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## **A RETROSPECTIVE FROM RETIRING DIRECTOR OF THE BPF PIPES GROUP**

Caroline Ayres retires as Director of the BPF Pipes Group in August 2025, after 12 years in the role and 24 years with the BPF, having joined in 2001 as Standards and Technical Manager.

The BPF Pipes Group is a member of TEPPFA (the European Plastic Pipes and Fittings Association) and Caroline joined the TEPPFA Executive Committee in 2012. She also served as Vice-President of TEPPFA from 2017 to 2021. She said it was a real pleasure to work alongside colleagues from across Europe and to be a part of their work.

Here she takes a look back at some of the changes in the industry over the last 20 years and also offers some thoughts about its future.

“Developing standards has been a fundamental part of the BPF Pipes Group (PPG) and pre-dates my time there. Technical standards – British (BS), European (EN) and international (ISO) – together with industry specific standards such as Water Industry Standards (WIS) have been the bedrock of our industry. Developing and updating these standards is vitally important to ensuring the safe installation and long-term use of our products, as they apply to utilities, construction, building and the environment.”

Caroline’s work with standards began even before she joined the Pipes Group; whilst a member of the BSI PRI/88 Committee she worked on developing standards

for plastic piping systems. She has been Chair of the BSI PRI/88 Committee since 2014.

“During my tenure, plastic piping systems have developed into new application areas, such as flood alleviation with SuDS systems, the expansion of underfloor heating, as well as district heat networks, where plastic pipes are playing crucial roles.

“Although sustainability and net zero were not key priorities when I started working with the BPF Pipes Group, they have become much more important and our members’ engineered solutions are helping to address the needs of the modern world. Plastic pipe systems are high performance products, providing long-term service and effective lifetimes of up to 100 years. At the same time, our members are seeking new ways of recycling plastic pipes and fittings into other useful and long-lasting products like irrigation pipes, cable ducting and SuDS geocellular systems. Their work in incorporating recycled material into their systems is continuing to increase and some real innovations are taking place.

“Our members work together to develop and improve standards, and this co-operation has produced a number of fact-based guidance documents and promotional material to benefit those working in utilities and construction.

“This is an important industry and here in the UK there are a surprisingly large number of companies manufacturing plastic pipes and fittings, employing sizable workforces in research and development as well as in production, sales and logistics. All of these manufacturers are working hard to improve the sustainability and performance of their products. Working together to create guidance documents helps to raise those standards too.

“As an association, we work to ensure best practice and standards in all applications areas where our members’ products are used, like brownfield sites

where barrier pipes are proving ideal, as well as encouraging best practice in areas like underfloor heating, air admittance valves, drainage and sewers, acoustic pipes and SuDS. Our aim is to clarify installation techniques and standards for those working in these industries so they can make the best use of these types of products and systems.

“We have continued good co-operation with Europe post-Brexit; some of our manufacturing companies are European or multi-national but they have continued to invest in the UK.

“I feel confident that I am leaving the BPF Pipes Group in the capable hands of its members and my successor, Owen Mace, and I shall continue to watch future developments with interest.”