

WASTE WATER MANAGEMENT

Homeowners, Are you aware of your responsibilities?

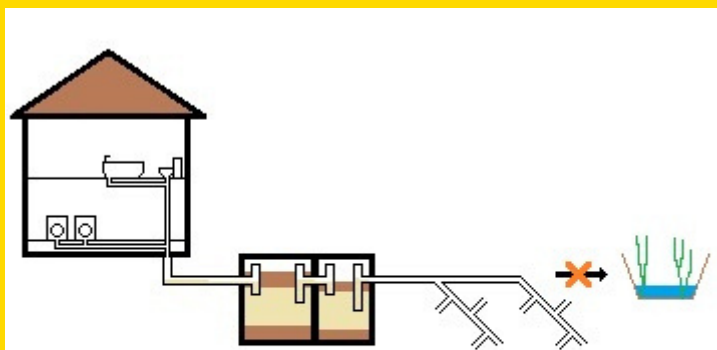
If you do not receive a bill for treating waste from a water company then you are unlikely to be connected to the mains sewage system.

This means you will have either a septic tank or a package treatment plant instead.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

A **septic tank** has chambers, which allows the solids to form into sludge at the bottom of the tank. Septic tanks must drain to land, not to a watercourse.

A **package treatment plant** can drain to a watercourse provided that the plant is maintained properly. This liquid does still contain some phosphate.



HOW SYSTEMS THAT ARE NOT EFFECTIVELY MANAGED IMPACT RIVERS

If not managed properly they can increase phosphate levels in rivers.

Phosphate increases growth of plants such as algae, which 'choke' the river surface and reduce available oxygen for fish and other aquatic animals.

The result can be fish kills and a reduction in aquatic biodiversity.



WHY PROTECT OUR RIVERS

- Many rivers are a valuable green space in our communities as well as being a source of drinking water in many cases.
- It can be home to many species of wildlife, from kingfishers to eels and otters and a huge variety of insects, such as dragonflies.
- All these species depend on clean water.
- We are working together to protect the river and the species that rely on it so we need your help to keep the water clean and pollution free.

PHOSPHATE - WHAT IT IS AND WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Phosphate is a nutrient found in human waste and washing powders.

It becomes a problem when high levels enter the water environment and creates excessive growth of some plants that can damage natural habitats. The main ways it enters our rivers is in fertilisers used in farming and sewage.

Only 14% of the Waveney catchment is classified as 'good' for phosphate, which leaves 86% as needing improvement.

HOW CAN YOU MANAGE YOUR SYSTEM TO REDUCE PHOSPHATE LEVELS?

1 Empty the tank regularly (at least once per year) to avoid build up of sludge.

Some phosphate settles to the bottom as sludge and will build-up to reduce capacity overtime, risking high levels of phosphate entering the environment. Increased solids can stop systems working or cause damage that is expensive to fix.*

2 If you have a septic tank, do you know if it is connected into the nearby watercourse?

They do not clean the sewage enough to discharge directly into a watercourse and allowing this to occur breaks the law.

3 Use environmentally friendly detergent brands with no phosphate content.

Look out for phosphate listed on the side of packaging. Sometimes it is called sodium Tripolyphosphate (STPP) instead. Look for products with less than 5% of these substances.

4 Use laundry liquids or powders instead of tablets and use as little as possible.

Tablets usually contain higher levels of phosphate. Using less detergent minimises the amounts of phosphate and other substances entering the environment.

5 Minimise bleach and disinfectant use.

Sewage treatment systems are biological systems that rely on micro-organisms to function. Use of too much bleach, etc. will kill these micro-organisms.

6 Do you know if roof water enters your sewage system?

This water will be clean so requires no treatment. Large amounts entering the system may wash out solids into the soakaway. Roof water can directly enter a watercourse or a separate soak away.

7 If you have a treatment plant, have it serviced regularly according to the manufacturer's guidance

This will ensure it is properly maintained and remains in good working order.

8 Do not put solid items, such as nappies and sanitary items, into the sewage system.

These will block the system and cause solids to overflow into the garden.

*Please choose a reputable de-sludging contractor so they dispose of this responsibly.



WOULD YOU LIKE SOME ADVICE OR WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

Call of Nature website is a website with advice on how to maintain septic tanks, cesspits and package treatment plants so that they do not cause pollution to the water environment:

<https://callofnature.info/#>



LOOK OUT FOR THE YELLOW FISH

We are also running Yellow Fish campaigns throughout Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk. We will be offering advice on how we can all reduce our impact on the water environment. To find out more visit



groundwork.org.uk/projects/yellow-fish