

Future Trend: Changes Associated with Other Drainage Systems

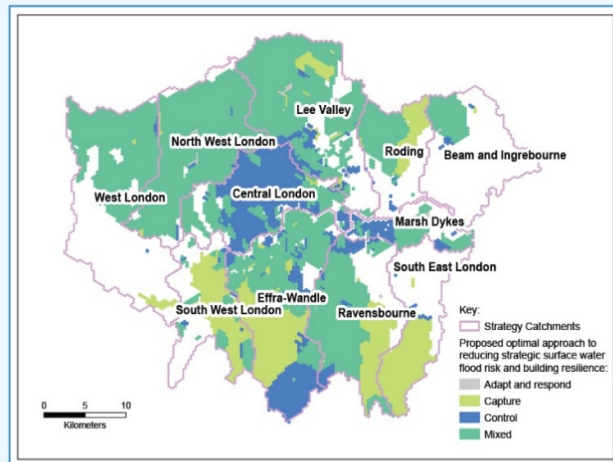
Trend definition and relevance to DWMP

Thames Water's drainage systems interact with drainage assets owned and operated by other organisations, including watercourses, agricultural drainage, highways drainage, private drainage and surface water systems operated by Lead Local Flood Authorities. These interactions can be both direct (connected) and indirect, for example, unmaintained highway drainage may lead to surface flooding that can inundate Thames Water systems. Changes to the condition, operation (such as the frequency of cleaning or dredging) or capacity of these systems can influence the performance and resilience of our wastewater network, both positively and negatively. Even foul-only systems can be impacted by third-party infrastructure and drainage management practices.

Our DWMP therefore needs to remain aware of and responsive to emerging trends, planned interventions and operational changes across these different systems. Understanding these interactions helps inform our risk assessments, identify opportunities and dependencies, and support collaborative, catchment-based approaches to managing shared surface drainage, flooding and environmental challenges.

Trend description, uncertainty and potential impact on our region

London surface water strategy solution for managing excess surface water



Source: London Surface Water Strategy 2025-2030, Flood Ready London Partnership, 2025

- Implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010¹ would remove the automatic 'right to connect' surface water drainage to public sewers and require Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for most new developments. This could reduce surface water flows entering our sewer network and improve resilience. However, implementation timescales remain uncertain, and no changes have been assumed within the DWMP28 planning period.
- The London Surface Water Strategy² promotes the use of SuDS and other nature-based solutions to capture, store and infiltrate surface water, reducing reliance on conventional grey infrastructure. The figure highlights the London zones where these measures are being prioritised to reduce surface water flood risk affecting around 320,000 properties.
- Highways authorities and stakeholders are increasingly concerned³ about the impact of polluted highway runoff on water quality. In London, highway drainage often enters our sewer network before reaching watercourses, requiring coordinated planning. Outside London, highway drainage tends to be a separate system. Highway runoff improvement programmes⁴ are expected to continue beyond 2030, while source control measures are likely to reduce pollution risks over the longer term.

Stage of DWMP used	
Risk assessment	✓
Plan development	✓
Impact/Importance	
Short term (2035)	Low
Medium term (2045)	Medium
Long term (2055)	Medium
Example PIs affected by this trend	
	Good ecological and/or chemical status: Public sewerage
	Surface water flooding (shared responsibility)
	Good ecological and/or chemical: Urban and transport (shared responsibility)



References

- 1 GOV.UK, 'Flood and Water Management Act 2010' 15/12/2025 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/schedule/3.
- 2 Mayor of London, 'London Surface Water Strategy' 14/05/2025 www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/environment-and-climate-change/climate-change/climate-adaptation/surface-water-flooding/london-surface-water-strategy.
- 3 The Guardian Sandra Laville, 'England's toxic road runoff pollution being ignored, MPs told' 04/09/2025 www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/04/englands-road-runoff-pollution-problem-being-ignored-mps-told.
- 4 National Highways, 'National Highways 2030 Water Quality Plan Mitigating high risk outfalls and soakaways' 08/2023, nationalhighways.co.uk/media/shhf0vbo/national-highways-water-quality-plan-2030-published-aug-23.pdf.

