

Water Scarcity Group

Wednesday 11th March 14:30-16:30

1. Chair's introduction

The Chair welcomed members and outlined the agenda for the meeting.

2. South Levels Water Resource Option

Stantec provided an update on the South Levels Water Resource Option Project. The study has suggested there could be considerable water available in the South Level Internal Drainage Board, with further work needed on modelling, monitoring, and assessing of potential options. Group members welcomed the study, noting significant potential benefits for the Cambridge area and wider region.

Action(s):

- Final report to be shared with the project Steering Group.
- Cambridge Growth Company (CGC) to progress discussions with Water Resource East (WRE), MHCLG, and water companies on next stages for the project.

3. Programme Management Office (PMO) update

MHCLG provided a project management update, including updates on the Water Efficiency programme, smart-farming and agriculture fund. Cambridge Water and Anglian Water provided updates on WRMP commitments, including ongoing work to ensure the timely delivery of the Fens Reservoir. The Environment Agency (EA) noted the usefulness of the new Cambridge water supply-demand balance dashboard.

Action(s):

- MHCLG and Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS) to coordinate engagement amongst Group members and consultants to discuss the Cambridge water supply-demand balance dashboard in further detail.
- Cambridge Water to provide WSG members with table of supply options under consideration.

4. Ofwat - Cost Change Process

Ofwat provided an update on the new cost change process, noting its relevance to growth in Cambridge and the wider government growth ambition. The process

looks to provide earlier certainty over costs that will be recovered in the next price control period and, if necessary, allow companies to access additional revenue in price review periods. Ofwat and Anglian Water noted the ruling from the CMA on 10 March following the company's request for a re-determination of the Ofwat decision.

5. MOSL - Non-Household Water Efficiency Fund

The Market Operator Services Limited (MOSL) provided an update on the non-household water efficiency fund, including launch arrangements (April 2026) and eligibility. Members welcomed progress and suggested ways to increase awareness of the fund. Group also noted the importance of alignment with other efficiency and agricultural programmes under the Group's umbrella, noting the potential to streamline communications and the need for coordination to avoid duplication.

Action(s):

- CGC to support MOSL with communications opportunities to increase awareness of the non-household water efficiency fund.
- WRE and MOSL to progress discussions on streamlining communications across schemes. MHCLG to consider application across other efficiency programmes.
- MHCLG to support with coordination to avoid duplication across efficiency programmes.

6. Water Resources East – System planning trial for the Great Ouse catchment

WRE provided an update on system planning work including for the Great Ouse catchment. WRE noted that a Regional Water System Steering Group has been established by DEFRA to progress this aspect of the Water White Paper. Progress is being made on a proposal for the Great Ouse including an initial trial (18-months), which should identify further work needed including options and investment. Group members emphasised the connectedness of the Ouse Catchment and the importance of considering contingent risks relating to water supply and quality.

Action(s):

- WRE to provide updates to the WSG as the project progresses.

7. Greater Cambridge local plan – water issues

GCSPS provided an updated on water-related representations to the local plan consultation, including from water companies, the Environment Agency and in relation to water efficiency standards. Members agreed there is a need for coordinated engagement between regulators, water companies and planning bodies to resolve issues and support plan progression.

Action(s):

- GCSPS to work with MHCLG and the CGC to convene Group members and discuss representations further.

8. Any other business

The Chair noted future meetings would be every six weeks. MHCLG will schedule these following the meeting.