

Note / Memo

**HaskoningDHV UK Ltd.
Rivers, Deltas & Coasts**

To: Sustainable Water Industry Group (SWIG)
From: Yvette Forbes, Martin Whiting and Nick Claxton
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Subject: SWIG Communication Category - ESCC SuDS Tool Award Entry

Title: *The East Sussex SuDS Decision Support Tool – an online tool that assists in the application of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for small scale development.*

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Website: *<http://www.eastsussex.suds-tool.co.uk/>*

The Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA) (2010) and amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act (Development Management Procedure Order, 2015) have recently established a clearer framework for the management of flood risk; in particular, assigning the responsibility for assessing the risk of surface water flooding to Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA). From the Government consultation (DCLG, 2015) it was determined that LLFAs would act as a statutory consultee to major development planning applications in relation to surface water, additionally they would provide standing advice to minor development applications. This change to the planning system is designed to assist in the delivery of sustainable surface water management in new development.

To appropriately respond and to meet the expectations of this additional role, it is recognised that LLFAs will need to provide clear local guidance and a consistent source of expertise. Subsequently, there is concern among LLFAs that in a time of constrained resources there is insufficient capacity to meaningfully engage with the planning system, particularly given the focus of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) expectation for the installation of SuDS in major development. The requirement to provide consistent and appropriate standing advice raises further concerns related to the cumulative impact of small scale development proposals on local flood risk.

The technical knowledge and resource capacity required of East Sussex County Council (ESCC) LLFA and associated Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to provide timely and consistent planning application responses, have been recognised by Royal HaskoningDHV (RHDHV) with the development of *The SuDS Decision Support Tool for small scale development* (hereafter referred to as the SuDS Tool). The online SuDS Tool was designed to assist planning authorities in assessing the suitability of SuDS within minor development proposals. The SuDS Tool provides an additional resource to LLFAs and planners, enabling the automatic generation of site specific standing advice that promotes optimal resource and time allocation, whilst reducing delays in the determination of planning applications. It also offers a reliable source of expertise on SuDS provision and a consistent approach to surface water management within the county. In addition to providing an invaluable resource to local planners and the LLFA, the SuDS Tool's intended audience is the applicant promoting minor development in the county (the user), who can freely access the tool via the URL <http://www.eastsussex.suds-tool.co.uk>.

Designed for the small scale developer, the online SuDS Tool encourages the user to integrate suitable SuDS measures at an early stage of the development design process, promoting the submission of proposals that are considerate of sustainable water management solutions. The determination of suitable SuDS measures are based on site specific information about the proposed development; existing site conditions such as, the underlying geology and the presence of environmental designations (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest) assist in ranking the appropriateness of various SuDS techniques for use at the specific site. Local hydrological information, combined with details about the proposed development, enables the SuDS Tool to provide an indicative storage volume, allowing the user to manage additional runoff from the site. The user can also opt to provide betterment, through the provision of additional storage.

The SuDS Tool also helps engage the user in other sustainable water solutions. Information related to the proposed development surface type generates recommendations on water quality treatment train requirements. An issue that is seldom considered in planning applications and can assist in improving the water quality of the receiving surface water network. The user's generated output from the SuDS Tool is presented in a PDF report that summarises the information about the proposed development and the SuDS measures the user proposes to apply within the development. The report is intended to be submitted with the planning application where the LPA can use it to provide a clear, consistent approach to determining whether the user has met their sustainable surface water management requirements.

RHDHV worked closely with ESCC and East Sussex LPAs to develop the SuDS Tool, making sure all requirements of the LLFA and LPAs were considered and known problems solved. This iterative process enabled verification of the SuDS Tool prior to its countywide launch in summer 2015.

The ESCC SuDS Tool has now been online and active for three months. Since the launch of the SuDS Tool, the website has shown a steady increase in visitor numbers, rising from approximately 7 visitors in July to 26 visitors in September, demonstrating that small scale developers in East Sussex are becoming aware of the SuDS Tool. User statistics further indicate that the tool is being used as an iterative process, until a final SuDS proposal has been reached.

The impact of the SuDS Tool has been recognised by the LPAs in East Sussex who receive over 2,500 planning applications a year; this figure is set to increase as the recovery of the national economy gathers pace. With less than 10 % of these applications being classed as "majors" there is a vast number of applications which will not be referred to the LLFA. This is of particular concern to the LPAs in East Sussex, particularly Hastings and Eastbourne, which are densely developed and rely mainly on smaller sites as a source of housing and business land supply.

ESCC officers estimate that a team of more than five officers would be required to comment on the drainage aspects of all planning applications received by the LPAs. The current ESCC staff resource is one full time post to meet the LLFAs statutory requirements. The tool has the potential for providing bespoke advice on a county wide basis, which allows the LLFA to concentrate on its core duties in a time of shrinking resources.

Supporting evidence of the SuDS Tool has been enclosed: screenshots from the ESCC SuDS Tool webpage are included in document *SWIG Award ESCC SuDS Tool App A*; an example output summary report is included in document *SWIG Award ESCC SuDS Tool App B*.