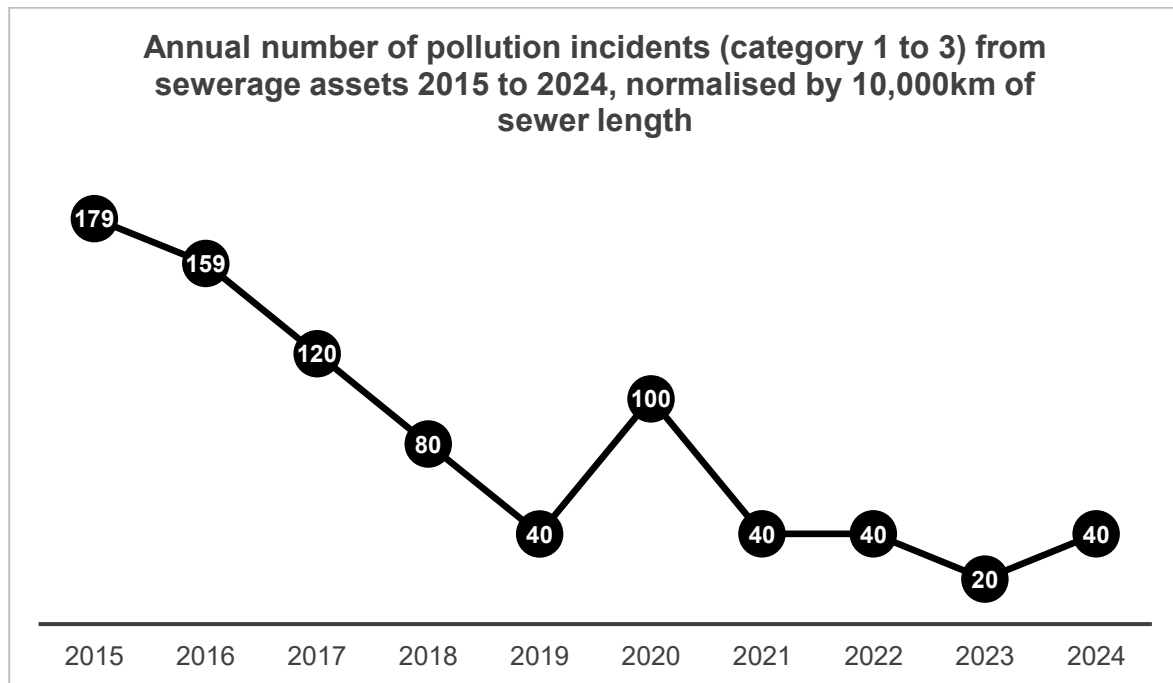
Total pollution incidents

Actual pollution incidents



Over the past decade, pollution incidents from Hafren Dyfrdwy’s sewerage and water assets have generally declined, with a brief rise in 2020–21 before falling again in the last three years.

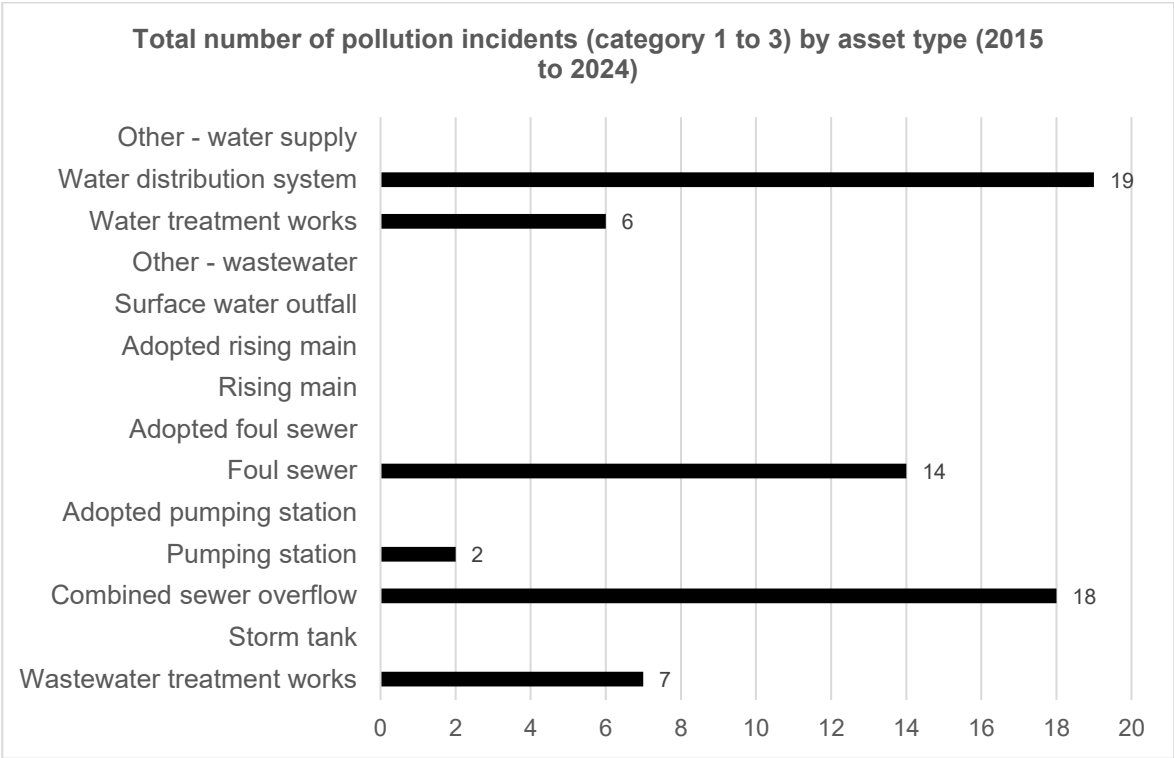
Normalised pollution incidents



This graph highlights pollution incidents caused solely by Hafren Dyfrdwy's sewerage assets. The number of incidents is normalised by Hafren Dyfrdwy's total sewer length, which was 502km in 2017/18. Normalising the data allows for a fair comparison with other water companies that operate over different-sized areas.

Pollution incidents per unit of sewer length fell between 2015 and 2019, rose sharply in 2020, and then declined again. However, in 2024, incidents doubled compared to 2023, though they remain below pre-2019 levels.

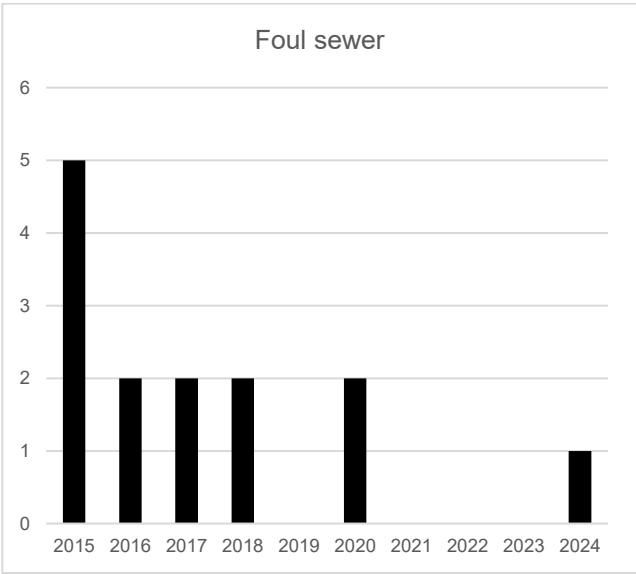
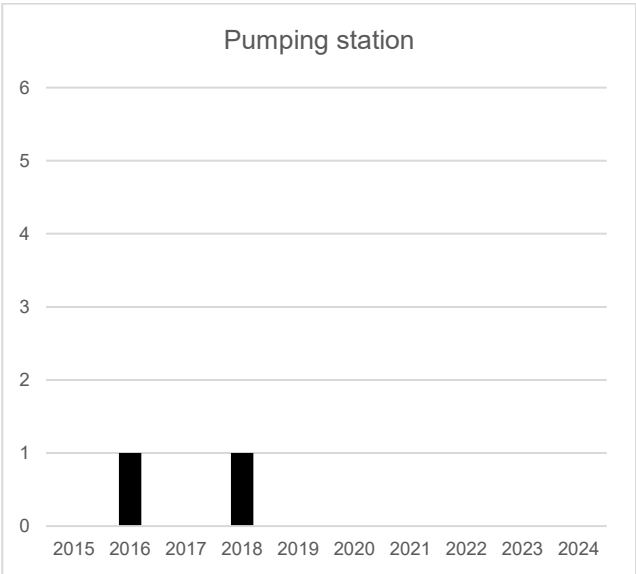
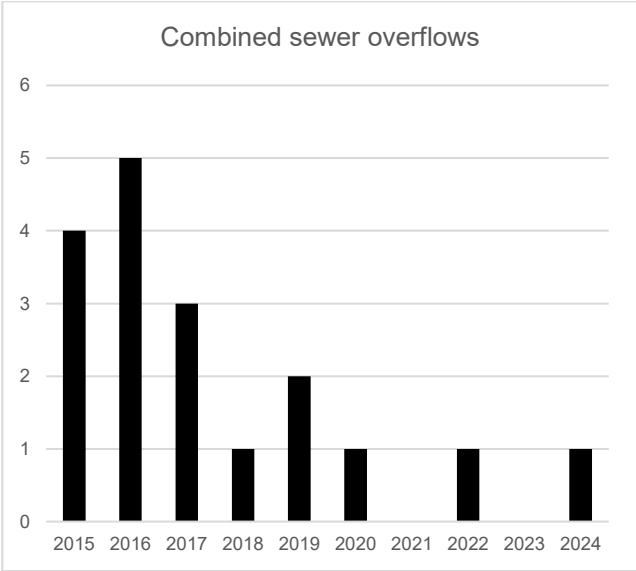
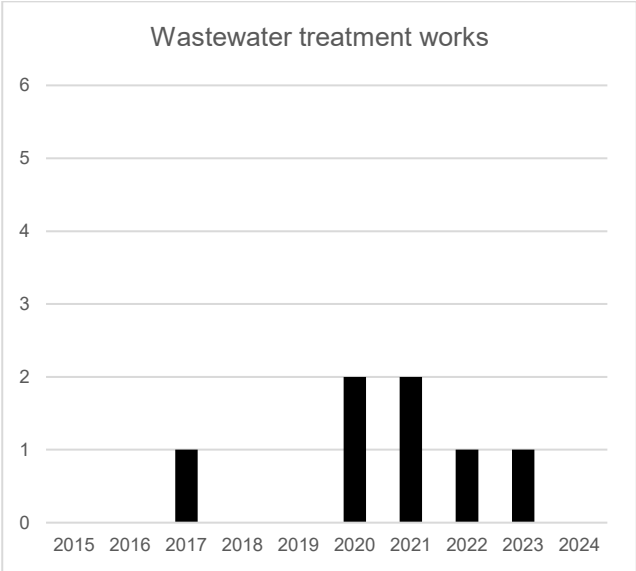
Asset analysis



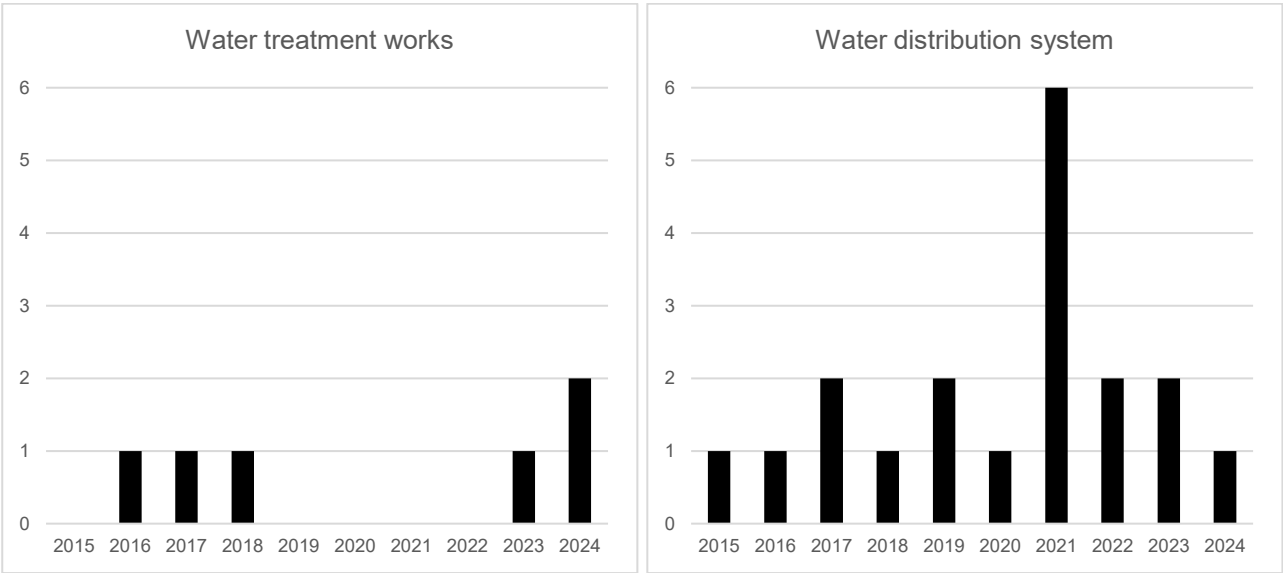
Hafren Dyfrdwy’s asset analysis above shows pollution incidents come from various assets, with the top causes over the last 10 years being the water distribution system, CSOs, foul sewers, WwTWs, WTWs, and PSs.

The asset graphs below show incidents from CSOs and foul sewers have generally declined, and pumping stations have caused no incidents in six years. The water distribution system remains the leading cause, peaking in 2021, while all WwTW incidents have occurred in the past five years.

Wastewater asset analysis



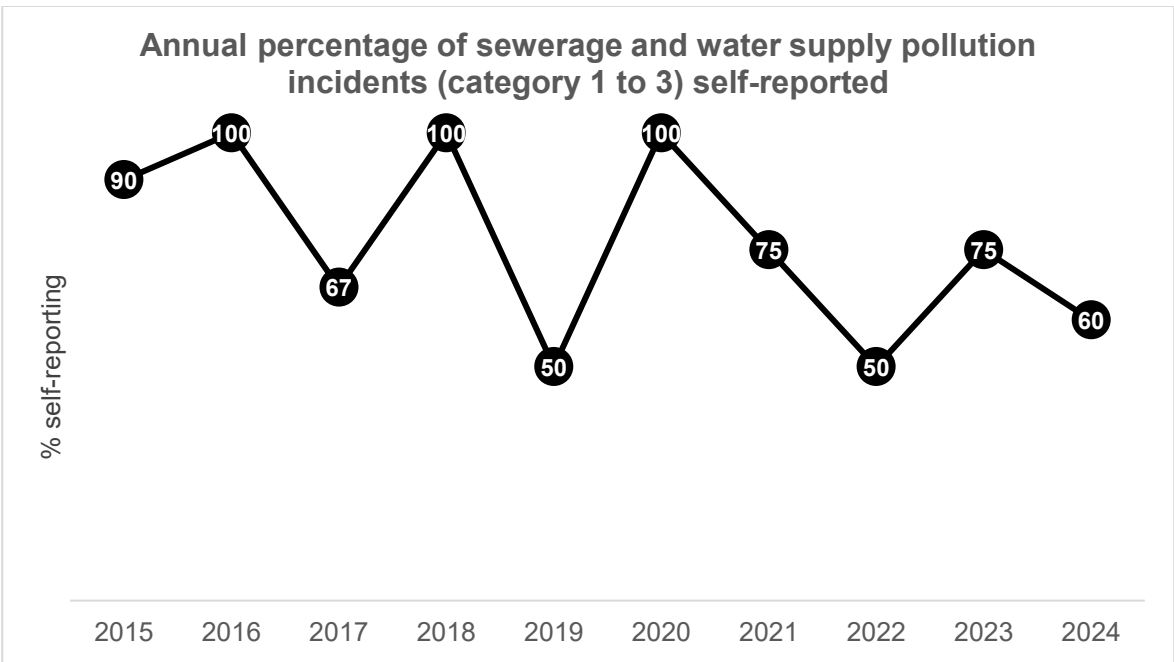
Water supply asset analysis



Serious incidents

Since the formation of Hafren Dyfrdwy in 2018, there have been no serious incidents recorded.

Self-reported incidents



Hafren Dyfrdwy's self-reporting has fluctuated, with a general decline in the last ten years. However, since 2015, Hafren Dyfrdwy reported all incidents at pumping stations and WwTWs apart from one incident in 2021.

Our response

We are holding water companies to account where they fail to meet our standards. The following sections set out the regulatory actions we are taking to address underperformance and drive improvements.

Enforcement

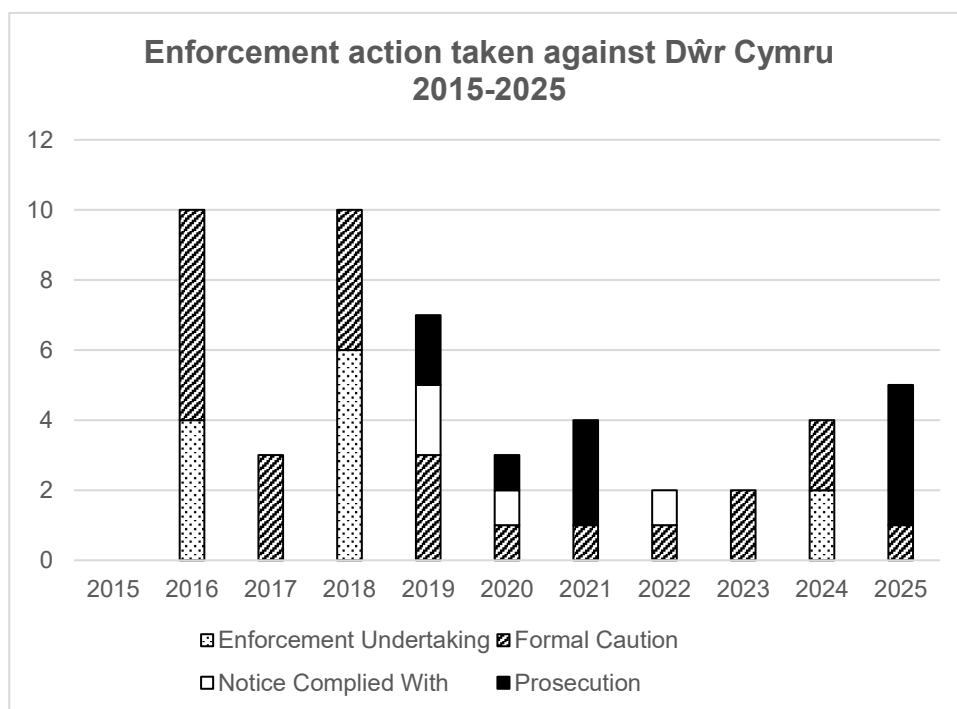
Our [Enforcement and Sanctions Policy](#) ensures environmental offences are handled fairly, firmly, and proportionately to prevent further harm. We use a range of tools outlined in our [Offence Response Options](#), from advice and guidance, and warnings to civil sanctions and prosecution, used based on the severity of the offence, the offender's willingness to comply and public interest.

Our enforcement interventions aim are to stop offences, restore harm, deter future breaches, and support compliance.

Minor or unintentional offences may be addressed through education or voluntary actions. Prosecution is generally considered a last resort and will only be pursued in cases where other enforcement tools have been ineffective or where the offence is particularly serious.

Complex investigations take time, with outcomes reported in later years.

Dŵr Cymru



The graph above shows the enforcement action we have taken in Wales, higher than a warning, against Dŵr Cymru since 2015. This is in response to pollution incidents and non-

compliance with environmental permits. In this time we have issued four notices, 24 formal cautions and ten prosecutions. Dŵr Cymru have been ordered to pay £1,930,427 in prosecution fines. We have also agreed to enforcement undertakings, which has resulted in a £174,500 contribution from Dŵr Cymru to local environmental charities and projects since 2015.

For details on recently concluded Dŵr Cymru prosecutions, please refer to the following webpages:

[Natural Resources Wales / Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water sentenced for polluting Gwent Levels protected environment](#)

[Natural Resources Wales / Landmark case sees Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water fined £1.35m for over 800 breaches to sewage discharge permits](#)

Hafren Dyfrdwy

Since the formation of Hafren Dyfrdwy we have not been required to take any enforcement action higher than a warning against them in response to pollution incidents or non-compliance with environmental permits.

Our regulatory action on pollution incidents

Our role is to regulate the water companies to make sure they comply with the law and protect the environment. It is their responsibility to meet the conditions we set in their water discharge permits and meet their statutory obligations.

As the regulator we will play our part to improve water company performance working in the following areas:

- A new legal requirement under the Water Special Measures Act, Pollution Incident Reduction Plans (PIRPs) will require water companies to set out how they will reduce pollution from all assets, including storm overflows. We are developing guidance for water companies and will publish it by the end of 2025. Water companies must have PIRPs in place by April 2026. These plans will set them targets to deliver annual improvements.
- We are working towards Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans (DWMPs) becoming statutory in Wales. They will form a key part of long-term planning and investment decisions. We will ensure water company DWMPs are ambitious, evidence-based, and aligned with wider environmental and climate goals. They will enable water companies to plan effectively for the next 25 years, addressing challenges such as population growth, drainage capacity, climate change, and asset resilience.
- We are focused on ensuring water companies deliver their AMP8 investment commitments (2025–2030), guided by the priorities set through PR24, which is the

price review process led by Ofwat that sets performance targets and funding for water companies. These priorities include reducing pollution, protecting water quality, increasing resilience to climate change, and improving services for customers and the environment. Our role is to hold companies to account and ensure that delivery is timely, transparent, and achieves real environmental outcomes.

- We will continue to focus on compliance activity, increasing our compliance assessment of water company permitted discharges through our Regulatory Service Plan. We have increased resource from 2025 to support this core regulatory work. By improving permit compliance, we can help prevent pollution incidents from permitted discharges by ensuring compliance.
- We are implementing a new Environmental Performance Assessment for 2026-30 with additional metrics to bring greater scrutiny.
- We are moving to a risk-based approach on how, or if we should respond, to incidents based on the potential impact to the environment. This shift in our approach means reports may not receive an immediate response if no direct intervention is required. Instead, they may be addressed through routine regulatory, enforcement, or pollution prevention work enabling us to better respond to incidents where our intervention is required to protect the environment. Any decisions on how we respond to a report of an incident will always be guided by environmental risk and intelligence.
- We are working with partners, including Ofwat, to drive improvements in water company performance, including reduction in pollution incidents.
- We are improving how we gather our data through our customer platform work and IT strategy for 2030.
- We are assessing how we can develop tools to maximise our data analysis capability, working with other regulators to learn from best practice
- We will continue to hold water companies accountable for performance improvements at every level, from frontline staff to senior leadership. We will also drive collaboration across the sector, pushing companies to share best practices that deliver environmental benefits.

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