

National framework Senior Steering Group summary September 2020

The national framework senior steering group held its eighth meeting in September 2020. It was our second virtual meeting and was chaired by Jean Spencer. The group reviewed progress since the publication of the national framework in March and looked ahead to the activities needed to ensure ambitious and compatible draft regional plans ahead of a consultation from January 2022.

The group first heard from each region in updates highlighting the progress made so far and identifying the main risks to the programme. Each group has delivered its method statements and are working hard to engage with sectors outside of the industry. Technical work programmes are on track and the groups are developing their approach to communications.

The **top risks identified** were:

- Impacts from Coronavirus and the recent prolonged dry weather on resources in water companies, regulators and regional groups posing risks to achievement of the agreed timescales.
- The risk of legal challenges which could impact the sequence of planning and investment decisions.
- Uncertainty around environmental water needs.
- Policy relating to planning assumptions such as demand management or drought resilience.
- The challenges to understanding and meeting water needs outside of public water supply.

The regional coordination group will focus on these risks in more detail and make sure appropriate mitigation is in place.

The progress made in the **RAPID work programme** was outlined in paper 27. In particular, the final report of the bulk supply contracts and pricing project will be published shortly and followed by a facilitation workshop. Regional groups have been asked to consider the findings from the gap analysis project, and the modelling work continues. SSG agreed that the Policy group needs the involvement of Regulation Directors to move the work forward.

September 2020

Defra presented the draft terms of reference for the **demand management oversight group**. SSG agreed the group should have a strategic role and be multi-sector. There was an action to hold further discussions to finalise the remit of the group.

The Environment Agency outlined the main changes proposed in the **draft water resource planning guidance**. It is out for consultation until 2 October with a view to publication in January 2021. SSG discussed the role of WRMPs in reducing carbon. It was agreed a separate workshop to talk about the issue in more detail would be helpful.

The final item was about how to **achieve alignment in regional plans**. Paper 29 outlined the work that is being carried out by the regional coordination group to manage the risks and support the alignment of regional plans and timely reconciliation of those plans next summer.

It was noted that there is very little contingency in the timeline for regional planning. The timeline remains as published and the regional coordination group will regularly review progress to ensure the planning work stay on track.

March 2020: National Framework published, and regional groups set out their initial statement of regional water needs

July 2020: Regional groups publish the approach they will take to developing their plans

February 2021: Regional groups will update their statement of regional water needs

August 2021: Regional groups share their draft plans to ensure alignment

January 2022: Informal consultation on draft regional plans

August 2022: Regional groups publish final draft regional plans

September 2023: Regional groups publish final regional plans
