

Customer Advice Note

Private Drains and Sewers - Protecting our Assets

On 1 October 2011, the Government transferred the ownership and maintenance of many private drains and sewers to water companies. After this date, privately owned sewage pumping stations are also expected to gradually transfer to water company ownership by 2016.

Why did this transfer happen?

The Government believed the transfer will make responsibilities for looking after drains much clearer. This will mean less disputes and worry about who is responsible for sorting problems out, which can often be expensive to put right. In the future costs will be shared equally across all customers.

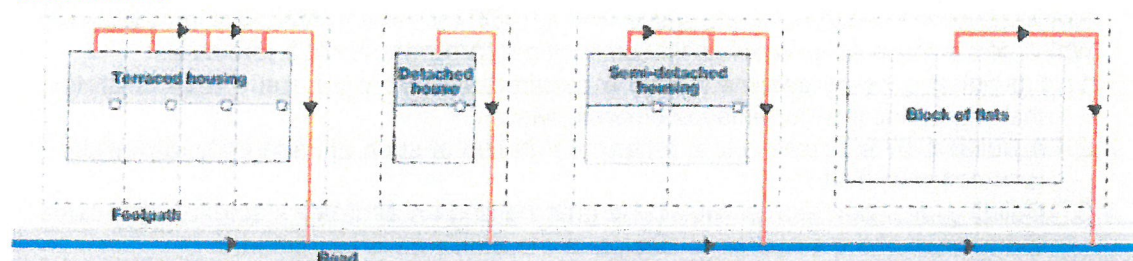
What are private drains and sewers?

Prior to 1 October the property owner was generally responsible for their private drains and some sewers. This could include part of the drain outside the boundary of the property, and/or partial responsibility for a shared sewer used by several properties.

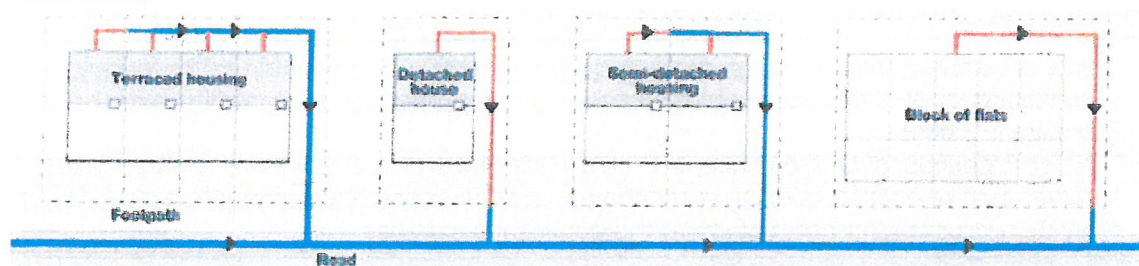
What has transferred?

The pictures below illustrate how responsibilities changed on 1 October 2011. The property owner will still be responsible for drains that serve only their property and are within its boundary, as well as gutters and down pipes attached to the property. Ownership of almost all other pipes transferred to Northumbrian Water (NWL).

Before transfer



After transfer



Key

- Owner/occupier responsibility
- Northumbrian Water's responsibility
- ▶ Direction of flow
- Property boundary

Are there any pipes which did not transfer?

Yes, not everything transferred. As already mentioned the property owner will still be responsible for drains that serve only their property and are within its boundary. Surface water sewers draining directly to watercourses, land drainage and highway drains, privately owned septic tanks, cesspits and sewage treatment works will not transfer. This transfer does not affect water supply pipes.

If I want to construct a building or extension, what are the implications for me?

- For any new buildings, extensions, etc that may impact on any sewer, the applicant or, if appropriate the architect / builder / Building Inspector **must contact NWL prior to any work starting on site.**
- If you are unsure whether any sewers are affected by your proposal please contact NWL for advice. We would prefer you did this **before** submitting plans for building regulations approval.

What will Northumbrian Water do?

- We will inform you whether any public sewers are affected by the proposed works.
- If any public sewer is potentially affected by the building works we will carry out a site survey to determine its exact location and depth.
- If its confirmed location is still affected by the building works we will have to carry out a CCTV survey (at the applicant's expense) to determine the condition of the sewer.
- Any necessary remedial work identified by the CCTV survey on the existing sewer will be carried out by NWL prior to the commencement of the building work (at NWL expense).
- NWL will let you know whether any works are required to move any manholes, pipework or connections (at the applicant's expense).
- NWL will provide an estimate for any works required to protect our assets.
- Depending on the outcome of the site visit and CCTV survey. NWL will inform you of which of the three actions below will be required to progress NWL approval:-
 1. No building over agreement will be required and NWL will issue a letter stating that the building work satisfies our conditions.
 2. A building over agreement or a payment in lieu of such an indemnity undertaking is required with NWL
 3. Building over permission will not be granted and an alternative solution to include a diversion of the sewer or re-design of the building will be required.

Who can carry out work on Private Drains and Sewers?

- Works required to drains that serve only their property and are within its boundary, as well as gutters and down pipes attached to the property can be carried out by the applicant's builder.
- New connections and diversions that are necessary to the sewer, including the removal or relocation of existing manholes must be constructed and programmed by NWL using our term contractors (at the applicant's expense).

How can I find out more?

- You can find out more details about the transfer at our website www.nwl.co.uk.
- If you are in any doubt about whether building work will impact on private drains or sewers, please contact NWL on 0191 4196521 / 0191 4196710 / 0191 4196540 or alternatively use the e-mail address buildingregulations@nwl.co.uk