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Claire Megginson
Association for North East Councils
One North East, Stella House
Goldcrest Way
Newburn Riverside
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
NE15 8NY

Via Email Only

Dear Claire

Re: Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

Thank you for organising the above event on 25 February 2010 which was very much welcomed by the HBF. SUDS is an important issue to the industry given its status within national and local planning policy and its clear environmental benefits, yet it presents confusion and conflict when turning to the important topic of adoption and maintenance. With the emerging draft Floods & Water Management Bill (FWMB) imposing obligations on local authorities to adopt SUDS (Royal Assent anticipated pre-election), the event was also very timely.

Following our conversation after the event, I would like to offer some thoughts in terms of where we go from here.

The main point that I was making in my group session was that local authorities do not have a Corporate policy relating to the implementation of SUDS, or for the adoption of them. This inevitably creates a conflict with adopted/emerging planning policy which requires the implementation of SUDS. The resulting chaos creates delay and uncertainty for developers. Interestingly, industry frustration on this point was shared by local authority planners in my group.

Planning policies requiring SUDS are rightly introduced and eventually adopted in LDFs or SPDs by LPAs. However, this appears to be happening without the support or awareness of the implications from other departments within each local authority. This appears to be due to a deficiency in corporate direction combined with an understandable lack of resource and expertise/knowledge on the subject within each local authority.



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In an attempt to address these issues in a positive manner, the HBF suggests that a SUDS Regional Implementation Guide (RIG) is developed and set up, potentially with NEA as facilitator.

One of the aims will be for every north east local authority to set out a clear Corporate policy statement on SUDS, and in particular, their adoption. The SUDS RIG Group will comprise a representative from each sub-region sitting alongside a representative from NWL, EA and the HBF. The RIG will ultimately set out a regionally-consistent SUDS implementation guide which has sign-off from every north east local authority, NWL, EA and the HBF.

If SUDS are to succeed in the north east, the HBF believes that a co-ordinated approach with all parties committed to the cause and working together is the best way forward.

I have enclosed an initial draft structure for the SUDS RIG Group which-critically-requires Corporate buy-in from each north east local authority from the outset. Local authority corporate commitment will form the first step towards formation of the SUDS RIG Group and in itself may take some time to achieve. The carrot for local authorities will be the increased implementation of SUDS whilst the RIG will assist in drawing out solutions in response to the FWMB requirements for local authority adoption.

Finally, HBF recognises and supports the objective of establishing effective national standards for SUDS in addition to the principle of the proposed SUDS Approval Body as noted in the FWMB. Although confirmation of final detail relating to these issues will not be know until the Bill is passed, this should not necessarily delay commencement of the proposed SUDS RIG.

I look forward to hearing your initial response in terms of the principle of the HBF's proposal and would be pleased to meet with you to discuss this in further detail.

Yours sincerely

For and on behalf of the HBF

Steve Willcock
Vice Chairman – HBF Land and Planning Group (NE)