

PRESS RELEASE

No. 693/2015

Date: 6th October 2015

Sewers Campaign

The Technical Services Department of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar in conjunction with Northumbrian Water, majority shareholder of AquaGib and in collaboration with AquaGib, the Environmental Agency and the Housing Department is pleased to launch a sewers awareness campaign which aims to raise much needed public awareness and provide advice to help prevent the damage to our sewer systems.

The campaign is based on a very successful campaign which was launched in the North of England called "Love your Drain" and aims to increase awareness of the problems caused by blockages. The campaign also provides support and advice which will hopefully bring about a change in behaviour which will help reduce the number of blockages in our sewer network.

The Technical Services Department is responsible for the maintenance of Gibraltar's public sewer network and continuously has to deal with problems associated with blocked drains. Many of the blockages are caused by a large volume of rags, wipes and paper hand towels which are flushed down the toilet and which do not readily break down. The problem is also exacerbated by food waste, cooking oils and fat being flushed down the toilet as these tend to congeal when cooled leading to blockages in the system. The cost of dealing with these blockages goes beyond a simple monetary value, they also cause huge amounts of aggravation and inconvenience to the public. Every time there is a blockage companies must be employed to remove them and in the most severe of cases these blockages can lead to the closing down of roads leading to disruption to traffic flow, not to mention the inconvenience and unpleasant nature of fould odors produced.

The Love Your Drain campaign will centre around a cartoon character called Dwaine Pipe, who will be the vehicle used to get messages across to the public and especially young children in a quick, easy to understand and memorable way. Dwaine eats toilet paper, pee and poo. He gets poorly if he is fed the wrong foods such as wipes, nappies, food scraps and cooking oil. It is a very simple message but many people sometimes don't realise that flushing unwelcome items in to the sewers can cause serious problems to our sewer network.

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On Saturday the 17th October 2015 there will be an awareness day held at the Piazza where the public will be introduced to Dwaine Pipe and receive information booklets and flyers. The campaign will shortly also be extended to our local schools to raise awareness of this problem through a series of talks and reading books which follow the adventures of Dwaine Pipe. There are a number of other initiatives also planned to get the message across and hopefully change public behaviour.

The message itself is actually very simple "If it's not toilet paper, pee or poo, don't flush it down the loo!"

The Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services the Hon Paul Balban said:

"I am very happy to be launching this essential interdepartmental awareness campaign. It is imperative that we all understand what actually happens when we flush the toilet and how this affects our sewer network. Throwing items such as cloth, rags, sanitary towels, wipes, foodstuffs including fats and cooking oils have a very negative and destructive effect on the sewer systems. Not only do these items cause severe blockages which often result in major disruption of vehicle flow and often, these items end up in the sea where they could take years to degrade and hence adversely affecting our environment our marine life and ultimately our health. This campaign will try to reach all sectors of the community but will especially target children in schools who are often the best persons to bring about change within households and will hopefully sow the seeds of our campaign."

The Minister for Housing the Hon Samantha Sacramento said:

"The Housing Department and Housing works Agency have worked in conjunction with Technical Services, Aquagib and Environmental Agency to make the public aware of the seriousness of maintaining the sewers clean. By making the public aware we aim to avoid the amount of call outs for blockages. The Housing Department will continue assisting the campaign by contacting all Government tenants over the coming months directly supplying them with further information on the matter."