

Anglian Water Unflushables and FOG Briefing

Definitions

Unflushables – this is a catch all term for anything that is flushed down the toilet that shouldn't be. It is most commonly used to describe wet wipes and sanitary products, but could also refer to any other litter which is washed down drains and ends up in the sewers.

FOG – this stands for fats, oils and grease. These are a particular problem because they solidify in the sewers and congeal with unflushables to cause blockages, often known as "fatbergs".

The facts

- If we put FOG down our sinks, and unflushables down the loo, it can block sewer pipes and pumps, flooding homes and gardens and spilling into local rivers and waterways.
- Blocked pipes are one of the most common causes of river pollution and flooding.
- Over half of the 40,000 sewer blockages in our region are caused by FOG and unflushables.
- Our sewers and drains are only designed to carry the three Ps – Pee, Poo and Paper (toilet).

Our Keep it Clear Campaign

Our [Keep It Clear](#) programme helps reduce the misery, cost, bad smells and potential flooding and pollution caused by avoidable blockages.

We're acting now to detect and remove blockages in the network, using the latest technology cameras and high-powered jets. Last year, Anglian Water removed over 3,000 tonnes of wipes, sanitary products and cooking oils from sewers. That's like 30 blue whales blocking our pipes!

Our recent project in Southend-on-Sea helped us to understand the items flushed down the toilet which cause repeated blockages in the area. Our specialist team used CCTV cameras to assess the sewer pipes, and then removed 460 tonnes (the same weight as 4.5 blue whales) of unflushables and other waste from an area serving just 180,000 people. We sent samples of what we removed to be analysed, and it was no surprise to find that the main culprit was wet wipes containing plastic fibres, accounting for 85% of the material by weight together with sanitary products and other single-use items.

The Keep it Clear campaign aims to educate the public on the following three things:

1. Only flush the three Ps – Pee, Poo and Paper down the toilet
2. Put wet wipes and sanitary items in the bin
3. Once cooled, put oil into the bin

Our policy work on wet wipes

We have been campaigning for some time for better education and labelling around wet wipes, so that the public know to always ["BIN THE WIPE!"](#). Around 90% of wet wipes contain some sort of plastic which means that unlike toilet paper, they don't break down in our sewers.

We support mandatory labelling on packaging about disposal and impact of wet wipes on the environment. Giving consumers more information (for example, telling them NOT to flush wet wipes

down the toilet) to drive behaviour change would be a huge benefit to the health of our sewerage systems in the UK. Labelling should also be clear, identifiable, and easily visible (this means not hidden in the small print on the back of a product).

We also support the government's recent announcement to ban plastic in wet wipes. However, the single most important message still needs to be not to put wet wipes of any kind down the toilet. Even without plastic, they will still block the sewage pipes as they won't disintegrate like toilet paper.