

# We're reducing the use of storm overflows and preventing local flooding



from  
Southern  
Water. 

When it rains, the rainwater runs off hard surfaces like roads and pavements and into the **combined sewer network**, where it mixes with wastewater from households and businesses. If there's heavy rain or it rains for a long time, our network of pipework, storm tanks and treatment works can fill up completely. When this happens, pressure relief valves known as **storm overflows** automatically release the excess water into rivers and the sea to stop it backing up through the combined system into houses and the streets.

To stop this from happening, **we're installing sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)** like tree pits and raingardens **to soak up rainwater** and to stop it from reaching the sewers.

## Why is this a problem – I thought sewers were designed to carry rainwater and waste?

Yes, combined sewers were designed to carry both rainwater run-off and wastewater from local homes and businesses, but they weren't designed to handle the amount of rain that we're now getting.

As more homes, roads and businesses have been built, there's less grass to soak up the rain, and more rain falling due to climate change.



## How can I help reduce storm overflows?

**Permeable is the word:** Help water soak into the ground by planting grass, installing flower beds, depaving your driveway or using permeable slabs on pathways.

**When building an extension:** Check that the water coming off the roof doesn't connect directly to the sewer. Instead, use a drain chain into a flower bed.

**Collect rainwater or slow it down:** Adding slow-drain water butts or planters to your garden helps slow the flow of rainwater into the sewer.

**Speak up about green spaces:** Encourage local councillors and authorities to make these drainage solutions part of their plans.

## Did you know?

**We need landowner and local council permission to put these drainage solutions in place.**

**We're working with local authorities to add SuDS in communities across our region.**



## What happens next?

We'll be working in your area over the next few weeks so say hello to our team if you spot them out and about. We don't expect any major noise or disruption, but if this changes we'll drop you a note in the post.

# Frequently asked questions

## What are SuDS?

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are an eco-friendly and long-term way to create better drainage of rainwater and groundwater.

## How do SuDS reduce flooding on roads?

SuDS installed next to roads are known as 'highway SuDS', and come in lots of different forms including permeable pavements, swales, and retention ponds. They absorb and store excess water, allowing it to soak into the ground or evaporate instead of causing flooding.



## How do SuDS reduce storm overflows?

Storm overflows happen where there is too much water in the combined sewer, so the best way to stop them is to make sure water is soaked up or held back from getting to the sewer system. SuDS are great at this because they can hold, slow and redirect both rainwater and groundwater.

## Can SuDS be added to old roads or are they only built into new ones?

SuDS can be added onto existing roads as well as new ones.

## Are they expensive and do they need to be maintained?

While there is a cost attached to putting these solutions in place, they are low cost to maintain in the long term, and they help to increase local biodiversity, enhance air quality, and help to keep spaces cool during hot weather. These solutions can also be put in place without causing any major disruption to local roads, traffic, etc.

## Do SuDS require a lot of space?

Some SuDS solutions such as permeable paving and retention systems can be added without taking up any extra space above ground. SuDS systems can be customised to suit both urban and rural settings, and we've found installing lots of small SuDS across a catchment can have just as great results as one big SuDS project.

## How do SuDS perform during extreme weather events?

SuDS are designed to handle extreme weather, and can easily stand up to cold winters, hot summers and heavy rainfall.



Find out more about our **Clean Rivers and Seas Plan** to tackle storm overflows. Scan the code to view an interactive map explaining:

- Why individual storm overflows activate.
- If they release into a site of interest such as shellfish or bathing waters.
- What we're planning to do to solve the issue and the level of investment required.
- When we aim to start the work.

[tinyurl.com/2s3zjteb](https://tinyurl.com/2s3zjteb)

