

First-time sewerage for existing properties



SOUTH WEST WATER

South West Water has a legal duty to work out the most economical and practical way to provide effective drainage where the current drainage for two or more properties is unsatisfactory.

Unsatisfactory drainage includes situations where there are environmental or amenity problems such as pollution of a ditch, stream or river from a septic tank or leaking cesspit, and odour, nuisance or public health problems.

Which properties are eligible for first-time sewerage?

By law, only existing properties with drainage for domestic sewage are eligible for consideration. Isolated single properties are not included.

Funding for schemes serving new properties are the responsibility of the developer.

What should I do if I think my property is eligible?

Firstly, we suggest you look at the problems that



you have with the current drainage system. Consider whether it is possible to solve your drainage problem by repairing structural damage or replacing the existing system.

Alternatively, improved maintenance of the system, e.g. regular emptying or desludging the contents of the unit, or removing surface water from the system which maybe overloading it could be a solution.

If you are satisfied that the drainage problem could not be solved in this way and you wish us to look at ways of improving the situation, consider applying for first-time sewerage.

How do I apply for first-time sewerage?

Before applying we suggest you seek the support of other property owners because new public sewers are only practicable where several properties are involved.

The best way of doing this is to seek co-operation from your parish or district council.



We will send you a detailed explanatory leaflet and forms to complete so we have the necessary information to consider your case.

How will you consider my application?

Once we have the relevant information, we will liaise with the local environmental health officer and the Environment Agency.

We will then consider the options, costs and benefits in accordance with Government guidelines. We will be responsible for providing a public sewer if our assessment:

- confirms environmental and amenity problems, and
- identifies that a public sewer is the most cost effective way to provide satisfactory drainage.

We aim to make recommendations as quickly as possible, even if more detailed work is required for a scheme to progress.



Where the cost-effective solution is for the householder to improve and maintain a private system, it will remain the householder's responsibility.

It is still possible for any single owner, occupier or local authority to requisition a drain or sewer to serve one or more properties but the cost of providing it will fall to them.

What happens next?

The proposed scheme will be the one that overcomes the environmental or amenity problems at least overall cost.

This may not be the least overall cost to the property owner(s) or to South West Water, but to the community as a whole.

Our funding for first-time sewerage schemes is set in five year periods. Therefore, even if we agree a public sewer needs to be built, it could be several years before the scheme goes ahead.

A public sewer is unlikely to be cost-effective in many rural situations.

What can I do if I disagree with your decision?

If you disagree with the assessment made by South West Water or about the timescale for providing a public sewer, you may refer the matter to the Environment Agency and its decision will be final.

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What are the costs involved?

If a public sewer is provided, South West Water will pay for it and any treatment system and subsequent maintenance.

Property owners will be liable for:

- installing the private house drainage between their property and the property boundary
- obtaining building regulations approval from the local authority for the above works
- making safe the old private drainage arrangements to be abandoned (e.g. septic tank)
- separating surface water from the sewerage system
- payment to South West Water of the standard infrastructure charge which is a one-off payment
- annual sewerage charges from the date of connection to the live system

Householders remain responsible for the operation, maintenance and effects of the existing drainage arrangements to their property, until such time as any new public system is formally commissioned and the property connected. Once connected they retain responsibility for the existing private drain within their property to the point of connection on the new system.

Contact us

www.southwestwater.co.uk/firsttimesewerage

or write to: Developer Services, South West Water,
Peninsula House, Rydon Lane, Exeter EX2 7HR

Services Helpline: 0344 346 2020*

8am - 6pm Monday to Friday. Emergencies only at any other time.

*03 numbers are charged at standard rates and will be included in any free minutes in a mobile or landline phone contract.