

Sustainable drainage on new developments in Wales

Background

This newsletter follows on from consultations by the Welsh Government on implementing sustainable drainage (known as SuDS) for all new developments in Wales. These were undertaken in the summer of 2017 and between November 2017 and February 2018, and included consultation workshops held in west and north Wales and Cardiff in February 2018.

We propose to publish a series of newsletters over the coming months, leading up to the introduction of a new approval process and standards for surface water drainage management in November 2018. Our aim is to inform those who will be affected by the new approvals process, including developers and their designers, consulting engineers, local authority planners, highways and drainage engineers and those responsible for green space management.

What changes are being proposed for surface water management?

Surface water drainage systems serving new development must be designed and built in accordance with standards for sustainable drainage published by Welsh Ministers. These systems must be approved by the local authority acting in its SuDS Approving Body (SAB) role. In some cases the SAB will adopt the systems.

Principles and Standards

The standards document published by Welsh Ministers contains a number of drainage design principles and a set of six standards. Drainage designers will need to demonstrate how their proposed drainage for a new

development complies with these or provide a sound explanation for any departure.

In determining any application for approval for a drainage scheme, the SAB must consider if the design complies with the standards, including matters such as maintenance requirements and access.

How will drainage schemes be different?

The Welsh Government's objective is that in future, drainage systems will provide multiple benefits, contributing to placemaking and improving the quality of public open space. Rather than surface water drainage being designed to deal with a disposal problem, it will aim to mimic natural systems, with water managed as much as possible on the surface, rather than in underground systems which are out of sight. These systems need to be designed to reduce flood risk, protect water quality and to provide recreation and conservation benefits.

Sustainable Drainage and the Planning System

Applications for approval of sustainable drainage on new developments will need to be made to the SAB. While this process will be separate from the planning application process, extensive discussion and consultation between the Local Planning Authority (LPA), the SAB and the developer will need to take place from the pre-application stage to ensure suitability of proposed SuDS design in line with national standards, adequate site layout and ultimately SAB approval.

Lack of adequate integration between the two processes could lead to SAB approval

not being granted. As a result, the developer may need to produce a new site layout design, provide supplementary information and delay construction until the SAB has approved the application.

Training

The Welsh Government has commissioned a training package to provide improved understanding of the new system. This will include a half day introduction to sustainable drainage and the new approvals process, a more detailed half day course for those already familiar with SuDS and a full day for those who will be submitting and assessing drainage schemes. We propose to make these courses available across Wales for local authority staff, developers and drainage designers. Further information will be provided in future newsletters.

Resources

A wide range of resources on SuDS are available. The Susdrain web site www.susdrain.org, which is supported by the Welsh Government, provides links to a wide range of resources and case studies. These include the comprehensive SuDS Manual (C753) and Guidance on the construction of SuDS (C768).

Timing and transitional arrangements

The new approvals process will come into effect in November 2018. Transitional arrangements will be in place for developments for which planning permission is in place.

What happens next?

The Welsh Government will publish a summary of the consultation responses on the statutory instruments which will implement the new system in March 2018. The next step is to place this legislation before the National Assembly for approval. Once the legislation is approved, local authorities, developers and consultants will have until November to prepare for the new approvals process.

What work is underway at the moment?

The Welsh Government is finalising the guidance which will accompany the legislation in May. A “Frequently asked questions” document is also under development.

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) is working with its members to develop a common process for applications, approvals and adoption

Communications

The Welsh Government is working with an advisory group, which includes representatives from key stakeholders, including developers, the WLGA, Consumer Council for Water and DCWW to develop and deliver a communications plan for the transfer. It is important that stakeholders prepare for the new design standards and approvals process at the earliest stage in the life of a development.

We would be grateful if you could circulate this newsletter and ensure that other key stakeholders in your organisation are aware of the forthcoming changes.

How can I find out more information?

The Cabinet Secretary’s written statement on sustainable drainage may be found at: <http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2017/sustainabledrainage/?lang=en>

Details of the current SuDS Standards may be found at: <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/flooding/drainage/?lang=en>

Information on the recent consultation is available at: <https://beta.gov.wales/implementation-sustainable-drainage-systems-new-developments-draft-regulations-and-national>

If you need any further information on implementing the requirement for SuDS on new developments, please contact us at: water@gov.wales