

Omission from the Bill Mapping of transferred sewers

Issue

- There is an existing statutory requirement for sewerage undertakers (water companies) to map their sewers.
- When existing private sewers are transferred to water companies the lengths of sewers will increase by 50% - 66% per company.
- The costs for proactive mapping are extremely high. Companies therefore propose a more cost effective and targeted reactive approach.
- The Water Industry Act 1991 already provides a mapping exemption to those sewers built before September 1989. The Bill needs to extend this exemption to transferred sewers and lateral drains.

Background

The government has proposed that all existing private sewers are transferred to sewerage undertakers from April 2011. When these sewers are transferred to water companies the total length of public sewers will increase by around 200,000km, or around 50% to 66% for different companies.

There is much uncertainty over the current location and condition of private sewers. Water companies will not therefore have the benefit of existing maps to update their asset databases.

To carry out detailed site survey and mapping of all the transferred sewers would require significant resources over an extended timescale. An initial estimate of the costs for this work was several hundred million

pounds. To proceed under the current legislation requiring mapping of sewers would mean this cost would be incurred, at customers' expense, without even a single sewer blockage being cleared.

Companies propose an alternative approach, carrying out site surveys and mapping on a reactive basis, i.e. when they are called out to an incident or blockage. This is the most cost effective approach and will mean that the poor condition / problematic sewers are mapped first.

The Water UK request for an amendment to Section 199 of the Water Industry Act 1991 is not currently dealt with in the Floods and Water Management Bill.

Water UK's view

We believe the existing mapping exemption in Section 199 (7) of the Water Industry Act 1991 should simply be extended by adding to the existing sub clause those (existing private) sewers and lateral drains transferred through section 105A of the Water Industry Act.

We believe such an amendment would be straightforward and non-contentious

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Water UK represents all water and wastewater service suppliers at national and European level. The water industry has invested £85 billion since privatisation in 1989-90.