Southern Water Working Group Meeting

10.30am on Friday 16 May 2025
Via Teams

Notes of Meeting

Attendees:-

	Representing
Chris Bending (Director of Place, Wealden District Council) ("CB")	East Sussex
Karl Roberts (Director of Growth and Joint Interim Chief Executive, Arun District Council) ("KR")	West Sussex
Fjola Stevens (Divisional Manager, Development Management) ("FS")	Chichester District Council
David Illsley (Policy & Conservation Manager) ("DI")	New Forest National Park Authority
Kellie Eldridge (PA to Chris Bending) – notetaker	

1. Format and Agenda for Emma Hardy meeting on 3 June

CB opened the meeting by outlining his ideas for the format/agenda of the upcoming Emma Hardy meeting, which were subsequently discussed and agreed as follows:

- Ms Hardy and her team will be sent an agenda in advance of the meeting
- Cllr Rachel Millward will introduce the meeting as Chair of the Stakeholder Group and provide Ms Hardy with background on the group and its objectives.
- A element of time will be allocated on the agenda for Ms Hardy to then briefly outline the Government's perspectives on the issue, to allow the Group to then be given the opportunity to ask relevant questions.
- To be well-prepared and maximise the benefits of this meeting, we need to agree 3-5 key topic areas to explore. We can then touch base with a range of Councillors within the main group, from across geographical and political backgrounds, for their views on our suggested questions in advance of the meeting. These questions can be added to the Q&A chat on the Teams call for Ms Hardy to respond to on the day. **Action**: CB will draft some suggested questions to present to a range of members of the main Stakeholder Group. Suggested topics for discussion include:

1. Regulatory oversight and growth infrastructure upgrades - does the Government fully comprehend the collective challenges/issues we are all experiencing with Southern Water?
2. The irony of having discharge issues in periods of dry wall to wall sunshine, in the cusp of hosepipe bans. The Government oversees everything, yet we have these discharge issues in dry periods. (This topic could be a timely conversation given the recent weather. KR added that Arun recently carried a motion at Full Council from their Green Party, criticising the scale of discharges in dry weather. They instructed the Council to write to the Government to express their concerns. This had cross-party support, so this issue will be followed up.)
3. From a protected landscapes perspective, how is the Government pushing relevant bodies like Southern Water to ensure they are fulfilling their duties? There is probably not a single Council in this region that is not affected by a national landscape in some shape or form. **Action**: DI to draft a question to CB to be put forward to Ms Hardy on this issue.

2. Data sharing update

CB shared the information pack WDC had recently received from Southern Water, following months (if not years) of pushing for specific detailed information relevant to WDC's district of their planned upgrade works. He noted that Southern Water has still not confirmed exactly when these works will be taking place (i.e. whether they will be within this 5-year window) and is still waiting for this confirmation. CB asked if it would be useful to share this information with the main Group so they can see what Southern Water could possibly replicate for them, to which the meeting agreed it would be. It was also suggested that efforts be made from both directions: for CB to push for this information on behalf of the Stakeholder Group, and for individual Local Authorities to approach Southern Water, using this as a precedent for asking for similar information for their areas. **Action**: CB to share the information pack with the wider group.

Referring to WDC's recent Old Orchard, Horam appeal hearing, KR noted a similar case is being pursued in Arun, focusing on surface water issues. Applying pressure on developers across all infrastructure is likely the most effective approach.

3. LGR/Devo

The conversation acknowledged that come devolution, the new Mayoral authority would most likely want to take a significant role in addressing these Southern Water issues.