# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Implementing sustainable drainage systems on new developments** |
| **DATE** | **16 November 2017** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs** |

Surface water flooding is a serious problem and a major cause of flooding to homes across Wales. The impacts on citizens and communities can be devastating and the cost to the Welsh economy significant. Our commitment to better managing water in our environment is a vital foundation for achieving prosperity for all and to delivering our long term well-being goals for Wales.

Our intention is to ensure the management of surface water from new developments follows good practice using the sustainable drainage (SuDS) approach. This will ensure resilient drainage systems which provide multiple benefits for water quality, flood risk reduction, amenity, well-being and biodiversity are installed for all new developments in both urban and rural areas.

Currently around 163,000 properties in Wales are at risk of surface water flooding and the risks are increasing due to climate change and urbanisation. Pollution and damage to the environment from surface water flooding is estimated to cost the Welsh economy around £60-130 million per year. SuDS can reduce flood damage by up to 30%.

Good quality SuDS (such as wetlands, swales, ponds and vegetated SuDS) can help increase access to green spaces and provide community facilities to bring people together which is highlighted as a ‘best buy’ to prevent mental ill health and improving mental well-being by Public Health Wales. Studies also suggest that people living closer to good-quality green space are more likely to have higher levels of physical activity, and are more likely to use it and more frequently.

The findings of a research study on use of SuDs in Wales which we published in February 2017 indicated the capital costs of SuDS solutions on new developments are lower than the capital costs of comparable traditional piped drainage solutions. Evidence also showed that operational and maintenance costs also tend to be lower for SuDS.

However, at present the use of SuDS on new developments is voluntary. In January 2016 the Welsh Government published recommended National Standards (SuDS Standards) for SuDS in Wales[[1]](#footnote-1), on a non-statutory basis. These provide principles and guidance for the design, construction, operation and maintenance of SuDS on new developments, yet the uptake of good quality SuDS compliant with the SuDS Standards remains low. This was a key finding of research[[2]](#footnote-2) we published in January 2017 which also concluded commencement of Schedule 3 is necessary to deliver good quality SuDS on new developments.

In order to ensure stakeholders are fully involved in developing our proposals we established a SuDS Advisory Group. This group has provided valuable support from sectors including local government, developers, water and sewerage undertakers and environmental NGOs, along with representation from professional institutions and consumer representatives.

Throughout the summer we consulted on the Implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems on New Developments which sought views on improving the uptake of SuDS on new developments. Specifically we discussed commencing Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 which establishes in local authorities an approval and adoption mechanism, the SuDS approving body (the SAB) along with mandatory Standards for Sustainable Drainage. Our consultation found strong support for commencing Schedule 3. This provides a means for local authorities to approve and adopt SuDS, establishing them as the “SuDS approving body” (the SAB) and introduces mandatory SuDS Standards. Many responses commented on the multiple benefits of SuDS and their links to achieving well-being goals under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and to delivering priorities for nature based solutions in line with our Natural Resources Policy.

Our Government response takes account of the comments received in the consultation. In order to implement the requirements of Schedule 3, we will now consult on the draft statutory instruments and statutory SuDS standards which provide the framework for its introduction. This further consultation will open from 16 November 2017 until the 15 February 2018. We will then analyse and publish responses before moving forward with Assembly scrutiny of the statutory instruments.

Subject to the outcome of this further consultation, we expect to introduce the legislation into the Assembly in May 2018, with a view to it coming into force within six months. In the meantime the SuDS Advisory Group has agreed to work with us on this and we will also continue wider engagement with stakeholders. I am grateful to all stakeholders and in particular the members of the Advisory Group for their commitment to implementing Schedule 3 on new developments.

**Implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems on New Developments:** <https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/implementation-sustainable-drainage-systems-new-developments-draft-regulations-and>

1. <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/flooding/drainage> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Sustainable Drainage Systems on New Developments, Analysis of Evidence, including SuDS costs and benefits of SuDS construction and adoption, Environmental Policy Consulting, January 2017. http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/flooding/drainage [↑](#footnote-ref-2)