

# BE THE WAVE AR FRIG Y DON

## Stop The Block

Background Information



cadwch keep  
gymru'n wales  
daclus tidy

**MARINE  
CONSERVATION  
SOCIETY**



UNDEB EWROPEAIDD  
EUROPEAN UNION



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**Cronfeydd Strwythurol a  
Buddosoddi Ewropeaidd**  
European Structural  
and Investment Funds



Ariennir gan  
**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
Funded by  
**Welsh Government**



## Drains and Sewage Systems

There are two types of sewage systems coming from our houses - combined sewage systems and separate systems. It is law now that separate systems are used when new houses are built but this has only been the case for approx. 20 years. Before then they were all combined systems so an awful lot of houses in Wales are on a combined system which means that heavy rain makes them overflow. If a combined system overflows, along with the storm waste all litter that enters the storm drain and the sanitary wates goes, untreated, into rivers/seas.

People also don't realise that storm drains on the street empty straight into rivers/sea so any rubbish that gets washed down stands no chance of being caught before going into the rivers and then the sea.

To avoid houses flooding, following very heavy rainfall water treatment works are allowed to dump a certain amount of untreated water directly into our rivers/seas. However, it has been found that some water treatment plants (including Welsh Water) are dumping much more that the regulated amount. This can be seen in the Panorama investigation 'River Pollution Scandal'  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000vk71>

### 'Urban waste water'

This is the mixture of domestic waste water from kitchens, bathrooms and toilets, the waste water from industries discharging to sewers, and rainwater run-off from roads and other impermeable surfaces such as roofs, pavements and roads draining to sewers. Urban waste water is often referred to as 'sewage'.

### Storm Drains/Surface Water Drains

These are designed only for rain water and therefore do not include filtering or treatment systems. Roadside drains are often mistakenly thought to be linked to the treatment network, in some places they are, however many of them go directly to a watercourse or the sea. It is safest to remember that they are meant for rainwater only. Simply due to a lack of awareness and people unwittingly pouring waste or dropping litter into outside drains, this can sometimes mean litter, cleaning fluids, fats or oils, paints and car washing water can enter our water and have a negative impact on water quality in your nearby river, lake or beach.

Other items end up in the storm drains due to littering. Bottle, crisp packets, sweet wrappers etc. that are thrown on the floor can be blown or washed into the storm drains which will take then straight into our water ways. Cigarette butts are the most common form of litter and are often washed down drains ending up in the sea. Cigarette ends should be extinguished and thrown in the bin with other rubbish. Also, a common error is for people to empty mop buckets, DIY washings, car washing water down a drain and therefore straight into our rivers and seas.



## Unflushables

Most reusable wet wipes are mainly made of plastic, so they don't break down like toilet paper. Research carried out on behalf of water companies showed that most wipes failed to break down in conditions simulating the UK's drainage system. Instead, they clog together in 'fatbergs' that cost the UK £100m each year to clear up

- 90% of wet wipes contain some form of plastic. Plastic from wet wipes doesn't go away- it breaks down into tiny microplastics. This results in plastic pollution in our oceans, waterways, even ending up in our food chains.
- The Marine Conservation Society survey recorded an increase of wet wipe pollution of 700% over the last decade.
- 14 wet wipes found per 100m of UK coastline by the Marine Conservation Society.
- 300,000 sewer blockages are caused by wet wipes every year in the UK.

Period products are a very common item to be found on beaches

- A big-brand pack of 14 menstrual pads contains the same amount of plastic as 5 carrier bags.
- Around 2.5 million tampons, 1.4 million pads and 700,000 panty liners are flushed every single day here in the UK!

### What is a fatberg?

Fatbergs are huge masses of solid waste that clog up sewage systems. They are made up of wet wipes, sanitary towels and nappies that have been flushed down the toilet as well as congealed fat, grease and oil that has been poured down the sink or drain. 93% of Fatbergs are wet wipes. The combination of solidified fat and single-use plastic items continue to build underground, blocking systems until the pipes can no longer cope. This causes flooding which will then enter our rivers and seas either directly or through storm drains.

<https://www.citytosea.org.uk/campaign/unflushables/>

<https://www.litterfreecoastandsea.co.uk/only-rain-down-the-drain/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/47117422>

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