Accreditation Scheme

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British Geomembrane Association

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This purpose of the scheme is to accredit installation companies. Further details of the accreditation process are provided below. The scheme covers all environmental protection projects using geosynthetic liners including geomembranes and Geosynthetic clay liners (GCL). The scheme is divided into two sectors, these are:

- Heavy containment sector.
- Gas and waterproofing barrier.

Installers may hold one or both accreditation schemes.

1.2 The Scheme

The documents forming the scheme consist of the following:

- This document, which sets out the scheme rules and how the scheme will be managed.
- A set of auditing sheets, that set out the accreditation requirements and are used to undertake the audit process.
- Ancillary documents, such as an application form.

Further information is presented below.

The structure of the scheme shall comprise the following:

- Initial application by the installer to join the scheme (including application form and documentation).
- Review of application by TWI.
- Audit of installer at head office.
- Audit of installer on site.
- Accreditation conferred on installer or improvement plan provided to meet accreditation requirements.
- Annual renewal of accreditation.

British Geomembrane Association (BGA) members and non-members are eligible to apply for accreditation. BGA membership does not affect accreditation.

The scheme is not limited to the UK and installers from outside the UK can apply. However, any costs associated with audit travel and accommodation in addition to the normal accreditation fees shall apply.

1.3 Report Structure

The structure of this document is as follows:

Table 1.1 Report Structure	
Reference	**Section**
1	Introduction
2	Definitions
3	Aims and Objectives
4	The Scheme
5	Audit sheets
6	Applications
7	Assessment
8	Appeals and Referrals
9	Closure

2.0 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions shall apply to the Scheme:

Installer: A company providing geosynthetic installation services.

Geomembrane: The term geomembrane refers to a specific group of geosynthetics. This document relates specifically to polymeric geosynthetic barriers, referred to as geomembrane from here on.

Geosynthetic Clay Liner (GCL): Geosynthetic Clay Liners are needle punched environmental reinforced composites, which combine two durable geotextile outer layers with a uniform core of bentonite clay to form a low permeability barrier.

British Geomembrane Association (BGA): The BGA is the trade association of specialist Geomembrane installers operating in the UK. The BGA represents the interests of its members and their clients and stands for quality installation work, cost effective service provision and, above all, technical excellence in environmental protection.

TWI Limited (TWI): TWI is one of the world's foremost independent research and technology organisations, with expertise in solving problems in all aspects of manufacturing, fabrication and whole-life integrity management technologies. TWI will administer and manage the accreditation scheme on behalf of the BGA.

Welding Syllabus: This is the 'TWI/BGA Plastics Joining – Geomembrane Welding'. Any reference to the welding syllabus in this document shall refer to the current version of the welding syllabus.

Environment Agency: National or Governmental Regulator with authority for relevant work sector (e.g. the Environment Agency for landfills in the UK).

Installation Accreditation Committee (IAC): Committee appointed by BGA to oversee this Accreditation Scheme.

BGA board: The main board of the BGA.

Applicant: Installer applying to join the Accreditation Scheme, or existing member, applying for renewal of membership.

Auditor: An auditor appointed by TWI.

Inspection/Audit: Site based inspection or auditor undertaken on applicant's works as part of the Accreditation Scheme.

The Scheme: this Accreditation Scheme, which shall be administered by TWI on behalf of the BGA.

Certificate: Certificate issued to installer to confirm that the Scheme requirements have been met.

Audit Sheets: These are a key component of the audit scheme and provide guidance as to the standards the Scheme requires as well as being used for auditing purposes.

Heavy containment sector:

Geosynthetic installation works that requires Environment Agency approval or notification. For example, but not limited to: landfill containment works, agricultural waste storage, Industrial waste containment and large lakes.

Gas and waterproofing barriers:

Membranes that are used as barriers to stop the ingress of gases, water, VOCs (volatile organic compounds) and hydrocarbons into buildings. Gases include methane, radon and carbon dioxide. The range of membranes also include membranes for damp proofing, air and moisture protection systems.

As with the heavy containment sector, which works to E.A approval/notification, the gas sector works and complies to the latest code of practices, BR211, CIRIA, BS8485:2015, building control and NHBC.

3.0 AIMS and OBJECTIVES OF THE ACCREDITATION SCHEME

3.1 Objectives

The principal objectives of the accreditation scheme are:

- To provide an auditable system of accreditation for installers of geosynthetic lining products for environmental protection.

3.2 Aims

To achieve these objectives the accreditation scheme has the following aims:

- To set minimum standards to ensure environmental protection.
- To provide guidance on best practice to installers and other industry stakeholders.
- To assure consistent high standards of workmanship through accreditation and to measure and implement continuous improvement.

4.0 THE SCHEME

4.1 General

Installers achieving accreditation will be listed on the BGA website.

Audit statistics will be tracked and published. Accreditation may be stated by installers following accreditation. Note Non-BGA members cannot use the BGA logo.

4.2 Installation Accreditation Committee

Members of the IAC will be appointed by the BGA board and will represent a cross section of the industry; namely, materials manufacturers, consultants, regulators and clients.

The IAC shall be responsible for:

- Overseeing the scheme.
- Approving the Auditor.
- Reviewing the objectives and the constituents of the scheme on an at least bi- annual basis.
- Advising the BGA Board as to any changes that are required to the scheme; and
- Presenting an annual report to the BGA annual general meeting.

Members of the IAC shall undertake an annual audit on TWI. These audits shall include review of information supplied to the Auditor (e.g. projects worked on, staff present on historic projects) to validate whether submitted information is realistic and correct.

4.3 Auditor

The Auditor shall be appointed by TWI and shall have a working knowledge of the geomembrane installation industry.

The Auditor shall be responsible for:

- Undertaking reviews of the application forms.
- Undertaking the office based audit; and
- Identifying non-conformances and remedial actions following the audit.

4.4 Changes to the Scheme

Changes and updates to the scheme will be made by TWI and approved with majority resolution by the IAC. Accredited installers will be notified of any changes. Additionally, changes will be notified on the BGA's website. Changes to the Scheme shall come into effect immediately and supersede previous requirements. TWI shall implement any changes in a timely manner. Installers shall update their staff of any changes.

4.5 Sub-Contractors or Hired in Labour

Should an installer sub-contract any installation work, then the sub-contractor must undertake installation work in accordance with the installers accredited working methods. Should an installer employ labour from another installer, then the hired in labour must undertake installation work in accordance with the installers accredited working methods.

5.0 AUDIT SHEETS

5.1 General

The Audit Sheet templates shall be prepared by the IAC and approved by TWI.

6.0 APPLICATIONS

6.1 Application Procedures

The applicant shall download an application form from BGA's website. It is up to the applicant to determine that they are ready for an audit since fees for unsuccessful applications will not be reimbursed.

The form requires that the following be submitted:

- Certificate of Company registration.
- VAT Registration number.
- Company address.
- Company insurance details.
- Public Liability Insurance details.
- Health and Safety Policy.
- Environmental Policy.
- Quality policy and management.
- Standard Operating Procedures; and
- Correct Application Fee.

Failure to supply this information will result in the application being rejected. Applications shall be submitted to TWI at any time of the year.

The applicant agrees to disclose any relevant information to TWI, though this will not include commercially sensitive information.

6.2 Initial Application

Following receipt and review of the application form and associated documents, TWI will arrange an audit within 2-3 months. Audits shall be undertaken on a 'first come first served' basis. Failure to supply the required information with the application shall result in the application being placed at the back of the audit list until all required information is received by TWI.

6.3 Accreditation Renewals

The scheme will be subject to renewal. Accreditation is renewed every year. If during the first two years, the audit does not result in significant non-conformances, then the following audit will be an interim audit (year three). Following this, full audits and interim audits will continue sequentially unless a significant non-conformance is noted. Accreditation renewal follows the same process as new applications, though the applicant has to apply three months before the expiry of the current certificate.

6.4 Fees

Fees will be set by TWI, and will be available on the BGA's website. A discounted fee will be available to BGA Members.

The application fee must be paid in advance to TWI and will be non-refundable. Audit fees will be payable directly to TWI or Auditor.

Should an application be withdrawn from the Scheme for whatever reason, there is no obligation for TWI or Auditor to refund the application fee.

Should a certificate be withdrawn for whatever reason, there is no obligation for TWI or Auditor to refund the application fee.

7.0 ASSESSMENT

7.1 Audits

The Auditor shall assess conformance with the Scheme using an audit (or audits). Any full audit shall include:

- Part 1: an assessment of the application information.
- Part 2 :an audit of records held at the head office; and
- Part 3: an unannounced site inspection/audit of an installation project.

Audits shall be undertaken using the Audit Sheets. All audits shall be carried out by TWI's approved Auditors. A renewal (interim) audit shall be undertaken not less than two months before the expiry of the current certificate and upon receipt of a renewal application from an installer. An interim audit will include Part 1 and either Part 2 or 3.

Additional audits may be undertaken at the discretion of the TWI and the applicant would be liable for these audit costs.

Following the audit, if there are significant non-conformances, the auditor shall notify the applicant so that steps can be taken immediately to rectify them.

Non-conformances identified by the auditor shall be corrected by the applicant and corrective action evidence submitted to the auditor within three months of the audit.

The auditor shall assess corrective action by four weeks of receiving it and may undertake an additional visit, at an additional cost to the applicant.

During the office audit, the Auditor shall be given access to the records of all installation work undertaken in the past 12 months. The Auditor shall choose two projects to audit.

It is the accredited company’s responsibility to ensure their annual audit application is completed a minimum of three months prior to the expiry date of previous accreditation.

7.1.1 Unannounced Site Audits

The applicant shall provide the auditor with a list of active sites (involving installation of membrane). This should be done on a weekly basis after application. It is the applicants responsibility to ensure that the auditor has access to the sites, prior to the auditor’s arrival. Failure to allow the auditor access to the site, within 15 minutes of arrival, will result in a failed audit and expenses charged. Failure to advise an auditor of a non-working site shall result in additional charges being applied.

7.2 Scheme Requirements

The scheme requirements and criteria are presented in the Audit Sheets, which are available on the BGA website and shall include the following:

- Environmental protection management.
- Health and Safety - including equipment and machinery.
- technical ability.
- Supervision and site management.
- Training and technician appraisal.

Each of the sections will be assessed on a number of predetermined criteria. The auditor may, at their discretion, visit the Head Office, regional offices, workshops, sites and any other locations that they deem necessary in order to undertake the audit.

The applicant being audited shall agree, as a condition of the audit process, to give access to personnel, records, documents and other information that the auditor deem necessary to reach a decision.

The standard will be reassessed annually by the IAC with TWI. It may be raised over time to encourage the raising of industry standards.

7.3 Certification

Following a successful audit, and full payment of any outstanding fees, the installer will be issued with a Company Accreditation Scheme certificate.

Working towards accreditation certificates will be issued by the auditor once the following criteria has been met:

- A fully completed application has been received by the auditor or TWI.
- Payment has been made for the audit.
- A satisfactory office audit has been completed.

8.0 APPEALS AND REFERRALS

8.1 Appeals

In the case of dissatisfaction with the outcome of an Audit, the applicant can appeal to IAC. The Appeals Committee would consist of an officer of the BGA, a member of TWI staff, plus a minimum of two members of the IAC.

An appeal fee (to be determined by the IAC) would need to be lodged with the treasurer of the BGA prior to the appeal being heard. The fee would only be refunded if the appeal was successful i.e. accreditation was granted.

8.2 Referrals

The Scheme will allow referrals (relating to non-conformances) from regulators or CQA consultants, or Clients.

Following two separate referrals from different third parties, the IAC would consider the referrals, and could if necessary, instruct the Auditor to undertake a re-audit. The applicant would be required to provide an application fee and submit all required application documentation.

An audit would then be undertaken in accordance with Section 7.

9.0 CLOSURE

This report has been prepared by SLR Consulting Limited and TWI Ltd with all reasonable skill, care and diligence, and taking account of the labor and resources devoted to it by agreement with the client. Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

This report is for the exclusive use of BGA; no warranties or guarantees are expressed or should be inferred by any third parties. This report may not be relied upon by other parties without written consent from SLR.

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