

Appendix 1

Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council Joint Response to Anglian Water's Draft Regional Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) 2024

This response is made on behalf of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council ('the Councils'). The water environment of Greater Cambridge including its rivers and precious chalk streams, are key to the area's environment and biodiversity and the health and wellbeing of its population. The Councils have recognised that we face a climate and ecological emergency, and the state of the water environment is a significant concern for the Councils.

Although water in Greater Cambridge is supplied by Cambridge Water, the area is adjacent to the Anglian Water supply area and is inextricably linked, as is shown by the draft WRMPs of both water companies. The Councils request that Anglian Water continues to work cooperatively with Cambridge Water, given the constrained nature of the Cambridge Water supply area. Anglian Water's final WRMP will need to take into account issues arising from the consultation on Cambridge Water's draft Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP) and their resulting final WRMP and vice versa.

This response reflects the Councils' response to Water Resources East on the Regional Water Resources Plan for Eastern England.

Transfer to Cambridge Water

The Councils support in principle the proposed transfer of water from Anglian Water's reservoir, Grafham Water, to Cambridge Water, which is essential to provide additional supply ahead of the Fens Reservoir being operational and which will support the abstraction reductions required by the Environment Agency to protect the chalk streams. The publication of Cambridge Water's draft WRMP in February 2023, reiterates this proposed transfer which will help to support Cambridge Water during the short term when licence caps lead to a significant water resource challenge. The draft Cambridge Water WRMP states that following discussion with Anglian Water, both companies have proposed the acceleration of the work, as part of the Defra Accelerated Scheme. If approved this would enable the water transfer to be available in about 2027, rather than 2031. The Councils support the acceleration of this programme, and request that this is included within Anglian Water's final WRMP.

Fens Reservoir

The Councils also support in principle the proposal for the Fens Reservoir which is being developed in partnership by Anglian Water and Cambridge Water through the RAPID process and which will provide additional strategic-scale water supply, with half of the water to supply Anglian Water and half to Cambridge Water. This infrastructure is essential to reduce reliance on the abstraction of water from the chalk aquifer in Greater Cambridge, which is having a detrimental environmental impact, and to provide additional water to support future housing and economic development. The draft WRMP states that 'the Fens Reservoir will not come online until 2035' and recognises that this date is highly ambitious. The Cambridge Water draft WRMP states that the reservoir 'could be in supply between 2035 and 2037'. Whilst noting the need for robust regulatory and consenting processes, the Councils support the prioritisation of this essential new infrastructure so that the environmental benefits from reduced abstraction can be realised as soon as possible.

Demand Management

The Councils are supportive of the demand side measures set out in the WRMP for both household and non-household uses. Demand side measures provide opportunities to make better use of the water available through using water more efficiently, minimising waste by leakage control and smart metering and re-using water. The effectiveness of these measures will need to be continually monitored. The Councils will include policies in the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan to ensure that new developments are extremely water efficient and this could be encouraged in other local authority areas that fall within the Anglian Water area.

The Councils would urge Anglian Water to lobby Government to recognise the role that they need to play in tightening Building Regulations standards for water efficiency. The Councils are also supportive of the proposed Government changes to the labelling of white goods and household appliances, to show their water efficiency, which is referred to in the WRMP. This should also include the requirement of water usage controls on electric power and rain showers. Again, the Councils would urge Anglian Water to lobby the Government to introduce this as soon as possible.

Water Reuse

Anglian Water are proposing a new Cambridge Water Treatment Plan, and the reuse of water from this is included within the Cambridge Water draft WRMP. The scheme to be submitted by Anglian Water under the DCO process will need to take this into account.

As part of integrated water management in both new residential and non-residential developments, rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling should also be encouraged to make new developments as water efficient as possible. In larger developments, the benefits of site-wide rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling should be considered. These measures are not currently referred to in the WRMP. These should be included as they are an opportunity to provide additional water reuse, and Anglian Water will need to work with local planning authorities and developers.

Desalination

The Councils agree that reservoirs and water reuse should be favoured over the desalination options. WRE's draft Regional Plan shows that in the future following the development of the two strategic reservoirs the region will need to rely upon desalination for additional water supply to fulfil long-term environmental improvements. The Councils would only be supportive of this if it was 'next-generation' desalination as set out in the draft Regional Plan which refers to the net zero carbon technologies that will need to be incorporated into the lifetime of the plants and an environmentally safe means of disposing of the brine water residue. There will be a need to monitor the progress of the development of such new technologies if they are to be relied upon in future plans.