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PRESS RELEASE: Time to address 'flawed' water infrastructure

Charity calls for action as Sussex is hit by water shortages, sewage pollution and flooding.

CPRE Sussex is calling on the Government, water companies and OFWAT to adopt an open, common-sense approach to tackle environmental and water capacity issues.

This month, we have seen water shortages in East Sussex, flooding disrupting train services and sewage discharges at beaches from Pagham to Hastings.

These events highlight how a flawed approach to planning and lack of investment in infrastructure are becoming ever-increasing problems as climate change accelerates.

CPRE Sussex Chairman Dan Osborn said: "If we build without due regard to the environment's capacity or infrastructure deficiencies water and sewage issues will get worse. What else would common sense tell you?"

CPRE Sussex says issues like high demand in hot weather are only likely to get worse if drought conditions become more frequent.

It wants to see all new developments built on a water neutral and nutrient neutral basis.

Water neutrality means balancing nature's needs with those of people, agriculture and business, always ensuring there is enough for nature.

Locally, it means reducing our water usage to protect Sussex's chalk streams and future supplies for people.

Nutrient neutrality means developments or projects do not add to existing nutrient burdens to protect nature and prevent pollution of water courses.

CPRE Sussex has also repeated its long-term call for immediate investment in wastewater treatment infrastructure to prevent harmful sewage discharges into rivers and coastal waters.

CPRE Sussex 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 therefore be confident that safe drinking water will always be reliably available, and sewage treated, without compromising the natural environment, and that decisions taken today will not impoverish future generations.

“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.”

For more information on how to support CPRE Sussex visit cpresussex.org.uk/get-involved

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For press inquiries and interview opportunities contact sheena.journalism@gmail.com.

Notes for editors:

1. Data on latest sewage pollution alerts taken from Surfers Against Sewage on 20 June, 2023: <https://www.sas.org.uk/water-quality/sewage-pollution-alerts/>

About CPRE Sussex

CPRE Sussex is shaping a greener future for Sussex. Our priorities are:

- Beautiful landscapes, rich in nature and greener towns and cities
- Countryside and green spaces which are accessible to all, enriching lives and health
- Sustainable development for thriving communities
- Effective responses to the climate emergency

We engage with decision makers, influencing them and challenging them to protect the Sussex countryside and green spaces. We inform on environmental issues and empower individuals and communities with robust evidence to defend and enhance the green spaces they love. We believe in collaborating with others to ensure a greener future for our county. We research and provide advice on planning issues. Together we can shape a greener future for Sussex.