

## **SOUTHERN WATER**

### **WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025-2075 (WRMP)**

Southern Water (SW) have published an updated version of their Water Resources Management Plan 2025-2075. This is underpinned by a 5 year Business Plan that has to be agreed by Ofwat and is then used to set charges each year.

A “drop-in” session was held in Broadstairs on 28 November 2024 to enable people to ask questions and discuss the WRMP, consultation on which ends 4 December. A number of specialist teams from SW were on hand to explain the Plan.

#### **Key Points:**

- SW is NOT a statutory consultee on planning applications and will only usually comment about large developments
- SW is required to provide a connection to a public sewer or surface water drain, under the Water Infrastructure Act 1991.
- SW did not seem to be aware that the Local Plan has allocated sites for 17000 new homes to be built
- SW were not up to speed with proposals to re-open Manston Airport and the likely demand for water/sewage disposal as a major commercial user
- SW's aim is to separate surface water from entering the sewerage system as it is this which causes the storm overflows and effluent discharges
- Some water storage reservoirs in the area which had been mothballed are being upgraded and brought back into use
- There are no requirements for new developments to provide schemes for “water harvesting” so that rainwater/grey water is saved and recycled. SW would like to see this included in the review of the Building Regulations (similar to the “green” requirements that are incorporated into the existing Regs) particularly as the government has a target to reduce water consumption to 110 litres per person and SW would go further if the Regulations were amended
- SW accept the point that as 79% of Thanet's water is supplied from our chalk aquifers, the more development concretes over the land, the more difficult it will be to extract the water to meet increased demand
- Desalination plants are being considered for Thanet in the longer term but are expensive to build and maintain, using a lot of energy. I suggested that Ramsgate Harbour would be a suitable site and they said they would look at this as the coastal wind turbines might provide the energy source
- 21% of Thanet's water is supplied via a pipe from the Medway Catchment. SW say this is resilient but given the impact of extensive development elsewhere in Kent this is questionable. I did say that in the WRMP, SE Water are providing a pipe to supply water from their catchment and this is due to be “operational in 2025”. SW response was that was highly unlikely as SE have problems supplying their own customers. There is, however, cooperation between the various companies and transfer pipelines between catchments in some places
- The WRMP in Annex 3 sets out “Problem Characterisation” and looks at Demand, Supply, Investment and Complexity. Overall, for the Eastern Area (including Thanet) there are some very significant concerns and a high level of uncertainty in the investment programme.

John Mealey is the SW Stakeholder Manager. I spoke to him and they spend a lot of time meeting with Parish and Town Councils. He also said there is a regular liaison meeting with TDC. He would be happy for appropriate specialists to meet with the Parish Council/stakeholders in Birchington to discuss water/sewerage issues and particularly how the demands from the development of SP16 (and potentially SP17) will be met. Having spoken with Cllr Nick Blankley I have emailed John Mealey to invite them to Birchington at a convenient time.

Contact details have been passed to Cllr N Blankley and Parish Clerk.

(The WRMP and Annex 3 are available for reference)

Rod Giddins  
2 December 2024