

6 August 2024

PRESS RELEASE: Survey reveals scale of sewage flooding in Sussex

Charity survey of Sussex parish and town councils reveals almost 8 in 10 suffer from diffuse sewage flooding.

A survey of parish and town councils across Sussex has revealed the scale of issues being caused by sewage flooding.

Almost 8 in 10 (78%) of the 58 councils which responded to the CPRE Sussex survey said they suffer from diffuse sewage flooding in their area, impacting homes, roads, footpaths, green spaces and environmental waters.

Southern Water is reported as only taking action to prevent sewage flooding in 3 in 10 local council areas and only helping to clear it up in 1 in 4 local council areas. Other headline figures from the survey include:

- Diffuse sewage flooding, additional to the reported “spills” at designated storm sewage outflows, occurs weekly to monthly in 4 in 10 local councils.
- More than 1 in 10 councils suffer from widespread sewage flooding.
- More than 7 in 10 believe the sewers in their area are hydraulically overloaded.
- More than 7 in 10 are under development pressure.
- Almost 9 in 10 believe the sewers in their area will not cope with additional sewage.

CPRE Sussex director Paul Steedman said: “These are truly disgusting figures that show just how widespread sewage flooding is, going well beyond the story of licensed storm surge overflows. We’ve heard about sewage bubbling up in people’s homes and gardens – as if the pollution of our rivers and seas wasn’t already bad enough.”

The survey is part of a [campaign by CPRE Sussex](#) calling for sewerage infrastructure to be in place before new housing developments are allowed to proceed. This could be achieved by using pre-commencement conditions, also known as Grampian conditions.

Of the councils surveyed, 6 in 10 believe pre-commencement conditions could strengthen planning in their area. A further 3 in 10 opted for “don’t know”, suggesting further explanation and guidance is needed.

Mr Steedman said: “Our pipes increasingly cannot cope with what we’re already putting down them. The costs in filthy rivers, seas, homes and streets are all too clear. Simply building more and more homes and connecting them to the existing sewers is a recipe for disaster. We need a comprehensive upgrade to our sewer and water treatment systems before we put even more poo down them. Councils should make this a condition of new planning permissions, with backing from the government.”

CPRE Sussex has written to local planning authorities across Sussex to share the initial survey results. It has also asked planning officers a series of questions, including if there is scope to use pre-commencement conditions and if there is support for a 25-year sewerage and sewage treatment plan.

Find out more about the sewerage infrastructure campaign [here](#).

-ENDS-

For press inquiries and interview opportunities call Sheena Campbell on 07709 354924.

Notes for editors:

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.