

Future Water Supply to Meet Demand for Growth

Chris Starkie, Director of Growth and Investment, Norfolk County Council



Why is water essential for Delivering Economic Growth?

- Delivering Economic Growth is core to the role of Local Authorities and Government.
- Policy is not always aligned across Government
 - Business and Trade
 - Defra
 - Environment Agency and others
 - Water Companies core responsibilities.
- Water supply in the East of England is a key necessity to deliver some of the planned growth and sector priorities – e.g. agritech, renewable energy, digital



But we have a problem

- Regional demand for water 2,132 million litres per day (2025 baseline)
 - Rising to 2,538 million litres per day by 2050
 - Of this 85 per cent public water, 10 per cent farm irrigation 5 per cent power
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- Available water supply 2,400 million litres per day (2025 baseline)
 - Falling to 1,700 million litres per day by 2050 due to climate change, need to increase drought resilience and environmental constraints on water abstraction

* Source WRE Regional Water Resources Plan

New supplies planned

- Water companies plan includes demand management, two new reservoirs and desalination plants as well as water reuse plants to boost supply and reduce demand
- A number of interim solutions also proposed including interim supply options and transfer schemes to move water to areas with deficits
- But concerns the plans underestimate the supply and demand mismatch – directly impacting on the region's economic growth

Current Challenges

- Water companies are considering applications for new non-household supplies on a case-by-case basis and advise that these may be declined.
- Housing Planning applications in the Cambridge Water area are being challenged by the Environment Agency over the sustainability of new supplies
- Restrictions are needed now because the volume of water that water companies can abstract is being reduced to comply with the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive and Habitats Directive.



How is water supply planned

- Water Resources East (WRE) produce a regional water strategy to inform water company Water Resources Management Plans (WRMPs)
- Water Companies Produce 5 yearly WRMPs and use
 - Local Authority Housing Growth forecasts in Local Plans to inform demand
 - Consultants are used to forecast non-domestic economic growth.

Issues

- The regional water strategy produced by Water Resources East (WRE) is not strong enough on addressing non-domestic growth
- Growth has been flat for many years but is now starting to accelerate
- Environmental restrictions on private water supplies will also drive demand for public water supplies
- New public water supply reservoirs in Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk are planned for 2037
 - no interim plan exists to meet new non-domestic demand

What needs to improve?

- Better understanding of the scale of constraint for water for non-domestic use – Why and Where
- Better collaboration between all players to understand growth needs – LAs, Government Depts (Defra, Dept for Business and Trade), Agencies – Environment Agency, WRE, Water companies.
- Can LAs plan better to focus growth in certain areas where water is more available – how do they know?
- Can Water companies plan better what is already available – including transfers from North and West of Country
- Can existing funding help focus spend to support business to grow in line with their water needs – i.e. WINEP funding, Nutrient Neutrality offset funding – National or devolved growth funding.

What are the next steps?

- Can a partnership be developed between players to solve the short to medium term problems being caused by a lack of water for new non-domestic customers in the East of England.
- Who should/could be involved?
- What are the mechanisms for taking this forward?



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