



## Sewerage and trade discharges

### Sewage discharge

Proper collection, treatment and discharge of waste water, and the correct disposal or re-use of the resulting sludge helps to protect and improve water quality in the UK.

Waste water, commonly referred to as sewage, is generally a mixture of domestic waste water from baths, sinks, washing machines and toilets, waste water from industry and rainwater run-off from roads and other surfaced areas.

Without suitable treatment, the waste water we produce every day would damage the water environment and create public health problems. Untreated sewage contains organic matter (carbohydrates, fats, proteins), bacteria and chemicals. Bacteria naturally present in rivers do break these substances down, but in doing so they use the oxygen dissolved in the water. If there were large or continuous discharges of untreated waste water the result could be too little oxygen for fish and other aquatic life to survive. So the purpose of waste water treatment is to remove organic substances to protect the environment.



Wessex Water is the only water company in the catchment that offers waste water treatment. There are 50 sewage treatment works in the Stour catchment that have permits to discharge into the Stour and its tributaries. These permits (issued by the Environment Agency) outline the final effluent quality and quantity parameters that must be adhered to.

### Trade discharges

Most traders and businesses in the catchment discharge their waste water to the sewer under agreement from the water company. Some businesses are permitted by the EA to discharge into the water course; the permits will stipulate the effluent quality that must be met. Businesses in the catchment that discharge directly to the rivers include: cress farms, fisheries and quarries.

### Sewage sludge

Sewage sludge is organic material that is produced during the treatment of domestic waste water. Treated sewage sludge can be used as fertiliser as it is full of nutrients.

Sewage sludge can contain chemical discharges or industrial contaminants so its use has to be regulated. This happens through the EC Sewage Sludge (Use in Agriculture) Directive (86/278/EEC). The directive limits the recycling of sludge to land to prevent harmful effects on vegetation, animals, people and the environment.