

**Water Stakeholder Forum**  
**10.00am – 3.00pm, Friday 18th November, Defra**  
**Room 808/7, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, SW1P 3JR**

**Note of Meeting**

**1. Welcome and Chair's Remarks**

Chris Ryder, Head of Water Quality, Defra

The following points were noted:

- Catchment Restoration Fund and Catchment Based Approach were developing well.
- Septic tanks: Registration scheme momentarily suspended.
- Septic Tanks: Defra were conducting a review of the arrangements for householders to register their septic tanks. The review was in response to the views of many householders who had queried why registration was necessary and what benefits it brought. The review would take a fresh look at the registration issue and establish what was the best approach for managing the environmental risks from the domestic sewage effluent from septic tanks and similar installations

**2. EA and Defra Updates**

Chris Ryder, Defra & Dave Baxter, EA

Please see presentation

The following points were noted

- The large increase in investigations would provide increased certainty in classification and lead to better value for money in delivering WFD objectives.
- EA wanted to provide a clearer decision-making framework for activity.
- The second cycle was a great opportunity to lead to the best possible management of the water environment .
- Future RBMP would be more like living documents and would emanate from better society engagement.
- Affordability was a political issue.
- More work was needed to help River Basin Liaison Panels to knit together work across catchments.

**3. EU Update**

Rory Wallace, Defra

Please see presentation

The following points were noted:

- There was a risk in how the Commission were looking at the definition of water services.

- Defra and the EA were working together on engaging with the Commission on the proposal for a watch list of priority substances.

#### **4. Keynote Speech**

Richard Benyon, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Natural Environment and Fisheries

Please See copy of speech (Check against actual delivery)

#### The following points were noted

- In terms of abstraction, in the longer-term South East of England issue would be addressed
- Defra valued the work of CLA
- Land-managers played a key role in the economy which was understood and valued, as indeed was the role of the energy industry. The responsibility for tackling environmental issues needed to be proportionate.
- Defra would be making an announcement soon on the SUDs legislation. SUDs was an important scheme for us to focus on.
- If there were any gaps in what science projects Defra was focussing on, to alert this to us ([waterforum@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:waterforum@defra.gsi.gov.uk))
- The Catchment Sensitive Farming Scheme was a welcomed and appreciated initiative. There was a notable turn-over in farming-facing contacts from within the Defra Network.
- Walker recommendations were being addressed in the Water White Paper but water was a tough political issue.
- Government wanted to see an increase in metering.
- It was important for UK companies to be involved in UKTI support to investors.

#### **5. Catchment Based Approach**

Tim Pickering, EA, Ecclesbourne Pilot Catchment Coordinator (Derbyshire)

Please see presentation

#### **6. WFD Funding**

Rory Wallace Defra

Please see presentation

#### **7. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)**

Pauline Crellin, Defra

#### The following points were noted

- Defra recognised that SuDS could have significant benefits for managing water resources, providing ecosystems services and helping us to adapt to

climate change.

- Well designed SuDS systems had additional benefits. They could increase habitats for biodiversity and could improve filtration (and therefore water quality) which would help to meet targets set under the Water Framework Directive.
- Defra had planned to launch a consultation on the implementation of the aspects of the Flood and Water Management Act relating to SuDS on 15 July. This consultation had been delayed due to queries raised at write-round.
- Defra were working to resolve those queries and to consider a new implementation date. Due to the consultation delays, it would not now be possible to implement the policy by April 2012.
- Local authorities were best placed to determine how long it will take to implement SUDs and we wanted to hear from them as part of the consultation.
- There was a question of long-term funding of SUDs and we were keen to set-up a working group with Treasury on this.
- Implementing SUDs involved working with a range of partners and dependencies which increased the complexity.
- The proposed SUDs legislation would include standards.
- Defra would produce a guidance document – to be developed in parallel with the consultation - but wanted to give flexibility in the implementation of the legislation.
- Defra would be publicising a partial Cost-Benefit Analysis with the consultation.
- The options as part of the proposed SUDs legislation have built-in flexibility and were not dependent on the publication of the National Planning Policy.
- There was uncertainty over the issue of maintenance costs for SUDs.
- SUDs were integral to the whole of water policy.
- The British Geological Survey (BGS) had developed a new national map to show the suitability of the subsurface for the installation of infiltration sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). This new dataset allowed users to determine the subsurface properties with respect to drainage, stability and groundwater quality to determine whether soakaways, infiltration basins or permeable pavements may be appropriate. The map was intended to be used as a guide, and was not a replacement for soakaway testing or a site investigation. For more information see [www.bgs.ac.uk/suds](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/suds) or contact Rachel Dearden<sup>1</sup> [rach1@bgs.ac.uk](mailto:rach1@bgs.ac.uk) . (Please also see Annex A)

## 8. CAP Reform

Kate Morley/ Claire McCamphill, Defra

Please see presentation

The following points were noted

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Rachel Dearden, a hydrogeologist at the BGS, has recently been awarded a NERC Knowledge Exchange Fellowship to work with drainage practitioners to promote good decision-making in the selection of infiltration SuDS with respect to ground compatibility. For more information get in contact via the address above

- The European Commission has published its regulatory proposals for the next financial perspective of the Common Agricultural Policy (2014-2020) on October 12th. The Commission had indicated that CAP must continue to address food security and safety, and help secure economic development in rural areas. The Commission had also indicated that environmental elements of CAP must be strengthened, including resource protection, biodiversity and addressing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Defra is preparing to consult interested stakeholders in England to gather evidence and better understand how the Commission's proposals will affect different sectors of the industry; Devolved Administrations will also be conducting a consultation with their stakeholders. Water Forum Stakeholders will be contacted when the consultation begins. As part of the consultation process, Defra officials are offering to present an outline of the Commission's proposals and the UK's initial response to the proposals at large events of interested stakeholders. If you are hosting an event in England and would be interested in hearing further details of the proposals please contact e-mail: Cap.reform@defra.gsi.gov.uk

## **9. Non-agricultural diffuse**

Richard Martin, Defra & EA.

Please see presentation

### The following points were noted

- There were existing powers in place for Water companies to tackle misconnections. Extending or enhancing these powers was not a priority but was one of the policy areas being considered.
- We have a reasonable understanding of the scale of the problem of diffuse pollution and were undertaking more and more investigations.
- There were good wins on taking a voluntary approach to tackling leaks from water tanks from domestic properties. Even with this, such leaks still remained a risk.
- Defra was working on the commitment in the Natural Environment White Paper to "develop a strategy to identify and address the most significant diffuse sources of water pollution from non-agricultural sources".

## Annex A: National Infiltration SuDS Map

The British Geological Survey (BGS) has developed a national Infiltration SuDS Map that shows the likely suitability of the subsurface for the installation of infiltration sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). The new dataset allows users to determine the properties of the subsurface with respect to drainage, ground stability and groundwater vulnerability enabling them to determine whether soakaways, infiltration basins or permeable pavements may be appropriate at a given location. The map is intended to be used as a guide, and is not a replacement for soakaway testing or a site investigation.

The map comprises 24 individual GIS datasets, which can be usefully divided into four sections. Each section has a 'screening layer' providing a spatial overview of the suitability for infiltration and a number of component data layers. These data layers are derived predominantly from BGS data and have been reclassified and reattributed to be specifically relevant for SuDS suitability. The four sections of the map and the data considered are listed below:

- **Are there any severe constraints that mean an infiltration system should be installed only if the potential for and consequences of flooding and geohazards are known?** Datasets include: Persistent shallow groundwater, soluble rocks, landslide hazards, artificial ground, shallow mining hazards
- **To what extent will the ground drain?** Datasets include: depth to groundwater, superficial permeability, superficial thickness, bedrock permeability, geologically-indicated floodplains
- **Will the ground be stable?** Datasets include: soluble rocks, landslides, running sand, collapsible ground, compressible ground, shallow mining hazards, swelling clays
- **Are there any water quality precautions?** Datasets include: artificial ground, subsurface flow mechanism (fracture/intergranular) and the Environment Agency's source protection zones.

Infiltration is a highly versatile SuDS technique that can be implemented over a wide range of ground conditions provided that the system is designed appropriately. The Infiltration SuDS Map reflects this concept, highlighting the potential for infiltration SuDS not only in free-draining ground, but also in lower permeability deposits where bespoke infiltration SuDS (infiltration basins for example) may be appropriate.

The BGS anticipate that the map will be of value to planners and developers, but also to SuDS approval bodies within unitary authorities, where it could be used to assess incoming planning proposals. The map will be available as a licensable dataset, with a cost of ~£1.50 per km<sup>2</sup>, attracting discounts for larger areas, or as an 'Infiltration to the ground GeoReport' that is available now (<http://shop.bgs.ac.uk/georeports/>).

BGS recognises that appropriate use of infiltration SuDS depends on an understanding of the importance of ground compatibility. Dr. Rachel Dearden, a hydrogeologist at the BGS has recently been awarded a NERC (Natural Environment Research Council) Knowledge Exchange Fellowship to support drainage professionals over the next three years. If you're interested in getting involved, please get in touch with Rachel, [rach1@bgs.ac.uk](mailto:rach1@bgs.ac.uk)