



All Party Parliamentary Water Group

Co-Chairs: Angela Smith MP and Baroness McIntosh of Pickering
Vice-Chairs: Neil Parish MP, Lord Bird and the Earl of Selborne GBE FRS
Treasurer: Luke Pollard MP

The Adoption of Sustainable Drainage Systems (Non-Verbatim Minutes)

Wednesday 20 June, Committee Room 20, Palace of Westminster
5.00pm – 6.00pm

The All Party Parliamentary Group's June meeting was on the topic of The Adoption of Sustainable Drainage Systems

Guest Speakers:

- David Strang, Senior Legal and Policy Adviser, Water UK
- Jeremy Jones, Associate Director, Atkins Global

Baroness McIntosh chaired the meeting, welcomed attendees and introduced the guest speakers.

Jeremy Jones opened the discussion, providing an overview of the history and background of SuDS over the last ten years.

He spoke about the joint DTI and British Water mission to the US in 2007 to learn about and study SuDS, as well as the subsequent report which coincided with the 2007 floods, which stimulated the Pitt Review in 2008. He recalled how this was the first document of its type brought before Parliament which specifically mentioned SuDS as part of the solution to flood management.

He also discussed the Flood and Water Management Act of 2010, which he described as a step-change for the water industry because it began to allocate responsibilities for flood risk management.

He concluded by stressing the importance of SuDS as a means of providing resilience against floods. He cautioned however that the management of SuDS must be a considerable collaborative effort, not limited to any one group. Finally, he said that SuDS will improve the infrastructure of the UK, improve biodiversity, and benefit agriculture.

David Strang outlined Water UK's work to facilitate SuDS adoption by water companies. He described the complexities surrounding this process and the importance of long-term maintenance and ownership of SuDS assets. He argued that water companies are well positioned to adopt and maintain SuDS given their long-term asset base and financial capabilities as well as their interest in promoting the integrated management of surface water.

He explained that in order to increase SuDS adoption, Water UK has secured a revision of the, "Sewers for Adoption" manual. This sets out the minimum standards that SuDS and other drainage assets must meet if they are to be adopted. The new guidance is expected to come into effect in the summer of 2019.



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Despite these steps forward, David shared his concerns about the divergence in the policy between England and Wales. He further cautioned that the system won't deliver high standards unless planning authorities take on a more proactive role.

Baroness McIntosh summarised the panel contributions and then asked **Jeremy Jones** what opportunities there could be for farmers and water companies to work together. He explained that the focus of SuDS hasn't been on a rural environment. However, he agreed that there is value in controlling flood water in rural environments.

Baroness McIntosh then asked **David Strang** whether an audit should be completed of existing sewers. David Strang said that Water UK is currently focused on the future of the sewer system. He did add however that water companies are planning to review their position over the coming business plan period.

Baroness McIntosh then opened up the floor to questions and comments.

Angela Smith MP argued that with millions of new homes being built around the country, the Government needs to implement new regulations. She stressed that SuDS should be the mainstream choice in relation to new builds and that the time for voluntary adoption is over. Jeremy Jones agreed and added that well-maintained SuDS can enhance developments and increase property prices.

Phill Mills, Policy Consulting Network Ltd, addressed the fact that a set of standards for adoption of SuDS is only the first step. He questioned what would happen if developers did not build to these standards. **David Strang** said that this may be a breach of the planning permission and as a result would fall under the responsibility of the local authority planning enforcement.

Jim Clark from Policy Connect asked about permitted development rights and how developers can be encouraged not to cut corners. **David Strang** said Water UK would like SuDS to be seen as desirable so that developers should want to implement them. Although he added that the planning system is squeezed of resources meaning that policing this isn't a top priority for councils.

Baroness McIntosh thanked speakers and guest for attending and closed the meeting.