



South Staffs Water



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Water Resources Management Plan Summary

December 2019

What is a Water Resources Management Plan?

A Water Resources Management Plan, or WRMP, describes how we will continue to meet the demand for water in the South Staffs Water region – and how we are going to make it count going forward. As such, it considers things like climate change, population growth and the need to protect the environment. We produce a new WRMP every five years. Our 2019 plan covers the 25 years between 2020 and 2045.

We have shaped our WRMP to meet our customers' needs over time. We know these will certainly change in many ways. But customers must always be able to rely completely on our ability to supply clean, high-quality water efficiently, consistently and to the highest levels of service they expect while protecting the environment they themselves both rely on and enjoy.

We face a number of significant challenges over the period covered by our WRMP, including:

- the need to make significant investment in our two major water treatment works to make sure we have enough high-quality water to meet demand and ensure the long-term resilience of our network;
- an increased demand for water because of population growth and an increase in the number of properties in our region;
- the need to change the way we use our resources to ensure the water we take (or 'abstract') from the environment is sustainable and does not harm that environment; and
- the expectation from customers to do more to reduce leakage on our network, and to help them save water and manage their bills. We have an important part to play in educating, informing and challenging our customers – helping them to use water wisely now and over the long term.

Our WRMP sets out the options we consider will best help us to meet these challenges.

WRMP timetable

We adopted the following timetable for our WRMP.

1 December 2017	We submitted our draft WRMP to the Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).
2 March 2018	We launched a 12-week consultation on our draft WRMP, which closed on 28 May 2018.
August 2018	We published on our website our response to the representations we received on our WRMP consultation.
December 2019	Having received authorisation from the Secretary of State, we published our final WRMP on our website. Copies are also available at our head office.

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Our WRMP describes how we will continue to meet the demand for water – and make it count going forward

Putting customers at the heart of our plan

At the heart of our WRMP are our customers' and other key stakeholders' preferences and expectations. We have built on the work we did for our 2014 WRMP and have used new techniques to give us even more evidence to support our plan.

To that end, we:

- carried out research to establish and understand our customers' priorities;
- held detailed one-day and half-day workshops with household and business customers to gain feedback on their preferences, service level expectations and things we could do to help those who may need extra support. We used different approaches during these workshops to help us understand customers' preferences – and the reasons for those preferences;
- had focused discussions with the Independent Customer Panel, which was set up to represent our customers and challenge our plans;
- carried out a study to understand our customers' reasons for not switching to a water meter; and
- used customer service data to understand perceptions of our service performance.

Our engagement reinforced for us our customers' priorities, including:

- having clean, high-quality water supplies;
- being sure that water will always come out of the tap;
- bills being fair, accurate and affordable;
- receiving great customer service;
- protecting the natural environment; and
- helping those customers who may need extra support.



Forecasting the future demand for water

We use the latest forecasts of properties and population in our region, combined with our existing policies around metering, water efficiency and leakage management, to give us a view of what the demand for water would be if we did not act to manage it.

We forecast that there will be a slow rise in demand from non-household and business customers over the 25 years between 2020 and 2045.

We forecast that our household population will increase by 238,000, with 128,000 new homes being built between 2020 and 2045. This is an increase of 24% in connected household properties.



We are forecasting a 24% increase in connected household properties in the South Staffs Water region by 2045

Making sure we can meet the future demand for water

We use sophisticated techniques, including climate change scenarios and computer models, to forecast how much water we have now and will have in the future from our reservoirs, rivers and groundwater sources. This is constrained by a number of factors, including:

- how much water we can legally take from the environment;
- the quality of that water;
- the processes we use to treat the water;
- how we move the water around our network;
- how often we will need to introduce restrictions on the amount of water customers can use. Currently, we plan on the basis of needing to introduce restrictions on water use once every 40 years, on average; and
- the allowance we need in the event that any of our water sources are unavailable because we have to do work on them or they develop an unexpected fault.



The last time we asked our customers not to use hosepipes was in the 1976 drought



We have a number of measures that we can use to manage our water resources. These include:

- working with customers to encourage them to use less water;
- more leakage detection and repair;
- increasing the amount of water we take from existing ground and surface water sources;
- developing new sources of water;
- trading water with third parties; and
- working with regional groups such as Water Resources West (WRW).

In developing our WRMP, we defined and assessed a large number of options and made decisions that are appropriate for our region, our circumstances and our customers. We evaluated these and came up with a list of feasible options. We then carried out an environmental assessment to help us understand any potential impact of the options on the environment. We also tested the options under a range of scenarios to make sure our plan is robust. Throughout this process, we took into account customers' views on things like:

- resilience over the long term;
- environmental impact; and
- the impact of the options on customers' water bills.

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If we did nothing differently, there would not be enough water to meet demand

Our WRMP – highlights

We think our WRMP for 2020 to 2045 combines the best mix of options that will deliver what our customers have told us they want us to do. It shows that we are making water count – for our customers, the communities we serve and the environment, now and over the long term.

Key elements of our plan	 What we will do
Leakage	By 2024/25, we will reduce total leakage on our network by 25% from 2019/20 levels. We will achieve this transformational reduction through a combination of pressure management, innovation and active leakage control. We will also make further leakage reductions from 2025 to 2045.
Metering	We will aim to encourage an additional 2,600 households a year to switch to a water meter over the lifetime of our WRMP. This will give us a level of 76% of customers with a water meter by 2044/45. We are looking at options for ‘smart meter’ devices that would help customers monitor and control how much water they use – something our customers said would be useful to them.
Water efficiency	We will reduce the average amount of water each of our household customers use by one litre per person per day by the end of the five-year period from 2020 to 2025. We will work with developers to explore incentives for them to include rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling within new sites. We will continue to work with customers and target water efficiency advice at those who may be concerned about whether they can afford to pay their water bills.
Sustainable water supply	The work to develop our WRMP has shown that, in the main, continuing to use our existing sources is the most efficient way to operate over the next 25 years. But we will manage our environmental impact by reducing the volume of groundwater we take from our sources by around six million litres a day where necessary to manage the risk of causing deterioration to the environment. We will also invest in new treatment processes at two of our groundwater sources, to bring them back into supply.
Resilience	We will liaise with our neighbour, Severn Trent Water, to further explore a bulk supply trade to provide additional resilience to our water supply system – especially during the period of investment in our two major treatment works.

By implementing this programme of work, we will be able to balance water supply and demand in our region up to and beyond 2045.

The full version of our 2019 WRMP and the accompanying appendices are available on our website.