



CIRIA proposal 3256
March 2021

Scoping the update of CIRIA's SuDS Manual

Summary

The SuDS Manual is a major and consistent source of reference for technical criteria and design detail in both local guidance and national policy documents. Experience and the associated research and evidence base around SuDS continues to improve, with new science and guidance documents being continually produced both within the UK and internationally. Blue-green infrastructure and Nature-based solutions, of which SuDS are part, are quickly gaining traction as means of delivering government environmental and planning objectives as well as providing a range of multiple benefits. This scoping study will summarise changes to drivers since 2015 and, in collaboration with stakeholders including users of the SuDS Manual, will identify the updates required to ensure that it remains current and relevant to their needs.

Justification

The SuDS Manual (CIRIA C753, 2015) is a compendium of good practice, based on guidance and research both in the UK and internationally, as well as the practical experience of the authors, project steering group and broader practitioners. It is widely recognised as a trusted and comprehensive 'one-stop-shop' reference document covering the SuDS philosophy and approach as well as technical detail for the major SuDS components.

Since the last update of the SuDS Manual in 2015 the knowledge based for SuDS has evolved as their implementation increases and relevant scientific research continues. This has strengthened practical experience and empirical evidence to inform good practice and an improved understanding of key principles. In light of these advances and policy changes over the last six years, is now timely to work with stakeholders to map out how the SuDS Manual should be updated to support continued good practice in the delivery of SuDS and broader environmental outcomes.

Changes in context and drivers for a new update already identified include:

1. Greater focus on multiple benefits within Government policy (e.g. National Planning Policy Framework, 25 Year Environment Plan)
2. The implementation of Welsh SuDS standards
3. A focus on climate resilient development and the importance of water in achieving this
4. The need to refocus the approach to deliver interception (rather than pipe to pond systems) and to clearly link that with development and design
5. The need to improve and simplify guidance on the delivery hydraulic performance and relevant design criteria
6. Review the application of approaches to manage the quality of surface water runoff
7. The need for more clarity on biodiversity – now with a focus on Biodiversity Net Gain and the ecological emergency
8. The need for more clarity on amenity – now with a focus on health and wellbeing and 'beauty'
9. Potential direction of travel towards delivery of multiple benefits identified by the recent Defra project on recommendations to update the Non-Statutory Technical Standards for SuDS and a need to clarify any contradictions.

10. Consideration against other published SuDS guidance
11. Experiences and learning has increased, particularly in terms of delivery of components and maintenance requirements.
12. There are also growing dependencies with regards to Ofwat's Code for Adoption Agreements and the interaction of Water UK's Design and Construction Guidance and the SuDS Manual.

Aims and objectives

The broad objectives of this project are to understand what elements of the SuDS manual need to be updated, to refocus and restructure, to identify any omissions, and to scope out the extent of the update.

The specific objectives of the project are to:

- Summarise current regulatory and planning framework to understand drivers and requirements for an update to the SuDS Manual
- Engage with a range of stakeholder to understand guidance requirements to underpin the widespread implementation of SuDS, taking into consideration Defra's drainage policy development in response to the Recommendations to Update Non-Statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- Produce a scoping report to inform a proposal and budget for the updating of the SuDS Manual

Methodology

- Summarise relevant changes to regulatory and planning frameworks since 2015 and identify where reference should be made to these within the SuDS Manual
- Map out drivers and industry needs and identify ways in which changes to the guidance (via re-structuring, updated / altered content, new imagery etc.) could meet those needs.
- Use the map to brainstorm the update at an invited stakeholder workshop.
- Create framework of updates
- Follow-up workshop to agree updates
- Produce SuDS Manual update scoping report

Outputs

The final project output will be a scoping report detailing which sections of the SuDS Manual should be updated, how it should be refocused and restructured, what information should be included and an estimate of resources required.

Project information

The estimated total project cost is £15,000. The project will run for 4 months

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