

Extract from “Water Strategy for Wales” published by Welsh Government

<https://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/150521-water-strategy-for-wales-en.pdf>

A sustainable approach to drainage in both rural and developed areas, surface water flooding and diffuse pollution are matters of growing concern. The predicted increase in intense rainfall events will present even greater challenges to our drainage systems and the way that we manage land. We need a drainage approach that can cope with these challenges and help address the risk of surface water flooding and diffuse pollution. The sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) approach to surface water management aims to deal with rainwater on the surface and close to where it falls. This approach can slow down the flow of water, reducing flood risk and protecting water quality while also providing a wide range of community benefits such as improving the visual amenity of developments, providing open space, and contributing to ecosystem resilience. The SuDS approach can be used effectively in both rural and urban areas and supports new development without adding to the risk of flooding or pollution. In rural areas good land management practices can do much to reduce downstream flood risk and protect water quality but SuDS techniques can also provide ways of managing surface water from farm yards and buildings. Despite these benefits, we estimate that the proportion of new developments and redevelopments drained by SuDS is low and uptake has been slow. Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (FWMA) requires new developments to include sustainable drainage features that comply with national standards. We will consider how to implement this when we determine the most effective way of embedding SuDS principles in new developments in the longer term. Flood and Water Management Act – <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/schedule/3> In the short term, we will publish interim national standards on an advisory basis which will enable designers; property developers; local authorities and other interested parties to both demonstrate that they have taken account of the Welsh Government’s planning advice on Development and Flood Risk and to pilot the standards, so that if necessary they can be revised before being made statutory. It is also vital that adoption and management arrangements for SuDS infrastructure and all drainage elements are agreed with the local authority or sewerage undertaker at the planning stage to ensure that the infrastructure is properly maintained and functions effectively for its design life. The SuDS approach can also be used in tackling surface water drainage problems in existing developed areas. Retrofitting of SuDS can improve the environment for local people, provide more green spaces and recreational areas and reduce flood risk. It can relieve pressure on existing drainage systems, resulting in savings in maintenance or upgrading. It also provides an opportunity to engage with the local community on their role in drainage and water management. The SuDS approach is central to future surface water management and supporting innovative surface water drainage in Wales. To support this, we expect sewerage undertakers and highways authorities to facilitate the use of natural systems in infrastructure developments and to reinstate or create aquatic features, such as wetlands and natural river channels, where there are benefits for wildlife, communities and customers. For new developments, an approach which integrates water cycle management into development planning and design has been pioneered in Australia. Known as Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) it uses SuDS

principles, and builds on ecosystems services principles to reduce water use, minimise flood risk and improve water quality. We will work with others both nationally and internationally to identify how the WSUD approach could be used in Wales. Responsibility for drainage and sewerage infrastructure Drainage systems have developed over time and this has led to a range of individuals and organisations having ownership and responsibility for them. In developed areas, local authorities and the sewerage undertaker each have certain responsibilities. In rural areas, drainage is often the responsibility of Natural Resources Wales. Highways drainage is the responsibility of highways authorities. The relationship between highways drains and the public sewerage network is complex, with some highways drains carrying surface water from public systems and some highways drainage discharging into public sewers. Highways are also important conduits for diffuse pollution. Understanding the role they play in the drainage system is vital for development of catchment scale sustainable drainage systems. Different legislation governs the respective roles of Natural Resources Wales, local authorities, highways authorities and sewerage undertakers. Working with all interested parties, we will review legislation and practices relating to drainage, focussing on surface water, highways drainage and orphaned assets. We want to see if the current arrangements are fit for purpose or whether we can improve governance arrangements. Our aim is to provide clarity over responsibilities, better planning and collaboration for the installation and management of these assets. This will also support the SuDS approach. We will, as part of this drainage review, assess the implementation of the process for adoption of public sewers introduced in October 2012 and the related Ministerial Standards. We will then consider whether there is a need for statutory guidance under Section 106B of the Water Industry Act 1991 .