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Further to my letter of 30 October 2017, I am writing to provide the updates you requested in your letter of 17 October 2017, on:

- work led by the water industry to promote the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), and;
- commencement of section 42 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to finalise the transfer of private sewers.

The government’s 25 Year Environment Plan set out specific actions for promoting further uptake of SuDS. These include amending planning practice guidance to clarify construction and ongoing maintenance arrangements for SuDS in new developments and tightening links with planning guidance for water quality and biodiversity. In the longer term the government will consider changes to national planning policy framework and building regulations to further encourage the uptake of SuDS. The proposals have been well received by key SuDS stakeholders. My department will now work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to deliver these actions, building on their review of SuDS, which will be published in due course.

Defra continues to support the work led by Water UK to promote the use of SuDS through revision of the water industry’s guidelines for adopting drainage assets. The sector is aiming to standardise its approach to the adoption of SuDS via publication in April 2018 of a revised sewer adoption manual, covering SuDS for the first time.

On section 42, Defra is currently reviewing the economic evidence for transferring the ownership of newly built sewers to water and sewerage companies. My department will need to examine whether now is the right time to commence section 42, taking account of any potential to delay housing delivery. Once this is complete, I will assess the case for commencing this provision.

With every good wish,

Michael Gove