



Position Statement Sussex North WRZ

Supply and Demand in the Sussex North water resource zone (WRZ)

Southern Water plan for new development and population growth in accordance with water industry regulations and standards. We assess future demand through our analysis of Local Plan growth projections and population forecasts which are used to inform our long-term Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP). Our WRMP sets out how we will maintain secure water supplies to our customers in the face of future growth and other pressures such as climate change. It is updated every 5 years to ensure any revisions to predicted growth for that plan period are captured.

Our most recent WRMP was published in December 2019 (WRMP19), based on population forecasts that were commissioned in 2016. We are now working on the next WRMP and have commissioned an updated population forecast in order to produce a Regional Resilience Plan that will feed into our WRMP update.

During the development of our WRMP19 a risk emerged to the delivery of a scheme to optimise the operation of our existing groundwater abstraction at Hardham. Whilst we assumed within the WRMP19 that this scheme would be delivered we also recognised there was uncertainty in how much additional supply the scheme would deliver given concerns raised about the environmental impact of our groundwater abstraction. These relate specifically to environmentally designated sites in the Arun Valley. We are now focussed on investigating these concerns further in order to ensure that our abstraction is not causing an impact and is sustainable in the long term. This could mean we take less water from the Hardham groundwater source in future but we do not anticipate any changes to our abstraction licence until the investigations, which could take between three and five years, are complete.

We are now working closely with our regulators on a way forward to ensure we have a sustainable source of supply at Hardham and to meet customers' supply needs whilst minimising impacts on the environment. In the long term we may need to develop alternative supplies funded by our five year business plan, which is informed by the WRMP, and in the short term we are implementing an action plan to reduce the risk of needing to implement drought measures more frequently such as temporary use bans. Our short term action plan includes investing more in leakage reduction and water efficiency, providing more resilience to our assets so that outage is less of an issue, re-zoning supplies (ie sourcing supplies from other water treatment works and/or neighbouring water companies).

As new developments are added to our network this has the potential to increase the demand for water and place pressure on our ability to maintain customers' service levels during water stressed periods. Given the issue which has emerged around our Hardham groundwater abstraction we are now actively working with our regulators to manage this risk in order to minimise the impact on customers and the environment. The current risk to customers' service levels does not imply we cannot accept new connections to our supply network – we are working on the assumption that these will continue in line with Local Plan housing growth forecasts and we will manage the risks as mentioned above.