

Welcome from Chris Murray MBE, Independent Chair of WRSE

Hello,

It's been a very busy summer for the WRSE team, with a massive amount of work carried out to further develop our regional plan, so it was ready for the start of the national reconciliation process. This is a key stage, to make sure that all the plans from the five regional water resources groups in England and Wales are aligned.

I would like to thank everyone involved for their dedication and hard work. It was a proud moment for all concerned when the WRSE Senior Leadership Team, including myself and the Chief Executives of our six member water companies, were able to approve the updated plan to go forward.

It's striking that the emerging picture across the regions is one of each area being faced with a potential water deficit, when taking into account realising all our vitally important environmental ambitions.

That really brings home the scale and complexity of developing and delivering plans that will benefit customers, the economy, wider society and nature. However, we remain confident that this can be achieved, built on strong collaboration between water companies, regulators and a wide range of stakeholders, such as those representing agriculture and industry, as well as environmental groups.

Excellent progress has been made to date and we're now focusing on making sure we're ready for our draft plan to go out for consultation in January next year. In the build up to this, we'll be engaging with our regulators in greater depth during the autumn. This will help further guide and shape our work.

We very much look forward to sharing our plan following the Christmas and New Year

period and, of course, we'll keep you fully updated on how you can find out more and have your say during the consultation.

Finally, I wanted to thank the Institute of Water for inviting me to give a keynote speech at their annual conference at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard last month. The over-arching theme of the event was collaboration, with my address entitled *"Without leadership there is no change, without collaboration there is no chance."*

In my speech, I highlighted the importance in collaborating effectively of finding and actively pursuing a common purpose. It's also key for senior leaders to foster and support a positive and constructive culture when it comes to joint working between different organisations. This keeps everyone involved pulling in the same direction and able to overcome challenges together.

From what I have experienced in my time as WRSE Chair, collectively, we have made huge strides in joining forces to tackle some really difficult problems and issues.

Our collaboration is still a work in progress, but we must never lose sight of how far we have come, nor lose focus on the ultimate goal we are all striving for.

Chris Murray MBE
Independent Chair WRSE



CHRIS MURRAY

KEY HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS NEWSLETTER INCLUDE:

An update on joint efforts to protect and improve our region's chalk streams. (Page 2).

The view from Ofwat on the next water industry Price Review. (Page 2).

The latest on the potential Strategic Water Resource Options for the South East. (Page 3).

A round up from the regional plans reconciliation webinar we hosted recently. (Page 4).

News about pioneering work in our region to develop nature-based solutions to water resources challenges. (Page 5).

A feature on Southern Water's ground-breaking water-efficiency campaign. (Page 6).

Pulling in the same direction for our chalk streams

WRSE Independent Chair Chris Murray recently saw at first hand work to address the challenge of protecting our region's unique environment and ensuring resilient and secure water supplies in the face of population growth and climate change.

Chris was hosted by Catherine Wright, Environment Agency Director of Operations for the South and East, on visits to two chalk streams, the River Mimram and River Beane in Hertfordshire, last month.

The focus on safeguarding chalk streams, many of which are located in the South East, has greatly increased in recent years, with a range of organisations coming together to protect these rare and precious environments. This includes regulators, water companies and environmental and community groups.

For example, under the 'Save our streams' initiative, Affinity Water has already stopped all abstraction from the River Chess in the Chilterns Valley, alongside a continued drive to further reduce leakage and support customers to save water. It's also working with local catchment groups, made up of the Environment Agency, Wildlife Trusts, councils and community groups, across its region to

deliver restoration work on local rivers.

Chris Murray said: "It was really inspiring to see what's being done to protect and restore our chalk streams, at the same time as making sure customers have the water they need. It's so important for people to understand the risks of over abstraction if no change in approach is made and how much improvement can be made through relatively small interventions. I was especially struck by the collaborative nature of the work, particularly the close liaison with local landowners, with everyone pulling in the same direction to realise a common set of goals. The visit really brought home just how much can be achieved when a broad range of stakeholders come together and work as a team."

Catherine Wright also commented: "It was great to meet Chris by the riverbank and



Chris Murray (centre) and Catherine Wright (in black coat on left) discussing joint work to safeguard chalk streams in our region.

show him the work the Environment Agency is doing with water companies and partners. Chalk streams are some of the most iconic and beautiful rivers in this country and support a range of unique plants and wildlife. We're working closely with WRSE and the water companies on the environmental destination for the regional plan to ensure there is plentiful and clean water for people, the environment and our wonderful chalk streams."

Price Review 24 and beyond – the perspective from Ofwat

John Russell, Senior Director (Strategy & Planning) at Ofwat, discusses the regulator's initial views on the next water sector price review, future price reviews and how these relate to water planning.

Earlier this year, we published our paper '[PR24 and beyond: Creating tomorrow, together](#)', aimed at helping us and the water sector prepare for the forthcoming price review and reviews in the decades ahead. The paper sets out our high-level ideas for how our price reviews can support the sector to create value for customers, communities and the environment.

For us, there are key challenges that, collectively, we need to successfully meet. The impact of climate change on water

resilience; Changing and growing customer expectations; A need to focus on long-term solutions for customers and the environment.

There is no doubt that the challenges ahead are significant, complex and involve more uncertainty than ever before. To achieve our shared ambitions, such as increased drought resilience, reduced abstraction from the environment, less pollution and reaching carbon reduction targets, we will need fresh thinking and real change. As well as investing wisely, a transformation in culture must be at the heart of changing how we deliver for customers, wider society and the environment.

Customers deserve the best, embracing innovation in a way that we, as a sector, have never had to do before. For example, really driving mass behaviour change on water use. It will also be key that currently

less established approaches, such as nature-based solutions and improved customer and community engagement, become major parts of the mainstream, in addition to harnessing the power of smart networks and open data.

So, what does all that mean in the world of regional water resources planning? For the forthcoming price review and beyond, we are looking for WRSE, and all the other regional water groups, to facilitate and help coordinate the best available evidence and analysis, doing so objectively and with transparency. This will enable each group to set out a clear, comprehensive and adaptable long term plan – a plan which can be widely supported and trusted by all stakeholders, and which will deliver a host of benefits for customers, the economy, wider society and the environment.

Regulator backing for latest proposed Strategic Water Resource Options

Ofwat has given an initial ‘thumbs up’ to the latest proposals for a range of significant water resources schemes that would have major benefits for the South East of England.

Affinity Water, Thames Water and Southern Water have developed these Strategic Resources Options (or SROs), working together in combination and / or with different partners including Anglian Water, Bristol Water, the Canal and Rivers Trust, Severn Trent Water, South West Water, United Utilities and Wessex Water.

Among the schemes put forward are large-scale water recycling, new reservoirs and water transfers, including making use of canals and rivers to convey supplies. Please see our [August 2021 newsletter](#) for a full round-up of the potential schemes for the South East.



Initial feasibility reports on the SROs, known as Gate 1 submissions, were sent to [RAPID, the Regulators’ Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development](#), for assessment in July, with RAPID then recommending that the ideas should proceed to the next stage of development and scrutiny. This would see updated and more detailed proposals submitted for examination at Gate 2 in October 2022. [The gated process](#) is intended to support companies in progressing

solutions to be ‘construction ready’ for the 2025-30 period.

Ofwat has accepted RAPID’s view, with water companies and other interested parties having until 29 October to make any representations following Ofwat’s draft decisions on the SROs. Ofwat’s final decisions will be published on 8 December 2021.

Update on Southern Water’s developing plans for new sustainable water resources

Southern Water has unveiled the latest progress in its plans to help keep Hampshire’s rivers and taps flowing – especially in a drought.

The company has been developing a series of potential options to:

- Protect the Rivers Test and Itchen, two of the world’s finest chalk streams, by substantially reducing the amount of water taken from them
- Safeguard vital public water supplies now and in future by making up the shortfall via alternative, sustainable sources.

The possible ways forward for the future would sit alongside investment to reduce leakage and improve water efficiency.

Now a wide-ranging assessment of the options, involving regulators and other statutory consultees, stakeholders and customers has been completed. The proposals that were assessed include a desalination plant and several different configurations of water recycling - using advanced treatment

techniques to turn what was previously regarded as wastewater into drinking water. The option of building a new pipeline, to transport more water from Havant Thicket Reservoir to Southern Water’s Otterbourne Water Supply Works, is also being explored, in consultation with Portsmouth Water.

From the options appraisal process, water recycling and water transfers were assessed as preferable, particularly when impacts on the environment were considered. Desalination ranked lower than these options.

As a result, Southern Water has written to its regulators informing them that it is continuing to explore its proposals for water recycling and water transfer solutions and is not intending to further develop plans for desalination.

Mark Wintringham, Southern Water’s Head of Delivery for the Water for Life – Hampshire programme, said: *“The need for new resources is driven by reductions in the amount of water we can take from Hampshire’s rivers during a drought and accelerated by climate change and a growing population.*



“As a result, we are developing a holistic approach to the water resources challenge in Hampshire that will put the county at the vanguard of sustainable water resources solutions.

“Our proposals, which include investing to reduce leakage and improve water efficiency, will help keep Hampshire’s rivers and taps flowing for us and future generations and pave the way for similar approaches for the rest of the region and indeed the country.”

Southern Water is now progressing further investigations and development of the remaining options ahead of its next submission to regulators in December 2021, where it will select its preferred solution, before carrying out further engagement and consultation, and starting the planning process.

For further information, please visit [Southern Water’s website](#).

Strong turnout for regional plans reconciliation webinar

More than 150 stakeholders attended the recent webinar we hosted, in collaboration with the other regional water groups, to share an update on the regional water resource plans reconciliation process. This work will make sure that all the plans are aligned.

The session was led by Jean Spencer, Chair of the National Water Resources Framework Senior Steering Group, with updates from a number of senior industry figures. These included Jonathan Dennis from RAPID (the Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development), Lisa Winfield, Senior Adviser at the Environment Agency, as well as Richard Blackwell from Water Resources West and WRSE's Technical Director Meyrick Gough.

Jonathan and Lisa gave an overview of the context behind regional planning, including the national framework, the biggest challenges to water resources, RAPID's gated process for assessing strategic potential

schemes and the policy objectives driving the increased shift to a regional approach.

Richard then took attendees through the challenges and opportunities inherent in regional planning and detailed how the assumptions in the national framework have changed as our collective understanding has developed. He also explained how stakeholders have been involved in all the regional plans and stressed the importance of their views, as the plans move towards public consultation in January next year.

Meyrick explained the iterative plan reconciliation process, including the principles all the regional groups have signed up to, the steps taken before reconciliation and the reasons why it is so important.

Both Richard and Meyrick emphasised the importance of taking a best value approach, as this allows the regional groups to understand the trade offs they need to make when developing their plans.

Jean Spencer commented: *"It was really encouraging to see the interest in the regional plans and the reconciliation process. It's so*



important that stakeholders stay involved through what can be a really technical process and I think this is a great signal ahead of January's consultations".

The regional water groups and the National Water Resources Framework group are planning a follow-up webinar for January 2022 to share details of each regional plan during the consultations.

You can watch a recording of the September 2021 webinar by clicking [here](#).

WRSE Agriculture & Horticulture group puts forward further water resource options

Potential new options for our regional plan for the South East have been shared by the WRSE Agriculture and Horticulture sub-group - part of [our Multi-Sector Group](#).

The sub-group held a workshop last month to help refine ideas developed across sectors to deliver multiple benefits. Each option was given time for a short 'elevator pitch', before a discussion about how feasible it would be to get it ready to submit in January as part of our regional plan, or if more work was needed.

The approaches looked at included ways of capturing groundwater to prevent flooding and decrease reliance on public water supply, redirecting water being pumped from the site of a former mine to supply local abstractors and ideas for shared storage of rainwater for irrigators with limited space.

Two tools, developed on behalf of Kent County Council, were also discussed – one to help farmers determine the most efficient rainwater harvesting solutions, with the second being a platform to facilitate water trading within catchments.

At the workshop, it was agreed that six options could be ready to submit in January, so the focus is now on determining what resources and information are needed to achieve this.

Alan Turner, Chair of the WRSE Multi-Sector Group, said: *"The workshop was a really useful step in the process of ensuring that multi-sector options, which deliver benefits across sectors, can feasibly be submitted for both WRSE's regional plan and, in due course, individual water company Water Resource Management Plans (WRMPs)."*

Watch our new regional plan films

We've made a series of short videos explaining more about our work to develop a regional water resources plan for the South East.

The films set out further detail on what a regional plan is and how we're working with others to develop our plan. They also cover the challenges we're planning for and the wide range of options we're considering, from reducing demand for water, to bringing water from elsewhere in the UK to our region.

The new videos can all be found on our dedicated engagement platform – please click [here](#) to access it.

Harnessing the power of nature

What part can Nature-based Solutions (NbS) play in regional water resources planning?

Work to answer that question has been progressing through [the PROWATER project](#), which involves partners from across Europe including Kent County Council and South East Rivers Trust (SERT), two of our key stakeholders, and WRSE member company South East Water. Southern Water and Affinity Water, both also part of WRSE, are taking part too. The learning from the scheme has helped us develop our approach for looking at NbS for our regional plan, such as gathering a more detailed picture of potential issues and solutions through our new online catchment tool.

PROWATER is focused on Ecosystem-based Adaptation - changing the way that land is managed to make catchments, and the water resources they provide, more resilient to the effects of climate change, such as drought or flooding. This is because how land is used – for example, using different forestry or farming practices, or allowing nature to thrive

- can have positive and negative effects on how much water can infiltrate the ground, how clean a river or groundwater source is, and the range of wildlife living there.

Kathi Bauer, Natural Capital Coordinator at SERT, explained: *“Improving and protecting our catchments is more cost-effective and has a lower carbon footprint than other measures to increase the amount of water available for drinking water and other needs. For example, introducing additional treatment processes or taking more water from the environment are not sustainable in the long-term and don’t provide the added benefits of protecting our rivers, increasing wildlife and carbon storage, as a catchment-based approach would.*

“In our region, we’ve been running three pilot schemes to look at how NbS can help increase water resilience, while delivering a range of other important outcomes. These cover Friston Forest in East Sussex, the River Beult in Kent and the River Stour, also in Kent. We’ve learnt a great deal from these pilots already, with much more to come as we build our knowledge and experience.”



Kathi Bauer from South East Rivers Trust

Through PROWATER, a workshop took place earlier this year to explore how to best support the uptake of NbS in water resources planning. The event involved representatives from WRSE, water companies serving the South East, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

The discussions resulted in three suggested ways forward, namely:

- Developing case studies on the potential of catchment-scale delivery of NbS, supporting engagement with Ofwat and informing potential regional trials, with water resource yield and impact on water quantified wherever possible
- Engaging with water companies, regional water resource groups, regulators and catchment stakeholders about an overall framework for the delivery of NbS, supporting a mixture of funding sources and liaison with landowners
- Using of the new Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) process to trial catchment-scale approaches over the course of 15 years, to feed into regional plans.

For the full report from the workshop, please click [here](#).

PROWATER has received funding from the Interreg 2 Seas programme 2014-20, which is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund.



Friston Forest in East Sussex is one of the PROWATER pilot sites

Taking a lead on reducing demand

Megan Wynes, Head of Brand & Content at Southern Water, provides an update on the company's [Target 100 initiative](#) to reduce average water use by a third by the end of the next decade.

The challenge

Our region faces a future of more people and less water. Our population is growing fast and climate change is bringing greater risk of both drought and flooding. We all need to change how we understand and value water. Target 100, our industry-leading demand reduction programme, is a critical part of how we are driving this change.

Target 100 is a commitment to, and agreement with, our customers. We'll advise, support, incentivise and educate them on how to reduce their water use to, on average, 100 litres per person, per day by 2040. At the same time, we will reduce leakage by at least 15 per cent by 2025 and by 50 per cent by 2050.

Through our Universal Metering Programme and water efficiency measures to date, we have already reduced our customers' typical consumption to 139 litres per person, per day, which is below the national average and one of the lowest levels of water usage in the UK.

Our business priorities

Target 100 forms part of our central delivery strategy for the current investment period and beyond, and, as a result, is part of our core reporting process. We're aiming to have reduced our customers' water consumption by a further seven per cent in 2025.

Of course, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on all aspects of UK society, including how people use water. Customers are aware they have changed their behaviour during the last 19 months and many feel they are consuming more.

To really understand the impact on water demand, we've developed an 'Extra-HOURS' model. This has suggested that, compared to the average for the previous three-year period, 2020–21 has seen an overall eight per cent uplift in individual daily water usage and household usage. In response, we've ramped up our focus on water efficiency and water demand.

Behaviour change at scale

We're focusing on a series of behaviour change communications campaigns in our 'stressed' water resource zones, across Kent, Sussex and Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Our seasonal campaigns are looking to **ENGAGE** customers, through digital media campaigns, TV ads and outdoor advertising, when water use is front of mind over the spring and summer. During the autumn and winter, we **EXPLAIN** key issues via blogs and media editorial / thought leadership content. At the same time, with every interaction, we make sure we **ASSIST** in changing behaviour by 'nudging' customers – for example, by providing practical advice and tips using direct-to-customer channels, such as leaflet 'door drops' and emails.

So far, we have completed two waves of campaign activity. The first 'Always On' (ongoing) phase during the start of the pandemic focused on providing support, guidance and reassurance. Our most recent campaign, throughout the summer of 2021, has spread our #ItAllMakesADifference messaging across our most-water stressed areas through print media, radio, digital, outdoor advertising, as well as a number of face-to-face events. In a first for us, we also created our own water-saving TV ad, which we broadcast with Sky over August and September in two of our key target areas.

As a result, we have seen campaign awareness levels of 54 per cent in Hampshire, 38 per cent in Sussex and 47 per cent in Kent. We estimate this amounts to more than one million customers and around 185,000 households who have taken active steps to reduce how much water they use as a result of our promotional work.



Megan Wynes from Southern Water

Forging community partnerships

To support our core campaign, we've also supported a number of community partnerships. We joined Southampton City Council's Green City partnership in February 2021, which allowed us to share our 'Save water, energy and reduce your carbon footprint' messaging via the authority's core channels, at the same time as promoting our free Water-Saving Home Visits.

We also partnered with Kent County Council and South East Water to reach out to our vulnerable customers in and around Thanet, to offer support in the form of free Water-Saving Home Visits and share water-saving messages on social media over the summer months.

Our partnership on reducing plastic waste and pollution with City to Sea continued, building on the success of our sponsorship of Rethink Periods (a plastic-free periods education initiative), with the development of our 'Rethink Water' education pilot. We'll also be sponsoring water-saving lessons and assemblies in 10 schools in the Southampton area for six months from the autumn, before rolling the programme out more widely across our water-stressed areas over the following 18 months.



A Target 100 billboard at a local train station