

19 November 2024

**PRESS RELEASE: Charity calls on Sussex MPs to back ‘sewerage before development’ campaign**

CPRE Sussex has written to MPs across the county asking them to back its [‘sewerage before development’ campaign](#).

The letter highlights the results of a recent survey by the charity which found 4 in 5 councils across the county are affected by diffuse sewage flooding with waste bubbling up into homes, gardens and streets.

It calls on MPs to help ensure efforts to address housing affordability do not make sewage spills worse.

**CPRE Sussex director Paul Steedman said:** “There is a significant risk that, without careful coordination, the government’s desire to ‘get Britain building’ will make the situation worse.

“Uncontrolled development that runs ahead of upgrades to our sewerage system could mean forcing more human waste into a system that is already struggling. We need to ensure our sewers and wastewater treatment works are upgraded ahead of loads more loos being connected – not the other way around.”

CPRE Sussex is 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.

The letter, sent to MPs this week, asks them to write to the government, requesting changes in national planning policy to make this the normal approach, as well as taking up the matter with local councils, the Environment Agency and Southern Water.

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

-ENDS-

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

**Notes for editors:**

Results from our survey of 67\* parish and town councils across Sussex:

- 78% suffer from diffuse sewage flooding in their area, variously impacting on homes, roads, footpaths, green spaces and environmental waters;
- Diffuse sewage flooding occurs weekly to monthly in 34% of local councils, additional to the reported “spills” at designated storm sewage overflows;
- 15% suffer from widespread sewage flooding, as opposed to more isolated events;

- 63% believe that the sewers in their area are hydraulically overloaded;
- Southern Water is only taking action to prevent sewage flooding in 32% of local council areas and only help to clear it up in 25% of local council areas;
- 65% believe that groundwater infiltrates the sewers in their area;
- 73% believe that surface water makes the problem worse;
- 69% of local councils are under development pressure and 86% believe that the sewers in their area will not cope with additional sewage;
- 57% believe that pre-commencement conditions could strengthen planning in their area;
- 39% did not know if pre-commencement conditions would help suggesting further explanation and guidance is needed.

\*An earlier release of this data was based on responses from 58 councils. A further 9 councils subsequently submitted responses.

Our recommendations for putting sewerage infrastructure in place before development:

1. DEFRA imposing a requirement on water companies to develop longer term sewerage and sewage treatment plans, to better control groundwater infiltration of sewers and surface water inundation of sewers; with such plans being prepared in liaison with the relevant local planning authorities, to ensure that local housing plans are properly aligned to water sector infrastructure planning.
2. The clear phasing of site allocations within Local Plans, tied to the delivery of the necessary upgrades to sewers and wastewater treatment works.
3. The use of pre-commencement conditions in the planning process (also known as “Grampian” conditions) requiring sewerage upgrades prior to construction or occupation.

### **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.