



CORRECT SELECTION OF LIQUID WATERPROOFING

CEO of the Liquid Roofing and Waterproofing Association (LRWA), Sarah Spink, discusses the versatility of liquids and highlights which products are best suited for different projects.

There's often a misconception that liquid-applied waterproofing is a recent development, but a combination of natural bitumen and various fillers, such as sand, was used to waterproof roofs as early as the 1820s. By the late 1800s, natural bitumen was being specified extensively, applied as a liquid with reinforcement layers using jute, straw, rag felt and other man-made materials.

Liquid waterproofing technology is continuously evolving and the systems we use today are a result of decades of innovation.

VERSATILITY

Liquid roofing and waterproofing systems offer a highly durable solution for both new build applications and the refurbishment of existing roof, balcony and walkways. Systems are made up of different chemistries, meaning some may be better suited in certain applications than others. The LRWA for example consists of several manufacturer members, all offering excellent waterproofing solutions with varying chemistries.

There are many advantages to using a liquid waterproofing solution, and it is clear to see why they are a popular choice at merchants. With many products being cold-applied, liquids offer a seamless finish, easy application and the ability to tackle detailing on roofs.

The LRWA is committed to working with merchants to help communicate the benefits of liquid waterproofing and raise standards across the industry, and as part of this aim, we are working on a project, which could provide merchants and other distributors

with a tool enabling them to quickly and easily assess the suitability of liquid systems, including accreditations.

New initiatives like this combined will ensure that merchants, contractors, and manufacturers can provide and install liquid waterproofing solutions which perform as expected.

LIQUID SELECTION

Below are some liquid technologies available on the market - which are commonly purchased by contractors from distribution networks – and explanations of the key specification and application considerations.

Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) – Consisting of a glass fibre reinforced polyester resin, GRP was first introduced around the 1940s. Probably the most popular liquid type in this sector, these systems are predominantly used for domestic properties with small flat roofs, best suited to areas of less than 100 m². This is because the system always requires the application of a quality plywood or oriented strand board substrate - but can also be applied to other surfaces such as concrete with the use of primers if required. Contractors would typically use GRP for foot trafficked areas such as walkways or balconies, and is also quite popular within local authority frameworks as well as garage roofs, outhouses and housing extensions.

Polyurethane (PU) – With a long track record in the UK market, Polyurethanes are extremely versatile and can be used in a multitude of applications. Systems can provide a good option for metal roofs, gutters, flat roofs of any size, warm roofs, green roofs as well as trafficked walkways, balconies and terraces. PU's are strong and flexible, offering a sound waterproofing solution. Products are available as both single and twin pack, may use glass fibre matting or polyester fleece reinforcement; single (wet-on-wet) application or multi-layer applications; and can be reactive systems, moisture triggered or moisture cured. Some products on the market are odour free; ideal for use in sensitive areas such as domestic homes, nurseries, hospitals or schools causing little disruption to occupiers of the building.

QUALITY PRODUCTS

As the demand for liquid waterproofing has increased, so has the number of manufacturers both in the UK and overseas, leading to a vast range of different products.

Contractors must ensure the products have been independently tested and certified. Be wary of 'too good to be true' guarantees of 20 years or more, and ensure the product has quality management system such as ISO 9001, BBA and fire safety certificates. Manufacturers should also offer application guidance and training.

If in doubt, advice from an impartial, specialised organisation such as the LRWA is free, and can help make an informed decision when choosing a product.

For more information or advice, please contact us at technical@lrwa.org.uk