

# Water Resources Management Plan – Southern Water

## The Company

Southern Water supply drinking water to over a million properties in Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Sussex and Kent.

## Summary of the Plan

Most of this region is classed as ‘seriously water stressed’ and Southern Water’s plan predicts that the company will face shortfalls in the future. Improving water efficiency and fixing leaks will help, but new sources of water also need to be developed to plug this gap. In the shorter term (to 2025) these include ‘bulk supplies (receiving spare water from neighbouring companies), and aquifer storage (storing water underground when it’s plentiful, for later use), but this may still leave some shortfalls, requiring extra abstraction which can be damaging for the environment. In the longer term, solutions to this are proposed which include wastewater recycling, more bulk transfers, and desalination (which creates drinking water from seawater).

**Consultation Deadline: 28<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

**E-mail your response to:** [water.resources@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:water.resources@defra.gsi.gov.uk) putting ‘Southern Water draft Water Resources Management Plan’ in the subject line and copying in [wrmp@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:wrmp@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk), [water-company-plan@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:water-company-plan@environment-agency.gov.uk) and [wrmp@southernwater.co.uk](mailto:wrmp@southernwater.co.uk)

## What to include in your response:

- Suggest that the Company and its regulators assess the draft plan against the aspirations of [Blueprint for PR19](#)
- **Welcome the good points** from the company’s plan, and **challenge them on some of the less good points** – these are summarised below, focussing on areas where the environmental costs & benefits could be greatest, such as abstraction, leakage and catchment management.
- Ofwat want to see all companies adopting bespoke **environmental performance commitments**; Southern Water have already polled customers on a number of ideas and should also be encouraged to adopt a commitment on Catchment Management (see ‘Catchment First’, below).

## The good

**Abstraction:** The sector as a whole is expecting to put **less water** into distribution in England in both the short term and long term despite climate change and population growth. Ofwat encourages companies to establish ‘Abstraction Incentive Mechanism’ projects that enable them to reduce abstraction from their most environmentally-sensitive water sources.

Southern Water are currently trialling a community-level incentive scheme in Cheriton, where water savings made by the community will be rewarded with funding for parish projects. The findings from this project should be built upon and extended to other areas.

**Leakage:** Southern Water plan to reduce leakage by **15%** in the next 5 years. This meets (but does not exceed) Ofwat's minimum recommendation, but as the company already have one of the lowest levels of leakage of all companies, it's understandable that they would find it difficult to go much beyond this target without great expense (which would impact customer bills).

**Demand Management:** A [NIC Report](#) into the resilience of water supply infrastructure published in April 2018 recommends that companies should be targeting 118 litres per person per day. Southern Water's plans exceed this. Their 'Target 100' scheme aims to support customers in reducing their personal water use to 100 litres pppd by 2040. In the coming five-year period to 2025, their reduction target is the **most ambitious of all companies** at 9.9%

**Catchment Management:** These schemes work with farmers and land managers to improve the way that sites are managed, reducing the risk of pollution events occurring. Southern Water already operate catchment schemes in Medway, Brighton & Worthing, and their '**Catchment First**' approach will build on this work to look for catchment solutions across their patch. Customers are extremely supportive of this work.

**Collaboration:** Southern Water are active in '**Water Resources South East**', a collaboration involving several water companies who are looking at regional rather than company-specific solutions to water shortages. The company plan to receive 'bulk supplies' from neighbouring companies, including some which will enable them to abstract less from the R. Itchen at times when it would be damaging.

### **The less good**

**Leakage:** The NIC Report recommends companies halve leakage by 2050; Southern Water propose **only a 31% reduction** by 2045.

**Resilience:** If companies' supplies aren't resilient, they have to rely on drought permits during dry periods; these are permissions allowing companies to take more water from the environment to ensure that supplies are maintained, but which result in environmental damage. Over the next 10 years or so, the company may need to utilise **drought permits** on the Test & Itchen rivers, so it's crucial that their plans to develop new water sources in the longer term are taken forward, to eliminate this risk. Some of the proposed solutions such as desalination can have their own environmental impacts, so the company must consider carefully how it can reduce these impacts.