

10 things Blueprint for Water would like to see in the Regional Water Resources Plans (July 2021)

Blueprint for Water¹ fully supports the development of the five regional water resources plans and representatives from the organisations in the coalition are actively engaging with all of the programme teams developing the plans.

Whilst we know that each of the five plans will need to address local and regionally-specific needs we have identified a number of common areas we would expect to see addressed in all the plans, helping to deliver the objectives of Government's **25 Year Environment Plan**. These are outlined below:

Headline Ask	How the Regional Plans can demonstrate it
Meeting the needs of the environment first	The regional plan clearly sets out how current and future environmental water needs will be met, including under the enhanced scenario ² , <u>before</u> it then looks at how additional needs from businesses and households are met. Where there is stakeholder support, even greater abstraction reductions should be considered.
Increasing resilience	The regional plan sets out actions (or targets) to increase environmental resilience within an agreed timeframe to help adapt to climate change impacts and increased pressures on the system. Actions should include reduced abstraction around protected areas, long-term water storage, strategic management of water across the catchment landscape, and use of smart technology solutions.
Delivering 20% biodiversity net gain	Where the regional plan proposes new infrastructure, it shows leadership by committing to deliver at least 20% biodiversity net gain ³ . Wherever possible preferred options contribute to the recovery of nature (e.g. supporting Local Nature Recovery Strategies ⁴).
Supporting the achievement of Net Zero as soon as possible	The regional plan builds on the water industry Routemap 2030 ⁵ and clearly sets out the impact on carbon emissions of alternative supply- and demand-side options, preferentially choosing solutions that reduce <u>total</u> carbon

¹ Blueprint for Water, part of Wildlife and Countryside Link, is a unique coalition of environmental, water efficiency, fisheries and recreational organisations that come together to form a powerful joint voice across a range of water-based issues. Wildlife and Countryside Link is a coalition of 60 organisations working for the protection of nature. The coalition covers England only, and the Asks are from an English perspective.

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/Appendix_2_WRGIS_and_environmental_scenarios_for_water_stress.pdf

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/biodiversity-net-gain-updating-planning-requirements>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-bill-2020/10-march-2020-nature-and-conservation-covenants-parts-6-and-7>

⁵ <https://www.water.org.uk/routemap2030/>

	emissions (capital emissions, operational emissions and those arising from water use).
Supporting the achievement of national water demand reduction targets	The regional plan includes short- and longer-term targets for reducing public water supply demand in homes, businesses and through leakage reduction that are at least as ambitious as those in the National Water Resources Framework ⁶ and the Environment Bill ⁷
Ensuring all abstractors play their part in reducing water demand	The regional plan includes commitments from significant non-PWS abstractors and/or their trade bodies to ensure the water they need is used efficiently and that their demand is also reduced where possible
Reducing the impact of new development on water resources	Where new water-intensive development is proposed in areas where there is no surplus water available, or in areas classified as in serious water stress ⁸ , the regional plan will include a commitment for water companies to work with developers and local authorities early in the planning process to reduce any additional water demand, and to explore the feasibility of the new development being water neutral ⁹ . (Companies should also consider appropriate measures to manage increased sewerage and wastewater, including nature-based solutions).
Delivering multiple benefits using nature-based solutions	The regional plan preferentially chooses options that can cost effectively deliver multiple benefits, with a priority on utilising nature-based solutions. For example, options that help address water resource needs that also reduce pollution; deliver flood risk management benefits and provide environmental enhancement. The adoption of Natural Capital accounting within the planning process would support this.
Working in partnership and committing to keep engaging with stakeholders	The regional plan sets out how the preferred solutions have been identified and will be delivered in partnership with a range of stakeholders, including environmental NGOs. It also sets out how stakeholders will continue to be engaged post “adoption”, to include sharing progress on implementation.
Being vocal where there are policy gaps	The regional plan identifies where further policy change is needed to support the delivery of the plan. For example, on mandatory water efficiency labelling on water-using products; tighter water efficiency standards for new development; or environmental land management payment options that support water storage and efficient use.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/meeting-our-future-water-needs-a-national-framework-for-water-resources>

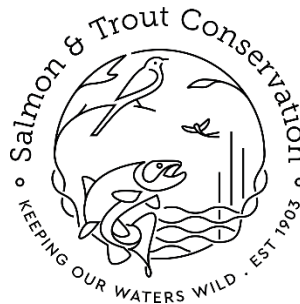
⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-bill-2020/august-2020-environment-bill-environmental-targets>

⁸ https://government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/958639/Water_Stress_Consultation_V1.0_accessible.pdf

⁹ <https://www.waterwise.org.uk/knowledge-base/a-review-of-water-neutrality-in-the-uk-2021/>

This document is supported by the following members of Blueprint for Water:

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