



WRSE Stakeholder Event Report
27 September 2019

Table of Contents

Introduction 3

Executive Summary 4

Workshop structure and content 6

Session 1: The role of regional plans 6

Session 2: The WRSE multi-sector, regional resilience plan 6

Session 3: Perspectives on the regional plan panel discussion and audience Q&A 6

Session 4: Table discussions – what do we want from the multi-sector regional resilience plan? 7

Session 5: Development of the WRSE plan 7

Session 6: Table discussions – engagement and involvement 7

Final remarks and event close 7

Attendees 7

Workshop feedback 9

Perspectives on the regional plan panel discussion and audience Q&A 9

Table discussion 1: what do we want from the multi sector regional resilience plan? 14

Table discussion 2: engagement and involvement 21

Feedback forms 24

Introduction

On 27 September 2019, Water Resources South East (WRSE) hosted its first stakeholder workshop at the WWF Living Planet Centre in Woking. The purpose of the workshop was to:

- inform delegates about the important shift in the role of regional planning – what is changing and why, the wider context and how it will inform water company plans
- set out the challenges we are collectively facing in the region and the ambitions the WRSE's regional resilience plan aims to realise
- understand the areas stakeholders view as a priority to enable us to develop a shared vision of the future and help us articulate what success will look like
- provide confidence that stakeholders' views will inform the development of the regional resilience plan and set out how they can continue to be involved to ensure maximum participation.

Create 51, a specialist strategic communication and stakeholder engagement consultancy, organised and facilitated the workshop. The event consisted of a series of short presentations from Defra, the Environment Agency (EA) and the Regulatory Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID); presentations from WRSE; a panel discussion involving a range of stakeholders followed by an audience Q&A; and two round table discussions. The roundtable discussions were facilitated by representatives from WRSE and the WRSE member companies and comments were captured by scribes.

Where possible, scribes noted verbatim quotes along with key themes and areas of consensus. Comments were not attributed to individuals to ensure that all stakeholders could speak as candidly as possible. In some cases, individual tables did not answer all of the questions. Where this is the case, the table has not been included in that section of the report.

This report is a summary of the outputs from the stakeholder workshop.

Executive Summary

The stakeholder workshop held on 27 September 2019 was the first multi-stakeholder engagement event held by the WRSE to launch its vision for a multi-sector regional resilience plan. The event was attended by more than 60 stakeholders from a range of different sectors and organisations.

The event began with representatives of Government and sector regulators providing the context for the need to strengthen the role of regional planning in developing future water resources. The Environment Agency set out the role of the National Framework which is being put in place to co-ordinate the work of regional groups charged with planning future water resources for their respective regions and ensure they feed into a strategic national approach to planning water resources. The representative from RAPID explained the role of this new cross-regulator unit to support the delivery of strategic infrastructure schemes.

WRSE set out its ambition to develop a multi-sector regional resilience plan. The specific water resources challenge facing the South East was highlighted, as was the need to take a holistic and balanced approach that included a range of different options that together would address the future supply deficit and build resilience. The need for collaboration and consensus-building was highlighted as critical if the best outcome for the region is to be achieved.

Representatives from a range of sectors spoke about their expectations for the regional resilience plan. For farmers, the opportunity to plan more holistically for drought and benefit from the expertise of water companies was a priority. For the energy sector the need for flexibility and the ability to address the changes in energy production, as a result of decarbonisation, need to be addressed. The environmental sector highlighted the urgency that was required and that the plan needs to get ahead of pressing environmental issues. For local government the need for resilient water resources to avoid the impact of drought on the economy and society is a priority. It is an opportunity to plan in a more joined up way and support sustainable growth and good spatial planning.

Delegates were asked to identify their priorities for the regional resilience plan. The top three included:

- Invest in catchment solutions to enhance the quality and quantity of water and improve environmental resilience
- Reduce household consumption
- Develop new infrastructure for the future.

WRSE set out its four-stage approach to developing the regional resilience plan.

1. Development of a resilience framework
2. Regional system simulation modelling
3. Policies, preferences and plans
4. Regional resilience plan.

Delegates were asked to discuss their preferred approach to engagement. The need for an open and transparent approach was highlighted, with opportunities for stakeholders to be involved throughout, including in technical work, seen as very important.

At the end of the event, stakeholders were asked to complete a feedback form. Of those who responded 100% were satisfied or very satisfied with the event with 97% wanting to remain involved.

Workshop structure and content

The workshop was chaired by Nick Ellins, CEO of Energy and Utility Skills who is independent of WRSE. Below is a brief description of each of the sessions. The slides presented can be found alongside this report.

Session 1: The role of regional plans

This session involved short presentations from Government and regulators about changes being made to national policy and regulations associated with water resources management. It included:

- Defra (Ed Beard): explained the action Government is taking to support the delivery of the National Infrastructure Commission's (NIC) recommendations to build water supply resilience. He highlighted the 25-Year Environment Plan, the National Policy Statement for Water Resources and the consultation on per capita consumption (PCC) reduction as areas that the Government is actively working on. The Government will respond to the NIC's recommendations.
- The Environment Agency (Paul Hickey): provided an update on the work being undertaken to develop a National Framework for water resources and the expectations for regional groups. He highlighted that the National Framework needs to serve the needs of society, including those longer term and wider societal issues, and set out its ambitions so as to inform the regional plans.
- RAPID (Crystal Moore): explained the role of the new RAPID unit, which will facilitate the development of large-scale water resources infrastructure schemes. She pressed that this is about delivery and speeding up the resolution of issues, so projects are construction ready by the start of the 2025 to 2030 period.

Session 2: The WRSE multi-sector, regional resilience plan

Simon Cocks, independent chair of WRSE, presented an overview of WRSE's work to date and how it intends to enhance its approach to meet the requirements of the National Framework. He highlighted the scale of the challenge faced in the South East and the need to achieve the right balance between different types of schemes (infrastructure, demand management, catchment solutions) to deliver the resilience required. He highlighted the opportunity for collaboration between different sectors and stakeholders.

Session 3: Perspectives on the regional plan panel discussion and audience Q&A

The session started with representatives from four different sectors providing an overview of their priorities for the regional plan. The speakers were:

- Paul Hammett, Water Resources Specialist, National Farmers Union
- Martin Pilbin, Commercial Manager, RWE
- Stuart Singleton White, The Angling Trust

- Cassie Sutherland, Greater London Authority

They were then joined by the previous four speakers for an audience Q&A session.

Session 4: Table discussions – what do we want from the multi-sector regional resilience plan?

Delegates were asked to discuss their priorities for the regional resilience plan. They were presented with some pre-prepared material that highlighted some of the areas that the plan could address and were asked to identify others. They were then asked to identify their top five priorities for the plan.

Session 5: Development of the WRSE plan

Meyrick Gough, WRSE Technical Director, provided an overview of the technical work that will be carried out to develop the plan, the timescales and where stakeholders will have the opportunity to participate and shape the plan.

Session 6: Table discussions – engagement and involvement

Delegates were asked to discuss what level of involvement they would like to have in the development of the plan, which areas were of most interest and the engagement methods they would prefer to be used.

Final remarks and event close

Simon Cocks closed the events by highlighting the urgency needed to address water resources issues in the South East but also the opportunities for greater collaboration that existed.

NB: Manuela Di Mauro from the National Infrastructure Commission was due to speak but was unable to attend on the day.

Attendees

A total of 54 stakeholders attended the workshop, representing the following organisations.

Defra	South Downs National Park Authority
The Environment Agency	Centre of Ecology and Hydrology
RAPID	ARUP
National Farmers Union (NFU)	Waterwise
Greater London Authority	West Sussex County Council
RWE	Water Level
Southern Water	Wey and Arun Canal Trust

SES Water

Portsmouth Water

South East Water

Affinity Water

Sussex Wildlife Trust

Natural England

Arun and Rother Rivers Trust

South East Rivers Trust

Uniper Energy

Water Resources East

Water Resources North

Country Land and Business Association

WSP

GARD

RSPB

Energy UK

ARUP

The Water Report

Water UK

South Oxfordshire District Council

Oxford Water Network

ICE Expert Water Panel

Zoological Society London

Business Stream

The Angling Trust

Kent County Council

Workshop feedback

The following section captures the discussion and feedback that took place during the panel discussion and Q&A and the two facilitated workshops.

Perspectives on the regional plan panel discussion and audience Q&A

Paul Hammett, NFU

Fruit and vegetables are a huge success story for the region and consumption is growing. Good soil, climate and light availability means we are well set up to produce what consumers want but a risk is vulnerable access to water. An NFU survey showed that 72% members suffered from the impact of drought in some form during 2018.

There are also regulatory issues – water allocation is based on historic use, but there is no allocation for future growth. There are reputational vulnerabilities too – the food supply chain is fiercely challenging and if retailers see signals that farmers can't supply them, the farmers are vulnerable.

Water for food production should be seen as an essential use. It will become more difficult for individual farmers to meet their needs on their own. We are keen to engage in the regional planning process – feels like a useful step forward.

Farmers can share knowledge and water. We would welcome access to the technical knowledge and expertise held by water companies and apply it to the farming sector.

Some 70% of farms are family run. It will be difficult for small businesses to engage in this process – there is considerable imbalance between farmer and water companies. It is very diverse – one size will not fit all.

We need to develop a more common language. Farmers talk about acre inches not megalitres – makes it difficult to engage and understand.

Regional plans are driving progress, they provide a clean sheet of paper. How easy will it be to turn the tanker round on the strictly public supply issue only?

It's all about future trade policy – growing our own rather than importing. Some 30% of fresh fruit and veg is imported from Spain despite there being a very vulnerable water situation there.

Martin Pilbin, RWE

RWE has a large number of plants in the South and South East region. We're seeing short term scenarios moving the market, and that market is changing – there's a big penetration of wind, we're third largest generator of wind in the world.

We are changing the way we use existing plant and making decisions based on price - it creates opportunities for licence sharing, flexibility in timing.

Long-term – moving from value chain analysis where we turn coal/gas into electricity and dirty water into clean – and moving to value networks where people have a different perspective.

Zero carbon – energy sector being focused on decarbonisation for a while, and we can see transport is starting with batteries. We need to understand where that market is going – heating and transportation makes up two thirds of that market so change there still needs to take place.

Opportunities – we welcome market opening; we think a twin track approach is important for markets to have a place. What does it look like? –Transfer options with canals, wastewater re-use, low carbon desalination are on the table.

How will it be delivered? We need to talk about best value and economic position – these are key questions going forward.

How do we invest in these new assets? There is a missing story here – energy has been struggling with resilience for a while e.g. power cuts in London, and so we're effectively facing our drought. How market manages resilience has been a struggle for a number of years but for investors it's key – how sector planning will manage investment, not just the physical assets.

If investing in big infrastructure – and if doing best value – how is it going to be quantified? Who is going to pay for best value, are there different customers paying for it? It's a big issue.

Opportunity to work cross industry – I've been working in this market for 20 years and it's an opportunity to take some of the best things from the energy market and use them appropriately.

Stuart Singleton White, The Angling Trust / Blueprint for Water

Welcome the ambition but we need to highlight the urgency. This is not a problem happening down the road, climate change is happening at a much faster pace and there are environmental issues that the regional plan needs to address. The plan needs to start from a point of urgency.

Historically there has been a tendency to take a 'predict and supply' approach – focussing on the needs of consumers. We like the language coming out from regional groups about the need to re-balance towards a demand management approach to water. That's going to be key – it's not going to be easy but needs to be a central focus going forward.

Building regulations, efficiency standards etc – we need to see same approach in water. And it's about price and price points in the right places so if consumers are using more, we have the ability to influence that. Water is simply too cheap for too many people.

Water transfers are important, but we want to see more emphasis on water storage. We do think there is a need for more storage and also to look at the land management aspects of this.

There has been talk about how our environment has improved – and many aspects of it have – but if you're looking at drying chalk streams you are seeing the sheer challenges and impacts on one of the most important ecosystems this country has. Some 85% of chalk streams are in the UK.

There still seems to be a hierarchy/gap between meeting the needs of the consumer/economy and the environment – that needs to be balanced much better.

Cassie Sutherland, Greater London Authority

The Mayor's ambition for water in London chimes with this – twin track approach of leakage, metering, water efficiency – but also recognising the need for water resources, and very supportive of shared resources.

Securing resilient water resources for the future is our aim – it's unthinkable for London to be faced with serious drought. The economic and social impact is unthinkable – running the financial centre, west end, tourism etc.

There are challenges e.g. water-stressed region, growing population – we're expected to grow by 2 million people by 2050 in London – but there are opportunities as well as challenges around population density.

London has high leakage rates and high per capita consumption. It's not easy – there are diverse demographics, high-density buildings, ranges in water use across the city, there's also difficulty in accessing pipes and getting into London to operate.

We're ensuring that water is at the heart of our planning policies – our emerging plan sets out the importance of regional co-ordination (and mentions WRSE) which is great, but we're also ensuring developments deal with surface water on site and are using optional requirements in the building regulations. We'd like this to be strengthened and actually delivered.

There are constraints to build in London. How do we work with designers to embed circular approaches – such as re-using waste and minimising waste, managing flood water? We're trying for an integrated approach.

Opportunities for WRSE? To help us align our different spreadsheets and put more focus on outcomes. For example, growth and economic forecast figures that are used for future water use –how do we co-ordinate these to make sure we're using the same figures and projections with neighbours and regulators?

Allow feedback loop for WRMPs to influence planning policy – they're working on different time horizons. The London plan is a very strong document – we have a chance to put in some important infrastructure and demand requirements and set out how it can be delivered.

Incentives are an area that we'd like to look at further in London, for example to accelerate water re-use. The lack of incentives is one of the main barriers – the plan should look at these and make recommendations and reach consensus about which ones are needed.

It's an important issue for the GLA – the regional approach is great, and we're delighted to be involved.

Audience Q&A and responses

1. We need to tell a better story and tap into the current strength of feeling around climate change. Millions of people involved in climate strikes. We are not doing this to make money – doing it for planet, wildlife, otters and salmon. We'll back you on that. Tap into the zeitgeist (Louise Bardsley, Natural England)
 - Agree with tapping into the zeitgeist, Defra moving forward with that, for example through the 25-year Environment Plan (Ed Beard, Defra)

- It's challenging to get people to care about water. It's not about price, it's about connecting people to the consequences of using water. United Utilities suggested moderating use and there was outrage from people (Paul Hammett, NFU)
2. Why aren't we looking at direct effluent reuse with extra treatment? (Louise Bardsley, Natural England)
 - There are some barriers associated with drinking water regulations and there are consumer issues. It's a challenge but something we need to consider for the future (Simon Cocks, WRSE).
 3. Growth and economic predictions need to be co-ordinated and linked. 250,000 population growth predicted in 15 years for Oxfordshire – 3 times what the ONS say. In London, planning far in excess of what ONS project. How are we going to co-ordinate into a realistic number for the South East? (Richard Harding, CPRE Oxfordshire)
 - We need to work together – it's an issue that should be addressed by WRSE (Simon Cocks, WRSE)
 - In the process we should be using some set and agreed growth figures – could be regions or in levels. That's a barrier that we've recognised (Cassie Sutherland, GLA)
 4. Partnership that tries to address strategic policy and infrastructure development – specific opportunities for collaboration. We think at a technical level closer links are needed between water resource planning and spatial planning. Also, there is a political dimension – we need to gain some buy-in for water resources work (Jorn Peters, GLA).
 - Definitely opportunity for pilot projects, getting symmetry of language and measuring in the same units (Simon Cocks, WRSE)
 5. Regional plan will adopt growth figures as a given – presumably the 2 million population growth in London by 2050 is optimal. Could the number be higher or lower? If it is optimal why is it? Who is driving the growth? (Paul Butler, South East Water)
 - It's the middle of the growth projections/range (Cassie Sutherland)
 6. Crunchy conversations/trade-offs will be needed – should that be left to the individual stakeholders to work through or should policy say 'x' is more important than 'y'? (Karma Loveday, The Water Report)
 - The National Framework will map out policy decisions the Government will need to take – it's central to our thinking (Paul Hickey, EA)
 - We will need new policies – a water section of the Environment Bill is vital. Also, to rebalance the demands and needs of consumers/economy with the needs of the environment. The natural environment is the bedrock of what we do (Stuart Singleton White, The Angling Trust / Blueprint for Water).
 - Not a neat process of getting stakeholder views and keeping everyone happy. Policy needs to give us a framework, but it needs to be informed by practical action on the

ground. It's a sub-optimal place to have policies designed by politicians or civil servants without practitioners having input (Simon Cocks, WRSE).

7. Is the model for asset investment struggling (based on absolute need) and if so, are you going to consider other models for investment? (Karma Loveday)
 - Yes absolutely – if things are broken and not working, it's our job to come up with solutions (Crystal Moore, RAPID).

Table discussion 1: what do we want from the multi sector regional resilience plan?

Delegates worked in groups of 6 to 9 people and were presented with the information about areas of water resource activity that could be addressed through the regional plan. These activities were split into four high level categories as follows:

1. More efficient use of water e.g. Reduce household water consumption, leakage and industrial demand
2. Green infrastructure: increased environmental protection and enhancement e.g. invest in catchment solutions, reduce unsustainable abstractions beyond statutory requirements
3. Hard infrastructure: increased connectivity and new infrastructure e.g. new transfers, using canal systems, reservoirs
4. Management of drought events e.g. avoid/reduce environmental permits and temporary use bans

See appendix 1 for material provided.

Delegates were asked to discuss these water resources activities under each category, identify other areas of focus and identify the top five activities that they would prioritise for the plan.

Stakeholder priorities

The areas prioritised by stakeholders were as follows:

1. Invest in catchment solutions to enhance quality and quantity of water and improve environmental resilience (22)
- =2. Reduce household water consumption (20)
- =2. Develop new infrastructure for the future – reservoirs, desalination, water reuse, ASR (20)
4. Reduce leakage from the network (16)
- =5. Reduce unsustainable abstractions from freshwater sources beyond statutory requirements (14)
- =5. Develop and approach to natural and social capital valuations that we can use in decision making around solutions (14)
- =5. Optimise connectivity within and between regions by enhancing existing transfers, installing new pipelines and using other existing waterways such as canals (14)
8. Enabling the environment to adapt to a changing climate (13)
9. Recycle water at the micro and macro level, e.g. households, industry, catchments (11)
10. Use temporary supply arrangements during drought (5)
- =11. Increase environmental net-gain through the solutions delivered e.g. bio-diversity net gain (4)
- =11. Building standards for water efficiency and links with developers (4)

- =13. Develop new infrastructure that provides additional water for other users to provide greater resilience during extreme drought events (3)
- =13. Build more water storage (3)
- =13. Have consistent levels of service across the South East (3)
- =13. Plan to avoid or reduce the need for environmental drought permits and orders (3)
- =13. Plan to avoid or reduce the need for restrictions on household and business usage (3)
- =18. Use of tariffs, e.g. water scarcity (2)
- =19. Co-ordinate demand forecasts (2)

Below are the key themes and some verbatim comments from the discussions.

General discussion

There was considerable discussion around the importance of accurate growth forecasts. Stakeholders were concerned that there are different forecasts from different organisations and highlighted the need for the regional plan to be based on accurate growth forecasts so that the supply-demand balance is understood, and we plan accordingly.

“Should the regional plan be driven by population growth if the numbers aren’t accurate..... who has predicted this increase in population and why have they done it?” Water Company representative.

“There is a huge amount of uncertainty, especially around population growth, but the plan will be an adaptive plan so that new insights, for example revised population growth predictions, can be reflected as the plan develops.” Water Company Representative.

“Ensuring there is forward thinking and a real strategic plan is key – this amount of population growth, this amount of housing and linking with planning systems and environmental issues is key to how we consider future growth.” Local Planning Authority representative.

“It’s not good enough to add together the individual WRMPs and say that’s a forecast.” Special Interest Group representative.

“Assemble forecasts and test them at different points – don’t wait five years to re-evaluate your plan – you keep adapting and putting energy into the right things. We need to come to agreement on data and data standards and move forwards. Contesting data doesn’t move us on.” Regulator.

The importance of understating the needs of other sectors and the way in which their requirements are assessed and built into the plan was discussed and seen as very important to address if the WRSE plan is going to take a more multi-sector approach.

“We’ve got lots of challenges in terms of decarbonisation and therefore are looking at different technologies that are more water intensive – what other sectors’ demands are, and their strategic objectives, need to be understood.” Energy Sector representative.

“It wasn’t clear how the energy sector was feeding into this process – they seemed to have lots of questions.” Engineering/Sector Specialist.

“The NFU is working with multi sectors to work out supply deficit for each region. Trying to come up with consensus as to where we’d be by 2080. Agriculture has struggled as hundreds of SMEs; some know very well (soft fruit) but not dairy. Really heartening having NFU.” Regulator.

“Why don’t water companies manage farmers supply as well as the public supply? Most farmers in the South East utilise the same resources for their supply anyway. Why can’t the farming community be run off the same system as the public supply? There is very little engagement between those responsible for public water supply and farming community – integration could benefit both.” Water Company representative.

“I expect regional plans to include a forecast for future agricultural demand. At present farmers have an allocation that controls their activity, but if demands on agriculture was unconstrained it would be difficult to predict.” Farming and land management representative.

“Perhaps as water companies shift their focus from upstream issues and move towards supply and distribution there may be opportunities for the farming community to be involved in upstream reforms. There could be a solution that benefits everyone.” Engineering and Sector Specialist.

Incorporating the needs of the environment into the plan at the front end, not just as an output, was a priority for some stakeholders.

“What is the environment we want? We have choices.” Regulator.

“There needs to be environmental impetus at the front-end of regional water resource plans, rather than environmental outcomes. Long-term environmental ambition needs to be considered in the development of regional plans and stakeholders need to sign up to environmental standards incorporated into the plans.” Water Company representative.

The need for a more common language to be used to support joined up planning and engagement with customers and communities was highlighted.

“The language is very water-led. Not bringing in farmers language and how they would describe things – would help people understand better.” Engineering/Sector specialist.

“Communications and how do we connect the value of water. Need to work with passion as demonstrated by NFU and environmental panellists. There can be more working together with the messaging and better connection to the water cycle.” Regulator.

“Use language for people – PCC etc means nothing to the everyday person.” Water company representative.

“Careful that the media focus on things like leakage but do not really help with the solutions. Is moving water the right message – how does this encourage people to use less water?” NGO representative.

“We need to have conversations about the countryside and farming, not hosepipe bans. In rural areas people get it, in urban areas they don’t care where their water comes from – its more complicated.” Water Sector representative.

Some stakeholders highlighted the importance of innovation and new options.

“What do we want from the resilience plan? We need a mechanism for proper evaluation of options and nurturing slightly off the wall/new ways of thinking to get these options in a position where they can be included in the plan.” Engineering/Sector specialist.

“The key to this is a good level of innovation – solar cells on reservoirs etc.” Environmental Group representative.

More efficient use of water

The need for new homes to be built to high water efficiency standards and not introduce inefficiency into the system was a common area of discussion. This included re-use of water to reduce the amount of drinking water required.

“We’re building houses which are unfit for the future – this needs to be focussed on.” Environmental group representative.

“Community-based solutions to capture water and reduce potable water use – but if you don’t implement this on new developments you’ve lost it as retrofitting is not right. At some point there needs to be leadership from Government to determine these rules about rainwater.” Engineering/Sector Specialist.

“On new developments there is a charge that water companies make in respect of future water use of infrastructure. These could be associated with a condition such as you can only have this if you agree water consumption below a level.” Engineering/Sector specialist.

“More that can be done to look at recycling. We do all this treatment but only 2% is used for drinking water. There must be a better process so if you’re not using it for drinking you save that money and invest it better.” Consumer representative.

The need for water efficiency to also be focussed more on business customers was highlighted.

“One third of supply is used by business customers – it should be about household and business consumption. 80% of our customers are SMEs so very like domestic customers – my frustration is that there are only targets for domestic only.” Water Retailer.

Stakeholders recognised the role of price in reducing demand, raised the issue of tariffs linked to water scarcity and considered whether there should be a time-based approach to demand management.

“The price of water is fundamental in controlling usage”. Environmental group representative

“The price of water is so low at the moment people don’t think about their usage.” Engineering/Sector Specialist.

“Regional planning should consider the appropriateness of demand management. Politically, price rises may not be acceptable but if you are going to tackle demand you should consider pricing.” Water Company representative.

“In many other industries if there is high demand and scarcity the price goes up – not in water. Will have to consider it. We need to find the nudge price sensitivity to make the 5p plastic bag change in water.” Water Company representative.

“Should there be incident related price hikes like in oil?” Environmental group representative.

“How much demand management is needed in a normal year compared to an extreme year? Do we try to drive changes in how people use and view water during times when water is scarce, or should we put the message out there continuously?” Engineering/Sector specialist

“What is considered a normal year now? Climate change is happening so quickly and rapidly – dealing with this requires a new attitude to water planning throughout the industry.” Environmental group representative.

“We need to look at peak demand as well as average usage.” Regional Group Representative.

Green infrastructure: increased environmental protection and enhancement

The role of green infrastructure and investing in the environment to support wider resilience was highlighted by a number of stakeholders.

“How resilient is the environment? Is it in-built resilience? How quickly can it return to its natural state? We need to make it so it can recover in the best way if drought or flooding is the norm. We need to think about changing the way we put hard infrastructure in – other companies do it very differently as their issues are greater. Do we need to change the way we think?” Engineering/Sector specialist.

“Needs to be a focus on green infrastructure. Focusing on mitigation as part of the answer, engaging nature and using our environment to reduce impact is very important.” Environmental Group representative.

“I want to reinforce the huge benefits of green infrastructure when it comes to planning new areas. We need to look at how resilient we want to be and how much risk we want to accept. Things need to be planned at an early stage.” Local Government representative.

There was a feeling that we should not be trying to hold the environment exactly as it is but support its natural adaptation.

“Environment/habitats need space and flexibility to adapt.” Environmental Group representative.

The opportunity to trade water at catchment and sub-catchment level was highlighted as something that had not been identified and should be considered.

“What are the options to look at trading in small catchments – what people are doing with their water and why?” Energy Sector representative.

“There is nervousness amongst farmers that water companies may steal water. Need to get farmers on board.” Regional Group representative.

“From a power station point of view, we withdraw a lot of water from water bodies and replace it. With this there is an opportunity to re-use that water before it goes back in, but power stations aren’t generating for potential trading. We don’t want to be water suppliers but want the ability to trade.” Energy Sector representative.

Hard infrastructure: increased connectivity and new infrastructure

The need to increase the amount of water storage was a common discussion point. The need for increased connectivity was recognised but it was felt that more storage is needed so there is water to be transferred.

“The emphasis on connectivity could be fraught with problems if the water storage issue is not also considered. There is no guarantee that drought in the South East will be accompanied by rain elsewhere and in this situation the planned interconnectivity and transfer of water would not be possible. From an ecological point of view, water transfers may present issues with invasive species. Land use, catchments and storage solutions should be considered on a local scale as well as a regional scale.” Environmental Group representative.

“Connectivity can be improved all we want but ultimately it’s the storage that determines how much water is available. Don’t just jump from no storage to dams – there are lots of storage options in between.” Engineering/Sector Specialist.

“We should determine what is a sustainable level of storage going forward. How do you determine how much storage is enough?” Water Company representative.

“We have to think about where extra water can come from. We can generate it or transfer it. For WRSE the emphasis should be on how to transfer water from areas that have to those

that don't. Needs to be not in confines of South East but if regional plan needs it, it needs to link to a national plan." Special Interest Group representative.

"It is dangerous to assume there will always be water in one part of the country when you need it another – need more storage." Water Company representative

"Part of the issue with storage is people want to use land to build houses, not for it to be zoned for water. They then expect water companies to supply them with water that doesn't exist. It feels like a Government solution is needed – this storage is a priority." Engineering/Sector specialist.

"There is a particular challenge for the South East because a lot of people want to live in this area of the country. Increasing the storage element has to happen. We run up against nimby sentiments – people don't want crowds to enter. There is a huge public education programme needed to enlighten people on the benefits." Environmental Group representative.

There was recognition that big interventions rather than small, incremental interventions are now needed to increase capacity and resilience but also to help address major environmental issues. Options need to be considered objectively and on a level playing field.

"At some point we will need this capacity and the need will eventually catch up with what you've got if you put in place big infrastructure. There is a gravitation towards least cost rather than thinking about the biggest environmental issues. Solutions such as canals can help with environmental issues. Points need good science behind them to remove any hidden agendas. Need an absolutely objective approach which understands wider benefits as well – much more holistic and not so much cost focus or fitting the views of pressure groups." Environmental group representative.

"The Victorians built stuff for the future; we're eating away at some of that. We need to do something different – how can we be ambitious for future generations?" Engineering/Sector specialist.

A number of stakeholders also spoke about the need to integrate water and wastewater planning better and for WRSE to take a more holistic view of water management.

"Should include flood as well as drought – water in its totality. I think the opportunities for investing in infrastructure and retaining water in the environment are massive." Regulator

"In addition to challenges faced during drought, there are lots that occur during heavy rainfall events. Could we offer farmers incentives to store water during times of surplus, which they could then utilise in times of drought?" Environmental Group representative.

Management of drought events

Stakeholders identified the need for greater collaboration between different sectors during drought events.

“Farmers struggle in drought conditions. It would be interesting to see how farmers could work with other stakeholders during these events. A collaborative attitude in a multi-sector area such as this.” Farming and land management representative.

Stakeholders recognised that planning for a higher level of resilience i.e. a 1 in 500-year drought, will be more expensive and infrastructure may rarely be used and the idea of having water resources available on standby is an alternative option.

“The solution we have composed is to have water on standby and if you get to extreme drought, you tanker that in and the cost of doing so is equalised across the period by using insurance. It is not something you would rely on as an operational scheme, but at the top level it provides more resilience of your money than alternatives and once signed up you know it is there.” Engineering/Sector Specialist

There were mixed views about the role of drought management measures and whether the need to use them should be classed as a failure of the system.

“With a drought plan we are planning to fail and deal with failure – I think this is an antiquated approach.” Water Company representative.

“Restricted use can be seen as a good thing and may just increase people’s value of water. Restriction is not a failure.” Regulator.

“Droughts happen, it’s what we do that is important – educate people that droughts have always happened and will continue to do so.” Environmental Group representative.

Table discussion 2: engagement and involvement

Delegates were asked about how they want to be involved in the development of the regional resilience plan – what level of involvement they want and in which areas. They were also asked to identify any good examples of active/participatory engagement that they have experienced and to highlight any methods that they would prefer to be used.

Opportunities to be engaged earlier in the planning process rather than being consulted on an output was an expectation of many stakeholders. Regular forums involving a wide range of stakeholders, and also smaller technical groups to focus on certain aspects of the plan, was an approach that a number of stakeholders promoted. The example of Thames Water’s approach during WRMP 19 was cited by a number of stakeholders as was the approach taken by Water Resources East (WRE).

“One of the challenges with stakeholder consultation is that there is usually a constrained framework within which the engagement takes place. Is there opportunity for engagement

during the earlier stages, rather than after the questions for stakeholders have been pre-defined?” Environmental Group representative.

“The Thames Water stakeholder group has been very valuable, and stakeholders have been able to influence the direction of plans from the meetings. Each meeting tends to be focussed on a technical area. These meetings may be more difficult to do at regional level, but it could be done.” Environmental Group representative.

“The NFU’s ambition is to be heavily engaged in regional water resource planning. As a small organisation the resource needed to do it justice can be hard to find. It would be useful for WRSE to provide a clear explanation of the various groups and frameworks that comprise the regional plan so we can identify where our input will be most useful.” Farming and Land Management representative.

“Sending out a document and asking for feedback doesn’t get dialogue going and doesn’t provide solutions where there are perceived conflicts.” Environmental Group representative.

“Give us the opportunity to comment on scope of the investigations, e.g. growth and all technical aspects – engineering, modelling, hydrology – and have the opportunity to comment at a time when we can influence rather than presented as a fait accompli where people are backed into a corner and won’t change their minds as reports have been written.” Special Interest Group.

“WRE approach was good. Having an agreed spreadsheet/model and each sector working on their own requirements and those being fed in and checked against the model. It is all very clear about what each partner is putting in, their requirements/needs and what they might give up on. Key thing is that it’s open.” Energy Sector representative.

“There needs to be a mechanism to be able to find your interest or relevance, not just blanket emails. It would be good to get plenty of forewarning of things like consultation so we can plan it out.” Environment Group representative.

“Set out a timeline rather than drips and drabs” Energy Sector representative.

It was felt that the engagement around the plan needs to be open and transparent with appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms in place and understanding the weighting that is given to different people/groups was highlighted as something that should be considered.

“Co-create the plan all the way through – be transparent and open.” Regional Group representative.

“What we need are some outcomes to be clear on what the rules of the game are.” Regulator.

“Where it doesn’t need to be confidential it shouldn’t be. Cost is a difficult one.” Environmental Group representative.

“Definition of what is best value is important for all stakeholders so needs to be done in a transparent way. WRSE is trying to get a definition for the industry of best value – can’t underestimate the value of doing that piece of work.” Regulator.

“Where things have broken down is dispute resolution, we are poles apart with no resolution. Need mechanism for things to be resolved in an expert way.” Special Interest group.

“There needs to be some thought to ‘is everyone equal?’ and whose opinions should you listen to more than others. There has been lots of focus on customers, but customers don’t have a choice of who provides them water. Sometimes companies can be a bit too customer driven and actually need to look at the benefit to the customers and the water system.”
Environmental Group representative.

“Get children today involved to shape the future. Diversity of this group needs to change to get representation.” Engineering/Sector specialist.

Stakeholder fatigue and overload was recognised as a potential problem with the added requirement for a regional plan as well as water company Water Resources Management Plans (WRMPs). The importance of a joined-up approach between the two layers of planning was highlighted.

“Consultation overload is a serious problem. It could be mitigated by carrying assumptions from the regional plans into WRMPs. Once regional plan is in place, individual companies’ WRMP will be predicated on that so stakeholders won’t have to question the basic assumptions that form the WRMPs – these will have already been consulted on.”
Engineering/Sector Specialist.

Stakeholders highlighted a number of methods that they felt could be used to deliver greater engagement.

“It’s difficult to get people to say what they really think. We’ve used sprint events to make progress on sticking points. Leave your associations at the front door and come in as individual to thrash out solution.” Regional Group representative.

“Webinars are a good idea. Hard to get half a day commitment but don’t want to retreat into silo.” Local Government representative.

“Written stuff to comment on, make it topic specific – can really add value and expertise rather than being plan general.” Local Government representative.

“Hop on the back of events and presentations being done by others.” Regulator.

“Surveys may be good to as it’s impossible to quantify everything, so you have to qualify it.” Local Government representative.

“Using the web page to push things like policy and procedures out is a good idea.” Energy Sector representative.

“It would be good to do a pilot project on a smaller scale to demonstrate what could be done on a larger scale.” Environmental Group representative.

The issue of the design of the approach and ensuring the fit with other regions was highlighted.

“Initial design is important so we can see comparatively between the plans that each regional group comes up with – no national picture without it. When you do design, do comparisons, do a single plan, not one that makes assumptions for the South East that don’t fit with other regions – design for interoperability across regions.” Regulator.

“The regional plan feeds into WRMPs, but the WRMPs are the building blocks of the regional plan. How will this work? Will it only be WRMP19 data that is used to inform the regional plan, or will new targets be fed in? It’s important for stakeholders to understand the

methodologies of the regional plan and important for there to be consistency between regional plans. The different regions could then compare and share ideas.” Regional Group representative.

The need for shared, compelling messaging to increase wider engagement with the issues associated with water was needed.

“We need a narrative that can be shared. We all have a responsibility and I think we need to be spreading that message more.” Local Government representative.

“Technical bodies such as CIWEM/ICE – are there messages that these bodies can reinforce and add credibility?” Engineering/Sector specialist.

“We need to do more to engage politicians. It doesn’t have to be technical, but they need to understand the strategic dimensions.” Local Government representative.

“Customers are and will be increasingly interested because of the climate change angle. They will be more engaged now. It probably needs a communications programme across the area that local water companies can plug into their communications. There needs to be some creative communications.” Consumer group representative.

Feedback forms

Delegates were asked to complete feedback forms at the end of the event. The cumulative responses can be found in appendix X.

The highlights include:

- 13% were unaware of very unaware of WRSE before the event
- 100% were satisfied or very satisfied with the event
- 97% want to be involved in the development of the regional resilience plan

Stakeholders suggestions on how to improve events in the future focused on ensuring there was more time for discussion, briefings ahead of the event and voting opportunities during future sessions.

They also highlighted interest in subject-specific workshops – particularly on planning assumptions, forecasts, environmental ambition, water efficiency, natural capital, catchment management and spatial planning.