

August 22, 2022

**PRESS RELEASE: Act now on water and sewage issues**

***From drought to floods of sewage – now is the time for joined-up planning to prevent water shortages and pollution***

CPRE Sussex is calling on planning authorities, Southern Water and central Government to ensure supplies of clean, safe drinking water and protect the environment for future generations.

August 2022 has seen drought conditions, Sussex residents left without water supplies and floods of sewage discharged into our oceans and rivers after just one day of rain.

Last week the Safer Seas and River Service had warnings in place for Littlehampton, Saltdean, Seaford, Birling Gap, Eastbourne, Pevensey Bay, Normans Bay and Bexhill due to storm sewage discharge.

**CPRE trustee Dr Roger Smith said:** “The Government presumes that no matter how large the housing target or development, safe drinking water will always be provided and sewage treated. Consequently, development plans are adopted, and planning applications permitted, on that flawed and dangerous presumption. Communities cannot be confident that safe drinking water will always be reliably available and sewage treated without compromising the natural environment. Because of rapidly accelerating climate change and the reality that droughts will occur much more frequently, the Government’s reckless and irresponsible approach to planning, and the continuing failure to provide essential-for-life infrastructure must stop.”

Sussex is in a designated Serious Water Stress Area, meaning current or future household demand for water is a high proportion of effective rainfall.

**CPRE Sussex Chair, Prof Dan Osborn, said:** “We are approaching the limits of what the environment can provide on water. We need to take a strong position on the sustainability of decisions where the environment really counts. Far too often the environment, and ultimately our health and wellbeing, is given little weight. Current levels of sewage pollution prove that.”

Southern Water is currently consulting on its draft Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan.

The consultation, which closes on September 5, allows residents to see how well or badly their local sewage works is performing and what Southern Water is planning to do about it.

For example, last year just one of the many Southern Water sewage works discharging into the River Ouse released untreated sewage for an average of 17 hours a week.

**CPRE trustee Dr John Kay said:** “These releases are called ‘storm overflows’ but storms as normally understood don’t happen more than once a week. What actually happens is that the sewage works fail every time there is even moderate rain. The problem is excessive

development, coupled with all the older houses combining rainwater from roofs and roads into the foul sewer network.”

New development separates rainwater and foul sewage, so will not increase the frequency of ‘storm overflows’.

However, it will increase the level of pollution released each time due to the increase in sewage flows.

If we are to ensure safe drinking water and a protected environment for future generations we must act now.

CPRE Sussex is calling on all residents to write to their local councillors, MPs and water company urging them to act now to tackle water shortages and pollution.

Some residents have services provided by two companies – Southern Water or Thames Water for sewage and their drinking water supplier (Southern Water, Portsmouth Water or South East Water).

The current Southern Water consultation can be viewed at [southernwater.co.uk/dwmp](https://southernwater.co.uk/dwmp)

-ENDS-

For press inquiries and interview opportunities contact [sheena.journalism@gmail.com](mailto:sheena.journalism@gmail.com).

#### **Notes for editors:**

##### **About CPRE Sussex**

CPRE Sussex is the local branch of CPRE, working for a countryside that’s rich in nature, accessible to everyone and responding to the climate emergency. We want sustainable, vibrant communities in the Sussex countryside. We believe that good land-use planning is the unsung hero of environmental protection. It can help slow the growth in road traffic, encourage urban regeneration, curb urban sprawl, protect the beauty and tranquillity of the countryside and safeguard wildlife habitats.