

Welcome

When we published our last newsletter back in March, the coronavirus pandemic was just taking hold and its impact on daily life was only beginning to become clear.



Simon Cocks

Such an unprecedented event provides a major new dimension to our focus on creating an integrated and resilient water supply system for the future in our region – which can withstand a much greater variety of shocks and stresses than we've ever considered before.

An early, but important, step in our work is the development of our resilience framework to help shape our multi-sector regional resilience plan. Thank you to everyone who took part in our recent consultation on the draft framework, which you can read more about in our lead article in this newsletter.

Your continued contributions to, and support for, our work are welcomed and much appreciated. Remember to watch out for the publication of our Method Statements soon, detailing the processes and procedures we propose to follow when preparing all the technical elements for our regional plan – see page two for further details.

While NHS staff and care workers, quite rightly, have been at the forefront of the public's recognition of the hard work and dedication of key workers during the pandemic, it's been heart-warming to see water company staff also praised and thanked for their role in keeping drinking water coming out of taps and taking away and treating wastewater. In times like this, as a society, we've learnt to take nothing for granted anymore!

As with other sectors, the water industry has had to adapt to maintain 'normal service' in the face of a plethora of new challenges posed by the coronavirus – not least a marked change in water usage.

With most of the population in lockdown at home for weeks on end, including during a spell of very hot weather, household

demand for water surged – 15 per cent in the case of one water company in our region. Interestingly, despite lockdown measures easing somewhat recently, that additional domestic consumption has not dropped off for the company concerned, with water usage rising quickly on days with no rain. In contrast, with economic activity across the UK suffering a major slowdown, in the same company area, non-household water usage fell by 19 per cent, before rising again somewhat and then dropping back off.

Clearly, further work is needed to understand the above trend over a longer period both across our region and the wider UK. However, it raises the significant question of 'What is the new normal?', both during the remaining course of the pandemic and in the post-Covid 19 world, in terms of water resources planning.

That makes it even more important for us to continue to develop our regional resilience plan collaboratively, making sure we take as many of your perspectives as possible into account, in a world that seems set for an increasing amount of change.

Simon Cocks
Independent Chair, WRSE

Another step towards a resilient water future – thank you for your feedback

The Water Resources South East (WRSE) team would like to thank everyone who took part in our recent consultation on [our proposed resilience framework](#).

The adoption of the framework represents a significant step change in the way in which we plan water supplies. It will enable us to assess the shift in resilience delivered as a result of the regional plan being in place. It also means that for the first time, we will plan for events beyond just drought, assessing how different options perform from a resilience perspective.

Furthermore, the framework will allow us to demonstrate how the regional plan will change the resilience of the water supplies

of other sectors – such as agriculture, energy generation and industry, which do not rely on the public water supply system. This is a critical part of how we develop a truly multi-sector plan and take a more systems-based approach to resource planning.

Of course, all our supplies are reliant on a healthy and resilient environment and the framework will enable us to gauge how the regional plan contributes to enhancing this, supporting the delivery of the Government's 25-year Environment Plan.

Gathering views on the framework is an important first step in developing the plan, something we very much want to be a collaborative process. We received feedback from a range of organisations including Blueprint for Water, the Campaign for the

Protection of Rural England (CPRE), the Cotswold Canal Trust, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Group Against Reservoir Development (GARD), Kent County Council, Medway Internal Drainage Board (IDB), Natural England, Ofwat, South East Rivers Trust and Sussex Wildlife Trust.

Overall, the draft resilience framework was positively received, with people welcoming the inclusion of the environment as one of the key systems for delivering improvements. There were also helpful comments about taking a more 'joined up' approach between the water supply and wastewater treatment strands of the water cycle and adopting an approach that takes full account of potential

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Another step towards a resilient water future – thank you for your feedback (continued)

environmental and social benefits that could be delivered by different actions.

Trevor Bishop, Organisational Director at WRSE, said: *“We’re really grateful for all the views we received during the consultation. We’re now analysing people’s feedback and will use it to further develop the framework. Of course, we’ll update everyone on how we’ve taken account of what we’ve heard.”*

Trevor added: *“By assessing reliability and ability to adapt and evolve, we can clearly show that the solutions proposed in our regional plan, and the ‘local’ Water Resource Management Plans (WRMPs) this will inform, will be good for water company customers, other sectors that are major users of water and the environment, in terms of the resilience benefits provided. Of course, this detail will be vital in our ongoing discussions with stakeholders and customers, helping to*



ultimately provide clear evidence to support a strong case for funding at the next Price Review to deliver improved resilience.”

This winter, we will use the resilience framework to produce a ‘baseline’ resilience

assessment of the South East, looking at the situation as it stands currently. You can find out more about the timeline for developing a new regional resilience plan at www.wrse.org.uk/our-response.

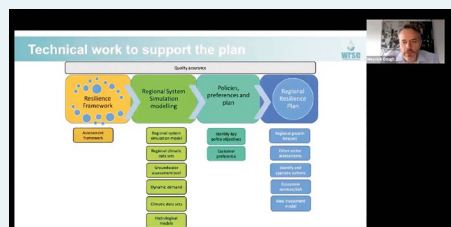
Resilience framework webinar a real success

As part of our resilience framework consultation, we held our first webinar on 18 June 2020, with the session well attended and receiving very positive feedback from those who joined us.

A total of 45 people took part, representing a wide range of organisations including water sector regulators, local authorities, environmental groups, business groups, water retailers and water sector consultants.

Meyrick Gough, WRSE Technical Director, said: *“The webinar was a great way for us to take people through the resilience framework, answer their questions and hear their views directly. We had plenty of queries and comments on the day, with people telling us that they found the presentations and discussions really helpful and informative.”*

You can watch the recording of the WRSE resilience framework online by clicking [here](#).



Coming soon – have your say on next WRSE documents

We’re putting the finishing touches to the next documents we’ll publish for your feedback. This includes our Method Statements, which set out the methodologies we’ll use to develop our regional resilience plan and a consultation on the regional policies that will be embedded within the plan.

We appreciate how important it is for us to be clear on the approaches we’re taking and give stakeholders the chance to provide feedback. The Method Statements provide the building blocks for our regional plan and many will ultimately produce important data that we will use within the plan. The statements also detail the technical approaches we will use to develop the plan.

The regional policies are a set of planning assumptions, which are used in the plan and will help shape its outputs. They cover a range of issues, including the use of drought permits and orders, leakage reduction, per capita consumption targets and carbon emissions. It is the first time we have put forward regional policies, rather than our six member water companies each setting their own. As such, this represents an important step to increase alignment across the South East.

WRSE Technical Director Meyrick Gough commented: *“Our Method Statements will set out the agreed processes and procedures that we’ll follow when preparing all the technical elements for our regional plan. For example, hydrological models, the data set and simulation model we’re using, our future demand forecast and environmental assessment. That’s important, as we’ll use the evidence and data which then emerges from these approaches to make decisions about what’s included in the plan.”*

“The policies we agree will be ‘baked in’, as we develop the plan, and have the potential to influence the choice and timings of the options and investment that the plan will promote. Therefore, it’s essential that where there are choices to be made, we give customers and stakeholders the opportunity to put forward their views to inform our decision making.”

We plan to publish our Method Statements for consultation on 31 July 2020, with our regional policies consultation following in early August 2020. So, please visit wrse.org.uk for more information, including the option of signing up for our regular updates via email in the ‘Contact Us’ section.

Working together to build environmental resilience

The Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels catchment in East Sussex takes in the rural landscapes of the High and Low Weald and the South Downs, as well as the fast-growing town of Hailsham and the coastal towns of Seaford, Eastbourne, Bexhill and Hastings. In particular, the Pevensey Levels is a wetland area of national and international importance for its biological diversity, including the fen raft spider.



The Pevensey Levels in East Sussex

South East Water is one of 25 organisations working in partnership to manage the catchment in a more integrated way to improve the quality of the environment at a local level, in the face of challenges such as local development and climate change. The partnership also includes environmental regulators, local authorities, other utilities, a wide variety of environmental and community groups and even local artists.

Emma Goddard, Head of Environment at South East Water, said: *“As a partnership group, we have a progressive and proactive outlook. For example, we were successful in a recent bid to Defra to run one of the ‘Tests & Trials’ projects that will help develop the Government’s new Environmental Land Management, or ELM, scheme.”*

ELM is founded on the principle of ‘public money for public goods’ and will be the cornerstone of national agricultural policy

when the UK leaves the European Union, supporting the goals of the Government’s 25-year Environment Plan. ELM will provide farmers, foresters and other land managers with an opportunity to secure financial reward, in return for delivering environmental benefits.

Emma continued: *“The ELM approach is of particular interest for water suppliers, like South East Water, as it creates the opportunity to provide wider resilience in our catchments and opens up the door to nature-based solutions for areas such as carbon capture, drought and flooding.*

The public goods ELM will pay for include:

- Clean and plentiful water
- Clean air
- Protection from and mitigation of environmental hazards
- Mitigation of and adaptation to climate change
- Thriving plants and wildlife
- Beauty, heritage and engagement

“As a company, it also represents a unique opportunity for us to be at the forefront of environmental policy design and implementation, supporting our strategic approach to make sure that environmental considerations are incorporated into how we make decisions as a business.

“After all, our business is intrinsically linked to the environment – we rely upon its streams, rivers and underground aquifers to provide both current and future customers with safe and reliable drinking water supplies.”

For more, please visit www.cplcp.org.uk

WRSE Chair calls for ‘real teamwork on water’ at Waterwise conference webinar

WRSE Chair Simon Cocks highlighted true collaboration across the water sector as the key to successfully meeting the challenges of the future, during discussions at the annual Waterwise conference (13-17 July 2020).

The event was held online due to the ongoing impact of coronavirus, with the over-arching theme being climate emergency and water efficiency. Simon joined senior figures from the Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales, Water Resources East, United Utilities and the National Infrastructure Commission for webinar presentations and discussions on the topic of adaptation.

During his contribution to the session, Simon focused on the ongoing challenge of getting

UK society to truly understand and respond to the current and predicted major stresses on water resources – rather than regarding water as an endless resource that will simply always be there, no matter what. The reality is very different, with the South East of England alone facing a potential deficit of 1.7 billion litres of water a day for public supply by 2050 according to the National Framework, if no action is taken. That’s half of the UK’s projected future shortfall.

Given the uncertainty around bringing about timely and wide-scale public behaviour change on water to drive down average usage, Simon also stressed the importance of the water sector taking a lead in collectively developing a wider set of solutions, that are cost-effective, to make sure there’s enough water for all in the decades ahead.

Simon said: *“For me, true collaboration, involving the Government, regulators, water companies, stakeholders and customers is key. However, to successfully change things for the better and embrace innovation and cooperation, everyone needs to rise above criticising or looking to others and focus on working together to find a consensus on the best way forward and make it happen.*

“Ultimately, it comes down to us, as a whole, making a choice to collaborate in the truest sense of the word, to deliver a resilient water environment.”

What we've been up to:

Trevor Bishop, WRSE Organisational Director

"Chaired the second regional Customer Challenge Group / Consumer Council for Water meeting for input on our regional customer engagement work"

"Presented at WWT Net Zero Week on the role of water efficiency and environmental carbon sequestration"

"Attended the National Water Resources Framework senior steering group and passed across the chair of the Policy group to the Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development"

Meyrick Gough, WRSE Technical Director

"Presented at the combined Thames Water and Affinity Water stakeholder event"

"Attended all member company working group meetings to ensure our regional plan integrates with strategic solutions being investigated"

"Continued liaison with the other regions as we all develop our method statements for consultation"

New independent chairs for two new WRSE groups

We have set up two new and independently chaired forums to help the delivery of the water industry's first multi-sector regional resilience plan, namely:

- A group dedicated to working with us on the environmental aspects of the plan
- A panel that brings together the main water-using sectors across the region to ensure their needs are embedded in our approach.

Focus on the environment

Achieving a level of environmental ambition that meets the expectations of customers and stakeholders and which is supported by regulators and government, is one of the critical challenges for the WRSE regional plan. It is recognised that more protection may need to be given to the environment, particularly chalk streams, to ensure that these habitats can adapt to a changing climate.

Dr Richard Benwell is chairing the new WRSE environmental forum – he is CEO of the Wildlife and Countryside Link, the largest environmental coalition in England, with 58 member organisations. Richard has also held a series of influential positions in the civil service. Most recently, as policy adviser to the



Richard Benwell



Alan Turner

Secretary of State at Defra, he contributed to the development of the department's three flagship bills: the Environment Bill, the Agriculture Bill and the Fisheries Bill.

Dr Benwell said: "The South East of England is home to some of the country's most iconic and yet incredibly vulnerable natural environments. The water sector is in a unique position to leave a legacy we can all be proud of - but this requires genuine collaboration across companies, stakeholders, regulators and government to enable change. My ambition for this group is for it to be a catalyst for good and that we do all we can to create a better environment for everyone."

Looking across sectors

The WRSE multi-sector group will support the innovative approach we are taking to incorporate other water-using sectors within a single regional resilience plan. It will enable

an integrated approach to resilience planning to be followed, across sectors that have their own water supplies and are not served by water companies. This will support more efficient and effective delivery of investment to protect the water needs of society, the wider economy, with a more sustainable relationship with the environment.

Alan Turner has become independent chair of this group. He is a well-known and respected figure in the South East through his role at Kent County Council and is ideally placed to help bring multiple interests together. He said: "This commitment to develop an integrated resilience plan across a variety of sectors for our region is a great step forward."

"For too long, we have planned in sector-based silos. This group and its contribution to the plan will be to promote an integrated approach to multi-sector planning and ultimately deliver enhanced resilience."

The new environmental and multi-sector groups are part of our wider WRSE programme of stakeholder participation, which will step up over the coming months. This will include engagement with a range of regional organisations with a role in promoting growth and supporting the economy, to ensure that the plan addresses the wider needs of society.

Check out our new website

We have launched a new-look website that better reflects our ambitions to develop a regional resilience plan, with the input of multiple water users.

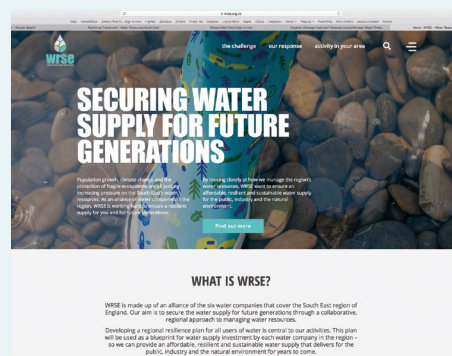
wrse.org.uk uses bold visuals and language and a strong, simplified structure to showcase our work to a wide range of visitors.

The site also features a suite of tools that allow visitors to be kept up to date, including an “Activity in your area” section, showing what immediate water resource improvements are planned across the region. Visitors can also sign-up for topic-specific or more general updates.

In addition, people will also be able to contribute their views and preferences via a new platform that will support engagement as the regional resilience plan reaches important consultation milestones.

WRSE’s Trevor Bishop said: *“Interest in our work has rightly increased and we want to engage more widely with stakeholders and collaborate with all users of water as we develop our plan.*

“That is why the website has been prioritised for development, as it is a critical tool in our engagement and consultation activities, allowing us to have a ‘live’ conversation and



The new-look WRSE website

use the views we hear to help shape our plan as it's being developed.”



Havant Thicket Reservoir - innovation in consultation

In the face of the coronavirus lockdown, an innovative consultation approach has enabled hundreds of people to have their say on proposals for the first new reservoir in the South East for decades.

Portsmouth Water’s Havant Thicket Reservoir scheme, which is being delivered in collaboration with Southern Water, would protect Hampshire’s world-famous chalk streams and secure future water supplies for the South East of England. It would also provide a new green leisure facility to benefit local communities and wildlife in the Havant area.

Given the need to keep everyone safe during the coronavirus pandemic, Portsmouth Water, supported by utilities sector communications and engagement specialists Create 51, worked in innovative new ways to reach out to people and enable them to give their feedback. For example, by holding a series of

webinars and creating a virtual exhibition for people to visit online.



Bob Taylor

Bob Taylor, Chief Executive Officer at Portsmouth Water, said: *“It’s great that we’ve received a large amount of feedback on our proposals, almost 1,900 consultation responses in total. We worked hard to make it easy for people to learn more about what we want to deliver and have their say during our consultation, whether that was online, by phone or post. So, we would like to say a big ‘thank you’ to everyone who took the time to give their views.*

“What people have told us is helping to shape the planning applications we’ll submit later this year. We heard views across a variety of different topics, including lots of support

for the community facilities we’re proposing, in particular, the new wetland we want to create.”

Mr Taylor continued: *“We also had helpful comments on the options for the reservoir access road, the route for the reservoir pipeline that’s needed, the existing woodland on the site and our extensive plans for delivering an overall benefit to the environment. For example, we’re committed to replanting and improving at least 110 hectares of woodland to create new and enhanced habitats – both on and around the reservoir site and further afield.*

“We’re now analysing all the views we’ve had in and we’ll be publishing a ‘You said, we did’ consultation report in August. This will set out a summary of all the feedback we’ve heard and how we’re responding to it.”

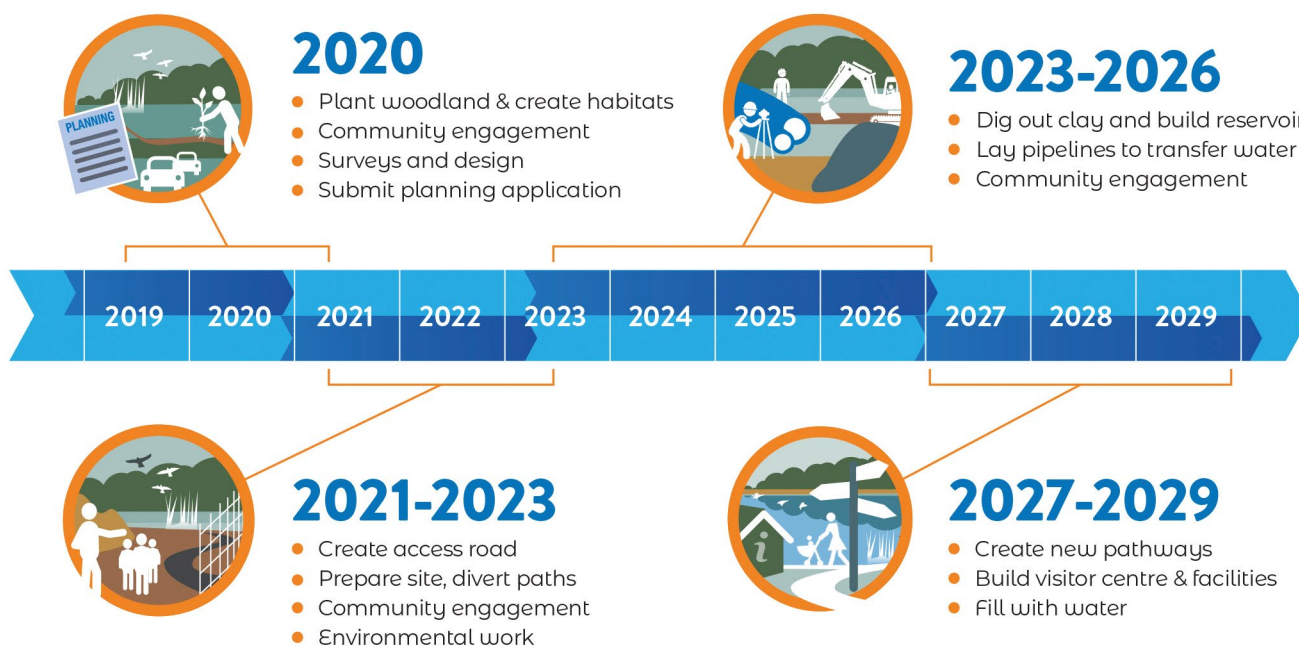
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Havant Thicket Reservoir - innovation in consultation (continued)

The Havant Thicket Reservoir consultation highlights include:

- The dedicated Havant Thicket Reservoir Facebook page that had over 102,000 page views via the 25 consultation posts that were published
- The collection of consultation videos, covering a range of topics, which were viewed more than 9,700 times via Facebook, YouTube and the dedicated consultation website, which itself had just under 4,200 visits
- Six public consultation webinars that were held, with a total of 156 people taking part and putting their questions and comments directly to Portsmouth Water’s panel of experts – the recordings of the webinars have been watched over 200 times too
- 1,350 printed copies of the consultation brochure and feedback form which were sent out to people living in the area around the proposed reservoir site and those from further afield who took up the offer of a hard copy of the brochure and form on request.

The timeline for the reservoir scheme



For the latest news on the Havant Thicket Reservoir project, you can visit portsmouthwater.co.uk/havant-thicket-reservoir or connect on Facebook [@HavantReservoir](https://www.facebook.com/HavantReservoir)

