

TITLE OF REPORT: Resilience and Emergency Planning for Droughts

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SUMMARY

This report provides Members with information about resilience and emergency planning for droughts

1 Background

- 1.1 The Council has no statutory duty to plan for droughts and managing water supply. This is the responsibility of the Water Authorities and in Gateshead this falls to Water Resources North (WReN), made up Northumbrian Water, Yorkshire Water and Hartlepool Water as core companies but they involve others who have an interest in water resources within the region. WReN is a group designed to oversee water resources planning for Yorkshire and the North East of England, an area of almost 2000 square kilometers.
- 1.2 Plans to manage water supply and demand are underway and the [National Framework for Water Resources](#) considers England's long term water needs to ensure resilient water supplies and improve the water environment. If action is not taken, many areas of England will face water shortages by 2050 such as the South East. Measures are required to ensure resilience to drought, supply the growing population, reduce harmful river abstractions and address the impact of climate change.
- 1.2 Regional groups are preparing Water Resource Management Plans looking at current and forecasted water use, weighing up the balance between water demand and supply availability up until 2045.
- 1.3 Plans will be required to:
 - reduce demand to 110 litres of water per person per day by 2050 and drive down water use across all sectors;
 - halve leakage rates by 2050;
 - develop new supplies,
 - transfer water to where its needed and reduce the use of drought measures that have an impact on the environment.
- 1.4 The [Draft North Water Resources Management Plan](#) for PR24 will be finalised in 2023. The North is the most drought-resilient public water supply in England today and water resources are in a good position with Kielder Reservoir.

- 1.5 In the future, water transfers between regions maybe required, and if water users in our region can become more efficient, more water could be available for transfer elsewhere.
- 1.6 Over the next five years, water companies in the North plan to reduce leakage by 12% and are aiming to reduce customers' use to 125 litres of water per person per day on average.
- 1.7 To reduce demand for water, on 1 July 2021, the [Government](#) announced plans to:
 - Make regulations to introduce a mandatory water efficiency label to inform consumers and encourage the purchase of more water efficient products for both domestic and business use.
 - Encourage local authorities to adopt the optional minimum building standard of 110 litres per person per day in all new builds where there is a clear local need, such as in water stressed areas.
 - Develop a roadmap towards greater water efficiency in new developments and retrofits, including the exploration of revised building regulations and how the development of new technologies can contribute to meeting these standards. We will ensure that the underlying legislation can, where appropriate, accommodate any potential future expansion of rainwater harvesting, water re-use and storage options.

2.0 The Council's role in a drought

- 2.1 The Council has no formal role should Gateshead suffer from a drought, however the Council could be called upon as part of multi-agency coordination arrangements in relation to getting pallets of water or water browsers out where required, but this task could just as easily fall to another agency including the Fire and Rescue Service.
- 2.2 As the Council has no formal role in responding to a drought, and it is considered that a drought in Gateshead is unlikely, the Council has not developed plans to respond to a drought.
- 2.3 A drought situation usually has a reasonable lead in period of dry weather and therefore there would be time to develop plans with partner organisations such as WReN, should they be required.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee note this information and if further information is required, consider inviting a representative from WReN to a future meeting.