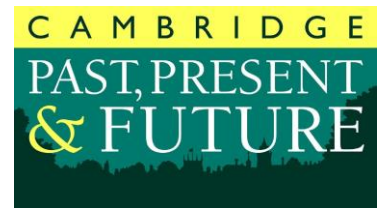


Water Resources East



By online form

14/02/2023

Dear WRE

Cambridge Past, Present & Future  
Wandlebury Country Park  
Cambridge CB22 3AE  
Phone 01223 - 243830  
[www.cambridgeppf.org](http://www.cambridgeppf.org)

### **Response to WRE draft Regional Water Resources Plan**

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxton Watermill.

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Cambridge Past, Present & Future support the work of the Regional Water Resources Plan and is considered to be a good foundation for the preparation of the Water Management Plans.

In response to your questions, we make the following comments.

*Q7 – On a scale of 1 to 5, how much to you agree with the following statement? WRE has presented credible region-wide projections of future water needs and deficits across all sectors and the environment?*

Answer: 2 – slightly disagree

*Q8: Please explain your answer.*

The reliance on changing the culture of customers to save water is worthy but will not be a quick or easy activity. Water has been a "free" resource for many years and is not seen as being something one has to save. Substantial increases in charges to consumers might help but to date the regulator seems averse to this approach. Additionally, the range in the estimate for agricultural requirements is too wide to be credible. It is hoped that new developments will include the domestic reuse of "greywater", i.e. water from baths, showers and washing up, for flushing loos. "Rainwater harvesting" is mentioned but we cannot see that this will improve the supply situation as any rainwater which is harvested will be at the expense of replenishing groundwater. It is hoped that less water will be used for power generation with the phasing out of the burning of fossil fuels and their replacement with wind turbines, etc. although the draft WRP warns that more water might be used in the future for the production of hydrogen. Although the problem of leakage from the system is covered, including leakage from pipes on consumers' premises the region apparently already has a good record in curbing leakage, at least from public systems. All these measures will be reinforced by the capping of abstraction from groundwater.

*Q9: On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with the following statement? WRE's ambition should be to achieve the outcomes associated with the 'Enhance' Environmental Destination scenario by 2050.*

Answer: 1 – strongly disagree

*Q10: Please explain your answer to Q9.*

The ambition should be to achieve the Enhance Environmental Destination by 2040 – a time period which will coincide with a number of Local Plans.

*Q11: On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with the following statement? WRE has taken the right approach to identifying potential solutions to mitigate the projected deficits.*

Answer: 3 – neither agree or disagree

*Q12: Please explain your answer to Q11*

There is mention of Net Zero Desalination Plants being developed. Desalination is currently delivered via evaporation technologies or reverse osmosis systems. Both technologies require energy to convert seawater to fresh water. There are no energy free approaches to removing salt from water. Net Zero may be achieved through offsets and accounting but there will be a need for energy infrastructure. All the costs, especially the cost of energy and including pumping water to other areas, need to be considered.

*Q13: Does our proposed plan strike the right balance between demand and supply-side options for the public water supply?*

Answer: The balance seems about right

*Q14: Please explain your answer to Q13*

This question is difficult to answer without a consideration of pricing policies and the price elasticity of demand for various use groups.

*Q19: What further catchment-level analysis or activity would it be useful for WRE to prioritise?*

The Cam catchment area, which has a stressed aquifer, areas of peat and chalk streams is in a seriously poor condition and should be a priority for further analysis and project responses.

*Q20: Are there any areas which you feel WRE should be considering which are not currently reflected in our plan?*

The report (page83) recognises the need for streamlining the planning process for smaller scale reservoirs. A complementary or possible alternative approach would be to give high priority to developing a strategy and implementation plan for smaller scale storage provision. This will increase the possibility of achieving the environmental goal by 2040.

We recommend that the three scenarios proposed be reduced to two. The difference between BAU+ and the Enhanced Scenarios consist of the measures to protect the natural environment. It seems all too easy for the Enhanced scenario to be regarded as an optional extra, to be abandoned for political and/or financial reasons unless existing directives and regulations can save them.

*Q21 Do you have anything else to add?*

We suggest that the water companies lobby for the land use planning system and the building regulations to be amended to make the WRMPs binding upon the planning system and the building industry. This is needed to ensure the delivery of water efficiency and processing of waste water but also construction of desalination plants. This assumes that the WRMPs are couched in terms which make their recommendations legally

enforceable. This is necessary to ensure the measures are put into practice. We are, of course, faced with the existing housing stock which is largely inefficient in terms of water conservation (and much else). What incentives will be offered to the owners of existing properties to bring them up to standard?

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

*Sarah Nicholas*

Principal Planning Officer