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Campaign to Protect  
Rural England  
Sussex

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Sussex charity calls for ‘urgent change’ to address systemic failings in water systems**

***As Channel 4 series Dirty Business hits the headlines, CPRE Sussex calls for an end to the discharge of partially and untreated sewage into our rivers and coastal waters.***

A Sussex charity says residents across the county have ‘suffered outrageously’ at the hands of water companies.

CPRE Sussex has long campaigned for an end to the discharge of partially and untreated sewage into our rivers and coastal waters.

Now, with a new television series hitting the headlines, the charity hopes increased media attention may help to drive change.

**CPRE Sussex director Paul Steedman said:** “Dirty Business reveals what we have known for a long time – urgent, widespread change is needed to address systemic failings in our water systems and the repair the damage done by years of bad practice. Thousands have been left without water for days at a time. Poisonous microbeads have washed up on our shores and sewage has been left spilling into our waterways, homes and streets.”

A 2024 [CPRE Sussex survey](#) of 67 parish and town councils across Sussex found 8 in 10 suffer from diffuse sewage flooding in their area, impacting homes, roads, footpaths, green spaces and environmental waters.

Diffuse sewage flooding occurs weekly to monthly in a third of local council areas in addition to the reported “spills” at designated storm sewage overflows.

At the same time, 7 in 10 councils say they are under development pressure and almost 9 in 10 believe the sewers in their area will not cope with additional sewage.

In January, the Government published its ‘A new vision for water’ White Paper in a bid to address nationwide failings by water companies.

However, while there are some welcome changes, the paper lacks detail and urgency.

**Mr Steedman commented:** “A new regulator must rigorously police water companies and hold them to account, acting in the public interest rather than prioritising private profit. We also need to simplify the complexity of the water system at a planning level. Currently, a lack of coherent systems is damaging the environment and wasting valuable time and resources. Any future

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developments must take account of the needs of current and future residents for an adequate supply of drinking water.”

CPRE Sussex believes sewers and water treatments works must be upgraded before construction or occupation of new sites.

This could be achieved with greater use of pre-commencement or ‘Grampian’ conditions by local planning authorities.

Find out more about CPRE Sussex’s work on water quality at [cpresussex.org.uk/what-we-care-about/water](https://cpresussex.org.uk/what-we-care-about/water)

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For press inquiries and interview opportunities call Nancy Duckels on 07795 551852.

### **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.