

Presentation to Torridge and North Devon District Councils

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SWW approach to support development growth across the region

1. South West Water, whilst not a Statutory Consultee, proactively reviews 30,000+ planning applications per annum across Devon, Cornwall and Bournemouth. The purpose of these reviews are to assess whether:
 - Our networks have the capacity to support the new development
 - Our future investment plans continue to focus upon the increased demand from new development
 - We can continue to protect the environment in respect of flooding, pollution and the availability of water resources
 - The new development will be located near, or over, our infrastructure which might cause damage during construction or restrict future access for maintenance.
2. Following recent feedback, we have reviewed how we can improve the way we respond to planning applications and build stronger relationships with Planning Authorities.
3. We previously held a workshop in November 2023 with the Planning Officers from Torridge and North Devon to share our approach and improve engagement. We hope to maintain this relationship.
4. The Company will target providing responses to all applications that will impact the capacity within our clean and wastewater networks. We have standard requirements relating to water consumption and the discharge of surface water into our sewerage networks



Strategic Planning Engagement



Strategic Priorities

Wastewater

- WaterFit investment of £330m reducing average spills per location to **20 per year by 2025**.
- £900m up to 2030 to radically improve storm overflow performance
- Further investment reducing average spills per location to no more than **10 per year by 2040 (10 years ahead of Defra target of 2050)**
- Accelerated delivery investment to start by 2025

Water Resources

- **Secure supply of water to customers, while also protecting and enhancing the environment**
- **Forecasts water supply and demand out to 2050** and identifies any risks to supplies
- Identifies the 'best value' programme of action to maintain reliable and resilient water supply
- Water Resource Management Plan is a statutory requirement set out in legislation - we must **review and update it every 5 years**



SWW approach to Planning Applications

1. Under current rules, developers have a right to connect to the nearest public sewer or water main providing it is equal to or above the diameter of the connection. South West Water, as a Statutory Undertaker, has an obligation to facilitate growth.
2. It is the responsibility of the developer to present the drainage strategy for their proposed site to demonstrate that it won't have a detrimental impact on the environment. Often, SWW will have already engaged with the developer through our strategic relationships.
3. It is then up to the Water Company to make sure any network improvements are made in a timely manner. This is funded through an Infrastructure Charge from developers paid at the time of connection.
4. We receive planning lists from some Planning Authorities and proactively review the planning portal for Council areas where we do not.
5. We review the impact of new development growth using our tactical supply and demand tool which will identify whether growth can be supported or highlight the need for a more detailed evaluation.
6. Where required, we utilise our inhouse hydraulic modelling teams and external consultants to assess whether public wastewater infrastructure can support the new development growth whilst continuing to protect the environment from pollution and flooding.



What are our Standard Requirements?

1. Environmental protection is at the forefront of South West Water's focus and therefore it is essential that the public sewerage networks are used for the purpose that they were intended.
2. Whilst we currently have sewers which are defined as being "combined", which means they receive both foul and surface water flows, we insist that surface water is kept separate on new development sites.
3. This is because most of the environmental challenges we face are due to the impact of surface water which takes up capacity within our networks and can result in overflows operating, particularly during periods of wet weather.
4. We insist that surface water from roofs and driveways from new developments is connected in accordance with the priorities as set out in the surface water hierarchy encouraging the customer to connect as high up the hierarchy as possible.
5. These considerations are:-
 - Into the ground (infiltration)
 - Controlled discharge to a surface water body.
 - Controlled discharge to a surface water sewer or another surface water drainage system.
 - As a very last resort – a controlled discharge to the combined sewer.



How we will continue to develop our approach

1. Following recent feedback, we have already held an internal workshop to review our processes.
2. We have also written to all Planning Authorities to strengthen our engagement arrangements and will continue to support the planning process.
3. We will target to make responses to all planning applications that impact our networks. We will ensure that standard conditions relating to surface water and water efficiency are understood by all stakeholders.
4. As our duty is only to receive surface water run-off from roofs and driveways, we will continue to work with developers to help them to design drainage systems that support the surface water hierarchy.
5. Whilst we do not have a responsibility to take highway water, we will continue to work closely with other stakeholders to deliver multi-agency solutions to separate surface water flows and help manage them in a better way.
6. We also have a programme called Downstream Thinking which looks at innovative ways of removing surface water from existing combined networks to restore capacity and improve environmental performance.



Next Steps

1. We have previously engaged with the Planning Officers and held a constructive workshop in November 2023 to agree how our organisations could work together more effectively. We have a further workshop planned on 7 February.
2. We have agreed that a more detailed presentation will be given to the planning committee at a future meeting which will cover:
 - Our Business Plan 2025 – 2030
 - Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans (DWMP)
 - Our network, including Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO's)
 - Drivers and SWW plans for spill reduction
 - Our WaterFit programme and near real time data sharing
 - Water Resource Management Plans (WRMP)
3. South West Water will continue to review existing processes and improve engagement with Planning Authorities to ensure we are as effective as possible to support development growth across the region whilst continuing to protect the environment.

