

Who is this briefing aimed at?

This briefing is aimed at all those with an interest in water resources management, including:

- Water companies
- Environmental groups
- Farmers and local businesses
- Regional development agencies
- Regional consumer groups
- Local government

What is happening?

We are developing a new water resources strategy to replace the previous strategy published in 2001.

It's our job to manage water resources throughout England and Wales and to plan how to use them in a sustainable way both now and in the future.

The new water resources strategy will set out how we believe water resources should be managed over the coming decades so that water can be abstracted and used in a sustainable manner, in the face of increasing pressure and uncertainty on water resources.

Why do we need a new water resources strategy?

Since our last strategy in 2001, thinking has progressed, new information is available and additional pressures have surfaced including;

- new legislation is in place e.g. the Water Act 2003;
- Government policy in England is now more favourable towards water metering;
- new information is known about water resources availability through the completion of Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies;
- population and water demand forecasts have been revised;
- there is more focus on climate change and a political will to drive down greenhouse gas emissions.

Because of these changes, we plan to launch a new water resources strategy for England and Wales, a separate strategy for Wales and a summary document, in March/April 2009.

What is the water resources strategy?

The water resource strategy will ensure that actions are taken to deliver a secure water supply and to safeguard the environment in the future. We believe that the strategy will enable us to reconcile the sometimes conflicting needs for water, and manage water resources so that there is enough water for people and the environment in the decades to come.

The strategy aims for:

- a better water environment;
- sustainable development;
- people valuing water and the water environment;
- adaptation to and mitigation against climate change.

Why do we need a water resources strategy?

Why is it good for the *Environment Agency*?

- It incorporates stakeholder views, giving us credibility;
- It provides clarity on our positions and greater consistency;
- It will be an integrated strategy, covering a broad range of our responsibilities;
- It provides the framework for local action plans;
- The process of delivering a new strategy has developed our thinking as an organisation.

Why is it good for *abstractors and users of water whom we regulate and influence*?

- It provides information on future water resources which will enable businesses to make more informed choices and decisions.
- It provides clarity on what we expect from those we regulate and influence;
- It provides a consistent, national approach to water resources allowing for targeted effort where it is required;
- It applies the twin track and risk based principles in what we do;
- It allows for greater flexibility in water resource management;
- Views and comments from businesses have been taken into account.

Why is it good for the *environment*?

- It provides an informed and realistic look at possible outcomes for the environment and attempts to answer the 'difficult' questions;
- It enables water and the water environment to be better valued;
- It supports building resilience into the environment;
- It provides for a flexible system to respond to environmental challenges;
- It is an integrated approach.

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What does it cover?

The water resources strategy will cover:

- the water environment and the pressures on it;
- sustainable development and demand for water;
- how water is valued by society;
- adapting to and mitigation of climate change;
- policy and legislation surrounding water resource management, now and in the future.

The strategy will set out how we believe water resources should be managed. It will take a long term look at water resources management, beyond the 25 year horizon to fully consider the impacts of climate change.

It will look at the measures that we believe are necessary for all sectors of abstraction and use, in order to adapt to the uncertainties of climate change, and the actions we can take to help mitigate against these effects. The actions will help us ensure that both water supplies and the environment are safeguarded in the future.

How will the strategy be implemented?

Regional action plans

We are not producing specific regional water resources strategies. Instead regional action plans will be developed from the national actions to show how they will be translated locally. River Basin Management Plans and water company Water Resources Management Plans will be the route where many of these actions are delivered. This will allow a targeted approach to water resources management and will allow the different priorities and pressures to be reflected locally.

Regional implementation group

We have set up a regional implementation group with a representative from each Environment Agency region. This group will oversee the development of the regional action plans.

What has happened so far?

Water Resources Strategy Consultation

During 2007 we published a consultation [‘Water for people and the Environment: Developing our water resources strategy for England and Wales’](#) on the development of our water resources strategy. A [summary of consultation responses](#) has been produced. Both documents are available on the [water resources strategy](#) internet pages.

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Strategy Modules

Throughout the development of the strategy we have established a series of modules covering some of the major water resources issues. These modules provide much of the analysis and supporting information that feeds into the strategy.

- *Water Resources in the South East of England*

In October 2007 we published our module *Water Resources in the South East*. The purpose of this module was to encourage water companies to consider the 'art of the possible' in terms of demand management. The launch of this document was followed by a workshop which gave those involved in managing water resources in the south east and in similarly stressed areas an opportunity to contribute to the debate. The summary '[Water for the future – Managing water in the South East of England](#)' has been published to the internet.

- *Carbon and energy use in water resources*

This module considers the carbon emissions associated with different water supply and demand management options and how, as a regulator, we could play a role in helping water companies reduce their emissions. A summary '[The greenhouse gas implications of future water resources options](#)' has been published to the internet.

- *Allocation of water resources*

The purpose of this module is to help us identify potential improvements to the abstraction licensing system to help obtain access to water resources in the future, whilst retaining environmental protection. We are investigating potential alternative models for water resources allocation which may be necessary to manage water resources in the future. We are also considering what actions may be necessary to promote the value of water, including the role of communications and water efficiency campaigns. We plan to publish a summary on water resources availability over the next couple of months.

- *Water Resources in 2050*

By considering how future demands, environmental needs and resources may change by 2050, this module has been used to analyse whether the strategy actions will be flexible enough to cope with a range of potential future scenarios. A [science summary](#) (Product code: SCHO1008BOSS-E-E) has been produced and is available on our external publications catalogue on the internet.

We have also published a '[Demand for water in the 2050s](#)' summary document on the internet.

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- *Governance, policy and legislation for water resources*

This module considers whether the organisational and legislative aspects of water resources management will be appropriate for the future. Early thinking in this area has helped us to provide our response to the All Party Parliamentary Water Group's inquiry into the water industry. We have conducted an international comparison of water resources management in developed countries. This work also looks at what we can do differently in the short term with our existing powers. This module is due to be released in the new year.

- *State of the water resources environment*

This module will identify the current and future pressures on water resources and will set the scene for the strategy.

What else is going to happen?

We plan on launching the modules to the following deadlines:

Dec 2008	Water resources in 2050 module
Dec 2008	'State of the water resources environment'
Jan 2009	Allocation of water resources
Jan 2009	Governance and legislation module
March/April 2009	Strategy documents published and launch event

What communications have already happened?

- Consultation during 2007
- 28th July 2008 press release: [Report shows water efficiency can help save money and the environment.](#)
- 4th Oct 2008 press release: [Summer river flows could more than halve by 2050 due to climate change.](#)

Where can I get more info?

See the [Water Resource Strategy](#) pages on our website.
Email [Water Resources Strategy](#).

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