



MANAGE RAIN BETTER WHERE IT LANDS:

**BRIEFING PAPER ON  
SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE  
SYSTEMS (SUDS) ROUND TABLE**

# MANAGE RAIN BETTER WHERE IT LANDS // **CONTEXT**

This briefing paper draws on insights from a roundtable discussion on Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and explores how their consistent implementation, supported through Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010- can unlock significant environmental, social, and economic benefits. It is intended for members, partners, and stakeholders across the water, environmental, and development sectors, highlighting how SuDS can enable better water management, climate resilience, and community wellbeing while contributing to the national sustainability goal.

Writers:

Dane Beauchamp - Head of Programmes, British Water

Paul Hargreaves - Senior Associate Director of Water & Environment, Jacobs

Nathan Brown - EMEA Gov Affairs and Public Policy Manager, Autodesk

Jo Bradley - UK Director of Operation, Stormwater Shepherds. (Sustainable Water Management Focus Group Convenor, British Water)

# INTRODUCTION

British Water is the leading UK membership body representing the interests of businesses working in the supply chain of water and wastewater, together with wider stakeholders across the sector.

Our members, from technology innovators and manufacturers to contractors, consultants, and utilities, drive progress in water management, sustainability, and infrastructure delivery across the UK and globally.

We leverage global resources, support services, and networks for the benefit of our members - ensuring companies and organisations have their voices heard.



# WHAT WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE

British Water and its members are calling for the implementation of Schedule 3 of the Floods and Water Management Act. Without it, we risk locking in outdated drainage practices for the next generation of homes, worsening flooding, pollution, and water scarcity. The message from industry, regulators, and local authorities is clear: Blue-Green Infrastructure is the foundation of climate-resilient growth.

The public will not tolerate another decade of pollution, flooding, and wasted opportunities. The solutions exist, the evidence is clear, and the benefits are measurable. SuDS are not an experiment; they are an established practice. What's needed now is leadership. Manufacturers are ready to invest, but without a national mandate, market confidence remains low. Without change, we will continue to externalise the true cost of water mismanagement, passing it to local authorities, water companies, and consumers, while eroding public trust.



# SuDS AS AN ENABLER

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are nature-based solutions that manage rainfall close to where it falls, mimicking natural drainage to reduce flooding, improve water quality, and enhance biodiversity. Unlike traditional piped systems, SuDS slow, store, and reuse water through features such as swales, ponds, rain gardens, and permeable surfaces, turning surface water from a waste product into a valuable resource.

SuDS deliver wide-ranging benefits across water supply, flood management, water quality, amenity, and climate resilience. By reducing reliance on treated potable water for non-potable uses such as irrigation and toilet flushing, they save energy, lower carbon emissions, and cut costs. When integrated into developments as multifunctional spaces, parks, sports fields, green corridors, or event venues, they also improve community wellbeing and urban liveability.

Schedule 3 of the **Flood and Water Management Act 2010** provides the legislative framework to ensure SuDS are designed, built, and maintained to national standards. Its implementation would remove the automatic right to connect surface water to public sewers, clarify adoption and funding responsibilities, and unlock the full environmental and economic potential of high-quality SuDS.



# THE EVIDENCE FOR HIGH-QUALITY SuDS

A recent report by Public First, *Planning for Water: The Value of High-Quality SuDS* (2025), demonstrates the scale of national benefits achievable through consistent implementation of high-quality SuDS: £36 million per year in environmental and water management benefits; £219 million per year in welfare value for residents; £3.1 billion total uplift in property values (around £4,000 per home); 63% of homebuyers would pay more for properties with SuDS; and 62% would pay extra to live in areas with lower flood risk. Developers recognise the multiple benefits of SuDS but report inconsistent local regulation and unclear maintenance responsibilities as major barriers. The report concludes that implementing Schedule 3 and establishing consistent adoption mechanisms would unlock both economic and social value, supporting climate adaptation and national resilience.

*"HQS are not simply drainage infrastructure — they are essential to climate resilience, community wellbeing, and sustainable growth. Mainstreaming SuDS through coherent national standards and secure stewardship would unlock significant social and economic value while supporting the delivery of thousands of new homes across England.."- Public First (2025)*

# CASE STUDIES AND EVIDENCE

- [Sheffield – Grey to Green](#): Retrofit SuDS transforming urban streetscapes and reducing flood risk.
- [Waterlooville](#) – New Build Development: Integrated SuDS using natural flow paths and drought-tolerant planting.
- [Cardiff – Greener Grangetown](#): Community-centred design delivering biodiversity, amenity, and water quality improvements.
- [Mansfield – Retrofit Programme](#): Large-scale retrofit demonstrating economic and environmental returns.
- [Enfield – Collaborative Streetworks](#): Joint infrastructure planning, reducing costs and disruption.
- [Public First \(2025\)](#): Demonstrates the national economic value of high-quality SuDS in reducing costs and enhancing wellbeing.
- [CIRIA B£ST Tool](#): Provides quantified evidence of SuDS' financial and social benefits
- [University and Industry Living Labs](#): Ongoing monitoring of SuDS performance, water quality, and biodiversity impacts.

# CONCLUSION: A CALL TO ACTION

To deliver the Government's ambition of 1.5 million new homes while building resilience to flooding, drought, and pollution, England must shift from managing surface water as waste to managing it as a resource.

Manage rain better where it lands, for people, for nature, for the future.

The Water Sector calls for:

1. Full implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, creating a consistent, statutory basis for SuDS approval, adoption, and maintenance.
2. Alignment of planning, regulatory, and funding frameworks to support multi-benefit, long-term investment in blue-green infrastructure.
3. National investment in education, skills, and innovation, enabling local authorities, developers, and supply chains to deliver SuDS confidently at scale.

With clear regulatory support and consistent delivery, SuDS can become a cornerstone of sustainable infrastructure, turning surface water from a problem into a shared resource that underpins thriving, climate-resilient communities. The evidence is clear, the technology is proven, and the public is ready. What is needed now is political will to ensure every community can benefit from sustainable, adaptive water management.