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Pre-Consultation for Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water's draft Water Resources Management Plan 2024

Every five years we develop our Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) which sets out how we will manage our water supplies across our supply area to meet current and future needs, over the next 25 years. Our current Plan (WRMP19) was published in March 2019 and is available at the following link: <https://www.dwrcymru.com/en/our-services/water/water-resources/final-water-resources-management-plan-2019>

We are currently developing our next Plan (WRMP24) for the period 2025 – 2050 and today are launching this pre-consultation to provide an opportunity for you – one of our key stakeholders - to provide your views on what is seen as the key elements for our Plan development and the priority areas that it should seek to address.

Introduction

At Welsh Water our vision is clear; *“to earn the trust of our customers every day”*. Our purpose is to provide high quality and better value drinking water and environmental services, so as to enhance the wellbeing of our customers and the communities we serve, both now and for generations to come.

We know that customers rely on us to deliver high-quality, safe and reliable services every day, no matter what is thrown at us by the weather or other operational challenges. They also need to be able to trust us to be planning well ahead, to ensure those services are sustainable and resilient over many decades to come.

We are the sixth largest water company in England and Wales, supplying water and wastewater services to just over three million people (Figure 1). We operate a variety of water sources to supply our customers. Most of our water is supplied from our impounding reservoirs although we abstract significant volumes from lowland river sources such as the River Wye in southeast Wales and the River Dee in north Wales. Groundwater accounts for less than five percent of our supplies at a Company level but at a local level, may be the whole supply.



Figure 1 – Welsh Water's operating area

What is a Water Resource Management Plan?

WRMPs are statutory documents that all water companies must produce at least once every five years, and which play a crucial role in securing the public water supply for the region. Water resources planning is about trying to ensure there is enough water supplied to homes and businesses while protecting the natural environment. At the heart of this is our understanding of how much water we are able to take from rivers, reservoirs and boreholes and supply to customers, not only in 'normal years' when we expect good supplies of rainfall across our supply area but also in periods of drought. Our forecast of water resource availability takes account of environmental factors and climate change that reduce the amount of water that can be sustainably taken from our water sources.

We need to balance how much we are able to supply against the current and future demand for water using the best data available to us. Where the supply demand balance flags a

potential shortfall, to resolve it we identify options that either reduce demand or increase supplies. However, the decision on which solution is best should look at wider objectives such as maintaining good drinking water quality, meeting Government policy direction or customer's wider preferences such as environmental impact. The investment required is then fed through into our company business plan to seek the necessary funding.

Our 2024 Water Resources Management Plan

The approaches we see as being key to the successful delivery of this Plan are:

- To comply with relevant legislation, notably the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and align with Welsh Government's "Water Strategy for Wales 2015"
- To deliver a Best Value Plan that doesn't just consider least cost solutions, but which looks to provide wider benefit to customers, society and the environment
- To embed the principles of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) within our Plan
- To ensure that the views of our customers and stakeholders are properly considered, particularly on service levels and the cost of the Plan
- To ensure our decision making considers all available options to reduce demand and/or increase supply to achieve an environmentally sustainable and secure supply of water
- To prioritise demand management over supply side options where the wider benefits of doing so provide a Best Value solution. As part of this, we are proposing a further 10% reduction in leakage rates during the 2025-2030 period
- To improve the resilience of our supply systems to pressures such as drought and climate change. We must deliver a plan that provides resilience to a 1 in 200-year drought event and will set out our plans for improving our resilience to a 1 in 500-year drought event.
- To ensure that the Plan is compliant with all statutory requirements and to carry the required environmental assessments of the Plan
- To ensure there is alignment between the Water Resources West Regional Plan and our company water resource management plan as we develop these plans in parallel.
- To investigate the opportunities for trading water resources with 3rd parties where this is to the benefit of our customers and not to the detriment of the environment.

Next Steps

Our Water Resource Management Plan will be developed over the next nine months with a draft submitted to Welsh Government in September 2022. Collaborative working is at the heart of what we do and so we would very much value your thoughts on the development of our draft WRMP24. Alongside this letter we have produced further supplementary information on the way in which we will develop our WRMP24. This is also available on our website at: <https://www.dwrcymru.com/en/our-services/water/water-resources>

To share your views with us please contact us by the 21st March 2022 at:
water.resources@dwrwymru.com

We will be presenting an overview of our draft 2024 Plan at the Water Resources West Stakeholder Workshop on the 9th February 2022. This is a virtual workshop and so if you're interested in attending then you'll need to register at the link below:

<https://eqcommunications.createsend1.com/t/ViewEmail/j/81E4A26475527FA12540EF23F30FEDED?alternativeLink=True>

Yours sincerely

Dr Ian T. Brown

Head of Water Resources