

SOUTH EAST PLAN : EIP DATA MEETING.

REPRESENTATION ON WATER RESOURCE STRATEGY FOR THE SOUTH EAST.

1. Representation relates to the South East Plan policies NRMI and NRM2.

2. The shared experience of the current drought now entering its third winter, with restrictions on garden watering and other “non-essential” uses still in place, has highlighted the urgent need for a strategy for the sustainable management of the region’s water resources. Our renewable resources in a year of average rainfall are now barely sufficient to sustain supplies to meet basic domestic, industrial and agricultural needs and it requires only relatively minor drought episodes to create a significant supply deficit and a virtual year-round shortfall in the balance of river and ground-water resources. In recognition of this, much of the South East has been classified by the Environment Agency as having an unsustainable regime for water abstraction under both summer and winter conditions. Furthermore, we now face the prospect of a progressive increase in the stress on resources arising from:
 - the planned housing growth for the South East
 - the ongoing impact of climate change
 - the need for water companies to comply with new and more demanding environmental controls on abstraction from rivers and groundwater sources.

CPRE believes that, unless action is taken to address the deficit as a matter of the highest priority, the water companies will be unable to keep pace with the resulting steep increase in demand under drought conditions.

3. Demand growth.

Even under average conditions, public water supply (PWS) demand in the South East is now running close to the total deployable output of all water companies serving the region: 5,410 against 5,500 MI/d. Under “design drought conditions” (i.e. the 1-in-10 Dry Year) there is now a deficit of between 350 and 400 MI/d, hence the current restriction on water use. Housing growth is forecast at 578,000 for the plan period and assuming occupancy of 2.0 and per capita consumption at 160 l/h/d, this equates with an increase in demand by 2025 of 185 MI/d (annual average). Any increase in PWS for industry and agriculture is taken as being offset by water efficiency improvements. The corresponding 1-in-10 Dry Year demand, taken as 115% of average, is estimated at 213 MI/d.

4. Climate change.

This is likely to prove one of the most important single influences on future trends in catchment water balances. On the basis of the recent UKIP 2002 forecasts we are applying a 3% increase to the total 2025 out-turn demand.

5. Restoring sustainable abstraction.

The European Water Framework Directive requires all member states to take measures for the protection, improvement and sustainable use of Europe's rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwaters. Measures are to be implemented via Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS) as part of the national River Basin Management Plans, with a timetable aimed at implementation by 2015. It will require some water companies to relinquish a proportion of their total authorised abstraction (surface or groundwater as appropriate) and current forecasts envisage a reduction in deployable output of 260 Ml/d as a probable minimum (no separate allowances made for Habitats Directive requirements).

6. Our calculations so far indicate a provisional out-turn total demand for the Region at 5,447 Ml/d which would be equivalent to supply/demand deficit of approx 1,010 Ml/d.

7. CPRE is not convinced that the water companies are in a position to address the future demand on the region's resources or to formulate a comprehensive and environmentally sustainable strategy that will ensure security of supply under all but the most severe drought conditions. This view is shared by the House of Lords as expressed in the recent report of the Select Committee on Water Management (June 2006). This points to the lack of balance between resource development and water efficiency measures in the companies' plans and notes that neither housing growth nor climate change have been adequately factored into the demand forecasts.

8. CPRE proposed strategy.

The forecast supply/demand deficit is of a magnitude that cannot be matched by further development of indigenous resources. We therefore envisage a three-part strategy comprising:

- Water-efficiency measures, including further leakage reductions, demand management and water conservation, underpinned by universal domestic metering
- Waste water re-use, both direct and indirect
- Strategic inter-regional raw water transfers, combined where appropriate with regulating storage

These elements should together provide sufficient scope and flexibility to satisfy demand growth for the plan period.

CPRE Kent's *Water Resource Strategy for Kent* can be downloaded from www.cprekent.org.uk