

Protecting consumers, promoting value and safeguarding the future

**Competition in providing new water
mains and service pipes:
Guidance to companies – version 3.0**

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Responding to this consultation

We welcome stakeholders' views on any aspect of the guidance. In particular, we invite your comments on the questions below. The questions should be read in conjunction with the relevant sections of the revised guidance.

- 1. Do you support the proposal developed by the Water Industry Registration Scheme Advisory Panel (WIRSAP) to make in-line routine mains connections contestable work? If not, why not?**
- 2. With regard to principle 21, do you support our proposal to make service pipe connections where the main has been laid under requisition on a site a contestable activity? If not, why not?**
- 3. Do you believe service levels 8 and 8a are reasonable? If not, why not?**
- 4. Do you support the proposal to make supply connections (where this work is done under pressure) to properties from existing mains that back on to sites contestable, subject to certain conditions? If not, why not?**
- 5. With regard to service level 7a, do you support our proposal to make water companies liable for associated costs of re-flushing and sampling if service level 7a is not met? If not, why not?**
- 6. Do you believe the principles and service levels are appropriate and fit for purpose? Do you suggest any additions or deletions?**
- 7. We have used the term self-lay organisation (SLO). Do you believe this is the correct term or would you prefer to use utility connection provider (UCP) or another term?**
- 8. Do you have any comments or suggestions on the structure or content of the guidance?**

Please send responses to this consultation to Andrew Walker by **31 October 2008**.

You can email responses to andrew.walker@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk

or post them to:

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Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with access to information legislation – primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you would like the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory ‘Code of Practice’ with which public authorities must comply and which deals, among other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that we can maintain confidentiality in all circumstances.

An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on Ofwat.

1. Introduction

The self-lay guidance that covers all water and sewerage and water only companies in England and Wales was first published in 2002 and last reviewed in August 2005. This document aims to evaluate and update the guidance in light of the way the self-lay market has operated since 2005. It also takes account of changes following the implementation of the Water Act 2003.

This guidance suggests expanding the areas of work that self-lay organisations (SLO) currently undertake to include routine connections. Several existing levels of service appear open-ended or lack clear timescales and we want to start debate on to whether more challenging and precise levels of service could be promoted in some areas. These changes are highlighted in the guidance. In producing this updated guidance we have worked closely with our own Self Lay Group, The Drinking Water Inspectorate and Lloyds Register.

This guidance uses the term 'SLO' rather than utility connection provider (UCP), which other utility sectors use to cover the work we call self-lay. Clearly, if multi-utility lay (where several utilities are installed simultaneously or concurrently by the same SLO) became more widespread it would make sense to use UCP to describe all self-lay activities. For now, we intend to keep using the term SLO as it is widely understood within the water and sewerage sectors.

1.1 What's changed since the last guidance review and what may change in future?

It is worth noting the progress of the Water Industry Registration Scheme (WIRS) since our last guidance in August 2005. The scheme is part of an ongoing process to facilitate multi-lay for service providers. Under the scheme, Lloyd's Register carries out technical assessments of the service providers who elect to be accredited for contestable works associated with the installation of water infrastructure. The scheme is managed by the Water Industry Registration Scheme Advisory Panel (WIRSAP), which comprises representatives from water companies and SLOs.

Areas covered by the WIRS scheme include:

- design;
- construction;
- connections;
- commissioning; and

- project management.

Lloyd's Register offers an independent assessment and registration process that includes assessing the SLO's management procedures and processes. As of April 2008, there are 22 fully accredited SLOs and 13 partially accredited SLOs.

All of the water companies and Water UK recognise this accreditation, which demonstrates an SLO's ability to carry out activities to national standards. It means SLOs can avoid having to potentially comply with 22 separate water company requirements. WIRS plays an important part in supporting and potentially expanding the self-lay market as it promotes and ensures compliance with the highest standards of water infrastructure installation and the essential protection and maintenance of water quality. Further details of WIRS can be found in appendix 4 or on the Lloyd's Register [website](#).

WRc published the national self-lay code of practice, 'Self-laying of water mains and service', in April 2004. We will support the work of water companies and SLOs to update the code of practice. Fifteen water companies met at Water UK in February 2008 and agreed to produce a revised code of practice by April 2009. We will work closely with water companies to produce the updated national code of practice.

As the self-lay market has matured and become more widely acknowledged and accepted, it has become possible to look at expanding the current scope of contestable self-lay work activities. To this end, WIRSAP has proposed extending contestable work to include routine mains connections, subject to certain conditions, specifically to ensure water quality is not compromised. It is important to stress that water companies have strict legal requirements to ensure the wholesomeness and quality of the water they supply. Water companies could be subjected to criminal prosecution if they supply water that is unfit for human, even if a third party caused the problem.

This guidance also outlines additional areas of contestable work. We support the proposal to make supply pipe connections work on sites where the main has been provided under requisition contestable, subject to certain conditions and water quality safeguards, and after consultation with water companies and SLOs. This would expand the current scope of self-lay activity and, as a result, may increase competition.

Extending the scope of contestable work should be done in conjunction with maintaining wholesome water quality and should not have an impact on existing water customers. Protecting the integrity and wholesomeness of the public water supply should be the primary objective of anyone working on the public water supply system – even if existing customers are not apparently not affected by a piece of work. Failure

to follow the correct procedures could lead to an SLO being stopped from working and/or having its WIRS accreditation suspended. In the event of a water quality incident, the appointed water company could be prosecuted. An SLO could also be liable for separate prosecution by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) if negligence was alleged.

Competition in providing infrastructure and connections has progressed more quickly in the gas and electricity sectors, without compromising health and safety. Gas and electricity have similar accreditation and monitoring schemes to WIRS (GERS and NERS). Greater competition in the water infrastructure and connections market could rely heavily on the WIRS (or similarly robust) framework. SLOs that are WIRS accredited are arguably subject to greater scrutiny and formal competence tests than some water company term contractors. We expect to see water companies ensuring that their term contractors are subject to the same scrutiny and competency as WIRS-accredited SLOs.

We have sought to clarify the principles underpinning this guidance and the levels of service to be provided by summarising them at the front of the guidance. A detailed written explanation of the levels of service is in appendix 2.

There are five appendices attached to this guidance, including a glossary of key terms. Appendix 3 refers to some of the key water quality regulations which are not directly mentioned in the guidance but are important considerations for water companies.

Please note references to days in this guidance are working days except for service level 8 (which for reason of legislation is calendar days).

1.2 Principles that underpin our guidance

The principles listed below describe how we expect companies to behave in practice. This will ensure that developers have a meaningful choice between self-lay and requisitioning. The choice of self-lay or requisitioning should be made without compromising water quality.

Principle 1	Water companies should have clear and publicly available self-lay policies on their websites that reflect the principles below. These policies should include points of contact for the SLO.
Principle 2	Water companies should have clear and reasonable criteria against which SLOs and their individual employees can be assessed for appropriate skills and qualifications.
Principle 3	SLOs should not be expected to meet either higher or lower standards than

	contractors employed directly by water companies.
Principle 4	Water companies should require an SLO to be competent only in those activities the SLO proposes to carry out. Water companies can require SLOs to be competent in the basic elements of self-lay work, such as main and service laying, connections, understanding material selection and basic hydraulics.
Principle 5	Water companies should include clear (and publicly available) specifications for methods of working and the type of materials to be used in their self-lay policy.
Principle 6	SLOs are entitled to procure their own materials if they comply with water companies' reasonable specifications and national standards. Water companies cannot insist that SLOs buy materials from them.
Principle 7	Where water companies require materials, for example meters, to be standardised, they should be able to justify this in relation to operational and/or maintenance efficiency benefits.
Principle 8	Water companies' charges for non-contestable elements of self-lay work (such as inspection, design approval, sampling, etc) should reflect the reasonable costs of doing the work.
Principle 9	SLOs can install off-site mains in third party land and highways where they have obtained the necessary street authority approvals and satisfied any other legal requirements.
Principle 10	SLOs can install extensions to the site and the new part of diversions where they have the necessary permissions. Water companies can retain responsibility for these works only when they will affect existing customers and/or there are justifiable engineering reasons to do so. The water company must provide timely and clear reasons for any refusal to allow these works. Disputes can be referred to Ofwat.
Principle 11	Water companies can retain the right to carry out off-site work to reinforce the existing network.
Principle 12	Water companies must be able to justify the need for and cost of reinforcement work and provide a timetable at the start of the project. They should generally complete reinforcement work as soon as possible. We would expect reinforcement work to be started within 12 months of the start of the self-lay scheme.
Principle 13	SLOs can design on-site systems in accordance with water companies' specifications. Water companies must approve designs before work starts.
Principle 14	Water companies can retain the right to design off-site systems.
Principle 15	Water companies should co-operate with SLOs by providing information about their water networks to help SLOs carry out works.
Principle 16	Water companies should clearly explain to SLOs at the start of a self-lay project the level of supervision and inspection required and the associated charges.
Principle 17	SLOs can swab, pressure test and disinfect new mains under water company supervision.
Principle 18	Water companies can retain the right to undertake water sampling and quality testing.
Principle 19	Water companies should allow competent SLOs the right to make controlled in-line routine connections, that is to connect new mains to existing mains, subject to certain conditions.
Principle 20	SLOs can connect service pipes to new mains they have laid (after the water

	company has commissioned the mains), provided the appropriate standards are met and there are no risks to existing customers.
Principle 21	Water companies should allow SLOs to carry out service connections to new mains on development sites where the main has been installed by the water company, subject to a services-only agreement.
Principle 22	Water companies should consider SLOs' requests to install water meters to water company specifications.
Principle 23	Water companies should publish clear and reasonable timescales for each element of main-laying work they perform when providing new water infrastructure. Their published timescales should follow the levels of service in appendix 2 and set out what SLOs must do in order for the water company to complete the work.

1.3 Service levels

	The required levels of service	Days
1	The water company scrutinises the application and acknowledges it as complete or notifies the applicant of any shortfall of detail. The service standard for checking and acknowledging the completeness of the application is three working days from receipt.	3
2	The following service standards apply where the SLO asks the water company to do the design: For developments up to 500 domestic properties this is within 20 working days. For developments greater than 500 properties or schemes where significant off-site design is required, or where there are changes to the developer's prior notifications, or where specialist advice or investigation is required, the water company must confirm when they will provide full details of the quotations within ten working days.	20 10
2a	The water company specifies the point of connection and provides system design parameters. For developments not greater than 500 properties this is in within ten working days of receiving all the information.	10
2b	The water company checks the design, calculates asset payment and provides full details of cost of non-contestable items and services. For developments not greater than 500 properties this is within 15 working days of receipt of design and drawings from the SLO.	15
3	The water company checks the final details and application within five working days. (Proviso: this will not apply if there are significant changes in, for example, housing layout, number or type of houses, programme for development or point of connection, requiring significant revision of asset payment and/or non-contestable charges.)	5
4	The formal agreement is issued with the design and offer to the SLO or developer.	5
5	The water company verifies and accepts records or refuses consent for the employee to work, as appropriate, within five working days of receipt from the SLO.	5
6	The water company makes supplies available within five working days of notice of a requirement for a supply, and is available to witness the sterilisation and pressure test subject to the specified notice period, providing the necessary off-site works have been completed and there are no New Roads and Streetworks Act (NRSWA)	5

	or Traffic Management Act requirements.	
7	The water company will take a water sample for bacteriological testing within three working days of the SLO's request. Where the first water sample fails, the water company should inform the SLO within 24 hours of the result.	3
7a	Subject to a satisfactory bacteriological test and receipt from the SLO of 'as laid' drawings, the water company will connect to the existing system within ten working days of notice that the new main is available for testing and connection, and will issue a notice accepting the main into operation, providing there are no NRSWA or Traffic Management Act requirements.	10
8	Water company to provide spur connection (off existing main into entrance of site) within 21 days of receiving a complete self-lay agreement (unless work complexity or road opening arrangements require a longer time period, in which case a counter notice should be issued within seven days of the agreement).	21
8a	Water company response to a request for routine connection approval to be within two working days of receipt of a fully completed application (requests received after 12.00 on any day being deemed to have been received on the next working day).	2
9	Where the SLO asks the water company to fit the meter, the water company will do so within five working days of receiving the details of the connection from the SLO.	5
10	Where the water company supplies meters for SLOs to fit, they must do so within five working days of being asked by the SLO, or within reasonable water company procurement timescales.	5

2. Overview

2.1 What is self-lay?

Owners and occupiers of premises that require a new water main or sewer may ask the water or sewerage company to install the pipework. When this is required for domestic purposes, it is known as requisitioning. Alternatively, they may choose their own contractor to do the work, which is known as self-lay. The water company will take over responsibility for (adopt) self-laid pipes that meet the terms of its agreement with the developer or self-lay organisation (SLO) that will carry out the work. All water companies should have an easily accessible self-lay policy.

The developer of a new site may go to tender for the provision of water and/or sewerage services to the site. The developer may receive offers from incumbent water and/or sewerage companies, and actual or potential [inset appointees](#). Upon appointment, inset appointees become subject to the same rights and responsibilities as all water and/or sewerage companies. In this guidance, references to water companies are therefore also references to inset appointees. For example, as discussed above in the context of water companies, inset appointees must similarly adopt pipes laid by or on behalf of a developer and for this purpose have easily accessible self-lay policies. Where a developer chooses a potential inset appointee as its preferred bidder, the developer may requisition infrastructure from the appointee upon appointment. An inset appointee may arrange for the provision of infrastructure on a self-lay basis, and in doing so is subject to the same self-lay framework guidance and duties as all water and/or sewerage companies.

The Water Industry Act 1991 (WIA91)¹ sets out a statutory framework for the self-lay of water mains and gives us powers to determine disputes. This document sets out the principles that should underpin and inform water companies' own procedures on self-lay and applies to self-laid water mains and service pipes for domestic purposes. This guidance does not cover the self-lay of sewers. This is covered in WRC's publication 'Sewers for Adoption', which is a guidance document published by agreement between sewerage companies and the construction industry.

By following this guidance, water companies will minimise the potential for disputes to arise.

¹ All references to WIA91 in this document refer to the Act as amended by the Water Act 2003.

2.2 Legislation and publications

WIA91 sets out a framework for water companies to enter into agreements with developers constructing or proposing to construct new water mains and service pipes for domestic purposes.

Broadly speaking, the legal provisions are as follows.

- If an SLO constructs certain pipes in accordance with an agreement made under section 51A of WIA91, the water company has to connect them to the existing network and adopt them.
- Once the water company has adopted mains in accordance with an agreement, the company will make a payment to the party it entered into agreement with. This is an allowance for the revenue that the water company expects to receive from the customers of the newly-connected main

We can determine disputes about the terms and conditions of self-lay agreements and water companies' refusals to adopt self-laid pipes supplying water for domestic purposes.

The Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) is the independent voice for water and sewerage customers in England and Wales, but has no powers to deal with self-lay disputes.

In this guidance, we refer to the following publications.

- 'Guidance on financial arrangements for self-lay and requisitioning agreements', (the financial guidance). This is summarised in section 2.3 below.
- 'Process for handling disputes and appeals: requisitioning of water mains and public sewers and/or lateral drains and adoption of self-laid mains', May 2004 (the disputes process).
- UK Water Industry Research's (UKWIR) 'Self-laying of water mains and services – A code of practice for England and Wales', 1st edition, April 2004 (UKWIR's self-lay code of practice). This covers the design and installation of new on-site water mains and communication pipes, including a boundary stopcock and/or meter chambers and the installation of off-site mains. This document is currently being reviewed.

The Ofwat documents referred to above are available on our [website](#).

2.3 Financial guidance

The key points of our financial guidance are set out below.

- The asset payment and charges for self-lay must be calculated as if the work had been requisitioned.
- The asset payment must be calculated in accordance with section 51C of WIA91.
- Charges for work that the water companies carry out in relation to self-lay schemes should reflect the reasonable costs of the work. Where these charges are included in an agreement under section 51A of WIA91, we have the powers to investigate disputes about the levels of these charges.
- Water companies are entitled to levy infrastructure charges and recover reinforcement costs when works are self-laid. The financial guidance includes further explanations of all the costs associated with installing new infrastructure.
- In most cases, the level of security that a water company can require when works are self-laid should cover the reasonable potential cost of remedying minor defects in the SLO's work and the reasonable costs of the non-contestable work where these have not already been recovered. The financial guidance also explains when this security should be returned and the form in which it should be returned.
- Please note our financial guidance is also currently being reviewed and is published alongside this document.

3. Ofwat's self-lay group

In May 2002, we set up a self-lay group (SLG) to help promote progress in the market. The SLG includes representatives from contractors, developers and water companies. The SLG monitors the development of the market and, where necessary, raises issues and concerns for consideration or decides whether to take action itself. We are working with the SLG to communicate the benefits of self-lay to interested parties in England and Wales.

In addition, we keep abreast of current practice in the self-lay market through:

- researching water companies' policies and practices;
- attending seminars and conferences such as SLO forums;
- information brought to us through telephone enquiries and complaints; and
- contact with the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem).

Anecdotal evidence indicates that more developers are aware of the self-lay opportunities available. Despite this, the take up of self-lay has been slow and activity is concentrated in the Midlands and North of England. The challenge is to ensure developers in other parts of England and Wales are aware of the choice to self-lay.

We will continue to ensure that people understand the legislation and guidance papers, and to help the self-lay market work better. Together with the SLG, we have identified areas of work that require attention.

We will continue to monitor Lloyd's Register's progress in implementing WIRS, contributing to its development as necessary and encouraging the water and sewerage sectors to support it. If the scope of contestable work is extended, the scope and work of WIRS (or a similarly robust scheme) should be extended to ensure rigorous protocols, surveillance and accreditation are in place to support the extended scope of work. These standards should apply equally to SLOs, SLO sub-contractors and water company term contractors.

We will ensure Water UK's sponsored model national legal agreement is fully implemented and contribute to its development.

We will assess developments in the self-lay market to identify possible obstacles to competition in mains and service pipe-laying and develop policies required to overcome these.

4. Guidance for water companies

We encourage developers, SLOs and water companies to work together to facilitate competition in the context of the Government's desire to see more houses built. We encourage water companies to embrace and further develop competition, while safeguarding water quality and the interests of customers.

Developers choosing to self-lay can plan the main-laying and connection work to suit their site programme. Many developers are also interested in multi-utility service laying. This is where one SLO installs several utility services to a site, sometimes in a single trench. The developer benefits by procuring services from one service provider, rather than from separate utilities. Costs will often be lower if water, gas and electricity services are laid in one trench. There is also a lower risk of damaging existing infrastructure by repeated excavations. Hence there are obvious benefits from laying all, or most, utilities in the same trench. UKWIR's self-lay code of practice sets out the stages of the process.

Developers, SLOs and water companies should all work in partnership. SLOs should make early contact and provide adequate information to enable water companies to prepare quotations in line with service level timetables. Developers should plan early and provide details to water companies on:

- site layout plans;
- house types;
- plots;
- phasing; and
- internal and external plumbing arrangements.

Appendix 3 provides more information on the water regulations.

Water companies should allow developers to employ SLOs to carry out the works they can do and to buy in the services of the water company or an appropriate alternative for the remaining work (subject to the approval of the water company). If SLOs cannot complete parts of the work and have to use water companies' services it is fair and reasonable to recover these costs from developers. Water companies should ensure developers are charged for these services in a cost-reflective way.

The rest of this chapter sets out the principles for water companies' self-lay policies and agreements. We have incorporated the service levels associated with each principle. Appendix 1 sets out the work we consider to be contestable and non-contestable. Service levels in general are covered in section 3.13 and appendix 2 lists the service levels. The outlined service levels should be incorporated fully into water

companies' individual processes and policies. There are duties and obligations on SLOs, developers and water companies, who should work together from the first approach to completion of the site.

4.1 Self-lay policies

Principle 1: Water companies should have clear and publicly available self-lay policies on their websites that reflect the principles below. These policies should include points of contact for the SLO.

Water companies' policies should be readily available to SLOs, potential SLOs and developers. These policies and any associated appendices or forms should be available on water company websites. Contact details, whether telephone or e-mail, should be clearly listed. Water company staff should inform enquirers of the option to self-lay and be able to explain their company's self-lay policy, alongside providing information on requisitioning.

UKWIR's self-lay code of practice sets out the standards and processes for installing new water mains and service pipes. In addition, water companies should provide clear guidance on their individual technical specifications. They should also make clear their dispute handling procedures to SLOs and inform SLOs and developers of our powers to handle disputes.

Water companies' policies on water quality must cover the requirements of both the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations and the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations and refer to appropriate reference documents. Please see appendix 3 for details of these water quality requirements. UKWIR's self-lay code of practice also covers water quality, particularly what these quality requirements mean in practice.

Water quality is a prime concern and legal duty of water companies. The DWI may take enforcement action against a water company if it supplies unwholesome water to consumers. Water companies are also liable for prosecution if they supply water that is unfit for human consumption, subject to a due diligence defence, or if an unapproved substance or product is applied or introduced into the public water supply system. Water companies may include clauses in their self-lay agreements to enable them to recover reasonable costs that may result from any prosecutions or enforcement action because of a water quality incident caused by an SLO's or developer's actions. Criminal liability cannot be transferred.

4.2 Approving self-lay organisations

Principle 2: Water companies should have clear and reasonable criteria against which SLOs and their individual employees can be assessed for appropriate skills and qualifications.

Principle 3: SLOs should not be expected to meet either higher or lower standards than contractors employed directly by water companies.

Principle 4: Water companies should require an SLO to be competent only in those activities the SLO proposes to carry out. Water companies can require SLOs to be competent in the basic elements of self-lay work, such as main and service laying, connections, understanding material selection and basic hydraulics.

Water companies' self-lay policies should set out their criteria for approving SLOs. They should allow WIRS-accredited SLOs to work in their areas and could also allow other appropriately qualified or competent SLOs to carry out aspects of self-lay work. We believe the same criteria and standards should be used regardless.

SLOs should make sure that their employees are competent and qualified in the areas of work they carry out. This includes:

- main and service laying;
- connections;
- compliance with national hygiene requirements;
- understanding material selection; and
- basic hydraulics.

The standards of construction required of SLOs should be no more than water companies require of their own contractors.

Energy and Utility Skills (EU Skills) is the sector skills council for utility industries and is funded by the Government and employers. EU Skills has developed a modular Network Construction Operations (Water) qualification to cover the competencies required to lay water infrastructure. The qualification consists of core and optional modules designed to ensure that SLOs meet the essential criteria while allowing the choice to specialise in certain areas. Operatives must be reassessed every five years to retain a valid qualification. The water companies support this initiative and we encourage their staff and contractors and developers to pursue these EU Skills qualifications to help reduce the barriers to competition that individual water companies' training requirements can present.

Before starting work, SLO employees should hold a current National Hygiene Card issued by EU Skills, and confirm with the host water company whether any company-specific training is required.

Lloyd's Register's WIRS scheme requires operatives to hold NCO(W) registration with EU Skills. Lloyd's Register's [website](#) lists accredited SLOs.

Water companies do not necessarily need to validate operatives of SLOs who hold WIRS accreditation before work starts but it is reasonable for assessments and audit checks to be done while work is underway.

Service level 5: The water company verifies and accepts records or refuses consent for the employee to work, as appropriate, within five working days of receipt from the SLO.

4.3 Applications to self-lay

Under section 51A(3) of WIA91, the developer constructing or proposing to construct the pipes may request an agreement from the owner of the water network to which they wish to connect. We encourage SLOs and developers to discuss their requirements with water companies as early as possible. If the developer has appointed an SLO, water companies should provide information to that SLO. Under section 51A(4) of WIA91, any applications to self-lay should include supporting information, as specified by the water company in its self-lay policy.

Water companies and developers should agree as early as possible whether the supplies are for domestic or non-domestic purposes. Section 218 of WIA91 states that supplies of water for drinking, washing, cooking, central heating and sanitary purposes are supplies of water for domestic purposes even if, apart from some specific exceptions, the use of the property is commercial.

UKWIR's self-lay code of practice includes the information that a water company may require when an SLO or developer applies to self-lay. We expect all parties to follow this guidance and water companies to apply it when deciding their own self-lay specifications.

Under section 51B(1) of WIA91, water companies must either refuse the application or give notice to the applicant of the terms on which it would grant the application within two months of a self-lay application. A water company may delay its response to an application if it is incomplete (section 51A[5] WIA91). If an SLO or developer submits incomplete information, water companies should highlight this to the appropriate contact within three working days. The following timescales apply to self-lay

applications. We encourage early contact between the SLO and water company to ensure the works proceed efficiently.

Service level 1: The water company scrutinises the application and acknowledges it as complete or notifies the applicant of any shortfall. The service standard for checking and acknowledging the completeness of the application is three working days from receipt.

Service level 2a: The water company specifies the point of connection and provides system design parameters. For developments not greater than 500 properties this is within ten working days of receiving all the information.

Service level 3. The water company checks the final details and application within five working days. (Proviso: this will not apply if there are significant changes in, for example, housing layout, number or type of houses, programme for development or point of connection, requiring significant revision of asset payment and/or non-contestable charges.)

4.4 Specifications for self-lay work

Principle 5: Water companies should include clear (and publicly available) specifications for methods of working and type of materials to be used in their self-lay policy.

Principle 6: SLOs are entitled to procure their own materials if they comply with water companies' reasonable specifications and national standards. Water companies cannot insist that SLOs buy materials from them.

Principle 7: Where water companies require materials, for example meters, to be standardised, they should be able to justify this in relation to operational and/or maintenance efficiency benefits.

The general requirements and specifications for all types of civil engineering construction work, including providing water mains and service pipes, are represented at a national level in the Civil Engineering Specification for the Water Industry (CESWI) and supplemented by Part 2 'Design and Constructional Guidance' of the National Code of Practice and any water company-specific addendum. We may refer to these documents in determining disputes about agreements, although we will not be bound by them. See section 3.6 on agreements and refer to our [disputes guidance](#).

Water companies have to meet the statutory requirement the DWI enforces too ensure that water supplies are not contaminated. The DWI may take enforcement

action if water is unwholesome and the water company is potentially criminally liable for supplying water that is unfit for human consumption. Water companies' specifications must cover all relevant DWI requirements and list appropriate reference documents.

SLOs' methods of working must follow agreed practice as required by the national hygiene code and as supplemented by any local water company requirements.

All materials coming into contact with drinking water supplies must be approved under Regulation 31 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations.

Water companies' pipework, up to and including the stop tap or boundary of the property, must meet Regulation 31.

The DWI has a list of products and processes approved under Regulation 31 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations.

The customer is responsible for the pipework from the stop tap onwards and this must meet the requirements of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999.

Water companies should have final approval of any standards and specifications in operation in their area, which they should be able to justify in relation to operational, maintenance or efficiency benefits. For example, water companies can reasonably specify which meters the SLOs can install. These standards should be no more onerous than those for their own contractors. Where water companies believe that there are localised reasons for using certain types of materials, for example on brownfield sites where there is a risk of contamination, they should justify this on technical, operational or maintenance efficiency grounds. They could also choose to supply the meters to SLOs.

4.5 Charges made by water companies

Principle 8: Water companies' charges for non-contestable elements of self-lay work (such as inspection, design approval, sampling, etc) should reflect the reasonable costs of doing the work.

We expect water companies to complete the cost breakdown template included in our financial guidance. This should be provided at the start of the process to enable the developer to make a reasonable assessment of the likely costs of the work. The cost breakdown template should include details of non-contestable costs such as:

- design approval;

- diversions;
- inspections and supervisions;
- connection to the water company's existing network; and
- water sampling and analysis.

It should also provide details of:

- any network reinforcement charges;
- infrastructure charges;
- the estimated asset payment, and
- the cost of the agreement.

In general, the level of non-contestable costs should be the same as they would have been had the work been requisitioned. In some cases, extra costs may be incurred because the works have been self-laid, for example where extra inspection is required because an SLO has limited experience or where there are problems with the works. Water companies can charge for this work in addition to the other non-contestable costs. This should be set out as part of the first formal quote from the water company.

Water companies should publish details of their charges and charging methodology for the tasks involved in the self-lay process in their self-lay policies. For further information on charging arrangements, please read our [financial guidance](#).

4.6 Self-lay agreements

Section 51A of WIA91 sets out how water companies may enter into agreements to adopt and connect self-laid water mains and service pipes for domestic purposes. Some water companies prefer to agree a contract with an SLO rather than the developer, while others prefer the reverse. This guidance does not prescribe contractual relationships, but water companies' self-lay policies should explain clearly the roles and responsibilities of all parties.

The agreement should be in place before the work starts, unless the water company gives authorisation in writing to proceed before the agreement is in place. The water company will declare in the self-lay agreement that it will adopt the water main or service pipe at a date upon or after completion of the work, provided that it is constructed in accordance with the agreement. SLOs, developers and water companies should work together to ensure that self-laid water mains meet the specifications necessary for adoption. Water companies should carry out final inspections within a reasonable time after the SLO or developer has notified them that the work is complete. This should be within ten working days of the main being commissioned.

Through Water UK, water companies have worked with the industry, including SLOs, developers and regulators, to produce a model national legal agreement which was introduced in 2006. This standardisation streamlined the process for SLOs working in different water company areas. We expect water companies, SLOs and developers to use the agreement.

We will consider disputes about the terms of a self-lay agreement as explained in the disputes process. Where a dispute has implications for water quality, we will seek advice from the DWI, in accordance with our Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with them, agreed on 23 April 2004. If there is a dispute about reinstatement work associated with self-lay work, local authorities and highway authorities can take action against SLOs using powers granted under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991.

Water companies' self-lay agreements with developers or SLOs should set out how complaints and disputes are handled and describe clearly the responsibilities and duties of the different parties. Water companies will deal with customer complaints after the pipe is adopted.

A water company can enter into an agreement about a water main or service pipe within the area of another water company where the other water company has consented in writing or the Secretary of State has decided that the other company's consent is unnecessary. This situation might occur when the pipes are to be laid in the latter water company's area but will connect to the system owned by the former. All parties should communicate effectively to ensure a smooth process.

The following service level applies to this part of the process.

Service level 4: The formal agreement is issued with the design and offer to the SLO or developer.

4.7 Providing on-site and off-site mains

Principle 9: SLOs can install off-site mains in third party land and highways where they have obtained the necessary street authority approvals and satisfied any other legal requirements.

Principle 10: SLOs can install extensions to the site and the new part of diversions where they have the necessary permissions. Water companies can retain responsibility for these works only when they will affect existing customers and/or there are justifiable engineering reasons to do so. The water

company must provide timely and clear reasons for any refusal to allow these works. Disputes can be referred to Ofwat.

Where SLOs can obtain the necessary street authority approvals, they can install off-site water mains. These are new mains that need to be installed as part of the new development but are not within the boundaries of the developers' land. Access arrangements must be agreed between all parties. These may be in the form of land transfers or easements, which will always be assigned to the water company. Water companies must explain in their self-lay policies what developers and SLOs must do to arrange access to private land. Access arrangements must always be completed before the formal adoption of the pipework.

For the purposes of this document, the new part of a diversion is any part of a diversion that is on-site, in the developer's land, or includes laying new pipes but not making any connections to the water company's existing network. In exceptional circumstances, water companies may regard it inappropriate for an SLO to construct extensions or diversions to any existing mains on development sites. In such circumstances, the water company should explain the decision fully.

4.7.1 Reinforcement of the existing network

Principle 11: Water companies can retain the right to carry out off-site work to reinforce the existing network.

Principle 12: Water companies must be able to justify the need for and cost of reinforcement work and provide a timetable at the start of the project. They should generally complete reinforcement work as soon as possible. We would expect reinforcement work to begin within 12 months of the start of the self-lay scheme.

Section 51C(3) of WIA91 states that when self-lay works are carried out, a water company may also need to provide other water mains and tanks, service reservoirs and pumping stations because of the new main. This is known as network reinforcement and may have an impact on existing customers. When the water company carries out this work, it can recover its reasonable costs.

Water companies should consider favourably requests from SLOs to carry out reinforcement work as part of the self-lay agreement where this does not have an impact on existing customers. Water companies retain the right to carry out this work because they own the assets and have detailed knowledge of their condition and capacity.

Water companies should identify off-site requirements for reinforcement work and provide timely information in response to enquiries about it. This should include impact on supply provision time, provision of quotation and the appropriateness of recharge. On-site and off-site works should be included in the initial costings and agreement.

There may be occasions, for example on large developments, where it is more efficient for the water company to phase off-site reinforcements in line with development progress. In these circumstances water companies should:

- estimate the full costs at the start
- estimate when the reinforcement will be required; and
- calculate the estimated charge to the developer(s).

The charge should take account of when the work will be completed. Water companies should tell developers the reasons for reinforcement work and provide a breakdown of their charges, showing any apportionment between different parties where several developers are involved. This will ensure fair and proportionate arrangements are agreed at the start of the development.

The water company may also decide that other supporting infrastructure at or downstream of the point of connection is required (between the existing network and the new properties being built by the developers). This might include tanks, reservoirs or pumping stations. Under section 51A(7)(a) of WIA91, the water company can include this work in the terms and conditions of self-lay agreements. The SLO or the water company (at the SLO's expense) can provide such infrastructure. Under section 51A(7)(b) of WIA91, we have powers to determine disputes, for example on the need for such infrastructure or whether the SLO can provide it. If the infrastructure is constructed in accordance with the agreement, the water company will adopt it.

Our [financial guidance](#) has further information on the charges payable when infrastructure is self-laid.

4.7.2 Upsizing

Water companies can ask SLOs to lay a larger main than necessary for the current development, in anticipation of future demand. In this case, section 51A(7)(c)(i) of WIA91 enables the water company to specify the size, depth and material of pipes. The water company must pay the SLO or developer the reasonable extra expense it incurs in meeting these additional requirements. Water companies can recover these costs from subsequent developers connecting to the same main.

4.8 Design

Principle 13: SLOs can design on-site systems in accordance with water companies' specifications. Water companies must approve designs before work starts.

Principle 14: Water companies can retain the right to design off-site systems.

Principle 15: Water companies should co-operate with SLOs by providing information about their water networks to help SLOs carry out works.

SLOs can complete designs, provided they follow the water company's guidance and seek company approval. Water companies must approve designs as these have an impact on their supply systems. Self-lay work should not start until the water company approves the design. Water companies should meet service level 2, as set out below. Water companies will need to determine pipe sizes because of the impact on the network. The water company and SLO or developer should discuss this during the design process. All designs, whether carried out by the SLO or the water company, should clearly demarcate the work carried out by each party.

Before starting the design an SLO and the water company should agree the supply point(s) for the site and, should the work be delayed, check that the supply arrangements remain valid.

Designs, whether provided by SLOs or water companies, should show details of all aspects of the work. A full specification covering aspects of the work not fully detailed on the design drawing should be provided. Designs should specify the location of all valves, washouts or hydrants and service connections. They should also show meter positions and whether services are single or shared supply or being made through manifolds.

Water companies require SLOs or developers to provide ground analyses with designs for all sites. In some circumstances, the water company may also require details of remedial work necessary before designs can be approved and work started. In addition, water companies can insist on new designs if the ground conditions do not allow work to proceed to the original design or if the developer's site plan changes. Their design specifications should cover the types of materials and methods of working that can be used in contaminated land.

Water companies must explain their reasons for rejecting designs, and disputes should be resolved through negotiation, where possible. We can consider disputes about the terms and conditions of self-lay agreements, which include design specifications.

If an SLO wants a water company to design the main it should give the water company adequate notice and full information.

SLOs should obtain information from other utility service providers about the location of their assets before they start work. Water companies should co-operate with SLOs' requests for information about water networks. For security reasons, it is not appropriate for water companies to put details of their networks on their websites.

The following service levels apply to designing the network.

Service level 2: The following service standards apply where the SLO asks the water company to do the design:

For developments up to 500 properties this is within 20 working days.

For developments greater than 500 properties or schemes where significant off-site design is required, or where there are changes to the developer's prior notifications, or where specialist advice or investigation is required, the water company must confirm when they will provide full details of the quotations within ten working days.

Service level 2b: The water company checks the design, calculates asset payment and provides full details of cost of non-contestable items and services. For developments not greater than 500 properties this is within 15 working days of receipt of design and drawings from the SLO.

4.9 Supervision and inspection

Principle 16: Water companies should clearly explain to SLOs at the start of a self-lay project the level of supervision and inspection required and the associated charges.

The SLO, water company and perhaps the developer should meet on site before work starts. Where water mains and service pipes are self-laid, water companies must supervise and inspect work to maintain quality standards and security of supply. Water companies should meet with the SLO to identify the inspection and supervisory requirements of a development before work starts on site. The criteria that developers and SLOs should meet before inspections are carried out should be outlined clearly. Requirements may differ across developments. More inspection may be needed on larger sites, phased developments, and on brownfield or contaminated sites where special materials or different working practices apply.

Water companies may charge for additional inspections where SLOs do not meet the water company's standards, and for extra inspections and advice requested by the SLO.

Water companies can recover the reasonable costs associated with inspecting and supervising the work carried out by the SLO. This includes the costs that might be incurred if a higher level of inspection is needed if, for example, the SLO is inexperienced in a water company's area. These costs should as far as possible be stated up front.

The DWI carries out random, unannounced audits of work the water companies and their contractors carry out on the distribution system. The same is likely to apply to SLOs. SLOs must keep water companies informed of progress and where plans change.

The water company and SLO should hold a site meeting within ten working days of the main being commissioned to audit of the completed works and identify any remedial work required.

4.10 Pressure testing, swabbing, disinfection, water sampling and quality testing

Principle 17: SLOs can swab, pressure test and disinfect new mains under water company supervision.

Principle 18. Water companies can retain the right to undertake water sampling and quality testing.

Water companies should allow SLOs to swab, pressure test and disinfect new mains. Final connections will not be made until a satisfactory water sample result is obtained and the water company has copies of the as laid drawings and pressure test results. As water companies are liable for water quality failures, they retain strict legal responsibility for final quality control.

Water companies can allow SLOs to carry out water sampling (some water companies use contractors for this activity), but can retain the right to do this if they prefer. Water companies should make their processes for testing and sampling clear and notify SLOs or developers within 24 hours of a sample result.

Water companies must follow these service levels relating to pressure and quality testing.

Service level 6: The water company makes supplies available within five working days of notice of a requirement for a supply, and is available to witness the sterilisation and pressure test subject to the specified notice period, providing the necessary off-site works have been completed and there are no New Roads and Streetworks Act (NRSWA) or Traffic Management Act requirements.

Service level 7: The water company will take a water sample for bacteriological testing within three working days of the SLO's request. Where the first water sample fails, the water company should inform the SLO within 24 hours of the result.

4.11 Connecting new mains to existing mains and adopting new mains

Principle 19: Water companies should allow competent SLOs the right to make controlled in-line routine connections, that is to connect new mains to existing mains, subject to certain conditions.

New mains are those laid by the same SLO as part of the same development or spurs left by the water company or SLO to facilitate a mains extension. Existing mains are the parts of the system in place before an SLO starts its own installation work.

WIRSAP has suggested allowing SLOs to make routine connections subject to certain conditions, namely to ensure there are proper processes in place to protect water quality. We support this proposal to extend the scope of contestable work. An SLO would be allowed to connect a water mains:

- (a) to a newly laid main (either laid by the host water company as a spur off an existing main or by themselves or another SLO at the end of a previous phase of main laying);
- (b) to mains which are controlled by a valve or mains that can be squeezed off without affecting existing customers (this includes double spade valves); and
- (c) where there is no interruption to supply to existing customers.

The following service levels are suggested for an SLO wishing to carry out this routine connection work.

Service Level 8: Water company to provide spur connection (off existing main into entrance of site) within 21 days of receiving a complete self-lay agreement (unless work complexity or road opening arrangements require a longer time period, in which case a counter notice should be issued within seven days of the agreement).

Service Level 8a: Water company response to a request for connection approval is to be within two working days of receipt of a fully completed application (requests received after 12.00 on any day are deemed to have been received on the next working day).

However, if an SLO still wishes the water company to carry out this work, the self-lay agreement should specify the point or points at which the new main (section 51A[7][d] of WIA91 or service pipe (section 51A[8] of WIA91) will connect with the water company's existing supply system. A water company may agree to connect a service pipe to its existing supply system, subject to compliance with one or more of the requirements specified in section 47(2) of WIA91. Under section 51D(1) of WIA91, a water company must not connect a self-laid water main or service pipe to its system unless it has taken over responsibility for (adopted) the [extent ok?] specified in the agreement to adopt.

Before adoption, water companies require information from SLOs including audit trails for materials, details of easements and 'as constructed' details to enable the water company to operate the system.

Service level 7a: Subject to a satisfactory bacteriological test and receipt from the SLO of 'as laid' drawings, the water company will connect to the existing system within ten working days of notice that the new main is available for testing and connection, and will issue a notice accepting the main into operation, providing there are no NRSWA or Traffic Management Act requirements.

If a water company fails to meet service level 7a, any costs associated with reflushing and sampling should be met by the water company.

4.12 Connecting service pipes and fitting meters

4.12.1 Connecting service pipes

Principle 20: SLOs can connect service pipes to new mains they have laid (after the water company has commissioned the mains), provided the appropriate standards are met and there are no risks to existing customers.

SLOs can connect service pipes to new mains as defined above, because they will know the condition of the pipe. This work will generally relate to on-site mains, provided that the appropriate standards are met and there are no risks to existing customers. At the moment, SLOs can install supplies up to and including 63 mm under the scope of the existing WIRS accreditation (these supplies are usually installed under pressure without the need to isolate the main or affect other customers). Supplies of 63 mm or above should be dealt with as mains extensions or done by the water company, unless the water company allows the SLO to do it as an under pressure connection, that is without isolating and depressurising the water main.

Principle 21: Water companies shall allow SLOs to carry out service connections to new mains on development sites where the main has been installed by the water company, subject to a services-only agreement.

We see merit in allowing SLOs to carry out some service connections to off-site mains. For example if a development fronts onto a public highway with an existing water main, some of the houses on the development could be fed from the existing water main. If the SLO can demonstrate the appropriate competence (such as through WIRS accreditation), complies with all the relevant traffic management legislation and there is no sound engineering reason why the connection cannot be done (for example an asbestos main), we believe this work should be contestable.

Contestable work in the service pipe area could also include those services on a site off a new main laid under a requisition rather than through the self-lay route. This work should be subject to the same criteria as listed above, that is be carried out by competent WIRS-accredited personnel.

The self-lay agreement should also specify the information the SLO should provide when the connection is made.

Water companies should require SLOs or developers to provide a clear programme of proposed future connections to the main. This enables the water company to:

- control the timing of service connections to new mains;
- enable inspection of work; and
- facilitate inspections to ensure compliance with water regulations.

Water companies must be reasonable in terms of how far ahead they require information on service connections. We encourage early discussion and sharing of information between all parties to avoid problems.

Principle 22: Water companies should consider SLOs' requests to install water meters to water company specifications.

Before SLOs can install meters, they must demonstrate competence in this area of work to the water company. Water companies should set out their competency requirements in their self-lay policies. It is reasonable for individual SLOs to lose approval to install meters if they do not fit them properly. Where frequent problems occur, water companies can increase the number of inspections needed. SLOs must use specified equipment and materials, and locate meters in accordance with water companies' policies.

Water companies' self-lay policies should fully explain their requirements for meter fitting and monitoring the SLO's meter fitting, and information required after the work is done before the work starts.

Where SLOs fit a meter we believe it is reasonable to expect that the meter location, serial number and postal address is provided to the water company within five days of connection.

Water companies can enter into separate agreements for installing service connections, including meter fitting. This would enable the water company to collect a deposit from the SLO or developer to protect against it receiving inadequate meter information. Any such deposit must be separate from the asset payment, which is paid when the main is adopted by the water company.

Water companies can discuss supplying meters to SLOs to ensure that materials used are compatible with their processes. SLOs should not be barred from procuring the meters themselves, subject to the meters meeting company requirements.

Water companies should explain the safeguards they require from the SLO to ensure that metering work is carried out satisfactorily. The water company should agree procedures with the developers and SLOs for remedying any defects identified after the meters have been fitted, including responsibility for carrying out and paying for the work. This will minimise inconvenience to new customers if meter installation or the transfer of meter information is not completed satisfactorily.

The following service levels to apply to this work.

Service level 9: Where the SLO asks the water company to fit the meter, the water company will do so within five working days of receiving details of the connection from the SLO.

Service level 10: Where the water company supplies meters for SLOs to fit, they must do so within five working days of being asked by the SLO, or within reasonable water company procurement timescales.

4.13 Service levels

Principle 23: Water companies should publish clear and reasonable timescales for each element of main-laying work they perform when providing new water infrastructure. Their published timescales should follow the levels of service in appendix 2 and set out what SLOs must do in order for the water company to complete the work.

All water companies should comply with the service levels specified in this guidance for each element of the self-lay process. The full process and timescales are in appendix 2.

If SLOs or developers are concerned about the service they receive from the water company, they can ask for levels of service to be included in the self-lay agreement, including any penalties for non-compliance. If the water company objects to the inclusion of such terms in the agreement, the SLO or developer can refer the matter to us for determination.

If the SLO or developers can show that the water company has a poor service record, we may determine that the levels of service should be included in the self-lay agreement. We take into account all relevant considerations related to the case. If the water company subsequently fails to meet the levels of service in the agreement, the SLO or developer may be able to seek redress through the courts.

Similarly, water companies can set reasonable standards for SLOs to meet, but these should be the same they set their own contractors. Where these standards are included in the terms and conditions of self-lay agreements, we can consider disputes about terms and conditions referred to us for determination.

Appendix 1: Contestable and non-contestable work

1. Contestable work

- Designing on-site water systems in accordance with water companies' specifications (except sizing pipes below).
- Installing on-site mains.
- Installing off-site mains in third party land and highways where the developer or SLO has obtained the necessary easements and street authority approvals and satisfied any other legal requirements.
- Routine in-line mains connections, subject to relevant safeguards.
- Installing extensions and the new part of diversions to new development sites, where the developer or SLO has the necessary permissions and no existing customers will be affected, or there are no engineering reasons why this work should be non-contestable.
- Installing service pipes to new mains, according to water company specifications.
- Connecting service pipes to new mains (after the water company has commissioned the new mains), provided the appropriate standards are met and there are no risks to existing customers. See also the guidance on timing of service pipe connections.
- Connecting service pipes to new mains on development sites installed by water companies or other SLOs.
- Connecting service pipes directly to existing off-site mains, subject to appropriate accreditation and caveats.
- Swabbing, disinfecting and pressure testing new mains, under supervision by the water company.
- Fitting water meters to water company specifications and subject to water company approval.

2. Non-contestable work

- Designing off-site water systems.
- Sizing pipes – water companies can retain responsibility for this part of the design work.
- Approving on-site water system designs.
- Off-site work to reinforce the existing network.
- Connections that involve risks to existing customers.
- Mains connections other than those specified under contestable work.
- Water sampling and quality testing.

Appendix 2: Stages of the process and levels of service

Working days exclude weekends and public holidays.

The response time should be from the date of receipt by the water company of the relevant information to the date of notifying the developer or the SLO that the task has been completed.

1. General or land enquiry stage

- The water company provides indicative costs for off-site mains and reinforcements to inform the interested developers before they procure the land.
- The successful developer advises the water company that the development will proceed and confirms the approximate number of properties and entry points. This enables the water company to assess the connection point and need for reinforcement.

2. Formal enquiry

- The developer invites one or more SLOs to tender for providing the infrastructure to the site.
- The water company issues each SLO with the schedule of information it needs to progress an application.
- The water company will accept the developer's letter of invitation to the SLO and the schedule of information as confirmation that the SLO is authorised to represent the interests of the developer.
- Water companies will expect investigation details for contaminated land screening and, where necessary, detailed site investigation to conform to UKWIR's specification for laying pipes in contaminated land.
- The developer may also request a quotation from the water company for on-site mains.
- The nominated SLOs submit their proposed service corridor layout drawings, with the template of development details, to the water company.

Service level 1

The water company scrutinises the application and acknowledges it as complete or notifies the applicant of any shortfall of detail. The service standard for checking and acknowledging the completeness of the application is **three working days** from receipt.

Service level 2

The water company sizes the mains for the development, laid out in the proposed service corridor.

The water company then estimates off-site and reinforcement costs, and non-contestable charges, including inspection, disinfection and sampling, and building water. Also, any mains to be upsized for future developments should be identified and the SLO notified of the water company contribution to any upsized element. The water company calculates the asset payment due to developers installing their own pipework, taking into account all the costs and allowances in accordance with the methodology set out in the Water Act 2003. This is explained further in our guidance on 'Financial arrangements for self-lay requisitioning agreements'.

The following service standards apply for the above works, where the SLO asks the water company to do the design:

- Developments up to 500 domestic properties this is **within 20 working days**.
- For developments greater than 500 properties or schemes where significant off-site design is required, or where there are changes to the developer's prior notifications or where specialist advice or investigation is required, the water company must confirm when they will provide full details of the quotations **within ten working days**.

The following alternative service standards are proposed for schemes where the SLO elects to do the design:

Service level 2a

The water company specifies the point of connection and provides system design parameters. For developments not greater than 500 properties, this is **within ten working days** of receiving all the information.

Service level 2b

The water company checks the design, calculates the asset payment and provides full details of the cost of non-contestable items and services. For development not greater than 500 properties, this is **within 15 working days** of receiving all the information.

For water company designed schemes, the water company advises the fire authority of the proposal and submits the layout for statutory approval. If SLOs have specified substantially different service corridors, fire authority approval will not be possible until the water company is advised (by the developer or successful SLO) of the service corridor, which meets fire authority requirements, to be used.

Service levels 2, 2a and 2b may be subject to the requirement to seek our approval if agreement cannot be reached between the water company and the SLO.

SLOs submit their tenders to the developer, who appoints an SLO.

The successful SLO submits final construction drawings, a programme of work and other specified details to form the basis of the agreement for adopting the mains.

Service level 3

The water company checks the final details and application within **five working days**. (Proviso: this does not apply if there are significant changes in, for example housing layout, number or type of houses, programme for development or point of connection, requiring significant revision of asset payment and/or non-contestable charges.)

Service level 4

The formal agreement is issued with the design and offer to the SLO or developer.

Service level 5

The SLO provides the employee medical and competence records as specified by the water company, though this should not be a requirement for a WIRS-accredited SLO as their own procedures should ensure that only competent, fully qualified people are engaged. The water company verifies and accepts records or refuses consent for the employee to work, as appropriate, **within five working days** of receipt from the SLO.

Service level 6

The water company makes supplies available **within five working days** of notice of a requirement for supply, and is available to witness the sterilisation and pressure test subject to the specified notice period, providing the necessary off-site works have been completed and there are no NRSWA or Traffic Management Act requirements.

Following the successful pressure test, the SLO cleans and disinfects the main and asks the water company to sample and connect the new main to the existing system.

Service level 7

The water company will take a water sample for bacteriological testing **within three working days** of the SLO's request. Where the first water sample fails, the water company should inform the SLO within 24 hours of receiving a result.

Service level 7a

Subject to a satisfactory bacteriological test and receipt from the SLO of 'as laid' drawings, the water company will connect to the existing system **within ten working days** of notice that the new main is available for testing and connection and will issue a notice accepting the main into operation, providing there are no NRSWA or Traffic Management Act requirements. **If a water company fails to meet service level 7a, any associated costs with refushing and sampling should be met by the water company.**

Note: The water company may specify constraints on the length of time between disinfection, testing, connection to the system, and draw off of flow from new mains in order to safeguard water quality.

Service level 8

Routine connection work: providing a spur connection. Water company to provide connection off existing main **within 21 days** of receiving a complete self-lay agreement. If work complexity or road or traffic legislation does not permit, a counter notice should be issued within seven days of the agreement.

Service level 8a

The water company should respond to a request for connection approval **within two working days** of receipt of a fully completed application (requests received after 12.00 on any day should be deemed to have been received on the next working day).

Service level 9

Where the SLO asks the water company to fit a meter, the water company will do so **within five working days** of receiving the details of the connection.

Service level 10

Where the water company supplies meters for SLOs to fit, they must do so **within five working days** of receiving a request.

Appendix 3: Summary of Water Regulations and associated contractor approval scheme

Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 and any subsequent amendments, or the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2001 for water companies in Wales

Water mains and pipes approved for use in the public water supply system

Materials for water mains and communication pipes must meet the requirements of Regulation 31. Failure to meet this requirement is an offence under Regulation 33. The DWI enforces these Regulations and lists approved mains and pipes. The list is published annually, and updates can be obtained from the DWI or from its [website](#). The list also appears in the 'Water Fittings and Materials Directory', which is published by the Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS), phone 01495 248454 for details, or visit the WRAS [website](#).

Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations prevent the waste, misuse, contamination and undue consumption of public water supplies in domestic and commercial plumbing installations. The water companies enforce these Regulations. Copies of the Water Fittings Regulations and text of Statutory Instruments 1999 – Nos 1148 and 1506 are available from the [Office of Public Sector Information](#). Further advice should be sought from the WRAS. The WRAS, in partnership with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, has also produced the 'Water Regulations Guide' to explain the requirements. Copies are now available from the WRAS.

Approved contractor schemes

The Regulations introduced approved contractors. Approved contractor status carries certain statutory responsibilities. Under the Regulations, water companies are entitled to run approved contractor schemes, as well as any other organisation appointed by the Secretary of State or the Welsh Assembly Government. Approved schemes are listed on Defra's [website](#) and can be obtained by entering 'approved plumbers' in the search box. Schemes are run by individual water companies or through the Water Industry Approved Plumbers Scheme (WIAPS), the Institute of Plumbing and Heating

Engineers, the Association of Heating and Plumbing Contractors, and the Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers' Federation.

Approved contractor schemes vary in their scope, so it is essential to check with the appropriate operator whether any particular scheme covers all work envisaged. All work undertaken by an approved contractor must comply with the requirements of the Regulations, confirmed by a certificate. Approved contractors are excused some of the pre-installation notification requirements of the Regulations, since their certified competence removes the need for statutory pre-notification of work, but water companies may audit work.

Appendix 4: An introduction to WIRS

What is the Water Industry Registration Scheme?

The Water Industry Registration Scheme (WIRS) has been developed to allow contractors to carry out installation and commissioning of water mains and services that will be adopted by the Water Utilities (WU). Any SLOs contracting to carry out contestable work (as defined by Ofwat and detailed in the National Self-Lay Code of Practice) can be accredited under this scheme. All the WUs in England and Wales recognise this scheme and allow SLOs holding the appropriate scopes of WIRS accreditation to tender for, and if successful undertake, design, installation and commissioning of water mains and services. Once the work has been satisfactorily completed, the host WU will adopt the system for remainder of its lifetime, subject to the SLO meeting all the adoption requirements.

Who needs accreditation?

All SLOs who wish to undertake any part in the installation and commissioning of water mains and services to be adopted by the Water Utilities (WU) process, including design, construction and project management, need WU approval. Water Utilities fully support WIRS, which removes the need for them to operate their own approval schemes, and encourage all SLOs engaged in the construction of new water mains and services for adoption to seek and gain WIRS accreditation.

What scopes of work are available?

Work associated with the construction of new water infrastructure, in the following scopes:

Design construction, commissioning and connections

- a) Work on development sites with mains up to 355mm diameter,;
- b) Off-site and on-site work with pipe diameters over 355mm diameter; and
- c) Service laying on development sites.

Project management

For further information on WIRS and accreditation in general please visit the Lloyd's Register [website](#).



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August 2008

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