



# Government introduces new rules for the operation of **septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants**

Reduce pollution in your parish by informing local households and businesses using this communications toolkit

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## **Introduction - Let's work together to protect your local environment**

As part of efforts to improve water quality and reduce pollution, Government has introduced new 'general binding rules' that simplify the way septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants are regulated in England.

The rules are simple to follow and reduce pollution by ensuring people maintain septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants properly.

You can read the general binding rules in full at [www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules](http://www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules) but here are the main things people need to do:

- *Have your system emptied by a registered waste carrier regularly (at least once a year unless the manufacturer says otherwise) and ensure it doesn't cause pollution*
- *Maintain your system regularly and get any faults or problems fixed immediately by an accredited engineer*
- *You are limited to discharging a maximum of 2,000 litres of treated sewage per day into the ground or 5,000 litres of treated sewage per day to flowing water. If you discharge more you will need a permit. Calculate how much your system is discharging at [www.gov.uk/permits-you-need-for-septic-tanks/calculate-discharge](http://www.gov.uk/permits-you-need-for-septic-tanks/calculate-discharge)*
- *Speak to the Environment Agency before installing a new system as you may need a permit. Speak to your local council to check it will meet planning requirements and building regulations. Only install equipment that meets British Standard BS EN 12566*
- *If you sell your property, inform the buyer in writing that it has a septic tank or small sewage treatment plant*

By working in partnership we can encourage people to protect the local environment and improve local water quality by maintaining their septic tanks and treatment plants properly.

**We would like your help to inform households and businesses about the new rules, so we have developed the following materials you can use to spread the word:**

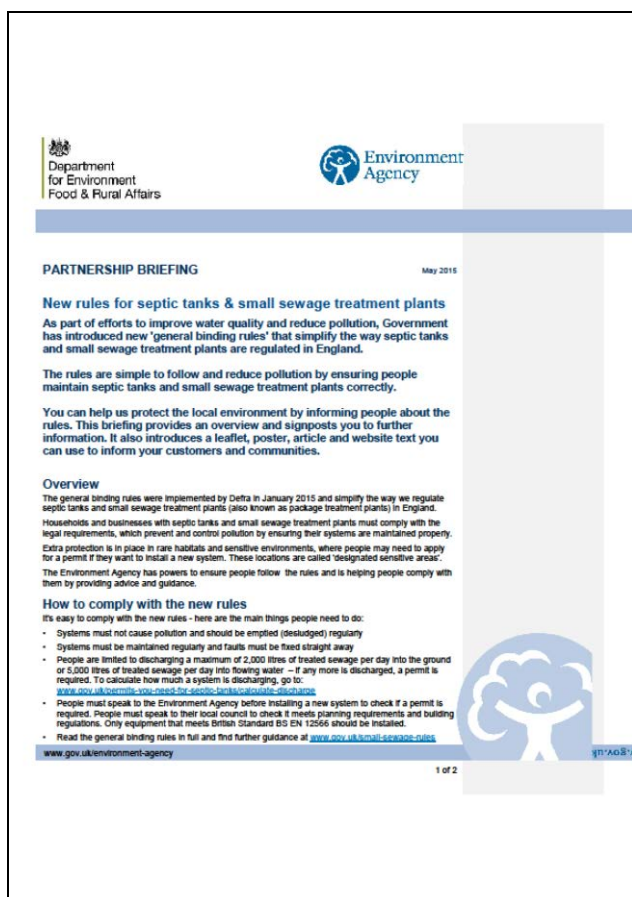
- Read our **briefing** to get an overview of the general binding rules
- Deliver our **leaflet** to households and businesses
- Publish our **article** in parish newsletters and magazines
- Copy and paste our text and links onto parish **websites**
- Display our **poster** in the community
- Discuss our suggested **agenda item** at a parish council meeting

If you need further copies or more information, please contact the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506.



## Briefing

Double click on the image below to download a **formal briefing** about the small sewage discharge general binding rules, which should answer most of your questions. It also directs you to sources of further information. Share this with your parish councillors or anyone that you think should know about the new rules:

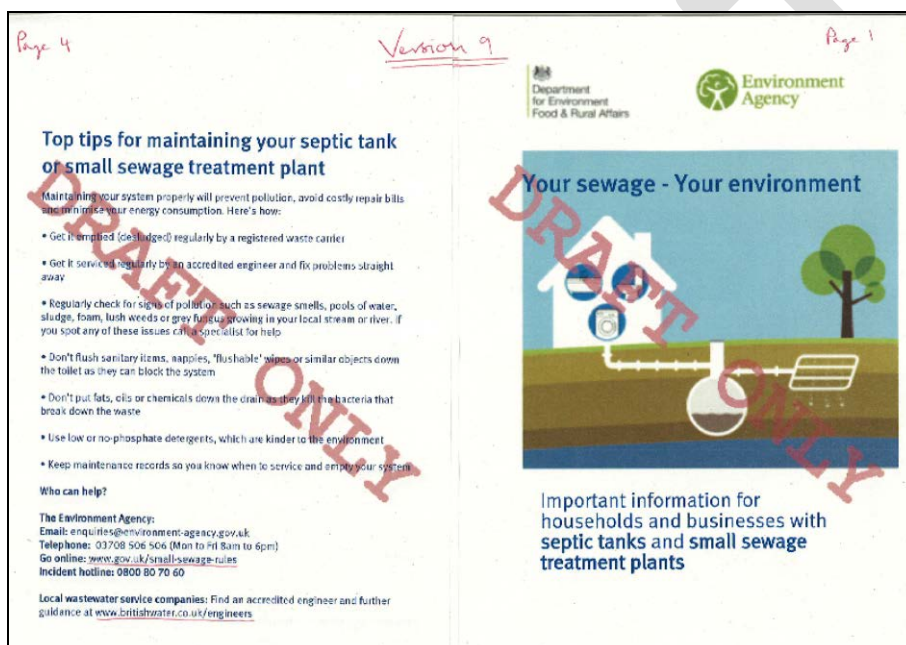




## Leaflet

Double click on the image below to download a PDF version of the **leaflet**, which can be delivered to local homes and businesses who may use a septic tank or small sewage treatment plant.

Print copies in colour on double-sided A4 paper, then fold the paper down the middle to create an A5 leaflet with 4 pages (**Note:** print a trial version first to make sure it prints properly. If the option is available on printer settings, select 'flip on short edge' to ensure the second page does not print upside down):[b1]



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## Poster

Double click on the image below to download a PDF version of the **poster**, which can be printed in colour on A4 paper.

Display it on community noticeboards or in local doctor's surgeries, hardware stores or other places where people will see it:



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Environment  
Agency





### **Article for newsletters and magazines**

Consider publishing the following article in parish newsletters and magazines:

#### ***New rules for septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants***

*As part of ongoing efforts to improve water quality and reduce pollution, Government introduced new rules in January 2015 that simplify the way septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants are regulated in England.*

*Households and businesses with septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants are responsible for meeting the legal requirements, which are called 'general binding rules', by ensuring their systems are maintained properly and do not cause pollution.*

*We expect that most people will be able to follow the rules and use their septic tank or treatment plant without needing a permit. However, in areas designated as environmentally sensitive, where additional measures are needed to prevent pollution, a permit may be required.*

*It's easy to comply with the new rules - here are the main things to do:*

- *Systems must not cause pollution and should be emptied (desludged) at least once a year*
- *People must check how much their system discharges by looking at the guidance online at [www.gov.uk/permits-you-need-for-septic-tanks/calculate-discharge](http://www.gov.uk/permits-you-need-for-septic-tanks/calculate-discharge)*
- *People are limited to discharging a maximum of 2,000 litres of sewage per day into the ground or 5,000 litres of treated sewage per day into flowing water – any more and a permit is required*
- *Faults or problems must be fixed immediately*
- *People must speak to the Environment Agency before installing a new system to check if they need a permit. New systems must meet British Standards and people must speak to their local council to check that it meets planning requirements and building regulations*
- *Read the general binding rules in full, and find further advice, online at: [www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules](http://www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules)*

*To check if you need a permit and if your property is in a designated sensitive area, call the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506.*

*If you are concerned that a septic tank or sewage treatment plant is causing pollution, call the Environment Agency's incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.*



### **Text and links for your website**

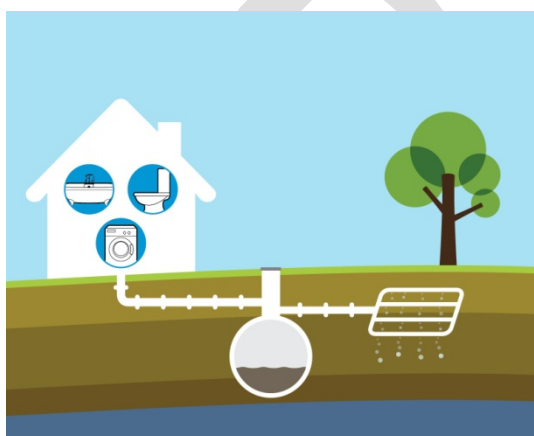
Copy and paste the following text on to parish council websites to inform online audiences about the general binding rules, If you have space, copy and paste the image on to the website as well to make it more eye-catching:

#### ***New rules for septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants***

*Government has introduced new rules that simplify the way septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants are regulated in England, to protect the environment and improve water quality.*

*If you have a septic tank or small sewage treatment plant you must comply with the 'general binding rules' by ensuring your system is maintained properly and does not cause pollution. Extra protection is in place in areas designated as environmentally sensitive, where people may need to apply for a permit if they install a new system.*

*The general binding rules are easy to follow. You can read them in at [www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules](http://www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules)*





### **Agenda item for parish council meetings**

Consider adding an agenda item to a parish meeting to discuss the general binding rules and consider how the council can deliver and display the materials to reach local people.

During the meeting consider which areas are likely to contain properties not linked to the mains sewerage, so may use septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants. Agree if it would be helpful to distribute the leaflet and other materials to people living in these areas, and consider how this could be achieved.

Here is a suggested agenda item, which can be tailored to be more specific to the local parish:

#### **Agenda Item:**

*To receive notice;*

*The Government has introduced new 'general binding rules' that simplify the way septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants are regulated in England by ensuring they are maintained correctly and do not cause pollution.*

*The Environment Agency has developed materials, including a leaflet, poster and article for parish magazines, which will inform homeowners and businesses about the new rules and encourage people to protect the local environment and water quality.*

*To consider how the Council can assist with the display and delivery of this information to Parishioners.*