

Southern Water

WaterWise Teaching Resource



Down the drain

Group profile

**Department for the Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)**

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Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

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The Interest Groups

- Water company
- Local council
- Local residents
- Tourist board
- Environmental pressure group
- DEFRA

You represent Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

The new works

There are plans to build a new multimillion-pound wastewater treatment works and sludge recycling centre on a brownfield site outside Richardford. The new works will treat wastewater from Richardford and all the surrounding towns including Pountney, Filmore, Gull Sands, Saltmouth, Hartmouth and Darton. Treated wastewater will be pumped to Darton and discharged into the sea there, through the long sea outfall. Outfalls at Gull Sands and Saltdown will be converted to storm overflows. The treatment works at Darton, Filmore and Hartmouth will be converted to pumping stations.

DEFRA's Position

'It is important that we adhere to the high standards set by the European Commission, both for the quality of the water provided and the quality of the treated water that is returned to the environment. In doing so we must also take a balanced view of the impacts of any new developments, ensuring that we do not pay too high an environmental or social price for the improvements needed to meet the new criteria for marine water quality.' **Sam Chapman, DEFRA Spokeperson**

Your responsibilities

- You control water policy, including sewage treatment and coastal water quality. This means ensuring people have adequate, safe water but also ensuring the safety and quality of the country and marine environments.
- You interpret EU laws and ensure that water companies and other businesses implement them.
- You ensure that new developments are sustainable by defining environmental, economic and social criteria that they have to meet.
- You work with the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) to ensure that planning regulations are adhered to. In the case of very controversial planning applications, you can 'call in' the application for the decision to be made by the Secretary of State instead of the local planning committee.
- You must take into account EU laws and also the views of the other groups, balancing the needs of local residents and the environment.



What you have to do

1. You have to carry out some research to find out about DEFRA.
2. You have to prepare some information, such as newspaper items, leaflets or posters, about DEFRA and how it works to ensure the improvement of the environment and bathing waters as well as ensuring water supply and treatment meet demand.
3. You have to prepare for an open meeting. At the meeting you will tell the others about DEFRA's view of the new wastewater works and sludge recycling centre at Richardford and the long sea outfall at Darton. You may have reasons for and against building the works at Richardford. You must decide whether you think DEFRA will agree to the plans and support the Water Company or whether it may 'call in' the planning application via GOSE.
4. You have to prepare to answer questions about DEFRA's reasons in an open debate

There are lots of resources to help you:

- This Profile Sheet
- The Fact Sheets will give you some background information and some facts and figures. This will help you understand how many people use the Water Services and what they use them for.
- The Subjective Literature is a collection of newspaper reports and ideas for promotional leaflets and posters. You can use these as they are. You can also write some of your own.
- Clip Art is available to help you illustrate your presentations.
- Web Links

Getting started

Make sure everyone in the group has a job to do:

- Preparing speeches
- Writing newspaper items
- Designing posters
- Designing leaflets
- Finding out information.

Think carefully about what you want to say in your speech, newspaper or leaflet. You must be able to back up what you say with reasons or facts. You must be consistent - make sure your group members do not contradict each other.



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Getting your ideas together

For the open meeting you will need a spokesperson or a small group of people to make a speech or present your case. They can use some of the information you have prepared.

You need to stress that the Water Company must comply with the laws and rules that Parliament and the EU makes.

You should inform the public that a new wastewater works is needed in the area.

During the second part of the debate any member of any group can ask questions. On behalf of DEFRA, you must be ready to answer any concerns raised.

You must think about the problems that worry the other groups and whether the proposal is controversial enough to need to be 'called in' or rejected by DEFRA.

Here are some ideas for getting started. Look at the list of points in the table.

What can you add to the list?



group profile

There are plans for a new wastewater treatment works and sludge recycling centre just outside Richardford. What are the.....

Advantages?	Problems?
<p>The present works is old. It needs updating.</p> <p>The new works will use the latest technology. This is good for UK business because it may mean that the water industry can sell its ideas to other countries.</p> <p>We are keen to see wastewater treated as effectively and efficiently as possible. Richardford seems a suitable location - it is central, there is room to build, and there is easy access to the site. We are pleased to see a major investment in this local area.</p> <p>The plans for the new works aim to meet high standards set out by the European Parliament. In conjunction with the regulators, OFWAT, EA (Environment Agency) and DWI (Drinking Water Inspectorate), we have set standards for drinking water quality, customer service, care of the environment and the treatment of sewage.</p>	<p>The new works will be built near to a small coastal town. We know that the local landscape will be altered because of the new buildings, but we also know that the Water Company has thought about this and included proposals to deal with any problems in its plans.</p> <p>We need to be sensitive to residents' concerns over this but consider the broader issues when making a decision.</p>
<p>The Water Company is complying with European Law to improve the quality of wastewater entering the sea, EC Urban WasteWater Treatment Directive (1995- 2000) Control of Pollution Act EC Bathing Water Directive</p> <p>European and UK law requires improved standards of wastewater treatment for major towns by 2001.</p> <p>The Company is contributing to European environmental quality standards.</p> <p>European law requires an environmental assessment of project. This must look at the effects of the project on the environment. The Water Company has submitted an environmental assessment to the local Council.</p>	<p>Biodiversity (the range of plant and animal life on earth) is essential to life on earth. Unfortunately biodiversity is disappearing faster now than at any time in the past.</p> <p>It is important that sea and plant life in this and other areas are not put at risk from contaminated waters. The EU are updating their laws to protect the environment.</p> <p>We need to be happy that the Water Company is doing all it reasonably can to ensure disruption is minimised by reviewing their Environmental Assessment. We cannot expect there to be no disruption and hope traffic will use the existing infrastructure built to serve the industrial estate. There may be an increase of HGV traffic at peak times.</p>
<p>The works should ensure cleaner seas.</p> <p>The new wastewater treatment plant will make a significant improvement to coastal waters.</p> <p>We believe there will be benefit to residents, businesses and visitors to the area.</p>	<p>We believe that it is important that the public is not put at any risk from contaminated waters. The EU are revising the Bathing Water Directive to protect the public.</p>
<p>Organic bioproducts (sewage sludge) will be recycled to agriculture. This is in line with European advice on the need to recycle our resources.</p>	
<p>We understand that the treatment works have been designed to be environmentally friendly - tanks are to be covered and odours are to be treated.</p>	