

Raw sewage keeps swimmers away from UK beaches

10th August 2023



The UK is experiencing "poonami" - a sewage crisis. The environmental group Greenpeace said water companies poured toilet waste into rivers and seas for more than 300,000 hours in 2022. Many people have complained about becoming sick after swimming in the sea. Others expressed concerns about the terrible smell on beaches, or the horrible brown colour of the water. The research company Savanta conducted a poll about people's opinions on the poor quality of water. Almost a quarter of swimmers said they might not swim in the sea this year because of the risk. Last week, at least 57 people got diarrhoea after competing in sea swimming events at a World Triathlon Championship.

England and Wales are the only countries in the world to have privatized their water and sewage services. The UK government sold its water to private companies in 1987. The companies promised to spend billions of pounds on making services better. However, many Britons have complained that things have become much worse. The privatized companies have not invested enough money in stopping leaks or in modernizing systems. Since 1991, they have paid over £2 billion a year to their shareholders. Water campaigner and ex-rock star Feargal Sharkey is angry with the water companies. He said they have failed to create a quality system. He also blamed the UK government for not acting.

Sources: [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com) / [greenpeace.org](https://www.greenpeace.org) / [independent.co.uk](https://www.independent.co.uk)

Writing

Water, electricity, gas and the Internet should be government-owned. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

poonami / sewage / toilet waste / sick / swimming in the sea / smell / water / risk / privatized / government / billions / invest / leaks / money / shareholders / angry

True / False

- 1) The article says a "poonami" is a sewage crisis. T / F
- 2) Water companies poured waste in the seas for 300,000 hours this year. T / F
- 3) The water in seas around England has turned yellow. T / F
- 4) More than 57 people got diarrhoea swimming in the sea at a triathlon. T / F
- 5) England and Wales are the only countries not to own their water. T / F
- 6) People in the UK say water services are worse now than in 1987. T / F
- 7) Water companies have stopped all the leaks in the UK's water pipes. T / F
- 8) An ex-rock star blames the UK government for poor water services. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. crisis | a. pledged |
| 2. complained | b. beliefs |
| 3. sick | c. handed over |
| 4. opinions | d. corporations |
| 5. risk | e. protested |
| 6. companies | f. doing something |
| 7. promised | g. danger |
| 8. invested | h. disaster |
| 9. paid | i. put money into |
| 10. acting | j. ill |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) Should water and sewage be run by private companies?
- c) Why did the UK government sell its water?
- d) How safe is the water in your country?
- e) Why do companies care more about profit than people?
- f) Should the UK take back its water and sewage services?
- g) Would you go swimming in England?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the private water companies?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. water companies poured | a. of swimmers |
| 2. the horrible brown colour | b. become much worse |
| 3. conducted a poll | c. billions of pounds |
| 4. Almost a quarter | d. toilet waste into rivers |
| 5. at least 57 people got | e. to their shareholders |
| 6. privatized | f. of the water |
| 7. companies promised to spend | g. diarrhoea |
| 8. complained that things have | h. for not acting |
| 9. they have paid over £2 billion a year | i. about people's opinions |
| 10. He also blamed the UK government | j. their water |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you know about Greenpeace?
- What do you think of pouring human sewage into the sea?
- What's the best way to deal with sewage?
- Should the UK government give people money who got sick?
- What would you do if beaches smelled really bad?
- What do you think of swimming in the sea?
- What are rivers and beaches like in your country?
- What do you think of the word 'poonami'?

Spelling

- a sewage riciss
- The tioenvneanlmr group Greenpeace
- people have mnioadclep about becoming sick
- Others edrxsseeep concerns
- the lobhierr brown colour of the water
- Almost a tarqure of swimmers
- companies promised to spend bsiilonl of pounds
- companies have not eesitvdn enough money
- stopping keasl
- Water grepnmaaic and ex-rock
- failed to create a quality tseyms
- He also lmaebd the UK government

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. e	3. j	4. b	5. g
6. d	7. a	8. i	9. c	10. f

Role Play

Role A – Hose Pipes

You think hose pipes are the biggest waste of water. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their uses. Also, tell the others which is the least wasteful of these (and why): swimming pools, golf courses or bottled water.

Role B – Swimming Pools

You think swimming pools are the biggest waste of water. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their uses. Also, tell the others which is the least wasteful of these (and why): hose pipes, golf courses or bottled water.

Role C – Golf Courses

You think golf courses are the biggest waste of water. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their uses. Also, tell the others which is the least wasteful of these (and why): swimming pools, hose pipes or bottled water.

Role D – Bottled Water

You think bottled water is the biggest waste of water. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their uses. Also, tell the others which is the least wasteful of these (and why): swimming pools, golf courses or hose pipes.

Speaking – Water uses

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst uses of water at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| • Golf courses | • Hose pipes |
| • Bottled water | • Swimming pools |
| • Water pistols | • Car washes |
| • Fountains | • Water parks |

Answers – True False

1	T	2	F	3	F	4	T	5	T	6	T	7	F	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.