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## **THE WATER REGULATIONS ADVISORY SCHEME – WRAS**

### **AIMS, ORGANISATION AND CONSTITUTION**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 THE UK WATER SUPPLY INDUSTRY**

Water supplies in the United Kingdom are provided by a number of different types of organisations, referred to henceforth as ‘Water Suppliers’.

They include:-

- in England and Wales - a number of water and sewerage companies and a number of water-only companies, appointed under licence by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (the Welsh National Assembly in Wales) and regulated by the Director General of the Office of Water Services.
- in Scotland - the three Water Authorities (merged into one body - Scottish Water- from April 2002) under the general supervision of the Scottish Parliament.
- in Northern Ireland - the Northern Ireland Water Service.

### **1.2 WATER REGULATIONS**

- (a) For many decades, UK Water Suppliers have used water supply byelaws to prevent the waste, undue consumption, misuse or contamination of water. A major revision of the byelaw provisions was undertaken by the Government in 1999. Byelaws in England and Wales

were replaced by the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999, and by the revised Byelaws 2000 (Scotland) in Scotland. Regulations with broadly similar provisions already existed in Northern Ireland. These provisions are collectively referred to as ‘Water Regulations’ in this document.

- (b) The Water Regulations have similar purposes to the previous byelaws, with additional emphasis on the conservation of water and the prevention of erroneous measurement of water.
- (c) The Water Regulations are enforced by the Water Suppliers, assisted by the Water Regulations Advisory Scheme.

## **2. THE WATER REGULATIONS ADVISORY SCHEME (THE SCHEME)**

### **2.1. AIMS OF THE SCHEME**

The Scheme has the following aims:

- (a) To promote knowledge of the Water Regulations throughout the UK and to encourage their consistent interpretation and enforcement, for the prevention of waste, undue consumption, misuse, erroneous measurement or contamination of water.

- (b) To provide an advisory service for and on behalf of Water Suppliers and for any other person or body seeking guidance on the principles of Water Regulations.
- (c) To consult on behalf of the water supply industry in the UK with Government, with professional, trade and other organisations, with fittings and materials manufacturers and others regarding the Water Regulations and related matters.
- (d) To develop criteria for testing materials and fittings to assess their compliance with the Regulators' Specifications for approved products in accordance with the Water Regulations.
- (e) To assess the results of the testing of materials and fittings to determine their compliance with the Regulators' Specifications and to publish up-to-date lists of satisfactory materials and fittings in the Scheme's Water Fittings and Materials Directory.
- (f) To administer for those Water Suppliers who wish it, a scheme to assess, register and publicise Approved Contractors in accordance with the Water Regulations.
- (g) To participate in the representation of the UK Water Supply Industry in the development of relevant, practical and appropriate national and international standards for water fittings and plumbing systems.

### **3. THE SCHEME'S ACTIVITIES**

#### **3.1. PROMOTION OF WATER REGULATIONS**

The Scheme works to promote knowledge of the Water Regulations to professional and trade associations, designers, manufacturers and installers of water systems and fittings, building services managers and others responsible for plumbing systems and water fittings. All relevant means are used, including seminars and audio-visual presentations,

advisory videos, leaflets, brochures and books and regular information bulletins.

#### **3.2 ADVISORY SERVICE**

The Scheme promotes consistent interpretation of the Water Regulations across the UK, and assists others in complying with them, by providing an advisory service for and on behalf of the Water Suppliers. By arrangement with the Evaluation and Testing Centre of WRc-NSF Ltd., an experienced team of specialists is available to respond to technical enquiries regarding the Water Regulations. These enquiries are received from Water Suppliers' staff and from water fittings manufacturers, plumbing system designers, merchants, installers and the Suppliers' customers.

#### **3.3 CONSULTATION**

Through its committees and practitioners' groups, the Scheme co-ordinates consultation between the UK Water Supply Industry and Government, manufacturers, professional and trade associations and installers on matters relating to water fittings and plumbing systems. This includes the development, interpretation and implementation of legislation, codes of practice and guidance documents.

#### **3.4 APPROVAL OF WATER FITTINGS AND MATERIALS**

- (a) It is an offence to install or use, in public water supply systems, fittings which do not meet the Water Regulations' requirement that every water fitting shall be of an appropriate quality. This requirement can be complied with in various ways, one of which is that the fitting shall conform to a specification approved by the regulator. A major activity undertaken by the Scheme is the assessment of materials and water fittings for their compliance with the Regulator's Specification and corresponding test

- criteria. The Scheme's assessment is confined to matters of Water Regulations compliance and so does not attempt to make judgements about fitness for purpose or value for money.
- (b) The Scheme does not undertake the actual testing of materials and fittings. Test results will be considered by the Scheme if they are prepared
- by a laboratory that is accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) to carry out those tests,
  - or by an overseas laboratory which is covered by a multilateral agreement accepted by the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA), the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), or the International Laboratory Accreditation Co-operation (ILAC),
  - or, in the case of manufacturers' testing of WCs, by a test facility which meets the Scheme's criteria for self-certification.
- (c) On behalf of the Scheme, a panel of experienced assessors drawn from the Water Supply Industry compares the test results with the published Regulators' Specification for water fittings or materials, to decide on their compliance. The Management Committee (see Clause 5.2) has established an appeals procedure to deal with cases in which manufacturers believe the decisions made on their fittings or appliances are unreasonable.
- (d) The submission of materials or fittings for assessment is voluntary and is at the discretion of manufacturers. However, the specification and correct installation of WRAS Approved Products in water systems will ensure compliance with the relevant Water Regulations, subject only to any special requirements dictated by local conditions. Although a charge may be made by the laboratory that conducts the tests, no charge is made to manufacturers for the assessment by the Scheme. For a small fee, WRAS Approved Products will be listed in the Water Fittings and Materials Directory, published by the Scheme (see Section 4).
- 3.5 WATER INDUSTRY APPROVED PLUMBERS SCHEME (WIAPS)
- (a) The Water Regulations permit Water Suppliers to grant Approved Contractor status to suitably qualified contractors. Approved contractors benefit from certain relaxations of some aspects of the Water Regulations. They must give their customers a certificate stating that their installation work complies with the Water Regulations. The certificate may be used by the customer as a defence in the event of any prosecution for non-compliance arising from that work.
- (b) WRAS administers the Water Industry Approved Plumbers Scheme (WIAPS) on behalf of a majority of Water Suppliers. A WIAPS Approved Plumber must demonstrate an adequate experience of plumbing, a knowledge of the Water Regulations and have an adequate level of third party liability insurance. The WIAPS scheme also offers an alternative, more limited, level of registration (Groundworkers approval) for contractors who only wish to carry out work on underground supply pipes and external water services.
- 3.6 DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS
- The Scheme participates in the development of technical standards for water fittings and plumbing systems on relevant British and international standards committees. The Scheme is represented in the Water UK Standards Group, which co-ordinates standards work for the UK Water Industry.

#### 4. THE WATER FITTINGS AND MATERIALS DIRECTORY

- (a) Materials or water fittings which have been satisfactorily assessed by WRAS are listed in the Water Fittings and Materials Directory, which the Scheme publishes and updates twice per year. Approval lasts for five years, after which time the product must be re-submitted for approval. Items manufactured under accepted British Standards Institution 'Kitemark' schemes or other certification bodies are approved and listed without further examination or test.
- (b) The materials listed in the Directory have been tested in accordance with the requirements of BS 6920: 2000 ('Suitability of non-metallic products for use in contact with water intended for human consumption with regard to their effect on the quality of the water'). BS 6920 includes tests for leaching of toxic metals, cytotoxicity, taste, appearance and promotion of microbiological growth. Metals are tested in accordance with the requirements of BS7766.
- (c) More stringent requirements apply to materials used by the public Water Suppliers in contact with water intended for drinking (i.e. materials used for the collection, treatment and distribution of public water supplies up to the point where water enters the privately-owned supply pipework). In England and Wales, these materials must comply with Regulation 25 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations (1989) (as amended). Section 25 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations (1990) applies similar requirements in Scotland. A separate process of approval under these regulations is supervised by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI).
- (d) For reference, the Directory includes the DWI 'List of substances, products and processes approved under Regulations 25 and 26 for use in connection with the

supply of water for drinking, washing, cooking or food production purposes.'

- (e) Information about the 'Water Fittings and Materials Directory' can be obtained from the Scheme and its website.

#### 5. MANAGEMENT OF THE SCHEME

##### 5.1 ACCOUNTABILITY

- (a) The Scheme is accountable to the UK Water Supply Industry as a whole, in so far as it is funded by a subscription from each of the Water Suppliers in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its activities are controlled by the Industry through the Management Committee (see Clause 5.2). The Management Committee is advised by a Technical Committee drawn from experienced staff of the Water Suppliers and which provides a panel of experts to deal with the assessment of test reports on fittings and appliances submitted to the Scheme for approval.
- (b) The route for reporting the Scheme's activities is from the Management Committee to the Council of Water UK - the trade body of the UK water industry - henceforth referred to as the 'body responsible'. The structure of the Scheme's committees and their relationships with other organisations is illustrated in Figure 1.

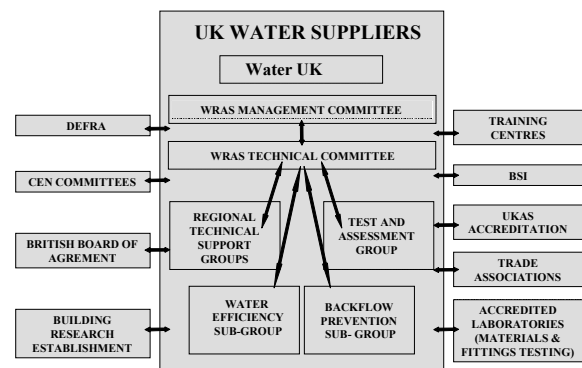


Figure 1: Structure of WRAS and relationship with

## 5.2 THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

- a) On behalf of the Water Suppliers subscribing to the Scheme, the Management Committee comprises representatives of the UK Water Suppliers, is responsible for the operation of the Scheme and reports to the body responsible (see Clause 5.1).
- b) The Chairman of the Management Committee shall be appointed after consultation with the body responsible. In addition to the Chairman, membership of the Management Committee shall comprise:-
  - (i) not more than two members representing the Water Services Companies.
  - (ii) not more than two members representing the Water Supply only Companies.
  - (iii) one member representing the Scottish Water Supply Authority(ies).
  - (iv) one member representing Welsh Water.
  - (v) one member representing the Department of the Environment Northern Ireland.
  - (vi) one member representing the WRc-NSF Evaluation and Testing Centre.
  - (vii) the Chairman of the Technical Committee.
  - (viii) the Manager of the Scheme.
  - (ix) the Secretary.
- (c) The period of service of the Chairman and members shall be three years and they shall be eligible for re-appointment saving only that other periods of appointment may be agreed in order to provide continuity of experience.
- (d) The functions of the Management Committee shall be as follows:
  - (i) to be responsible for the operation of the Scheme and to send to the body responsible annually a report thereon for publication.
  - (ii) to consider and approve budgets for the operation of the Scheme and to make

recommendations on the level of contribution to be paid by Water Suppliers pursuant to Clause 6.3 of this Scheme.

- (iii) to appoint the Technical Committee to be constituted under Clause 5.3 of this Scheme.
- (iv) to formulate policy for the furtherance of the aims of the Scheme, to consider matters relating to the enforcement of the Water Regulations and other related issues and as may be referred to it by the Technical Committee or other committees or groups as may be established by the Management Committee.
- (v) to establish a regional Technical Support Groups under Clause 5.4 of this Scheme.
- (vi) to establish and maintain machinery for the determination of complaints by any person aggrieved by a decision of the Technical Committee on any matter coming before it under Clause 5.3 (c) (i) of this Scheme.

## 5.3 TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

- a) The Technical Committee to be established in accordance with Clause 5.2(d)(iii) of this Scheme shall comprise:
  - (i) A chairman appointed by the Management Committee who should be a Water Supply Industry employee or consultant.
  - (ii) Five representatives of the Water Suppliers (England and Wales), experienced in the Water Regulations and the wider context of their enforcement.
  - (iii) One representative each of the Water Suppliers in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
  - (iv) The Chairmen of the regional Technical Support Groups
  - (v) At the request of the Chairman, one Scientific Advisor and one Medical

- Advisor (to be appointed by the Management Committee), a representative of WRc-NSF Evaluation and Testing Centre and a representative of the BSi.
- (vi) Any technical expert as considered necessary.
  - (vii) The Manager of the Scheme
  - (viii) representatives of other organisations as considered necessary from time to time, by invitation of the Chairman.
  - (ix) A Secretary.
- b) The period of office of the Chairman, members and advisers shall be for three years, and they shall be eligible for re-appointment thereafter.
- c) The functions of the Technical Committee shall be as follows:
- (i) to ascertain, by reference to the results of tests and examinations carried out on its behalf, whether or not any material or water fitting complies with the Water Regulations for preventing the waste, undue consumption, misuse or contamination of water and with such other Regulations as may from time to time be in force and, where appropriate, to publish its conclusions.
  - (ii) to formulate, review and arrange for the publication of test criteria to determine compliance with the Regulators' Specifications for water fittings and materials.
  - (iii) to approve for the purposes of the Scheme and to monitor the performance of any laboratory, test house or other establishment carrying out the testing and examination of water fittings for any of the purposes described in sub-clause (i) of this clause.
  - (iv) to make arrangements for the inspection of factory premises, manufacturing processes, stocks and records of the manufacturers of water fittings and to ascertain the adequacy of the quality control practices employed in meeting any requirements which may be specified as applicable to particular fittings in accordance with sub-clause (i) of this clause.
- (v) to tender advice to the Management Committee on any matter relating to the operation of the Scheme, and to report to it at least once annually on the discharge of its functions.
  - (vi) to consult any relevant Government Department, association, body or person associated with the manufacture, installation and use of water fittings or materials who signify in writing their desire for consultation or to be consulted.
  - (vii) to establish as it may from time to time think fit any sub-committee, working group or panel to advise it on any aspect of its functions
  - (viii) to establish such liaison with other bodies as it may think appropriate in the discharge of its functions.
  - (ix) on behalf of the UK Water Suppliers, to participate in the development or revision of national or international standards in accordance with the aims of the Scheme.
  - (x) to supervise the operation of the Water Industry Approved Plumbers Scheme.
  - (xi) to carry out such other functions as may be assigned to it from time to time by the Management Committee.
- 5.4 REGIONAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT GROUPS
- a) Regional Technical Support Groups shall comprise representatives of those Water Suppliers who wish to support the work of the Groups, drawn from defined geographical areas as determined by the Management Committee. Representatives shall be

appointed by their employers on the basis that they have direct responsibility for the practical implementation and enforcement of the Water Regulations. Each group shall include one member of the Water Regulations Advisory Scheme staff and one member of staff as Secretary.

- b) For each Group, a Chairman shall be appointed by the Management Committee from the membership of the Group. Each Group shall appoint a deputy chairman to deputise in the event of the temporary unavailability of the chairman, or until a replacement chairman is appointed.
- c) The functions of the regional Technical Support Groups shall be:
  - (i) To promote consistent enforcement of the Water Regulations by adopting interpretations agreed by the Technical Committee on behalf of all the UK Water Suppliers.
  - (ii) To bring to the attention of the Technical Committee any unresolved issues relating to the enforcement of the Water Regulations and to make recommendations thereon to the Technical Committee to assist it in reaching an agreed interpretation.

#### 5.5 THE MANAGER

The Manager of the Scheme shall report to the Chairman of the Management Committee and shall be responsible for all aspects of the day-to-day running of the Scheme.

### 6. MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

#### 6.1 ELIGIBILITY

Membership of the Scheme shall be open to any organisation as described in Paragraph 1.1.

#### 6.2 NOTICE OF WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SCHEME

A member organisation shall give a minimum of one year's notice in writing

to the Chairman of the Management Committee of its intention to withdraw from membership of the Scheme.

#### 6.3 FINANCE

- a) The expenditure on the operation of the Scheme shall be defrayed by contributions levied on members in such proportions and in such manner as the Management Committee may from time to time determine.
- b) The amount of the contributions shall be reviewed annually by the Management Committee and shall be increased by not less than the annual rate of inflation represented by the increase in the Retail Price Index in the twelve months up to the month prior to the annual review.
- c) Contributions are due to from members for the entire period for which they remain as members of the Scheme.

### 7. COMMENCEMENT OF THE WATER REGULATIONS ADVISORY SCHEME

The Scheme succeeded its predecessor, the Water Byelaws Scheme, on 1 July 1999.

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