

Water Regulations Advisory Committee
Plumbing Working Group
9th July 2002
Room 7abc, 2nd Floor, Ashdown House

Those Present:

Members:

Geoff Marsh	(Chair, WRAC)
John Roy	WRAC
Terry Stephenson	WRAC
David Gibson	WRAC
Steve Tuckwell	Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS)
Tony Pillai	ODPM/Building Regulations Division
Jamie Carroll	DTI/Quality Mark
Richard Unwin	Anglian Water
Robert Burgon	Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers Federation (SNIPEF)
David Bowker	Yorkshire Water
Ian Mitchell	Severn Trent Water
Dave Brindley	Thames Water
Phil Chalk	Water Industry Approved Plumbers Scheme (WIAPS)
Robin Newhouse	Association of Plumbing and Heating Contractors (APHC)
Andy Watts	Institute of Plumbing (IoP)

Secretariat

Peter Jiggins	Rob Mynard	Martin Macdonald	Nicola Clarke
Grant Gahagan			

Apologies

Linda Dulieu	WRAC
Patrick Bonnett	Department for Education and Skills

1) Introductions

- a) The Chair opened the meeting and introductions were exchanged among all attendees.

2) Setting the scene

- a) The Chair explained the background and purpose of the Plumbing Working Group and requested support from all involved parties, outlining the tight timescale that exists. The Chair detailed the need to look at all existing schemes affecting plumbers and to bear these in mind in establishing common minimum requirements for Approved Contractor schemes.

3) Establishing common minimum entrance requirements for Approved Contractor schemes (Paper WRAC PWG2002(01) see Annex 1)

- a) The Chair emphasized the need to understand how the different schemes worked. The Group had a short discussion about cross-border recognition of different water companies' Approved Contractor schemes. The Group was reminded that the aim was not to create one scheme, but one standard for all schemes.
- b) Members then discussed the different plumbing qualifications that were available. It was pointed out that any test should not be just a test of Regulations knowledge, it should also assess plumbing competency.

- c) A member informed the group that there were currently two Regulations qualifications available, the BPEC-WRAS and City & Guilds. The BPEC-WRAS was a singular assessment; the City & Guilds had an assessment for inspectors and a knowledge assessment for plumbers. The water company members explained the basis for their in-house training and assessment in the Regulations. The Group agreed it was not feasible to compare these different assessments in the meeting environment, a member should collate and compare the different assessment materials and tests and report back to the group. Members with in-house tests agreed to pass details to Terry Stephenson. The whole group would need to reach a view on what should be the common minimum level of assessment.

Action: Terry Stevenson, members with in-house Regulations tests

- d) The Group were given an overview of sub-categories of Approved Contractors under WIAPS. This scheme assessed operatives in a particular field of work (e.g. groundworkers) and approved them for that purpose only, thus obviating the need for specialists to learn about parts of the Regulations unrelated to their work. WRAS was considering extending its sub-categories to include installers of vending machines and catering equipment. A short discussion followed regarding the perceived benefits and drawbacks of this approach. Members agreed that the focus of this Working Group should be to get the core part of Approved Contractor schemes working, before looking at these subsidiary parts.

4) Benefits and incentives for joining schemes

- a) Members agreed on the importance of schemes having benefits for plumbers and customers. The Group was given a quick introduction to the Quality Mark scheme, which would target consumers whose demand should encourage contractors to join. It was suggested that branding of Approved Contractor schemes was important. Plumbers wanted a relationship with their local water company, as this was whom most customers would contact in an emergency. Some Members considered that if schemes had a common entrance requirement, common branding would be an advantage as an identifier. Concerns were also raised about the production of too many brands, as this would confuse consumers. It was suggested that the Quality Mark could be used as an umbrella brand, recognised by the public, for all Approved Contractor schemes. It was noted that the licensing scheme in Scotland was working well because it went wider than just Byelaws enforcement. Members agreed that they needed to decide whether schemes should be restricted to the Regulations or include wider consumer benefit, e.g. through the Quality Mark.
- b) There was some discussion about the link between notifications and Approved Contractors. If the notification requirement was not adequately enforced there would be less incentive for plumbers to join schemes. It was noted that WRAC was also reviewing the notification requirement. If this was changed it would impact on the incentive this provided for plumbers to become approved.

5) Consideration of a single accrediting body.

- a) A member pointed out that this was already in the Regulations, i.e. approval by the Secretary of State. There was general agreement, subject to the water industry's formal response, that a common scheme should pursue this approval.
- b) It was suggested that when plumbers were trained they should be suitably qualified and guided onto an Approved Contractor scheme. An assessment of Water Regulations would be in the new plumbing NVQ qualification as of 2003. The question was raised about what to do with plumbers that were already on a scheme. It was agreed that the approach must be flexible and pragmatic, but there needed to be a test to make sure plumbers were competent in the Regulations. It was agreed that

more information was needed on how other industry schemes worked, such as Corgi, Constructionline and the Quality Mark. Members agreed to provide the Secretariat with such information as cost of joining, training, complexity, etc. The Secretariat would collate the data received to enable the PWG to compare the requirements of other schemes.

Action: Secretariat

c) In response to a question it was noted that WRAS was currently working to establish a national database for all Approved Contractors.

6) Date of next meeting.

a) The next meeting of the PWG will be on 18th September 2002 in Room A, Nobel House, London.

7) Post-meeting note.

a) It is with regret that John Roy has informed the Secretariat of his resignation from WRAC, including the Plumbing Working Group, for personal reasons.

**WRAC Secretariat
July 2002**

Annex 1

Table to Summarise Membership and Entrance Criteria for Approved Contractor Schemes.

	Members & Type	Entrance Criteria			Audit Checks	Insurance	Benefits, Incentives & Costs	<u>Other</u>
		Plumbing Qualification	Water Regs. Assessment	Portfolios of Work				
Anglian Aplus	>900 individuals. +150 pending <i>(350 Private Companies</i> 23 Public Utilities)	Various City & Guilds in Plumbing, heating/ventilating, gas and pipe fitting; Mechanical Services Engineering level 2/3 <i>OR: BPEC/ C&G/ NVQ in Water Regs</i>	Assessment test, based on WS(WF)Regs	Accepted with: 3 years min employment with present employer; Variety of work (domestic/ commercial etc)	Once per year	Value of £2m. Copies submitted annually for verification.	Free to join. New developments fast tracked; Site inspections waived; Self certification & by proxy ≤5; Inclusion in Aplus Directory & can advertise in publications; Receive publications & updates on information; Use of Aplus Branding Material	
Severn Trent (WaterMark)	2419 individuals 677 companies + 344 application forms sent	C&G in Plumbing, NVQ level 2 MSE, Completed formal apprenticeship in plumbing	Attended Approved Training Course in relation to the WS(WF)Regs Must also agree to self certify work in future		On Application and thereafter once p/a	Public Liability	Free to join. Self certification; plumbing contact details on website; Publication of scheme in Yellow Pages & STW publications; Receive WaterMark news & info; Water Regs Seminars; 'Branding' association; Regulations training available (WTI)	8 individuals removed; Associate membership (ie subgroups) being considered for designers, consultants, architects, manufactures & retailers

Thames TAPS	55 +27 pending application +14 awaiting training (individual, not company)	Various City & Guilds in Plumbing, heating/ventilating etc. OR: A formal apprenticeship & Thames to audit work.	Certificate in WR (Thames, WTI or BPEC)	Accepted	Up to 3 times per year	Employer (£2m) & Public (£5m) liability	Free to join. Connection fast tracked; Direct phone numbers for support; Receive publications & updates on information; Training outside office hours.	2 members expelled; 1163 certificates received; Database in use (being updated); Training for 3 rd Party; Sectoral Membership development. If >5 employed, H&S certificate required; Work report form (Taps2) completed.
TAPS 3 rd Party (Subscribers)	246 +26 awaiting training (individual, not company)		Undertake TW course, followed by audit of 1 st 3 jobs					
Yorkshire	56 Working for 5 companies. +1 pending proof of qualifications +1 Health Service Trust organising training.	Provide evidence of training as a plumber / mechanical services engineer or similar.	Must hold a recognised certificate in the Water Regulations.		Once per year (3 carried out so far)	Public or employers. Proof of 3 rd party insurance not required	Free to join.	74 certificates received; On the verge of inviting suitably qualified plumbers who are members of recognised institutions to participate if willing to comply with Regs

WIAPS	Full Member	Ext. Serv	One of the following:	One of the following		3 times p/a by WIAPS or subscribing Water Company	Public or Employers liability	Free to join. Use of Branding Material, ID card to confirm validity, Start some work immediately without notification, reduction on inspection, purchase Water Regs guidance docs & the Water Fittings & Materials Directory at a discount, Free technical updates, Free compliance certificates for customer issue. Reductions in connection charges, speedier connection, reduced admin costs.	
	Bnmouth 1 0 Bristol 16 0 Ess&Suff 5 0 Cmbdge 0 0 Dee Valley 0 0 Folkestone 3 0 Mid Kent 10 0 Nthumbrian 8 0 Portsmouth 1 0 S. Staff 2 1 SWW 151 20 Southern 4 0 Sut&E.Sur 21 0 S.East 5 0 Tend.Hund 0 0 Three Vall 5 0 United Ut. 90 374 Welsh 11 6 Wessex 43 9 Total 376 410		S/NVQ Level 2 & 3 in MSE (Plumbing), C&G in Plumbing, Completion of formal apprenticeship in plumbing, Other recognised qualification/reference to verify plumbing skills.	C&G in the WS(WF)Regs, Certificate in Regs from a Water Supplier, BPEC/WRAS certificate in the Regs, Equivalent qualification recognised by the scheme.					
	Other non scheme members								
	Anglian 4 0 Sev. Trent 3 15 Thames 31 0 Yorkshire 13 0 Total 58 15								

APHC	92 individuals 49 companies. Even spread around the country- About 10% of APHC members.	Relevant qualification: C&G, NVQ, JIB Graded.	BPEC/WRAS WT1 or Water Undertakers course. Businesses must have at least 1 in 5 operatives completing course.		Assessment process carried out by APHC staff.	Minimum £2m Public Liability Insurance. Also Employers Liability Insurance where relevant.	Training courses around country (BPEC pack) Costs by Contract Value: £10,000 - £275 £20,000 - £405 £40,000 - £565 £80,000 - £780 £160,000 - £1,100 £320,000 - £1,865 £640,000 - £2,730 >£640,000 - £3,810	To enter must also; Have been trading for min. 2yrs; Be financially sound; Operate to the APHC customer charter; Operate a customer complaints system; Offer clients the APHC Domestic Guarantee of Work Scheme. Issue Work completion certs. ID cards.
Institute of Plumbing	32	Member of the IoP Register of Plumbers: Minimum for this is NVQ level 2 in Plumbing or proven experience/competence equivalent to this level.	Must have passed a Regs certificate. Suggested the C&G test.			Public/Products liability insurance- minimum £2m. Plumbsure workmanship guarantee. Must supply Plumbsure certificate on jobs with value >£250	Free to join.	Members must undertake a minimum of 5hrs Regs- related continuing professional development a year, Photo ID card issued, provision for information exchange members- management,
SNIPEF	285 businesses 1300+ plumbers	Hold a recognised plumbing qualification. (Demonstrated by registration card issued by Scottish and N Ireland Joint Industry Board for Plumbing Industry) Those without appropriate S/NVQ must have competence confirmed by employer.	Must pass Water Byelaws/Regulations test before card issued. 654 plumbers hold certificate demonstrating knowledge of water byelaws.		Inspection at approval stage, then on a random basis (and in relation to complaints)	Public Liability Insurance of £2m. Employers Liability Insurance where applicable.	Costs £40/yr in addition to subscriptions the firms pay. Public bodies will refer to use of Licensed Businesses in consumer dealings.	ID cards will in future show competence in recognised H&S assessment. Must provide evidence of financial integrity. Must ensure a proportion (min 1:5) of staff carry qualification in Regs/Byelaws. SNIPEF grant aid plumbers to undertake training.