



# NetRegs

## Where does my sewage go?

This fact sheet looks at the rules regarding small sewage discharges and answers some key questions.

### It covers:

- How to identify the **type of sewage treatment system** servicing your property
- The **key responsibilities** for private sewage treatment systems
- How to **look after and maintain** private sewage systems
- What to do if you have **no treatment** of sewage from your property
- The **common issues and solutions** associated with private sewage treatment systems

## Are you connected to a Scottish Water sewer?

If unsure – check your title deeds, check if you pay a sewerage charge with your council tax, ask Scottish Water, or ask your neighbours.

### Scottish Water: Connecting to our network

For information on connections to the Scottish Water network, including contact details visit the 'Connecting to our network' pages on the Scottish Water website, or you can call them on the following number – **0800 389 0379**.



## You are not connected to a Scottish Water sewer

### Can you connect to the Scottish Water sewer?

This is the best option. Contact Scottish Water (see above).

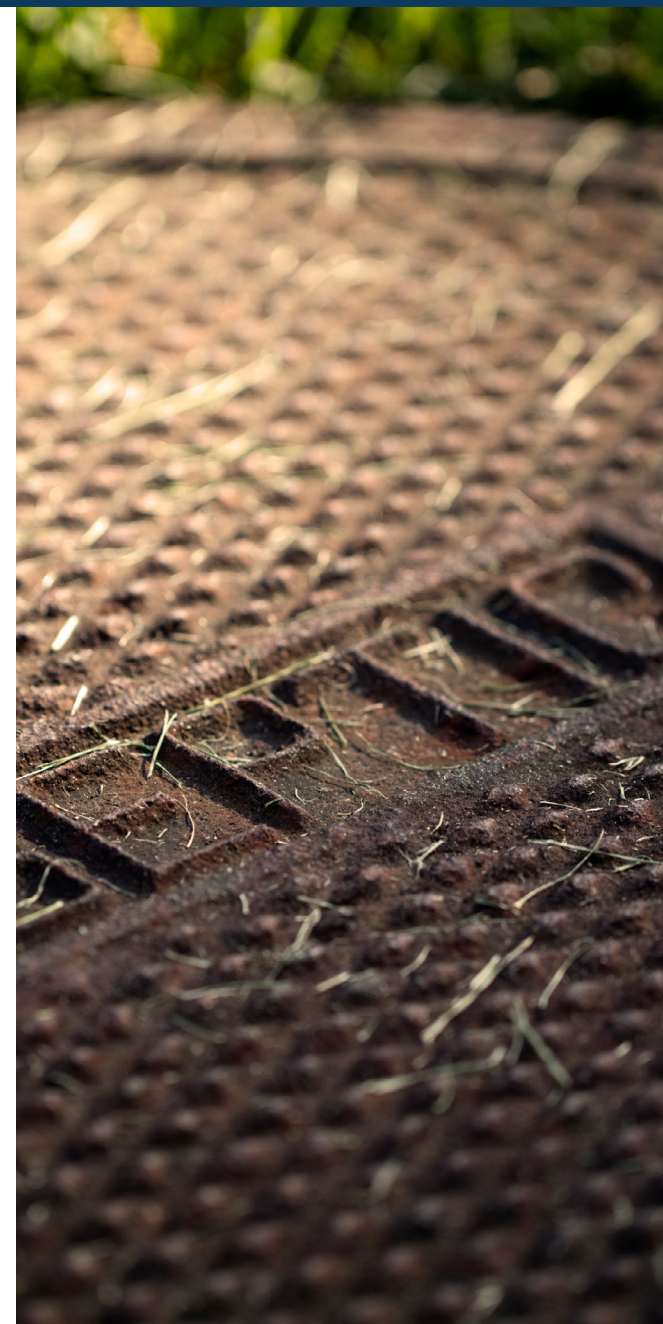
### Do you have private sewage treatment?

This could be a septic tank or package treatment plant, either your own, or a communal system shared with your neighbours.

Check for an access point on your property, this could be a:

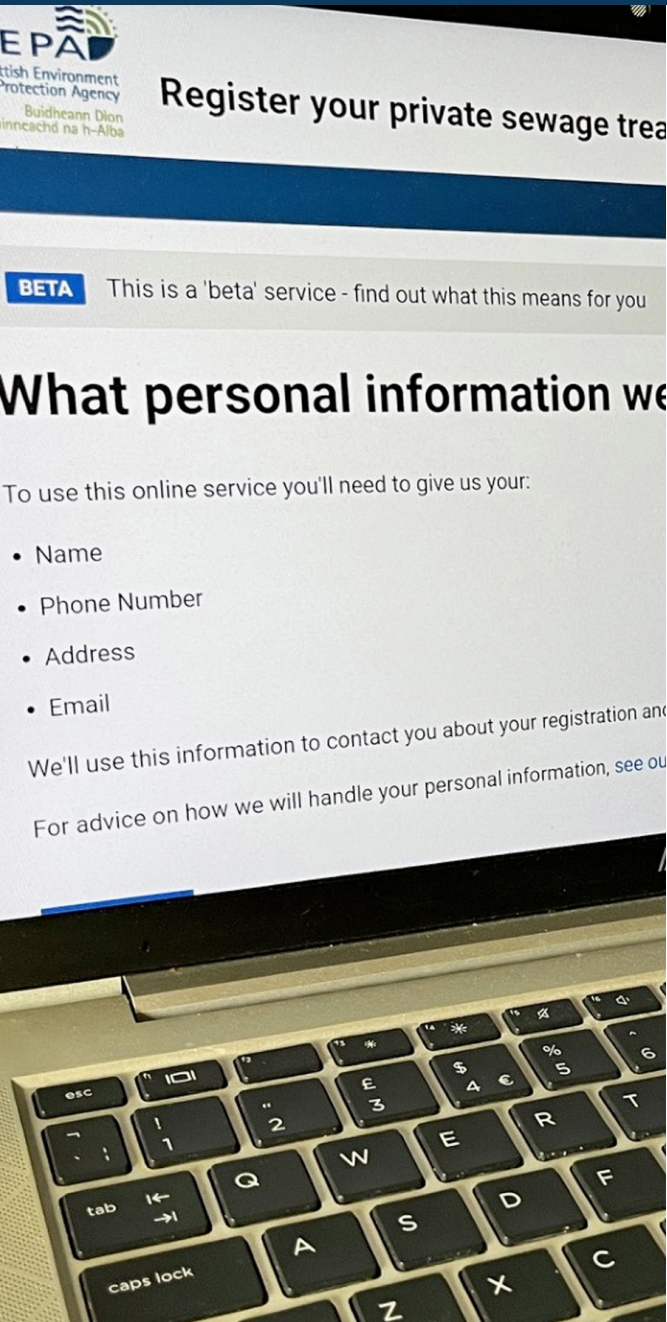
- Metal lid
- Large plastic cover
- Railway sleeper lid
- Structure with a power supply

If you remain unsure, contact a suitable contractor such as a plumber, to check the type of system you have.



# Where does my sewage go?

NetRegs



## You are not connected to a Scottish Water sewer (continued)

### Who is responsible for looking after your private sewage system?

If you own your property then you are responsible for making sure your private sewage system is maintained and repaired, and operates properly. This includes any pipework to and from the private sewage system and any outfall.

If you have a shared private sewage system then you and your connected neighbours will share responsibility.

### Is your private sewage system authorised?

Your private sewage system must be authorised by SEPA.

For small-scale private sewage systems serving a single house, or small number of properties you can check if it is already registered, or register an existing or new treatment system on the SEPA website (*see further information and useful links*).

### Buying or selling a property

You must ensure that your private sewage system is authorised by SEPA, and that the treatment system, and all associated pipework and outfalls are in good working order.

The home report may identify problems and this could cause delays in selling.

## Look after your private sewage system

It is important the homeowners maintain and make repairs to a private sewage system to prevent pollution and local nuisance impacts.

A properly working system will produce a relatively clear and usually odourless liquid. There are actions you can take to make sure your system works properly, including:

- De-sludge on a regular basis, as per the manufacturers requirements. Contractors including Scottish Water will do this for you. *Further guidance on de-sludging can be found on the British Water website – see further information for useful links*
- If your sewage treatment system is a package treatment plant, this must be maintained on a regular basis following the manufacturer's instructions. This should be done by a competent qualified person, like a service engineer. *Visit the British Water website for a list of accredited service technicians – see further information*
- If your system discharges to a river, burn, or to the sea, make sure the pipe is below the water level at all times (even during the lowest tides), and is maintained and intact
- Land soakaways can become clogged and may need to be cleared with a water-jet, or be replaced
- Do not put anything into septic tanks or other sewage treatment systems other than toilet waste and washing water. Use cleaning products that are safe for use with these types of systems
- Make sure any down pipes and drains that carry rainwater are not connected to the system. Too much water can overload the system, flushing out bacteria and untreated wastes





## **Do you have no treatment e.g. an untreated, raw sewage discharge?**

An untreated system will discharge all the contents of your toilets and sinks, untreated, into the environment. This can lead to sewage sludge, solids, and sanitary waste being washed onto river banks and seashores.

Discharges of untreated sewage are unacceptable. If you suspect you have an untreated sewage discharge you should contact SEPA to discuss.

In certain cases SEPA may grant authorisation – this can take between 30 days and up to 4 months.

Where SEPA authorises an untreated sewage discharge they will include a condition requiring appropriate treatment to be installed within a specified time-scale.

In most cases the upgrade will require one of the options listed below:

- Installing a private sewage treatment system with a soakaway, if suitable ground is available
- Installing a private sewage treatment system with an outflow to a river, burn or the sea. Make sure the outflow pipe is below the water level at all times (even during the lowest tides), and is maintained and intact
- However, if you are in an area served by a public sewer you should investigate a connection to the public sewer, if possible

# Where does my sewage go?

## Common problems and solutions for private sewage systems

**Sink or toilet draining too slowly** – The system may need to be de-sludged, or there is a blockage in the pipes. Get a suitably qualified contractor to clear pipes and de-sludge the system.

**Your soakaway has grey water pooling on the surface, even in dry weather** – Your soakaway may be blocked. Get a suitably qualified contractor to check the site.

**Unpleasant odour from the tank lid, soakaway, or from the discharge pipe** – The sewage treatment system is not working properly. It may need to be de-sludged. If not, then possibly something may have been put in the tank that has stopped it working e.g. bleach.. With proper care the tank will recover.

**Grey fungus growing in a river or burn** – Ensure your outfall is submerged and your system has been regularly maintained and repaired. If your system is causing extensive fungus growth in a river or burn, you should consider upgrading your system.

Roof or driveway drainage should not be connected to your system. This can wash out the contents of the system and lead to pollution.

NetRegs



## Further information and links



Scan the QR code to view further information including guidance, e-learning, and registering your septic tank.

NetRegs

environmental regulations online

[www.netregs.org.uk](http://www.netregs.org.uk)



Scottish Environment  
Protection Agency  
Buidheann Dion  
Àrainneachd na h-Alba