

WATER RESOURCES NORTH
REGIONAL DROUGHT GROUP STATEMENT OF INTENT



We know our changing climate means we will likely experience more frequent and more severe droughts in the coming years. As a regional multi-sector group, the role of Water Resources North (WReN) during drought is therefore becoming even more important, as collaboration between and within sectors is critical to successfully reduce the impacts on the environment and on society. Water Resources North (WReN) is committed to promoting collaborative and proactive drought management across our diverse region from the Peak District to the Scottish border. We recognise that effective drought management requires coordinated communications and action across all sectors that depend on water resources. This statement of intent outlines our approach to regional drought management, collaboration and planning.

1 OUR INTENT

We have now launched our WReN multi-sector Drought Group which serve as a regional forum that facilitates collaboration between sector groups (i.e. public water supply, agriculture, energy and navigation), regulators and wider stakeholders to enhance regional preparedness for periods of prolonged dry weather and drought events.

The groups aims and operations will change before, during and after drought as summarised in the table below.

Before Drought (Preparedness Phase)	During Drought (Response Phase)	After Drought (Recovery Phase)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor and share sector information on the current and forecast water situation ▪ Where beneficial to do so, align communications and messaging between sector groups, stakeholders and the public during drought ▪ In the development of water management plans, actively seek drought management options that provide wider benefits including resilience to both floods and droughts, improvements to water quality; and enhanced resilience of drainage and wastewater systems 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote the development of sector drought plans with monitoring plans and early warning indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify areas of water availability and stress across the region during drought ▪ facilitate discussion to identify opportunities for water rights trading and sharing between abstractors to manage drought response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incorporate drought learning into medium and long-term water resource planning ▪ Evaluating the effectiveness of drought response measures

WReN will work with other regional groups to share best practice and lessons learnt recognising that other regions may be in drought while WReN is not and vice versa.

It is important to note that the role of WReN does not include the development of a regional Drought Plan, nor does it aim to override an organisation's own Drought Plans. It seeks to support in the facilitation of collaborative discussion within and between sectors where this helps the overall outcomes of managing drought response for society and the environment.

2 GROUP MEMBERSHIP AND CADENCE

WReN's programme manager will organise meetings and provide secretariat services for the group, with additional activities funded by separate agreement as needed.

Our drought group will:

1. Complement, not replace, existing drought management structures and authorities
2. Meet on Microsoft Teams:
 - twice yearly (April and September) during non-dry weather conditions; and
 - monthly once a period of prolonged dry weather or an environmental drought has been declared by the Environment Agency (EA)
3. Maintain a rotating chair structure across different sectors

The group will include representatives from:

- Water companies serving the region
- Key water-dependent sectors (agriculture, energy, navigation, tourism, etc.)
- Regulatory bodies (Environment Agency, Natural England, CCW)
- Abstraction groups and other relevant stakeholders

We intend the WReN drought group will report its regional position to the WReN Board and National Drought Group.

3 ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL COMMITMENT

In all drought management activities, the needs of the environment, including water-dependent habitats and other sensitive environmental sites, will be a key consideration. Working with the Environment Agency and Natural England representatives (whose principal role is to protect and improve the environment), the group commits to pursuing drought management solutions that protect and enhance the natural environment.

Social needs will also be a key consideration in all drought management activities. Working with CCW and the water-dependent sectors alongside the water companies (who bring knowledge of their customers e.g. through significant customer research), the group commits to pursuing drought management solutions that protect social needs.

4 ADOPTION AND REVIEW

Following adoption, this statement of intent and the WReN Drought Group Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually to ensure they remains fit for purpose and aligned with regulatory expectations.

Document Control

Version	Changes	Date
1.0	First draft	28/11/24
1.1	Update to reflect WReN leads comments	07/05/25
2.0	Final incorporating Drought Group member comments	14/10/2025