

Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture



Isle of Man
Government

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Discharge Licence Policy

Policy No.: EPU/01/2020

Policy Approved: 06/10/2020

Effective Date: 06/10/2020

Last Revised: 10/10/2022

Review Date: 10/10/2024

Version: 2

Policy Owner: Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any new applications for a licence in accordance with the Water Pollution Act 1993 to discharge from private sewage treatment works into controlled waters will only be permitted if it is not reasonable or practicable to discharge to mains sewer or soak-away. This is to protect the health of watercourses and minimise the volume of discharges of minimally treated sewage into often very small streams which may even dry out during periods of low rainfall.

2. Background

In 2005 the licensing of discharges into controlled waters were implemented through provisions outlined in Section 5 of the Water Pollution Act 1993. Any discharges which were present prior to the licensing scheme were given 'existing' licenses with limited

conditions. New discharges to controlled waters were subject to a license application, modelling, consultation and specific conditions. The discharge of effluent from septic tanks to controlled waters was ceased with only discharges from private sewage treatment works allowed to enter any controlled waters.

At present there are 880 discharge licenses issued of which 613 of the licenses have been issued to Manx Utilities for drinking water discharges, treated sewage effluent and emergency overflows to name a few. There are 240 discharge licenses for treated sewage effluent discharges from private sewage treatment plants. Private sewage treatment plants and septic tanks are used in rural location where mains sewerage is not possible. Septic tanks can only be installed in areas where the discharge can be directed to a full soak-away (subject to percolation tests).

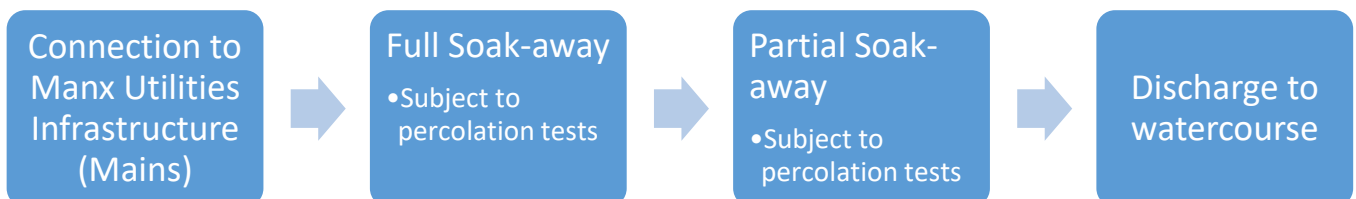
The use of a soak-away is encouraged currently by the Department subject to the necessary percolations tests. By keeping treated sewage effluent away from watercourses it reduces any potential pollution if there is a fault with the system and if there are multiple works in the same location loading on the watercourse.

3. Scope

The following policy shall apply to all discharge license applications which are received by the Department and any verbal advice given regarding the discharge of effluent from a sewage treatment works.

4. Policy

Application for a discharge licence for a private sewage treatment works will only be permitted discharge to controlled waters if it is not reasonable or practicable to discharge to mains sewer or soak-away. In the event of inadequate soak-away a partial soak-away will need to be considered whereby discharge to controlled waters is only likely to occur during heavy rainfall thereby guaranteeing dilution and protecting against discharge when they may be no discharge during periods of low rainfall.



5. Procedure

DEFA officers will ensure before progressing a discharge license application that the location of the nearest mains sewer is checked using the Drainage Asset Viewer which Manx Utilities maintain but allow us access too.

If the mains network is deemed not an option then percolation tests will be requested by the applicants to determine the percolation rate of the land. If the rate is sufficient for a full soak-away this will need to be progressed. The use of a full soak-away does not require a discharge license by the Department.

If the percolation rate is not sufficient for a full soak-away the use of a partial soak-away will be considered but this is still dependent on the percolation rate. By utilising a partial soak-away it will protect the watercourses during the dryer months where the flow rates are lower in watercourses. A discharge will still be required for a partial soak-away as in certain environmental conditions the discharge will enter the nearby watercourse.

Progressing a discharge license application for the use of a direct discharge is the last option but in certain circumstances necessary. The discharge will be modelled using the Monte Carlo Mass Balance calculation to ensure the grade of the receiving waterbody is not lowered due to the discharge. If the modelling show the discharge will not chemically affect the receiving waterbody an in house consultation will be produced which is sent to Fisheries, Forestry, Biodiversity and the local commissioners. The consultation lasts for 6 weeks to return any comments which will be considered when determining if a license can be granted.

If a discharge is modelled and determined to negative impact the receiving waterbody other options such as additional treatment via reed beds or other disposal options can be considered by the applicants.

6. Enforcement

There are provisions within Section 5 of the Water Pollution Act 1993 for the licensing of discharges. Any unlicensed discharges will be investigated and dealt with under provisions outlined in Section 5 of the Water Pollution Act 1993. The enforcement policy for the Department is to educate initially so this will be followed prior to any formal action being taken against an illegal discharge.

7. Frequently asked questions

- Who does this policy affect?
This policy affects all applicants who apply for a discharge license.
- How do I apply for a license?
A discharge license application form can be found at; <https://www.gov.im/about-the-government/departments/environment-food-and-agriculture/environment-safety-and-health-directorate/environmental-protection-unit/water-quality/>

8. Version History

Version No.	Date Issued	Description
1	06/10/2020	Original policy document
2	27/10/2022	Reviewed policy and updated discharge license figures.

END