

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE MEMBERS



April 2009 - March 2010

WRAS
Water Regulations Advisory Scheme



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Cover picture: During the year WRAS developed guidance for caravan site operators to ensure that their hose union taps for drinking water use and waste disposal purposes had adequate backflow protection.

THE WATER REGULATIONS ADVISORY SCHEME LTD

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It has been a successful first year for WRAS Ltd operating as an independent limited company, with a smooth transition from the previous arrangements. The Company delivered its objectives at a cost less than budget and was once again able to add to its reserves. Increased focus on costs since 2006/7 has enabled subscriptions to reduce by about 20% in real terms in four years, from £414,000 in 2006/7 to £372,000 in 2010/11. Your Board hopes to deliver further actual reductions now that we have a year's experience of operating as a stand-alone company.

Incorporation has strengthened our focus on our core objectives – Representation, Support for Water Suppliers, Approval of Products and Materials and Promotion of the Regulations – bringing increased benefits to Members at a lower cost.

The Scheme represented Water Suppliers in discussion of the Water Fittings Regulations and Scottish Byelaws with manufacturers of water fittings, with installers organisations and with trade associations, to promote consistency and compliance to prevent the waste and contamination of drinking water. The expected Government review of the Water Fittings Regulations stalled in 2009-10, but WRAS remains ready to participate if the review proceeds.

Support from Water Suppliers for the Technical Support Groups was excellent and many useful proposals for interpretations were considered by the Technical Committee. The national WRAS Water Fittings Regulations conference met its objective to improve awareness by providing opportunities to discuss key regulations topics, to promote and facilitate the development of consistency in interpretation, to promote the work of WRAS and identify ways of improving the services it offers and to provide a national networking opportunity. It was rated a great success and delegates looked forward to future events.

Almost 1100 products were granted WRAS Approval during the year and their details were published in the on-line Water Fittings and Materials Directory. Advice and interpretation of performance requirements for products was provided to manufacturers.

Membership of the Water Industry Approved Plumbers Scheme (WIAPS) grew at an improved rate despite the economic difficulties affecting the construction industry.

The transition has not been without its difficulties and I would like to thank my fellow directors who give generously of their time and our Managing Director, Dr Stephen Tuckwell and his colleagues for all their efforts.



Stephen Kay
Chairman, WRAS Ltd

1 REPRESENTATION

1.1 Trade and professional associations

WRAS provides a single point of contact between the Water Suppliers' Water Fittings Regulations departments and government, trade associations and professional bodies related to plumbing matters. The trade and professional associations have extensive networks of businesses or individual members who can be reached with 'water fittings regulations' messages through WRAS.

Meetings were held with widely varying groups including the British Ports Association and the British Marine Federation, the National Fire Sprinkler Network and the Heating and Ventilation Contractors Association. Twice yearly meetings have been established with the Plastic Pipes Group of the British Plastics Federation and the Bathroom Manufacturers Association to bring about closer links and better understanding of common issues.

Following a presentation by WRAS on the Water Fittings Regulations to the technical committee of the Tank and Cistern Manufacturers Association, the Association has worked with WRAS in the development of standards and advice on the design and testing of large storage cisterns.

1.2 Water Fittings Regulations review

The Government's review of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 for England and Wales began in 2008 and WRAS was invited to join with other organisations in a steering group to assist Defra. During 2009-10 the timetable for the review was revised more than once and with the announcement in March 2010 of the general election, WRAS understood that the review was suspended, pending the decision of the incoming Secretary of State for the Environment on the need for, and timing of, a review. Water Suppliers continue to identify items in the Water Fittings Regulations which they wish to have amended and WRAS remains ready to participate in the steering group and will make representations on their behalf for changes and additions when the review recommences.

1.3 Assistance to manufacturers, designers, installers and the public

Individual manufacturers of water fittings, some of the larger water fittings suppliers including the national DIY chains and installers' organisations have asked WRAS for interpretations of the Regulations, understanding of testing requirements and assessment of compliance of designs and installations. The WRAS technical enquiry service answered telephone and email enquiries running at around 100 per week, providing answers to queries which otherwise might be repeatedly asked of the staff of Water Suppliers regulations departments.

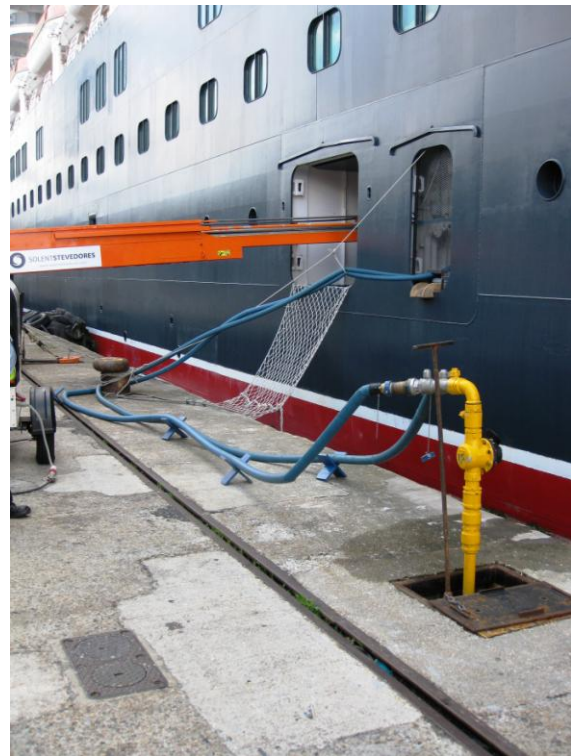
2 SUPPORT FOR WATER SUPPLIERS

2.1 Interpretation of regulations

Regulations managers exchanged experiences and discussed interpretations relating to many technical problems found 'in the field' as part of the work of the Technical Support Groups. These groups proposed solutions to these problems for the WRAS Technical Committee to endorse or amend on behalf of Water Suppliers nationally. Members benefitted from presentations of good practice and different approaches to enforcement of the Regulations.

The Groups developed advisory notes on diverse subjects, including the use of Type DC pipe interrupters on hose union taps in camping and caravan sites, correct design for interconnection of drinking water storage cisterns, backflow prevention requirements for school laboratories and the acceptable circumstances and methods for repair of lead supply pipes. These were presented to the Technical Committee for endorsement on behalf of all Water Suppliers.

Several incidents of backflow at ports as a result of filling ships with fresh water led to publication in 2006 of an Information and Guidance Note on backflow protection. Continued non-compliance with this IGN led to WRAS being asked by Water Suppliers to represent them at a meeting of the British Ports Association to discuss the difficulties port operators were claiming to have. The Technical Committee considered these claims and this liaison continues into 2010-11.



Right: A dockside hydrant standpipe being used without adequate backflow protection for filling a cruise liner with fresh water.

2.2 WRAS Water Regulations Conference

At the suggestion of members of the Technical Support Groups, a national conference was organised by WRAS for Water Suppliers' representatives in regulations and related areas of water supply. The objectives were to improve awareness by providing opportunities to discuss key regulations topics, to promote and facilitate the development of consistency in interpretation, to promote the work of WRAS and identify ways of improving the services it offers and to provide a national networking opportunity.

Over 100 delegates from 21 Water Suppliers attended the day-long meeting at the National Motorcycle Museum in Solihull, where they received presentations on the work of WRAS and on aspects of enforcement of the Water Fittings Regulations from practitioners drawn from the Water Suppliers. Delegates also provided WRAS with valuable feedback on the services offered and their suggestions for areas of work in the future. A high degree of satisfaction with the day was reported by delegates, who encouraged WRAS to organise future conferences.

3 WRAS APPROVAL OF PRODUCTS AND MATERIALS

The on-line Water Fittings and Materials Directory provided specifiers, installers and Water Suppliers' inspectors with confirmation of the compliance of plumbing products with the requirements of the Regulations.

Demand for WRAS Approval of fittings and non-metallic materials was maintained during the year, despite the economic downturn, demonstrating that manufacturers are reluctant to cut back on the development of new products and by renewing existing WRAS approvals, show they value the Scheme's endorsement.



The Product Assessment Group met eight times during the year. The annual total of products approved is shown in Figure 1.

Products approved	Year								
	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09-10
Fittings	580	748	658	750	825	904	757	700	715
Materials	227	264	223	200	353	320	345	387	366
Total	707	1012	881	950	1178	1224	1102	1087	1081

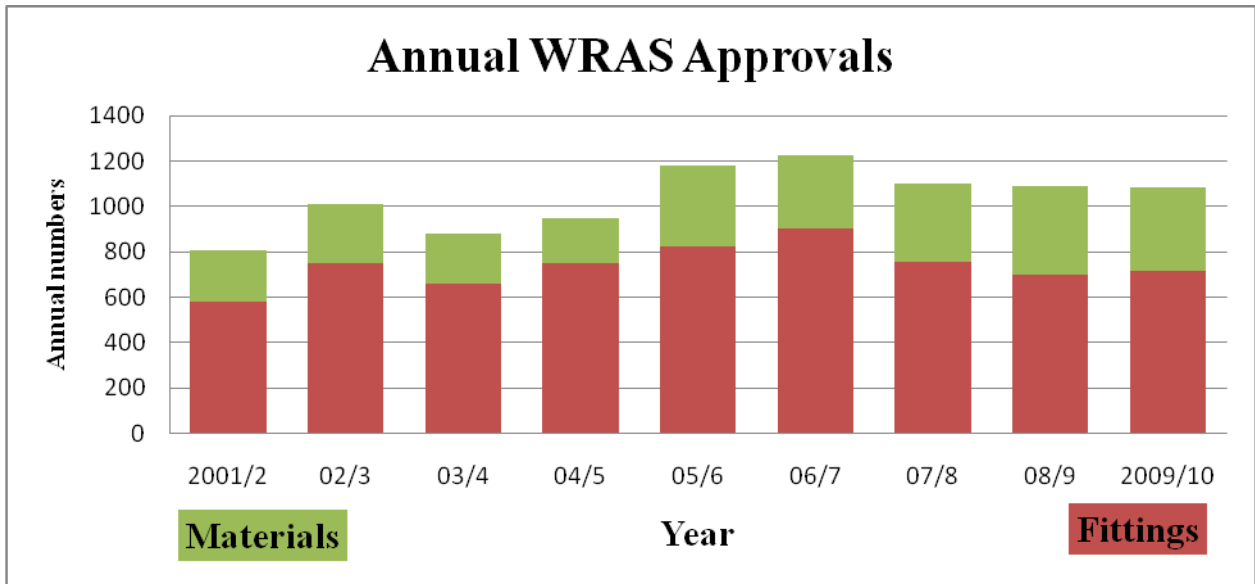


Figure 1: Annual numbers of products approved by WRAS

The revision of general guidance for applicants on the WRAS Approval process neared completion during the year and a start was made on published guidance on the approval of non-metallic materials in contact with drinking water.

In response to concerns of manufacturers and the PAG about delays and inaccuracies in the preparation by test laboratories of test reports and Approval applications, WRAS staff continued to seek ways to improve the approval process. In collaboration with the test laboratories which undertake mechanical testing of fittings, simple information to explain the process will be published early in the coming year.

4 PROMOTION OF REGULATIONS AND BYELAWS

Work to promote the Regulations continued, with presentations being made by WRAS to installers, trade and professional associations and manufacturers. Some Water Suppliers took the opportunity to bring their regulations staff to the WRAS offices to meet the WRAS staff, have the work of the Scheme explained and to see some of the testing of water fittings which is undertaken by one of the test laboratories.

Articles were also written for technical journals and books. WRAS contributes regular articles to the magazine of the Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering and to the student plumbers' 'HIP magazine'. Occasional articles were prepared on request, for example for the British Holiday and Home Parks Association Journal and the Workplace Law Handbook.

At 3562 copies, the number of Water Regulations Guides sold in the year was about half that of the previous year, possibly due to the downturn in construction and demand for plumbers.

5 APPROVED CONTRACTORS SCHEMES

5.1 National plumbers registration scheme

A proposal for developing a voluntary national registration scheme for approved contractors was supported by representatives of the eight Approved Contractors Schemes, Government departments, some water fittings manufacturers and the Environment Agency at a meeting in London in January 2009. WRAS was asked to undertake the development of the proposal and the Managing Director and a consultant met with the leaders of the eight existing schemes during the year for further discussion of the principles of the registration scheme. Differences in the membership arrangements between some of the schemes was seen as a difficulty, but a further national meeting is planned to explore common ground.

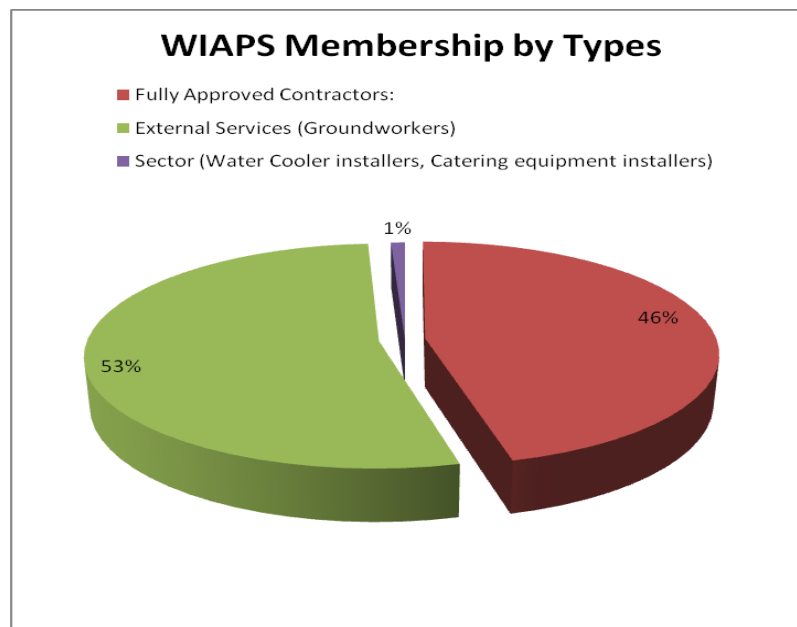
5.2 The Water Industry Approved Plumbers Scheme

19 Water Suppliers paid an additional subscription for WRAS to administer the Approved Contractors Scheme WIAPS on their behalf, giving them the benefit of central administration of the scheme and promotion of it at national and regional level.

Recruitment of members to the voluntary scheme improved compared with 2008-9. At the beginning of April 2010, membership stood at

Fully Approved Contractors:	3485 – annual increase 10.8%
External Services (Groundworkers)	4036 – annual increase 8.1%
Sectors*	66

* (Water Cooler installers, Catering equipment installers)



In March agreement was reached with Yorkshire Water Services (YWS) to support WIAPS and for YWS scheme members to transfer to the appropriate sectors of WIAPS.

Recruitment to the recently-formed specialist sectors for catering equipment installers and water-cooler installers got underway. The catering section was promoted jointly with the Catering Equipment Suppliers Registration Board, which oversees training in the installation of catering equipment, and for water coolers with the European Point-of-Use Drinking Water Association.



Preparation work was started with representatives of all Approved Contractors Schemes and relevant trade associations for an additional sector for installers of rainwater harvesting equipment.

Presentations to promote membership of the WIAP Scheme were made to numbers of organisations including students in plumbing colleges and, with the help of Thames Water Utilities staff, to those attending the second HIPex national plumbing students' exhibition in Newbury.

6 THE FIRST YEAR AS WRAS LTD

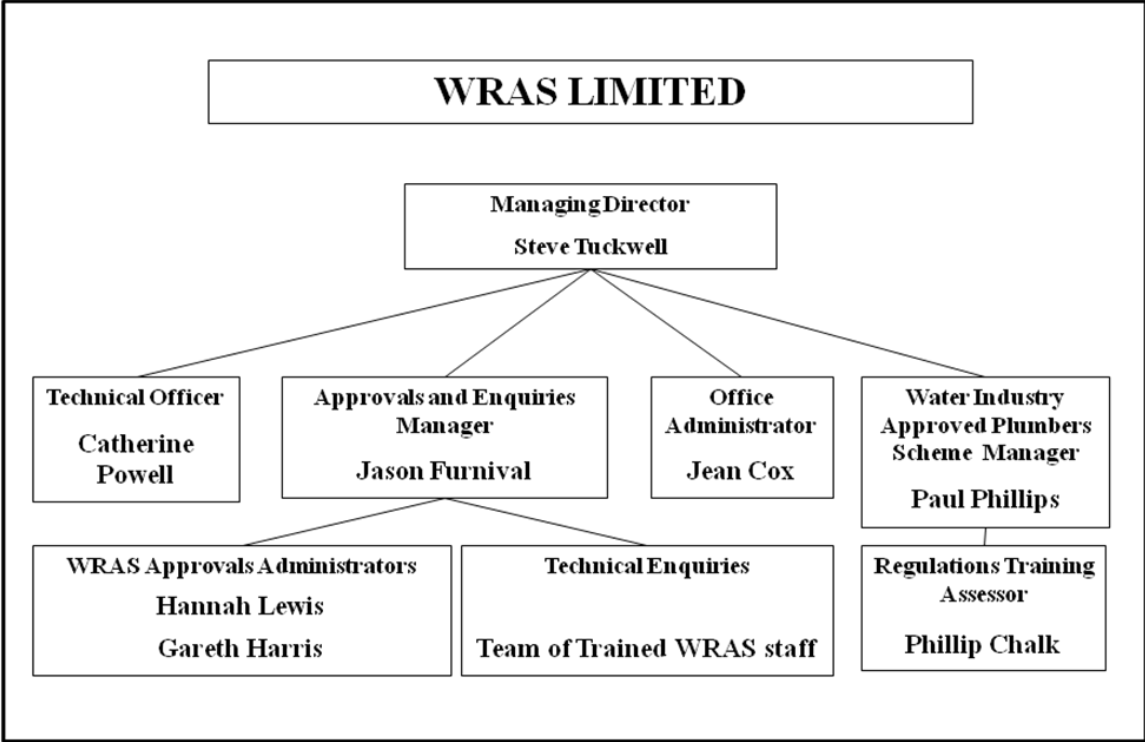
From April 1st 2009 WRAS employed its own staff to administer the Scheme, based in offices rented from WRc-NSF Ltd at its test laboratory in Oakdale, South Wales. Business services were obtained independently of WRc-NSF Ltd, who had previously provided all the facilities and administration for WRAS. Some of the staff transferred to WRAS Ltd from WRc-NSF Ltd. and the transition went smoothly, due in large part to the dedication and hard work of the technical and administrative staff.

WRAS Ltd is owned by 26 UK Water Suppliers who also pay an annual subscription for providing the Scheme's services.

The Board of Directors provides company governance and directs strategic and financial matters. The Board comprised representatives of two English water services companies, three water supply only companies, water suppliers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the chairman of the Technical Committee and the Managing Director and Company Secretary.

Stephen Kay	Cambridge Water plc - Chairman
Dymphna Gallagher	Northern Ireland Water (from 1 May 2009)
Roger Harrington	Bournemouth & West Hampshire Water plc
David Harker	Anglian Water Services Ltd (resigned 29 March 2010)
Peter D Perry	Dŵr Cymru/Welsh Water
John Rae	Scottish Water
David McMahon	Thames Water Utilities Ltd (from 24 June 2009)
Paul Seeley	South East Water Ltd
Geoffrey Tute	Southern Water - Chairman, Technical Committee
Stephen Tuckwell	Managing Director & Company Secretary

The staff of WRAS Ltd at 31st March 2010 were:



7 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

WRAS receives income from subscriptions, approvals fees and sale of publications. The cost of administration of the Water Industry Approved Plumbers Scheme (WIAPS) is accounted for separately from the WRAS accounts and is covered by a separate subscription from those Water Suppliers who support WIAPS.

Incorporation and becoming independent of WRc-NSF Ltd resulted in substantial savings on staff costs for WRAS Ltd, even allowing for external sourcing of business services which had been provided by WRc-NSF Ltd without additional cost.

After corporation tax, the surplus on WRAS activities was £212,522 for 2009-10. This will be used for furthering the work of the Scheme. At its meeting in November 2009, the Board reduced the Members subscription for 2010-11 by 10% and undertook to review the future requirement for subscription income.

A copy of the audited accounts accompanies this report to Members.