



Method Statement: Engagement With Stakeholders

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Executive Summary

Water Resources South East (WRSE) is developing a multi-sector, regional resilience plan to secure water supplies for the South East until 2100.

We have prepared method statements setting out the processes and procedures we will follow when preparing all the technical elements for our regional resilience plan. We are consulting on these early in the plan preparation process to ensure that our methods are transparent and, as far as possible, reflect the views and requirements of customers and stakeholders.

Figure ES1 illustrates how this engagement with stakeholders method statement will contribute to the preparation process for the regional resilience plan.

Stakeholder engagement is an important part of developing the South East (SE) regional plan and water companies respective WRMP24s.

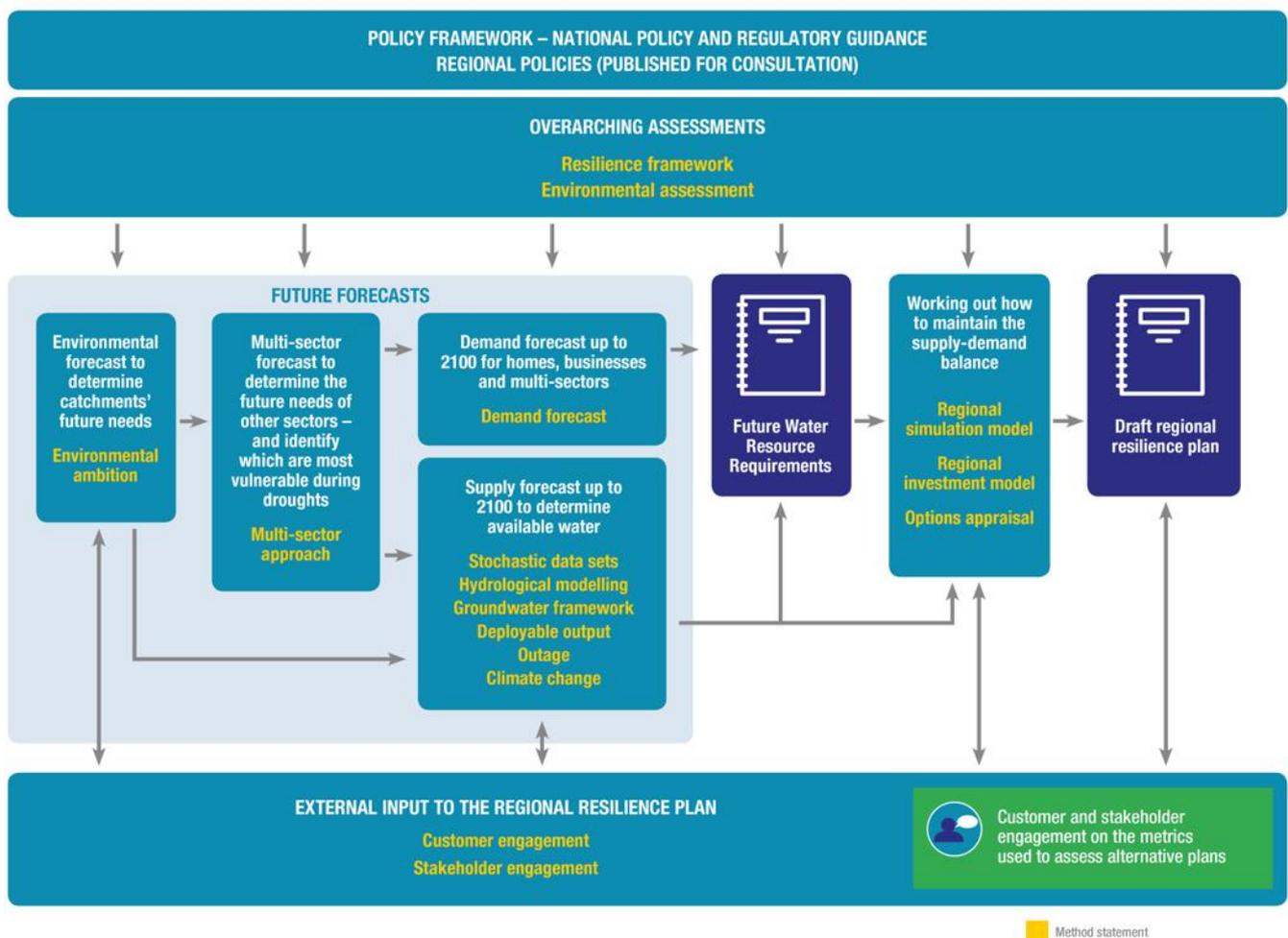
We are working with a wide range of groups, organisations and interested parties in the development of the plan to understand their future needs and priorities and ensure these are reflected in the regional plan.

We have established a stakeholder advisory group as well as three sub-groups to ensure focused engagement on key aspects of the plan and we will also continue to engage with the wider stakeholder community through meetings and online channels. We will share information in an accessible and timely way, provide opportunity to input at a formative stage, and listen and respond to feedback.

This stakeholder engagement method statement sets out the approach we will take to engage with these communities, ensuring openness and transparency. Our approach will

evolve both in response to strategic and technical developments and also feedback from stakeholders. We will endeavour to clearly communicate with stakeholders and keep them briefed on the engagement and technical programmes of work, and we will update this method statement periodically to ensure it remains current.

Figure ES1: Overview of the method statements and their role in the development of the WRSE regional resilience plan



1 Introduction

- 1.1 Stakeholder engagement is an important part of developing the South East (SE) regional plan and water companies respective WRMP24s.
- 1.2 Our engagement with stakeholders will seek to:
- ensure we develop a plan which provides a secure and sustainable water supply which meets the future needs for public water supply and other water users, supports the well-being of society and economic growth;
 - agree the strategic challenges facing the region; e.g. climate change, population growth, protection and enhancement of the environment;
 - inform the policies that will be adopted in the plan – specifically around key areas such as environmental ambition, risk acceptance (resilience) and the use of drought orders and permits;
 - contribute to the solutions considered in the plan, including catchment, nature based and multi-sector solutions, as well as proposals for innovative solutions. There will also be engagement on the strategic resource options which will be fed into the plan;
 - build an understanding of, and agreement to, the technical methods, data and assumptions employed in the plan;
 - ensure an understanding of, and agreement to, the decision-making process to help determine the preferred plan including the use of criteria and scenarios;
 - gain support for the overall plan, and where there are areas of challenge to understand the basis for the challenges and be able to clearly articulate and evidence the approach and decisions made by WRSE and the member companies.
 - ensure a clear and transparent approach for stakeholders, specifically in respect of the alignment of the regional plan with companies WRMP24s.

In addition, there are other areas that the engagement activities will need to address, many of which are more specific to the member companies, such as challenges to individual WRMPs or specific schemes; and ensuring a clear line of sight or ‘golden thread’ between key planning processes as business plans are developed.

- 1.3 WRSE, and the member companies, are working collaboratively through the Engagement and Communications Board (ECB) to ensure engagement activity is coordinated, inclusive and effective.
- 1.4 We have established an engagement programme which will be undertaken alongside, and support, the development of the regional plan. We aim to share information in a timely way and provide the opportunity for interested stakeholders to input to relevant work at a formative stage.
- 1.5 The approach complies with the expectations set out in the [National Framework](#) (March 2020) for example “Regional plans will identify how best to create resilient water supplies for all users, while protecting and enhancing the environment. They will be developed collaboratively by the water companies, other water-using sectors, environmental groups and regulators who collectively make up the regional water resources planning groups. Groups should also engage with other stakeholders such as local authorities, devolved government and interest groups” and the early draft WRPG (May 2020) which states “You should conduct an enhanced pre-consultation to raise awareness of your plan with consultees, identify and discuss potential risks and issues to help you produce a better plan. There should therefore be no surprises to regulators and stakeholders when you publish your plan” It has also been designed with the expectation of a public inquiry on company’s WRMP24s and planning applications for new infrastructure. It was presented and approved at the WRSE Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meeting (April 2020).

2 Method/approach

Regulatory and policy framework

- 2.1 WRSE engages with government, regulators, policy makers and the other regional groups through the National Framework Steering Group, Policy Task and Finish Group, Regional Coordination Group and RAPID stakeholder meetings and aims to help shape the regulatory framework to ensure we can achieve a resilient and sustainable water supply for the long term. WRSE also engages with government through wider policy activities such as contributing to policy development and consultations and scrutiny at government committees such as the Public Accounts Committee.

Informing the development of the plan

- 2.2 The WRSE engagement framework is illustrated in Figure 1, it comprises three tiers:

Tier 1:

Stakeholder Advisory Panel which comprises representatives from water using sectors from across the region, as well as organisations involved in determining future water policy and strategy. The purpose of the Panel is to ensure a broad range of interests are represented and to help shape the direction and content of the plan. The members of the Advisory Panel are provided in Appendix 1.

Tier 2:

Multi-sector and environmental sub-groups to ensure we understand and take account of the needs of other sectors, the resilience of their water supply system, potential solutions and define the environmental ambition for the region. Each group has an independent chair, is facilitated by WRSE and has agreed Terms of Reference. The members of the sub-groups are provided in Appendix 1.

Business and the economy sub-group to ensure we take account of the wider needs and objectives of the region in terms of growth and resilience; this is a virtual group recognising the diversity of the stakeholder community involved. It is currently being established and will include Local Authorities, water retailers and developers.

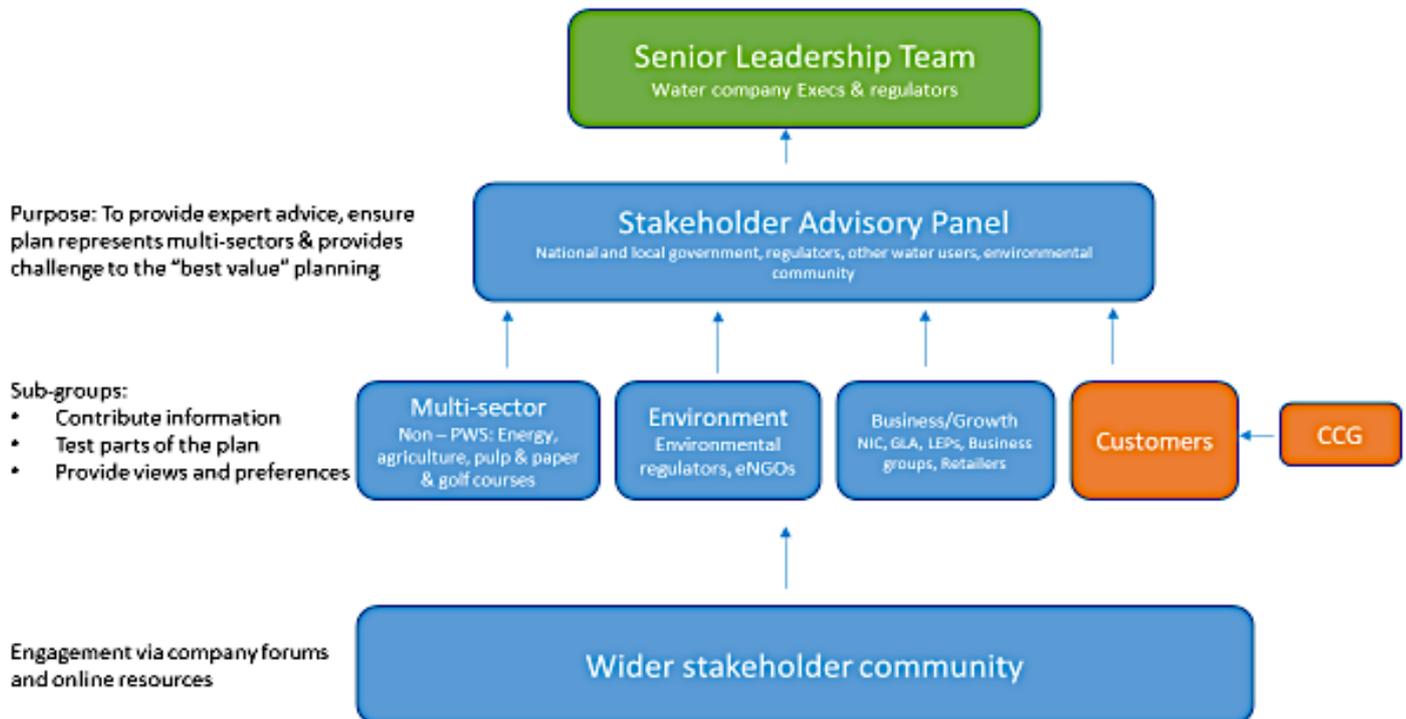
Customers – the views and preferences of customers are important in plan formation and we will engage with customers through research and other channels to ensure we understand, and take account of, their views and preferences; this is covered in a separate Method Statement.

Tier 3

Wider stakeholder community through meetings and events, hosted both by WRSE and the individual water companies, and online channels to ensure interested stakeholder organisations can keep up to speed and input to the development of the plan.

We are committed to work transparently and will publish materials used at stakeholder meetings listed above and minutes from these meetings on our website.

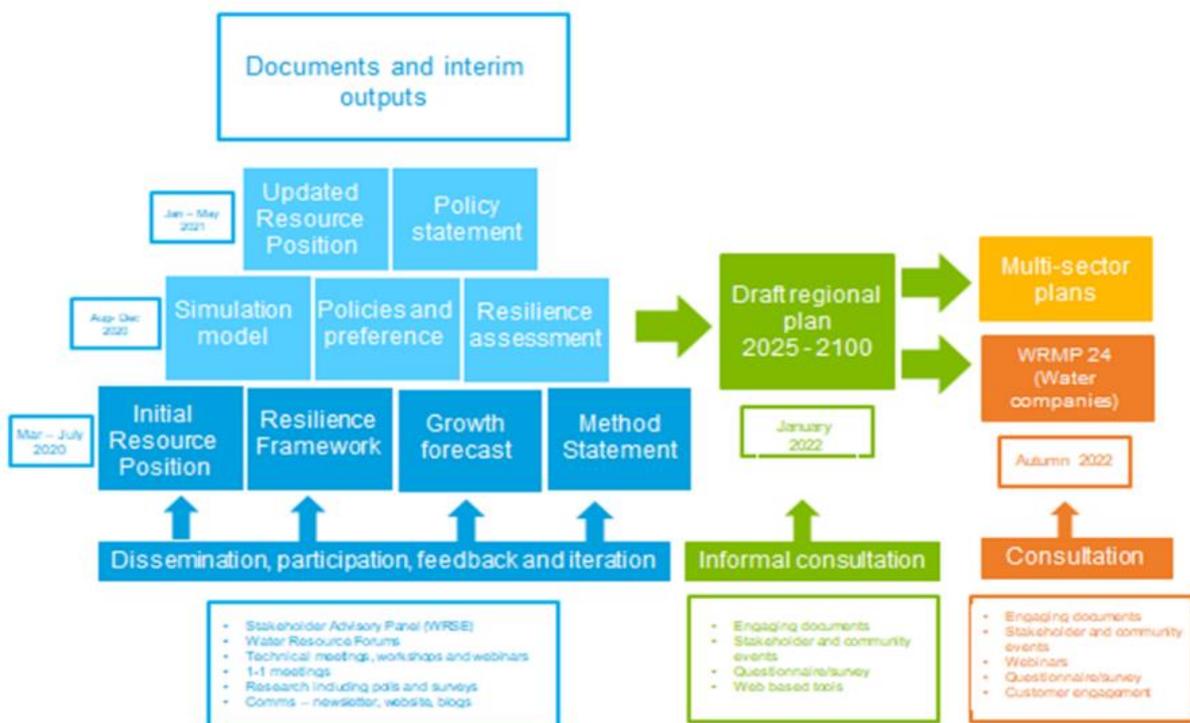
Figure 1: WRSE Engagement framework



2.3 WRSE has committed to share the components, or building blocks, of the plan at a formative stage. Figure 2 illustrates the components of the plan. For each component we have developed, or are developing, an engagement plan which comprises “tiered” information for stakeholders reflecting the diversity in appetite, and interest, of stakeholders. For example, the Resilience Framework was published in June 2020 and the engagement plan comprised a film, a short blog, an executive summary, a slide pack, a detailed technical report and a survey. The framework was presented in meetings, and WRSE also hosted a webinar. Stakeholders can therefore decide the extent to which they engage in the activities.

2.4 We aim to provide a 4 week period for comment on foundation documents, and have committed to respond to feedback within 4 weeks of the closing date of the comment period. The response document will be sent to all stakeholders who participated and will be published on our website. In taking this approach we can demonstrate that we are listening and responding to the views and preferences of the stakeholder community and that the engagement is actively informing the work of WRSE. This was positively noted recently by the EA

Figure 2: Building blocks of the regional plan



- 2.5 We have set up an online engagement platform <https://wrse.uk.engagementhq.com/> to support the engagement work, this provide a “one stop shop” for stakeholders housing all relevant information in one place. It will continue to be expanded as the work progresses, and companies will also publish relevant material on the platform. It also enables WRSE to keep robust records of stakeholder interaction.
- 2.6 There will also be stakeholder input managed as part of the technical workstreams for example the work to understand, and explore catchment solutions includes engagement with stakeholders. This will be tracked and presented in relevant technical reports to ensure all stakeholders have an opportunity to understand the discussions and outputs.
- 2.7 We will prepare a report, which will be part of the draft regional plan, and will set out the approach applied and how the engagement activity has helped to input to and shape the plan development.
- 2.8 **Feedback on the draft plan** - We will publish the draft plan in early in January 2022 for comment¹. This is not a statutory consultation, but we are intending to follow best practice as far as feasible within the timeline. We will design an engagement programme to ensure it is accessible to interested customers,

¹ Note this timeline is based on current regulatory guidance.

communities and technical stakeholders and will produce a formal response to the consultation, this will not be in the format of a statutory Statement of Response, but will clearly summarise the key issues raised, and our consideration and response.

- 2.9 Companies WRMP24s will be closely aligned with the regional plan. It will be important for the companies to clearly set out this alignment, and any changes or deviations from the regional plan and the reason for this, in their WRMP24s. This will aid stakeholders to maintain a line of sight through the stages of engagement and consultation. Companies will manage the statutory consultation on their draft WRMP24s in line with legislation.

3 Summary

- 3.1 Water Resources South East (WRSE) is developing a multi-sector, regional resilience plan to secure water supplies for the South East until 2100. We are 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.
- 3.2 Stakeholder engagement is an important part of developing the South East (SE) regional plan and water companies respective WRMP24s. We need to understand, and take account of, customers and stakeholders priorities and preferences in developing a balanced regional resilience plan which ensures a secure water supply for customers and other water users, whilst protecting the environment.
- 3.3 In this stakeholder engagement method statement we have set out the process by which we will engage with a wide range of groups, organisations and interested parties. We will do this via an established engagement programme to make sure our activity is coordinated, inclusive and effective.
- 3.4 Our approach will evolve both in response to strategic and technical developments and also feedback from stakeholders. We will endeavour to clearly communicate with stakeholders and keep them briefed on the engagement and technical programmes of work, and we will update this method statement periodically to ensure it remains current.

4 Next steps

- 4.1 We are consulting on this method statement from 1st August 2020 to 30th October 2020. Details of how you can make comments can be found here [consultation website](#)
- 4.2 We will take into account the comments we receive during this consultation process, in updating the Method Statement. Alongside this, the Environment Agency will shortly be publishing its Water Resource Planning Guidelines (WRPG) on the preparation of regional resilience plans. We may need to update parts of our method statements in response to the WRPG. We have included a checklist in Appendix 2 of this method statement which we will use to check that our proposed methods are in line with guidance where applicable.
- 4.3 If any other relevant guidance notes or policies are issued then we will review the relevant method statement(s) and see if they need to be updated.
- 4.4 When we have finalised our Method Statement, we will ensure that we explain any changes we have made and publish an updated Method Statement on our website.

Appendix 1

Members of the Stakeholder Advisory Panel and the Multi-sector sub-group and the Environment Advisory Group are presented here. Note this is current as of July 2020.

WRSE Stakeholder Advisory Group



Terms of reference (current)

The WRSE Stakeholder Group will work with the WRSE senior leadership team to ensure that a broad range of interests are represented and to help shape the direction and content of the regional multi-sector resilience plan. Specifically, the members of the groups will:

- Contribute expert insight into the long-term interests and future water needs of the sectors they represent
- Provide advice and challenge to WRSE as the regional plan is developed to ensure it reflects the needs of multiple sectors
- To partner with WRSE and its member companies where appropriate to further promote the development of the regional plan and WRSE's wider objectives.

Membership

- Ed Beard, Defra
- Jonathan Dennis, RAPID
- David Howard / Tom Perry, EA
- Louise Bardsley/Sophie Temple, Natural England
- Tom Ormesher, NFU
- Martin Pilbin, RWE
- Paul Knight, Salmon and Trout Conservation
- Daniel Bicknell, GLA
- Kane Horton, Canal and Rivers Trust
- Alan Turner, Kent County Council
- Jo Dow, Business Stream
- Steph Hurry, Waterwise
- Sarah Perry, Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust
- Anna Murgatoyd, Oxford Water Network
- Karen Gibbs, CCW

Multi sector sub group



Membership:

- Alan Turner, Kent County Council (independent chair)
- Tom Ormesher, NFU
- John Hall, West Sussex Growers
- Andy Limbrick, Energy UK
- Martin Pilbin / Neil Edwards, RWE Generation UK
- George Day, Uniper Energy
- Tony Hanson, Environmental Consultant, BIGGA/ England Golf
- Jo Scott, DS Smith (paper manufacturer)
- Debbie Stringer, Confederation of paper industries
- Nicola Owen, Mineral Products Association
- Kane Horton, Canal and Rivers Trust
- Alison Matthews, Environment Agency
- WRSE (Meyrick Gough, Trevor Bishop)
- Nick Honeyball, Affinity Water (PMB rep)
- Branwen Rhead, Southern Water (ECB rep)

Terms of Reference

- Understand the future requirements of non-public water supply users to be included in the WRSE regional resilience plan
- To establish a framework for assessing the resilience of the non-PWS system within the regional resilience plan
- To advise on sector-specific policy issues and technical processes that need to be considered as the regional plan is developed
- To identify opportunities for new water resource options and shared resources that could be promoted through the regional plan and understand the full range of solutions that could potentially be helpful for non-public water supply users, including funding arrangements
- To create a forum for ongoing collaboration to deliver improved water management across the South East (water efficiency, sustainable abstraction, drought management etc)
- To provide independent advice to the Senior Leadership Team (CEO/senior regulators) group.

Environmental Advisory Group



Membership:

- Richard Benwell, Link (independent chair)
- Sarah Perry, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust
- Ed Beard, Defra
- Paul Hickey, RAPID
- Ali Morse, Blueprint for Water
- Tom Perry, EA
- Louise Bardsley, NE
- Natalie Le Brun, RSPB
- Charles Rangeley-Wilson, Chalk Streams First
- Paul Crockett, EA
- Nick Price, Southern Water
- Yvette de Garis, Thames Water

Terms of Reference

- To advise WRSE on environmental scenarios – looking beyond the statutory minimum’.
- To advise and inform on the process of setting of environmental ambition beyond the statutory minimum by reviewing the current evidence, future challenges against the needs of the environment using agreed scenarios
- To advise on WRSE environmental policy and be part of the environmental assessment method consultations.
- To provide a review of potential environmental solutions.
- To provide independent advice to the Senior Leadership Team (CEO/senior regulators) group.

Appendix 2 Checklist of consistency with the Environment Agency WRMP24 Checklist

The Environment Agency published its WRPG on XXXXXX 2020, including the WRMP24 Checklist. The following table identifies the relevant parts of the checklist relating to this Method Statement, and provides WRSE’s assessment of its consistency with the requirements in the Checklist.

No.	Action or approach	Method Statement ref:	WRSE assessment of consistency