

# Position Statement



## Drains : *What are they good for ?*

- *Slow The Flow believes that local authorities need to be much more proactive in co-ordinating and implementing surface water management plans to actively seek out solutions to surface water issues.*
- *Slow The Flow believes that the powers of local authorities should be increased to compel third parties to implement surface water management plans.*
- *The utility companies need to be challenged and funded through Ofwat to seek long term solutions to persistent Combined Sewer Overflow issues.*

## Urban Drains

Drains fulfil an essential function in draining our roads and protecting property, but all too often it is a case of 'out of sight out of mind'. This is especially the case in towns and cities, where a blocked drain can cause many unforeseen problems elsewhere. Many issues in recent events can be laid at the door of Combined Sewer Overflows that transport both sewage and surface water. Modern sewers exclude surface water but pre-existing Combined Sewer Overflows do exist in all our towns. Where possible, diverting that excess surface water flow might mean the difference between flooding and not flooding. Even if it may not prevent flooding entirely, avoiding the overflow of the foul sewer would have a bearing on the quality of the flood water.

Sometimes the solution can be quite simple, such as raising a kerb to channel excess water away. Elsewhere, highways have been designed in such a way as to divert flow away from pinch points. Ultimately, designing our urban realm according to the paths of surface water might keep water above ground and use networks of public space to temporarily store water ( Sustainable Drainage Systems, or SuDS ) . Natural flood management is really part of this same concept of sustainable drainage. Recent legislative changes have made provision for water companies to designate and adopt SuDS as sewers. Slow The Flow believes that this should be taken advantage of wherever possible, to alleviate the burden on our local combined sewer systems.

## Agricultural drains

There have been a number of references to field drains on social media. Certainly in most parts of the country, agricultural drains were usually trying to drain pasture or arable land to increase yield resulting from better drained fields. In a flood event, these drains can add to the existing burden of water.

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Here in Calderdale, these field drains were trying to make the best of what was always marginal land in the great drive of enclosure of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Indeed, land that was, by its nature, wetter and rougher, saw the importation of vast quantities of lime and construction of drains.

Returning some of this in-bye land to rougher and wetter conditions, or positive attenuation, over a catchment scale may help to mitigate the effects of major events downstream. Equally, re-purposing some of the existing dams, goits and gullies, that were built to supply water to mills, might possibly assist. However, the cost of work required, to repurpose these structures so that they are fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and can withstand extreme events, can be prohibitive. The same result may be achieved through judiciously located attenuation ponds and swales.

*Slow The Flow is a charity working to advance the education of the public in Natural Flood Management, Sustainable Drainage Systems and other renewable methods of managing the environment, including the exploration of alternative practices which safeguard the natural environment and its resources in a manner which best fits the specifics of a local geography.*

Slow The Flow can be contacted in the following ways:



[secretary@slowtheflow.net](mailto:secretary@slowtheflow.net)



[slowtheflow.net](http://slowtheflow.net)



@slowtheflowcalderdale



[m.me/slowtheflowcalderdale](https://m.me/slowtheflowcalderdale)



@slowtheflow\_UK