

9th August 2017

To: OFWAT

Consultation on Codes for Adoption Agreement: BPF Pipes Group response

Please find below the response from the BPF Pipes Group to the consultation on the Codes for Adoption Agreement. We would be happy to expand on any points and support the industry during the development of the sector codes.

Question 1: Do you agree with our preferred approach in terms of the content and scope of our Code? Please explain your answer. YES

We support the preferred option set out in Chapter 4 of the consultation. Option 4 combines the significant benefits that have been gained from the development of the current sector guidance by practitioners and subject experts, with the need for ensuring compliance and minimising unjustified variations in product specification or use which have crept in for historical reasons.

Option 1 / 2 would offer less benefit than currently with the voluntary sector guidance now in place. There is a high risk of fragmentation of the industry as competition grows in the business and domestic sector and these options would encourage the development of company-specific guidance. Company-specific guidance leads to fragmentation of performance requirements and builds in costs as suppliers have to develop products for each market or seeks approvals in each market. Having a consistent approach would be an incentive to innovation, investment and cost reduction.

Option 5 would be restrictive and require very fast turn-around on changes to make it workable. In addition, we are dealing with new infrastructure which needs to tie in with existing services, so practical knowledge of water supply and sewerage systems is essential to ensure engagement of the industry in this code.

Question 2: Do you agree with our proposed code principles and their definitions? Please explain your answer. YES

Question 3: Do you think our proposed minimum information and publication requirements are appropriate and sufficient? YES

The information should be publicly available and easily accessible – however ‘freely available’ this does not necessarily mean ‘available free’. The experiences in Scotland since the online publication of Water for Scotland and Sewers for Scotland could be sought in terms of increased compliance with the most recent documents since these have been made

available online. The management of updates, which are likely to be more frequent than in hard copy, would need to be carefully considered if online documents were used.

Problems have arisen with the current codes due to the availability of a simplified version of Sewers for Adoption being available (for Wales) online which developers may use instead of purchasing the full code. This has led to decisions being made based on insufficient information and inconsistency developing between the two documents.

There is a benefit to being able to buy a hard copy version of the codes where they are long and this option might want to be retained.

Question 4: Do you agree with our proposed approach of requiring companies to develop Sector Documents and Model Adoption Agreements in consultation with Developer Service Customers, according to a set of minimum requirements? YES

Whilst the Self-Lay Code of Practice was initially written to ensure that the requirements on Developer Services Customers (self-lay operators) were no more onerous than on the water company providing the same infrastructure, there is no sector guidance for water companies against which to benchmark this. A single code is needed for all new infrastructure to ensure a level-playing field.

Whilst the major driver is to align requirements for water companies and Developer Services Customers, it will be important in the development of codes to consult with the supply chain. Pipe manufacturers provide day-to-day support to the industry (house builders, designers) on the design of drains and sewers and are integral to the process – therefore we would welcome the opportunity to ensure that the correct standards / products are referenced in the codes prior to publication.

Question 5: Do you agree with our proposed minimum requirements? Please explain your answer. YES

However, we would supplement this by proposing:

- a) *“what level of competency is required for a person other than a Water Company or a Sewerage Company to be allowed to carry out those works”* – we are strongly in favour of improving the training and competency of onsite staff, therefore the level of competency should apply to persons allowed to carry out those works, whether water company or other. A good example of this would be jointing of pipelines where Water UK and BPF Pipes Group have published recommendations on the minimum training and assessment for welding of pipelines (<https://bfpipesgroup.com/media/21332/Practical-steps-to-achieving-Zero-Interruptions-Zero-Leakage.pdf>)
- b) design and construction guidance for all aspects of non-contestable works to be adopted – this should be added to provide transparency and allow companies to allow non-contestable to become contestable in the future;

Question 6: Do you agree with our proposed approach to deviations? Please explain your answer. YES

It is important to recognise that deviations are needed from time-to-time, not least to deal with incorporating new infrastructure into existing services and managing health and safety (consistent operation of valves, electrical equipment etc. in emergency situations).

However, as the current codes have developed there have been contradictory approaches:

- a) the collective and collaborative approach to developing sector guidance is undermined by the publication of company-specific addendum which has led to unjustifiable variations;
- b) Sewers for Adoption has become over prescriptive - as an example the typical detail and layout diagrams are intended for guidance are regularly used as detailed drawings for projects – this leads to being out of step with product standards and does not encourage designers to consider arrangements most suitable for the project.

The codes should align with UK and international standards wherever possible.

The need for deviations could be minimised by using more generic diagrams (the National Annex to EN 752:2017 can be used as this has been developed jointly by water industry and manufacturers) and the use of permitted options rather than open-ended choice. There is a place for detailed technical guidance to support designers, but this could be offered separately to the codes by consultants or manufacturers.

Any generic deviations (i.e. for all projects in a water / sewerage company area) should be permitted only if technical justified and costed, and proposed by both water / sewerage company and Developer Services Customers for agreement by OFWAT.

We do not feel qualified to comment on the split of contestable and non-contestable work.

Question 7: Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to governing the initial approval of and subsequent changes to the Sector Documents and Model Adoption Agreements? **NO**

Question 8: Do you consider the proposed timeline for submitting the Sector Documents and Model Adoption Agreements to us for approval to be realistic and achievable? If not, what would you consider to be a suitable timeline? **NO**

It is our understanding that the revision of SFA is just commencing. For foul water content, we were asked only to note any items that were incorrect – however if this is to be used as the sector guidance further changes would be required (see response to question 6) and time for consultation with supply chain to ensure accuracy of standards etc. This is particularly important for sewers where both SFA6 (2006) and SFA7 (2012) are being used.

Question 9: Do you have any comments on the assurances the sector will be required to provide to us when submitting the Sector Documents and Model Adoption Agreements to us for approval? **NO**

Question 10: Do you have any comments on our proposed transitional arrangements to enable companies to comply with the Sector Documents and Model Adoption Agreements? **NO**

Yours sincerely,



Julia Trew
Standards Manager
BPF Pipes Group

