

HOUSE OF LORDS

Date: 18 October 2013

Lord Berkeley OBE asked Her Majesty's Government:

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether there are independent reports which justify the statement in paragraph 2.6.28 of the National Policy Statement for Waste Water that installing Sustainable Drainage Systems in London would be "disproportionally expensive" compared with the Thames Tideway Tunnel; and, if so, what would be the estimated annual increase in water bills for installing such systems. [HL2368] [HL2368]

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Lords, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord de Mauley):

The cost of implementing Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) across London was extrapolated from a study commissioned by Thames Water and led by the Pennine Water Group (University of Sheffield). The study explored the potential for SuDS to reduce Combined Sewer Overflow discharges in the Putney area and on the basis of a cost of £241million for the Putney area. It concluded that rolling out SuDS across the Beckton and Crossness catchments would cost at least £13 billion (2008 prices) over some 15-20 years but would not deliver the necessary Tideway improvements. This compares with the current estimate of £4.2billion (in 2011 prices) over seven years for the Thames Tideway Tunnel. The Tunnel will also deliver the required environmental standards.

In 2012 the Sheffield University co-authors of this study published a further independent paper examining the potential for retrofit SuDS in the Thames Tideway catchment areas. This concluded similarly that retrofitting SuDS, while technically possible, was not feasible due to the very high costs and disruption that would likely be involved and that at best such retrofitting would only complement conventional sewerage infrastructure.

As SuDS would not deliver the required outcome, the choice of mechanism for funding and financing large-scale SuDS infrastructure in London was not pursued. If it were funded wholly through sewerage bills the maximum bill impact would reflect the capital expenditure, and costs of maintenance and replacement.

de Mauley