

APPENDIX B

WRSE STATEMENT OF RESPONSE

This appendix presents the WRSE Statement of Intent, outlining how the regional group supports member water companies in preparing for and managing dry weather and drought. It describes WRSE's coordinating role through the Dry Weather Working Group, including consistent planning approaches, shared monitoring and triggers, and aligned regional communications to enhance preparedness and response across the South East.



COMPANY DRAFT DROUGHT PLAN 2027

WATER RESOURCES SOUTH EAST (WRSE) REGIONAL GROUP

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Introduction

This Statement of Intent is provided as an appendix to draft drought plans for member water companies in the WRSE region.

It summarises how WRSE will support member water companies with drought planning, coordinating drought actions, and support joint working with other stakeholders during prolonged dry weather and drought events.

WRSE has a long-established Dry Weather Working Group that brings greater consistency to the way in which water companies in the region have produced their drought plans, prepare for droughts and coordinate drought actions in the interests of customers and the environment.

The ambition of WRSE and the Dry Weather Working Group continues to be aligning approaches to drought actions; progressing with a joint drought communication plan and triggers. WRSE will continue to provide a coordinating role to support companies during dry weather and drought events.

It's work goes further than the minimum requirement set out in the drought plan guideline, but by design remains short of a single regional drought plan. This may become an aspiration in future reviews.

Some of the water companies and stakeholders covered by WRSE's Dry Weather Working Group also operate across areas covered by Water Resources East (WRE) regional group too.

WRSE and WRE will work closely to ensure their respective groups for managing dry weather and drought are closely aligned, while taking account of the different characteristic and needs between the two regions.

WRSE Dry Weather Working Group

The purpose of the WRSE Dry Weather Working Group is to support close collaboration, understanding and pre-planning for drought, dry weather and high demand events, or other issues, which threaten the resilience of the supply demand position of member companies.

It provides a forum for members to discuss, update and share information; undertake scenario testing, to progress and improve planning for co-ordinated regional management of events.

Through exception reporting, it monitors and alerts water company members when the region is operating at heightened levels of risk and advises when increasing levels of regional coordination of joint actions and preparedness is desirable.

It draws information from national, regional and local assessments, and provides updates to help inform regional and national awareness and early preparedness. This involves, but is not limited to:

- Assessing the supply/demand position - through standardised exception reporting
- Monitoring pre-set triggers to determine when to convene a regional comms teams – to manage and co-ordinate regional communication activities and messaging.
- Supporting water companies with regional engagement with other sectors and stakeholders.
- Overseeing collaboration – coordinating planning, information and consistency of approaches across plans and at a regional level, so that when required, triggers and actions work effectively and as desired.

Working arrangements

Under normal conditions the Dry Weather Working Groups meets bi-monthly and retain a focus on progressing joint work with water companies to improve the consistency of data and actions included in their drought plans; share best practice; and promote regionally consistent approaches to drought actions for adoption during future drought events.

During dry weather and drought events, the frequency of meetings will increase and be refocused to become more tactical accordingly, helping the group to effectively support a coordinated regional response.

The work undertaken by the group during dry weather and drought events will be aligned accordingly to complement work that will be undertaken by other important drought management groups and subgroups – including those linked with the National Drought Group and Water UK.

The group will be responsible for capturing and reviewing learnings and recommendations during and following a regionally extensive event. Ensuring all parties remain confident that coordinated planning and preparedness for future events across the region remains fit for purpose.

Key Objectives

The WRSE Dry Weather Working Group will:

- a) Provide a coordinated regional approach to drought and dry weather event management planning, preparedness.
- b) Support collective learning and discussion, working as a forum for technical and senior representatives of the member organisations including but not limited to regulators, Anglian Water and the SE water companies.
- c) Expand membership of the group as and when required to allow effective participation of other sectors and stakeholders.
- d) Share information on best practice and increase awareness and preparedness during times of increasing drought, high demand, adverse weather conditions or other agreed issues which could threaten the supply demand balances of companies.
- e) Collate and act on data and lessons learnt in order to improve effectiveness of planning for events.

Membership

The working group comprises technical and senior representatives with appropriate knowledge and skills, from:

- Government – Defra
- Regulators – EA, DWI, Natural England (when required), Ofwat (when required)
- CCW
- SE Water Companies & Anglian Water
- Water UK
- WRSE
- Other sectors – as required

Communication Plan

The Dry Weather Working Group has developed triggers and actions setting out how and when joint drought communications will be considered and progressed regionally during dry weather and drought events. Further work is underway to formalise those arrangements with water companies in their drought plans.

Monitoring and Review

The Dry Weather Working Group will:

- a. Review the effectiveness of its activities on an annual basis.
- b. Periodically, it will run regional drought scenario exercises to test and improve drought planning preparedness
- c. Participate in lessons learned exercises and reflect lessons accordingly in its future plans and activities