

INTENSE RAINFALL, RISING SEA LEVELS AND SEVERE STORMS



INCREASE RESILIENCE OF OUR WASTEWATER SYSTEM

Intense rainfall increases the risk of flooding as our sewer system has historically been designed to capture rainwater.

And to reduce the chances of sewage flooding homes and businesses, our wastewater system, in common with wastewater systems around the world, was designed and built to release diluted sewage in emergency situations through combined sewer overflows across our wastewater system that flow out to rivers and the sea.

We will increase the capacity of our wastewater system to reduce the impact of intense rainfall events.

Society increasingly considers these flooding events to be unacceptable. We agree. A great example of how we can make the change is the £1bn 'Living With Water Programme', which will improve strategic drainage infrastructure in the greater Belfast area through a combination of traditional and nature-based solutions.

We will work closely with partners to deliver sustainable solutions that provide adaptation to climate change and will also, where possible, provide a range of benefits to communities such as improved green spaces.

Warmer drier weather impacts on the condition of wastewater in our sewerage system, making this more difficult to treat and increasing the compliance risk for discharges to watercourses, particularly after the first heavy rainfall.

We will assess the potential impact on our wastewater system as part of our Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans.

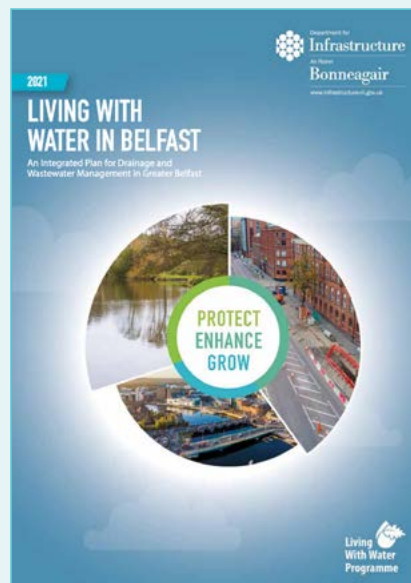
We deal with around 15,000 blockages of our sewers each year, over 11,000 of which could have been prevented. The most common cause of these blockages is the flushing of items which do not dissolve down the toilet such as wet wipes and the disposal of fats, oils and grease down the sink.

We will work with our customers to communicate what can be safely disposed down the sink or in the toilet.

DELIVERING A 21ST CENTURY DRAINAGE AND WASTEWATER SYSTEM FOR BELFAST

In 2021/22, the Infrastructure Minister published Living With Water in Belfast: An Integrated Plan for Drainage and Wastewater Management in Greater Belfast.

At £1.4bn over 12 years it is not a quick, or inexpensive fix. The Plan aims to deliver a long-term approach to drainage and wastewater management that will protect from flooding, provide a cleaner and greener environment and ensure that Belfast is open for business and investment. Over 50 engineers are working full time to deliver the construction works, which will include upgrading six wastewater treatment works and their sea outfalls, replacing pumping stations, building new tunnels and upgrading pipelines and sewers across the area.



Find out more at Living With Water Programme | Department for Infrastructure (<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/living-with-water-in-belfast-plan-updated-apr22.pdf>)