

## INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE NOTE (IGN)

[Revised and approved by the WRAS Management Committee November 2005]

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## THE WATER REGULATIONS ADVISORY SCHEME – WRAS

### AIMS - ORGANISATION - CONSTITUTION

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#### 1. SCOPE OF THIS IGN

1.1 This Information and Guidance Note provides, for both the public and the Water Supply Industry, a description of the aims of the **Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS)** and the way it is organised to achieve its aims. The terms and conditions for membership of WRAS by Water Suppliers are given in the Appendix.

#### 2. INTRODUCTION

##### 2.1 THE UK WATER SUPPLY INDUSTRY

Water supplies in the United Kingdom are provided by a number of different water undertakers which include:-

- (a) in England and Wales - a number of water and sewerage companies and a number of water supply-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 Water Services Regulation Authority from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006, and until then by the Director General of the Office of Water Services.
- (b) in Scotland - Scottish Water, under the general supervision of the Scottish Parliament.
- (c) in Northern Ireland – the Water Service, an Executive Agency within the Department for Regional Development.

These organisations are referred to as “Water Suppliers” in this document.

In addition, in England and Wales licensing of suppliers of water other than water undertakers came into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2005. However, enforcement of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 (SI 1999/1148) remains the responsibility of the water undertakers for these licensed supplies.

##### 2.2 WATER REGULATIONS

- (a) In 1999 the Water Suppliers’ byelaws in England and Wales were withdrawn and were replaced by the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999. In Scotland, technically similar byelaws were introduced in 2000, which have since been amended to the Scottish Water Byelaws (2004). Regulations with broadly similar provisions already existed in Northern Ireland. These provisions are collectively referred to as ‘Water Regulations’ in this document.
- (b) The purposes of the Water Regulations are to prevent the waste, undue consumption, misuse, contamination and erroneous measurement of water supplied by a water undertaker.
- (c) The Government is considering amendments to increase the existing provisions in the Water Regulations for the efficient use of water, emphasising the importance of the conservation of water in premises.
- (d) Those who install or alter water fittings and those who use plumbing systems which convey water supplied by a public

water supplier have a statutory duty to comply with the Water Regulations. Enforcement of the Water Regulations is a statutory duty of the Water Suppliers.

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

#### **3.1 AIMS OF THE SCHEME**

The Scheme has the following aims:

- (a) To promote knowledge of the Water Regulations throughout the UK, for the prevention of waste, misuse, undue consumption, contamination or erroneous measurement of water supplied by a water undertaker.
- (b) To promote and give guidance to enable consistent interpretation and enforcement of the Water Regulations throughout the UK.
- (c) To provide an advisory service for and on behalf of Water Suppliers and for any other person or body seeking guidance on the principles and requirements of Water Regulations.
- (d) 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.
- (e) To interpret the Regulators' Specifications for the compliance of products with the Water Regulations.
- (f) 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.
- (g) To administer for those Water Suppliers who wish it, a scheme to assess, register and publicise Approved Contractors in accordance with the Water Regulations.
- (h) 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.

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

#### **4.1 PROMOTION OF WATER REGULATIONS**

The Scheme works to promote knowledge of the Water Regulations amongst 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.

The Scheme provides speakers for seminars and presentations and produces advisory audio-visual presentations. It publishes the Water Regulations Guide, Information and Guidance Notes, Water Industry Approved Installation Methods, advisory booklets and leaflets, most of which are freely available on the Scheme's website.

#### **4.2 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. 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, plumbing fittings merchants, installers and the Water Suppliers' customers.

#### **4.3 CONSULTATION**

Through its committees and practitioners' groups, the Scheme co-ordinates consultation within the UK Water Supply Industry and between the 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.

#### 4.4 APPROVAL OF WATER FITTINGS AND MATERIALS

- (a) The Water Regulations require that every water fitting shall be of an appropriate quality and standard. One of the ways in which compliance with this requirement can be demonstrated 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. 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 whose testing has quality assurance accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS),
  - 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) The WRAS Test and Assessment Group is a panel of experienced assessors drawn from the Water Supply Industry which, on behalf of the Water Suppliers, assesses the compliance of the test results with the published Regulators' Specification for water fittings or materials. The Test and Assessment Group reports to the Technical Committee (see Clause 6.4). An appeals procedure exists to deal with cases in which

manufacturers believe the decisions made on their fittings or appliances are unreasonable.

- (e) 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.
- (f) In addition to any charge that may be made by the laboratory that conducts the tests, a small charge is made to manufacturers by the Scheme, covering the assessment and listing in the Water Fittings and Materials Directory (see Section 5).
- #### 4.5 WATER INDUSTRY APPROVED PLUMBERS SCHEME (WIAPS)
- (a) The Water Regulations permit Water Suppliers to grant Approved Contractor status to suitably qualified contractors. Approved contractors are able to benefit from less stringent inspection and notification procedures in 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 who have requested it. A WIAPS Approved Plumber must demonstrate adequate experience of plumbing, a knowledge of the Water Regulations and have the required level of third party liability insurance. The WIAPS scheme also offers alternative, more limited, levels of registration for contractors who only wish to carry out specified installation work in relation to a particular trade or profession.

#### 4.6 DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS

The Scheme is represented on the Water UK Standards Board, which co-ordinates standards work for the UK Water Industry. Through this means, the Water Supply Industry is represented on relevant British and international standards committees concerning the development of technical standards for water fittings and plumbing systems.

### 5 THE WATER FITTINGS AND MATERIALS DIRECTORY

- (a) Materials or water fittings which have been satisfactorily assessed by WRAS as complying with the Water Regulations are listed in the Water Fittings and Materials Directory. The Directory is available free of charge on the Scheme's website. Approval lasts for five years, after which time the material or fitting must be re-assessed.
- (b) WRAS Approved products can be marked with the Approved Product logo:



Prior to the WRAS Scheme, approved products were known as 'Water Byelaws Scheme Approved' and 'WRc Approved'. The 'WRc Approved' designation is still in use, but represents a different form of approval granted by WRc plc for construction products, and it does not imply compliance of the product with the Water Regulations.

- (c) Non-metallic 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, odour and flavour, appearance and promotion of microbiological growth.

- (d) 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). These materials must comply with Regulation 31 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations (2000) (as amended) in England (and the equivalent legislation for Wales). A separate process of approval under those regulations is supervised by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI). Similar requirements apply in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

### 6. ORGANISATION OF THE SCHEME

#### 6.1 MEMBERSHIP OF WRAS

Membership of WRAS is open to all Water Suppliers in the UK and is extended to the water supply organisations in the Crown Dependencies. Membership includes all UK Water Suppliers (except one very small undertaking), Guernsey State Water Board and the Water Authority of the Isle of Man.

Members pay a subscription which is set annually by the WRAS Management Committee (see Clause A2.4).

#### 6.2 ACCOUNTABILITY

- (a) The Scheme is accountable to the UK Water Supply Industry as a whole through the WRAS Management Committee. The Management Committee is advised by a Technical Committee.
- (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.

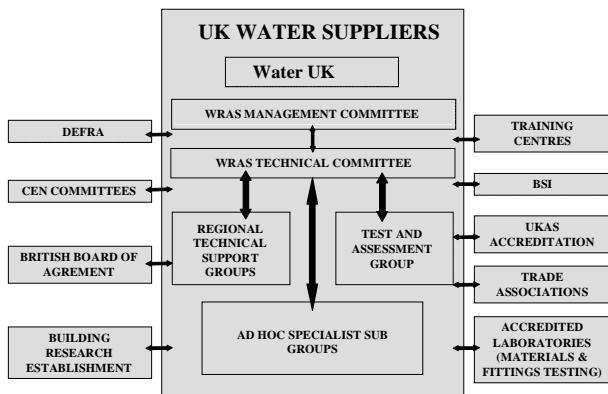


Figure 1: Structure of WRAS and relationship with other organisations

### 6.3 THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The WRAS Management Committee, comprising senior representatives of the Water Suppliers with a responsibility for, or interest in, the Water Regulations, is responsible for the operation of the Scheme and – through its Chairman -reports to the body responsible (see Clause 6.2).

### 6.4 TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

The Technical Committee advises the Management Committee on technical issues relating to interpretation and enforcement of the Water Regulations. Its members are mainly drawn from staff of the Water Suppliers experienced in these matters and it is supported by scientific, medical and legal advisors as necessary. The Technical Committee draws on the experiences of the practitioners in the Technical Support Groups for information and advice about interpretation and enforcement of the Water Regulations.

### 6.5 TECHNICAL SUPPORT GROUPS

All Water Suppliers are invited to be represented on the Technical Support Groups. The membership is drawn from defined geographical areas as determined by the Management Committee. Representatives are appointed by their employers on the basis that they have direct responsibility for the practical implementation and enforcement of the Water Regulations.

### 6.6 THE WRAS SCHEME MANAGER

The Manager of the Scheme reports to the Chairman of the Management Committee and is responsible for all aspects of the day-to-day running of the Scheme.

### 6.7 PROVISION OF SERVICES TO WRAS

By agreement, WRcNSF Ltd. supplies administrative and technical support to the Scheme under the general direction of the WRAS Management Committee. WRcNSF Ltd. is a joint venture company of WRc plc and NSF International which specialises in the testing of construction products including water fittings and materials and provides consultancy advice on related issues.

## 7 COMMENCEMENT OF THE WATER REGULATIONS ADVISORY SCHEME

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

**WATER REGULATIONS ADVISORY SCHEME  
CONSTITUTION AND TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP**

**A1 INTRODUCTION**

The following constitution and terms and conditions shall form the basis of the organisation of the Water Regulations Advisory Scheme and membership of it by eligible organisations. Organisations wishing to join the Scheme should apply by writing to the Chairman of the Management Committee at the Scheme's offices.

**A2 MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

A2.1 The Chairman of the Management Committee shall be appointed after consultation with the body responsible (see clause 6.2b).

A2.2 In addition to the Chairman, membership of the Management Committee shall comprise:-

- (i) not more than two representatives of the Water Services Companies.
- (ii) not more than two representatives of the Water Supply-only Companies.
- (iii) one representative of Scottish water suppliers.
- (iv) one representative of Welsh water suppliers.
- (v) one representative of the Northern Ireland Water Service.
- (vi) one representative of the management of the Scheme service provider.
- (vii) the Chairman of the Technical Committee.
- (viii) the Manager of the Scheme.
- (ix) the Secretary.
- (x) at the discretion of the Committee, a representative of the Crown Dependencies or other Members of the Scheme.

A2.3 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.

A2.4 The functions of the Management Committee shall be as follows:

- (i) to be responsible for the operation of the Scheme and to send annually to the Water Suppliers who support the Scheme a report thereon.
- (ii) to consider and approve budgets for the operation of the Scheme and to determine the level of contribution to be paid by Water Suppliers in accordance with Clause 6.1 of this Note.
- (iii) to appoint the Technical Committee to be constituted under Clause 6.4 of this Note.
- (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 regional Technical Support Groups under Clause 6.5 of this Note.
- (vi) to establish and maintain a procedure for the determination of complaints by any person aggrieved by a decision of the Technical Committee on any matter coming before it under Clause A3.2(ii) of this Note.

**A3 TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

A3.1 The Technical Committee to be established in accordance with Clause A2.4(iii) of this Appendix 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 of Scottish Water and of Northern Ireland the Water Service.
- (iv) The Chairmen of the regional Technical Support Groups
- (v) At the request of the Chairman, one Scientific Advisor, one Medical Advisor (to be appointed by the Management Committee), a legal advisor, a representative of the Scheme service provider 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.

The period of office of the Chairman, members and advisers shall be for three years, and they shall be eligible for re-appointment thereafter.

A3.2 The functions of the Technical Committee shall be as follows:

- (i) to encourage consistent interpretation of the Water Regulations by all involved and consistent enforcement by Water Suppliers.
- (ii) to ascertain, by reference to the results of tests and assessments carried out on its behalf, whether or not any material or water fitting complies with the Water Regulations and, where appropriate, to publish its conclusions.
- (iii) to interpret the requirements of the Regulators' Specification to determine test criteria for assessing the compliance of water fittings and materials.
- (iv) to approve and to monitor for the purposes of the Scheme 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 (ii) of this clause.

- (v) 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 (ii) of this clause.
- (vi) 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.
- (vii) 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.
- (viii) 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
- (ix) to establish such liaison with other bodies as it may think appropriate in the discharge of its functions.
- (x) 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.
- (xi) to supervise the operation of the Water Industry Approved Plumbers Scheme.
- (xii) to carry out such other functions as may be assigned to it from time to time by the Management Committee.

#### **A4 TECHNICAL SUPPORT GROUPS**

A4.1 The Technical Support Groups shall be established in accordance with Clause A2.4(v) of this Appendix as follows:

- (i) Membership of the Technical Support Groups shall be open to a representative of every Member of the Scheme, the Membership for each regional group being drawn from defined geographical areas as determined by the Management Committee.
- (ii) 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.
- (iii) Each group shall include one member of the Water Regulations Advisory Scheme staff and one member of staff as Secretary.
- (iv) 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.
- (v) The period of office of the Chairman, and deputy chairman shall be for three years, and they shall be eligible for re-appointment thereafter.

**A4.2 The functions of the regional Technical Support Groups shall be:**

- (i) To promote consistent enforcement of the Water Regulations by the exchange of information about interpretation and enforcement between members and 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 assist the Technical Committee in reaching an agreed interpretation.

**A5 MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS**

**A5.1 ELIGIBILITY**

Membership of the Scheme shall be open to any organisation as described in Paragraph 2.1 (a) to (c).

**A5.2 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.

**A5.3 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 normally 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 from members for the entire period for which they remain as members of the Scheme.

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