

**RTS Response to WRSE Consultations on their Proposed Policies and their
Method Statements 2020 with Stakeholders and Customers to inform their 2050 Water
Resources Management Plan for the South East**

Water Resources South East (WRSE) is an alliance of the six water companies which cover the South East of England and their aim is to secure the water supply for future generations through a collaborative, regional approach.

They are currently developing a multi-sector regional resilience plan to secure water supplies for the South East until 2100.

This Plan is taking a long-term view and considering the water we need to use at home and at work, as well as that required by agriculture, to generate electricity, for industry, recreation, the environment and to support the well-being of society.

More information can be found at <https://www.wrse.org.uk/> and for Proposed Policies at <https://wrse.uk.engagementhq.com/regional-policies> and for the Method Statements at <https://wrse.uk.engagementhq.com/method-statements>

PROPOSED POLICIES

Leakage reduction by 50% by 2050

Per Capita Consumption (personal water use)

Environmental Ambition

Net Zero Carbon emissions by 2030 for operational carbon

Levels of Service – to become common for customers across the SE for temporary use bans

Drought Permits and Orders use to be aligned with EA national framework

Private water supplies to be supported where public health or animal welfare could be at risk in a severe drought

Resilience to drought be increased to 1:500 years

Ethical buying, social equity and public value

RTS response to the consultation, which closed on 04 September 2020, confined itself to ABSTRACTION, one of the Society's major interest in this matter. The Consultation stated

Using water into supply as an overall measure - WRSE members are keen to work with a national initiative to improve the way we measure our progress on reducing water use and move to measurements which better support our ambition to reduce the impact of water supply on our natural environment. This could involve introducing an overall measure of how much water is put into supply and its environmental footprint. If we focus on ensuring the overall amount of water we supply is sustainable (for households and non-households) this will better support our ambitions to protect the environment and manage an uncertain and challenging future.

The Society submitted that a different metric for reducing demand in the long term – one linked more directly to **sustainable abstraction** – should be used.

METHOD STATEMENTS

In their Introduction concerning the challenges facing the region, WRSE highlights that water resources are under increasing pressure and no more so than in the water stressed South East. It is home to 30% of the population and is worth £627 billion per year to the UK economy (30% of the total). Currently, the water companies in the South East region abstract, treat and distribute more than five billion litres of water each day. This is over a third of the 14 billion litres per day that is provided, on average, by the water companies across England. The National Infrastructure Commission identified the need to increase the resilience to drought in its National Infrastructure Assessment. Since then, the Environment Agency has published a National Framework for water resources which shows that more than 3.4 billion litres of additional water is needed across England by 2050 to secure water supplies for the future, with half of that required in the South East.

Following from the Proposed Policies, WRSE have produced a library of sixteen Method Statements which set out the processes and procedures they will follow when preparing the technical elements for their Regional Resilience Plan. They state that over the past 12 months they have developed the methodological approaches and are sharing them now to ensure transparency in their approach, and to give stakeholders the opportunity to review and comment on our proposed approaches. This to allow interested parties to understand the methodological approaches – in essence the ground rules – to be followed in some complex and critical areas. These are:

Environmental ambition	Climate Change
Multi-sector approach	Regional simulation model
Demand Forecast	Investment programme development and assessment
Stochastic datasets	Options appraisal
Hydrological modelling	Resilience I
Groundwater Framework	Resilience II
Deployable output	Environmental assessment
Outage	Customer and stakeholder engagement

The RTS submitted its views in respect of the following :

ENVIRONMENTAL AMBITION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

re Env Assessment and Social/Health implications – the River Thames Society would like to see the Methods provide reassurance that the water companies will put in place robust monitoring and treatment processes that will protect human health and the ecosystems rivers where recycled water is concerned. Endocrine disrupting chemicals and other harmful discharges into rivers have been a concern for some time. The cumulative impact of recycling water with not all

hazardous agents removed by standard treatment processes could impact human health. Despite specific monitoring for many hazardous discharges the greater intensity resulting from intensive recycling water could cause problems. There also remain concerns about unknowns e.g.

- Products where international use and experience is not directly comparable and so confidence cannot be drawn from reuse schemes elsewhere.
- The generation and spread of atypical animal or human pathogens including novel infections, agents including antimicrobial resistance.
- Trade effluent from illicit uses e.g. the production of recreational drugs.

MULTI-SECTOR APPROACH

The River Thames Society has previously indicated that the initiatives outlined as improving leakage control and smart metering should also include industrial and farm users. These activities have significant impact on water demand and RTS feels improved demand management should include all water users. It therefore welcomes the initiative that this Regional Plan is to be a multi-sector approach.

HYDROLOGICAL MODELLING & DEPLOYABLE OUTPUT

The River Thames Society is keen to see a Plan where any increased abstraction is carefully controlled and environmentally sensitive. Over abstraction in The Thames and its tributaries, particularly in times of stress, is highly detrimental to the environment and unsustainable. The Method needs to encompass careful management of abstractions generally.

STOCHASTIC DATASETS re 'new approach' [Method Statement Summary page 5]

The Society asked whether WRSE was in touch with the Met Office or Newcastle University Professor Richard Dawson and employing the Meteorological tool for extremes, launched mid-October 2020, for example re flooding prediction? <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-54637086>. This Met Office tool is designed to help planners prepare for further extremes of rainfall and high temperatures.

This new analysis doesn't speculate on possible record high temperatures. Instead, it offers a projection of what researchers call "relatively high extremes" - the sort of weather you'd expect once every 50 years.

INVESTMENT PROG DEV AND ASSESSMENT

The RTS submission asked whether the recent Catchment workshops they held provided WRSE with the data/stats/information required for WRSE to understand the requirements of the river catchments?

With acknowledgement to RTS Council Members Les Jones Hilary Pereira and Gillian Rix for providing the Society's responses.

Results of these consultations are yet to be published (@ 20 November 2020)

Gillian Rix
