

INDUSTRY GUIDANCE FOR INSTALLERS ON CONDENSATE

DRAINAGE PIPE INSTALLATION

This guidance is endorsed by HHIC members.

1. BACKGROUND

During recent winters the UK has experienced prolonged spells of extremely cold weather - down to minus 20°C and below in many areas. This resulted in a significant increase in the number of calls to boiler manufacturers and heating engineers from householders with condensing (high efficiency) boilers where the condensate drainage pipe had frozen and become blocked with ice, causing the boiler to shut down. In the vast majority of cases such problems occur where the condensate drainage pipe is located externally to the building for some part of its length.

British Standards, Building Regulations etc. currently allow condensate drainage pipes to be run either internally or externally, or a combination of these. These documents give guidance on how to install the pipes in order to reduce the possibility of freezing. However this guidance may not be sufficient to prevent freezing in extreme conditions - with widespread and prolonged very low temperatures.

In view of the possibility that UK weather patterns will show more “extremes” in future due to the effects of global climate change, the following guidance updates previous recommendations on condensate drainage pipe installation. All other technical requirements for condensate drain installation given in British Standard BS 6798:2009, or in boiler manufacturers’ installation instructions should still be followed.

2. REVISED GUIDANCE ON CONDENSATE DRAINAGE PIPE INSTALLATION

Where a new or replacement boiler is being installed, access to an internal “gravity discharge” termination should be one of the main factors considered when determining potential boiler locations, so that the condensate drainage pipe can be terminated as recommended below. On an existing installation, the guidance below should also be followed if work is carried out to “upgrade” the condensate drainage system to reduce the risk of freezing in extreme conditions.

Internal condensate drainage pipework must be a minimum of 19mm ID (typically 22mm OD) plastic pipe and this should “fall” at least 45mm per metre away from the boiler, taking the shortest practicable route to the termination point.

In order to minimise the risk of freezing during prolonged very cold spells, one of the following methods of terminating condensate drainage pipe should be adopted -

2.1 INTERNAL TERMINATION:

Wherever possible, the condensate drainage pipe should be terminated at a suitable internal foul water discharge point such as (a) an internal soil and vent stack or (b) an internal kitchen or bathroom waste pipe, washing machine waste pipe etc. A suitable permanent connection to the foul waste pipe should be used. Figures 1, 2(a), 2(b) show appropriate connection methods.

The possibility of waste pipes freezing downstream of the connection point should be considered when determining a suitable connection point - e.g. a slightly longer pipe run to an internal soil stack may be preferable to a shorter run connecting into a kitchen waste pipe discharging directly through the wall to an external drain.

Where “gravity discharge” to an internal termination is not physically possible (e.g. the discharge point is above the appliance location, or access is obstructed by a doorway), or where very long internal pipe runs would be required to reach a suitable discharge point, the following measures may be adopted -

2.2 USE OF A CONDENSATE PUMP (TO AN INTERNAL TERMINATION):

Condensate can be removed using a proprietary condensate pump, of a specification recommended by the boiler or pump manufacturer.

The pump outlet should discharge to a suitable internal foul water discharge point, such as (a) an internal soil and vent stack or (b) an internal kitchen or bathroom waste pipe, washing machine waste pipe etc. Figure 3 shows a typical connection method.

A suitable permanent connection to the foul waste pipe should be used and the manufacturer’s detailed installation instructions for the pump should be followed.

2.3 EXTERNAL TERMINATION:

The use of an externally-run condensate drainage pipe, terminating at a suitable foul water discharge point or purpose-designed soakaway, may be also be considered; however if this termination method is chosen then the following measures should be adopted -

- The pipe should be run internally as far as possible before going externally and the pipe diameter should be increased to a minimum of 30mm ID (typically 32mm OD) before it passes through the wall.
- The external run should be kept as short as possible, taking the most direct and “most vertical” route possible to the discharge point, with no horizontal sections in which condensate might collect.
- The external pipe should be insulated using suitable waterproof and weatherproof insulation (“Class O” pipe insulation is suitable for this purpose) .

- The use of fittings, elbows etc should be kept to a minimum and any internal “burrs” on cut pipework should be removed so that the internal pipe section is as smooth as possible.

The customer/householder should be advised that even with the above measures this type of installation could freeze, and that if this were to occur then boiler shutdown could result, requiring remedial action - possibly involving a chargeable engineer call-out.

Where there are likely to be extremes of temperature or wind-chill, the use of a proprietary trace-heating system for external condensate drainage pipework, incorporating an external frost thermostat, should therefore be considered. If such a system is used then the installation instructions of the trace heating manufacturer and any specific recommendations regarding pipe diameter, insulation, etc. should be followed. All other relevant guidance on condensate drainage pipe installation should also be followed.

Other cold weather protection methods approved or endorsed by boiler manufacturers and/or service organisations may be adopted if these are considered suitable by the parties involved.

If an external soil/vent stack is used as the external termination then the connection method shown in Figure 4 should be used, together with the measures on insulation etc. as described above and shown in the diagram.

When a rain water downpipe is used as the termination (**NB** only permissible if this downpipe passes to a combined foul and rainwater drainage system) an air break must be installed between the condensate drainage pipe and the downpipe to avoid reverse flow of rainwater into the boiler should the downpipe itself become flooded or frozen. Figure 5 shows a suitable connection method.

Where the condensate drainage pipe is terminated over an open foul drain or gully, the pipe should terminate below the grating level, but above water level, in order to minimise “wind chill” at the open end. Pipe drainage will be improved if the end is cut at 45° as opposed to a straight cut. The use of a drain cover (such as those used to prevent blockage by leaves) may offer further protection from wind chill. Figure 6 shows a suitable connection method.

Where the condensate drain pipe terminates in a purpose-designed soakaway (see BS 6798:2009 or boiler installation manual for soakaway design requirements) any above-ground section of condensate drainage pipe should be run and insulated as described above. Figure 7 shows a suitable connection method.

3. UNHEATED INTERNAL AREAS:

Internal condensate drainage pipes run in unheated areas such as lofts, basements and garages should be treated as external pipe.

NOTES

- *The Benchmark Commissioning Checklist (located at the back of the boiler installation manual) should be completed as required to record details of the condensate drainage pipe installation.*
- *Where an external condensate drainage pipe is installed, the customer should be made aware of the risks and consequences of its freezing and offered the option to fit trace heating (or other measures approved by the boiler manufacturer or service organisation).*
- *Separate guidance has been published for householders on remedial actions which can be taken if a condensate drainage pipe freezes. This may result in requests for alteration to condensate drainage pipework, in which case the guidance above should be followed.*
- *In some instances (e.g. where an elderly person's heating needs to be reinstated as an emergency measure) condensate drainage pipes may have been cut in order to bypass any blockage and allow re-ignition of the boiler, with condensate being collected in a suitable container as a temporary solution.*

While not unsafe, this is not recommended practice and if such action has been taken then the condensate drainage pipe must be reinstated as soon as possible, using the above guidance to reduce risk of freezing in future.

Figure 1 – Connection of condensate drainage pipe to internal soil and vent stack

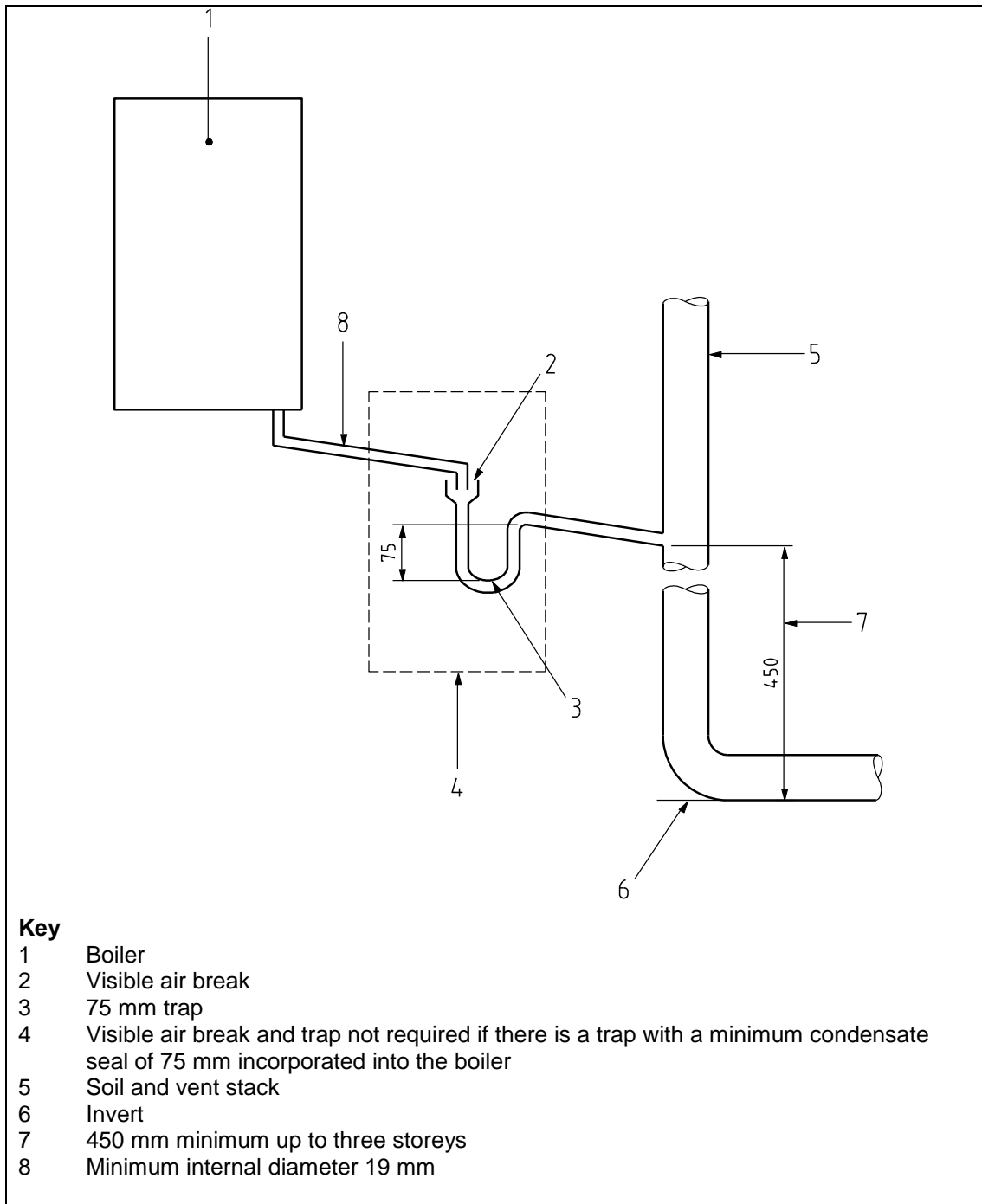


Figure 2(a) – Connection of a condensate drainage pipe downstream of a sink, basin, bath or shower waste trap

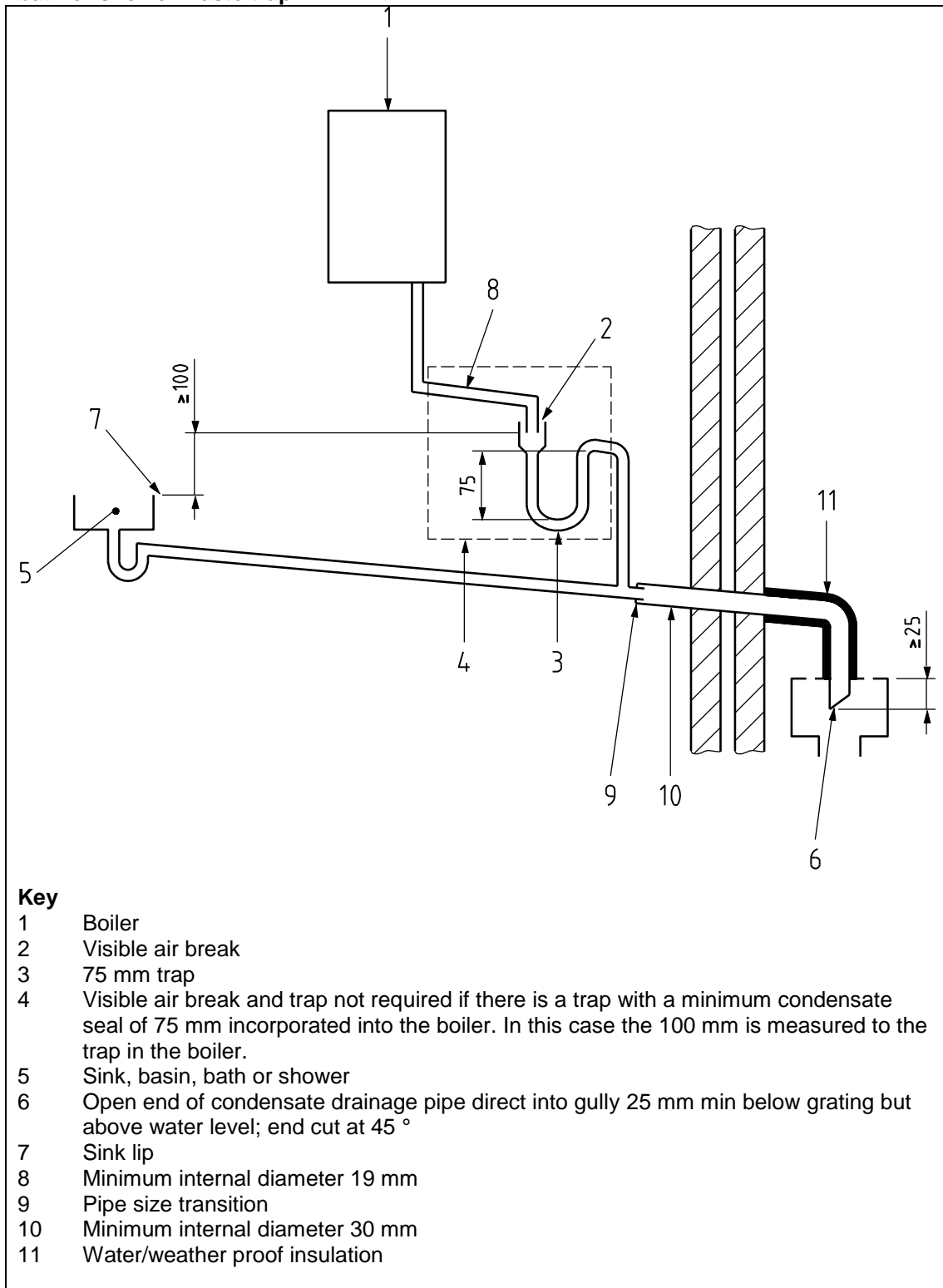


Figure 2(b) – Connection of a condensate drainage pipe upstream of a sink, basin, bath or shower waste trap

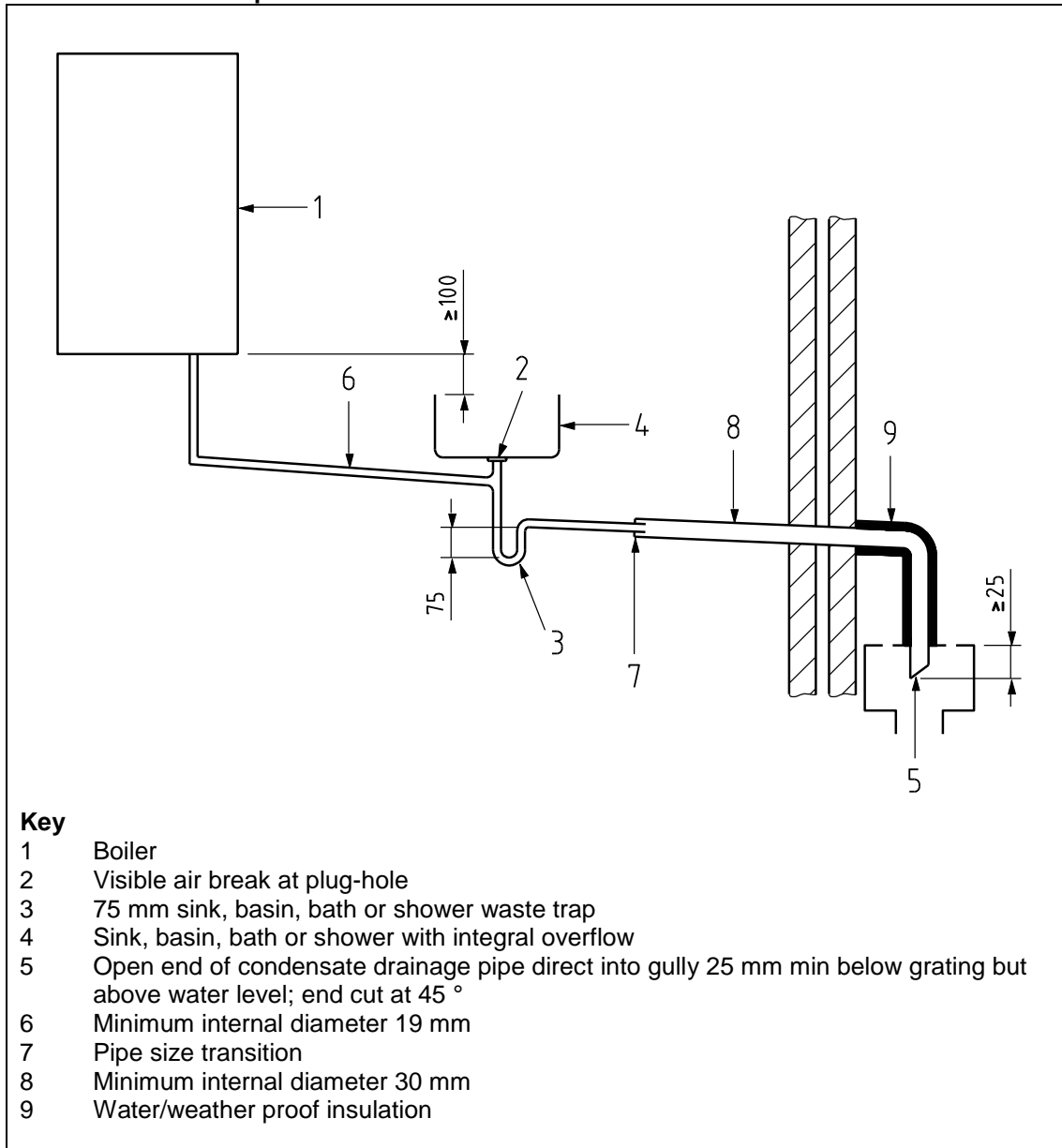
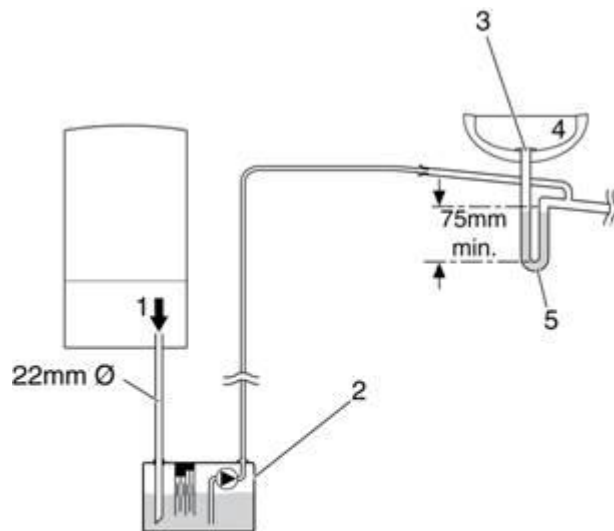


Figure 3 – Connection of a condensate pump - typical method (NB manufacturer's detailed instructions should be followed).



Key

- 1 Condensate discharge from boiler.
- 2 Condensate pump
- 3 Visible air break at plug hole.
- 4 Sink or basin with integrated overflow.
- 5 75mm sink waste trap.

Figure 4 – Connection of condensate drainage pipe to external soil and vent stack

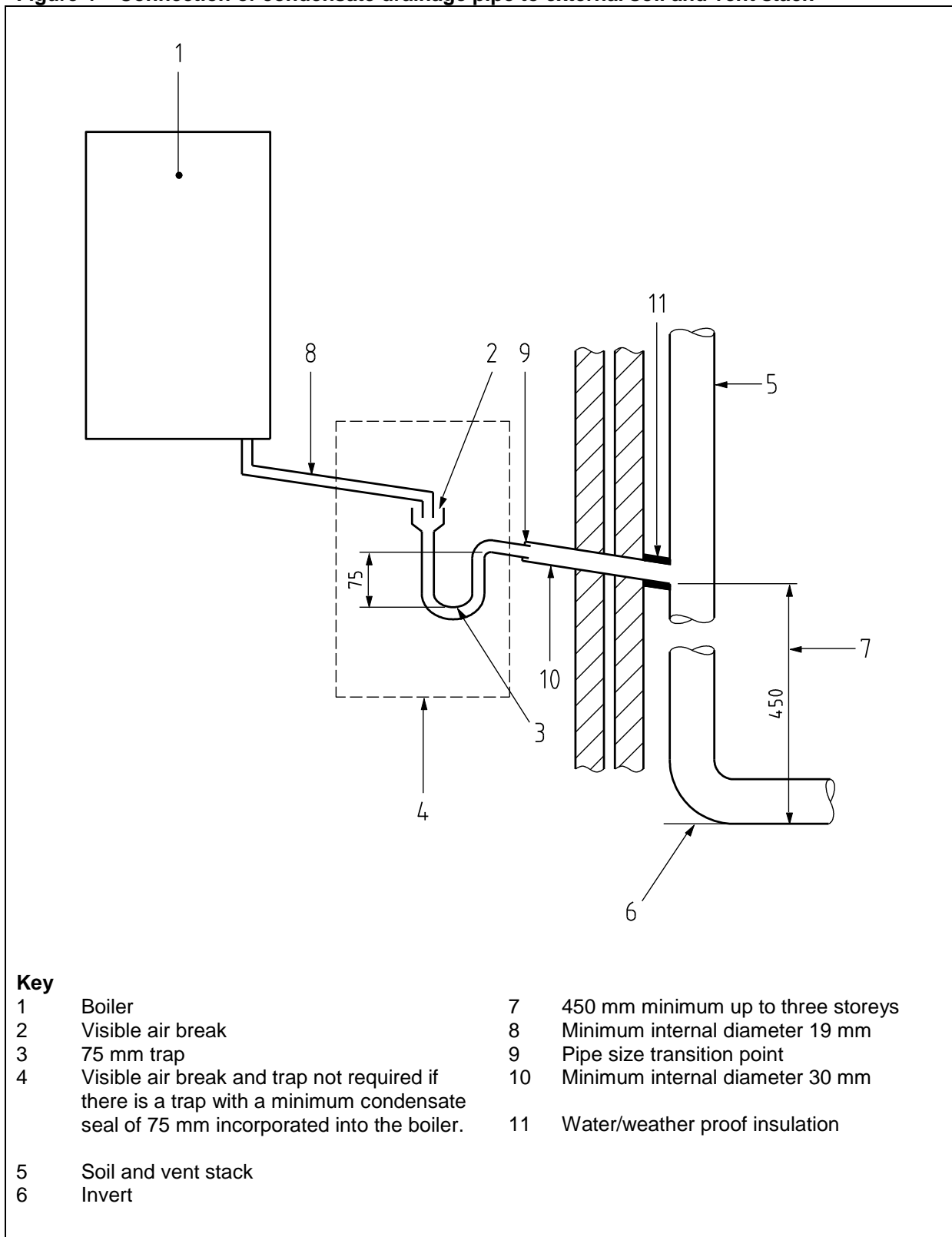


Figure 5 – External termination to rainwater downpipe (NB only combined foul/rainwater drain)

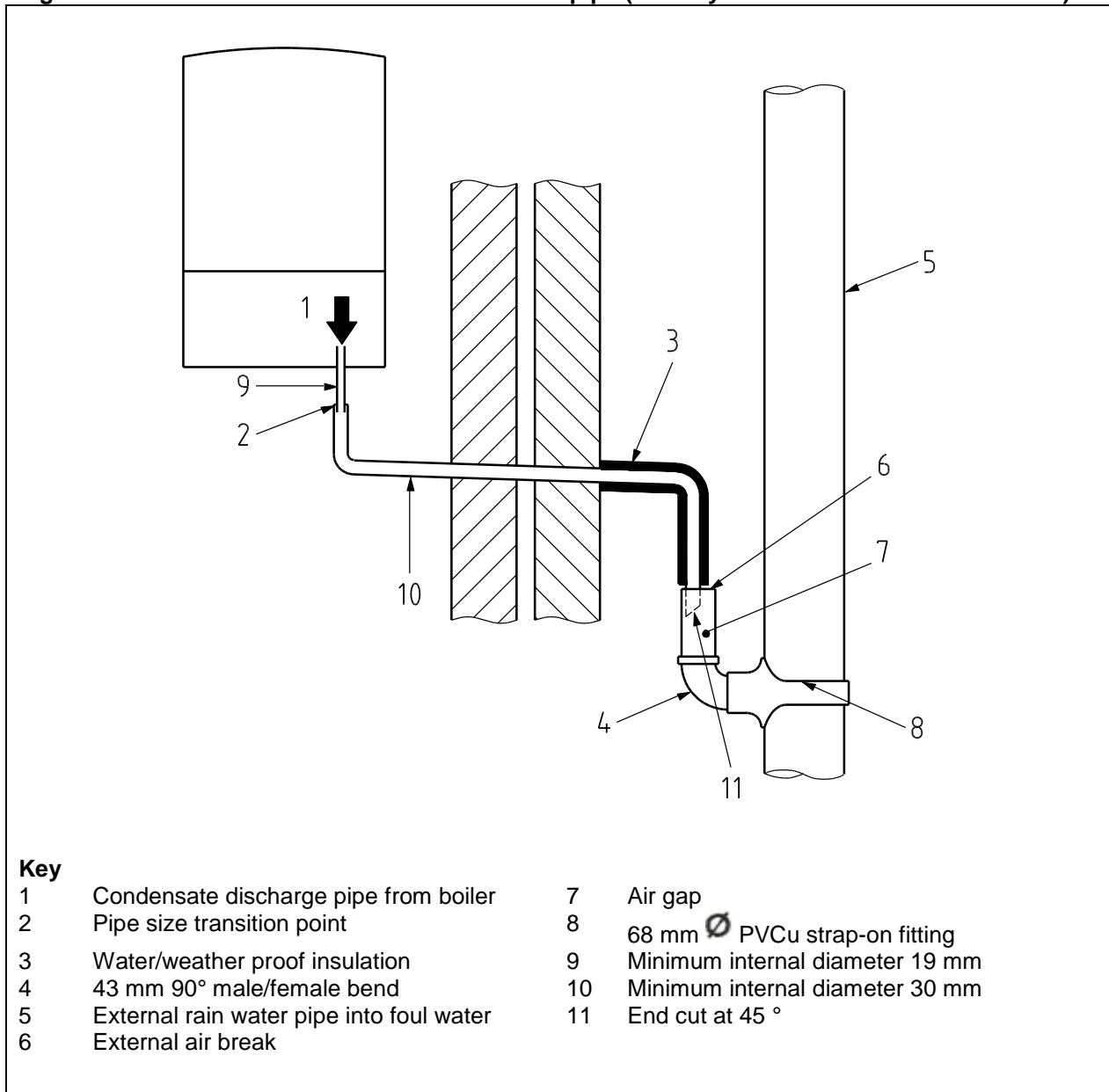


Figure 6 – External drain, gully or rainwater hopper

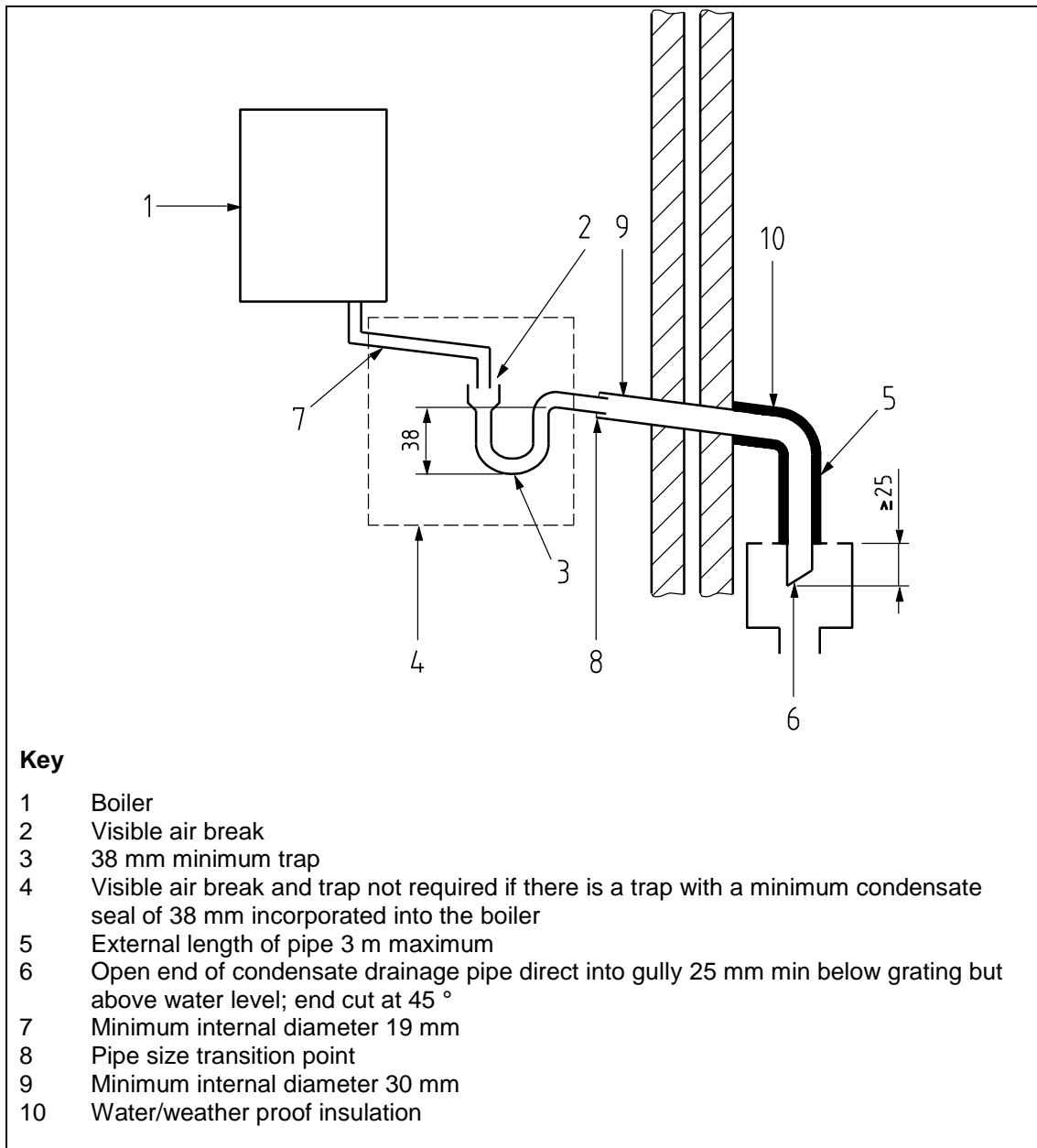


Figure 7 – Example of a purpose-made soakaway

