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November 2022

Open letter to summarise the responses and feedback to the draft Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) consultation.

Thank you

Thank you to those who took the time to respond to our draft DWMP consultation held between 30th June and 16th September. We wanted to share with you our summary of the responses, a high level overview of how these will impact the plan, and inform you of the next steps.

The valuable feedback you have provided will be fed in to shaping the final plan and within the final DWMP we will publish a Statement of Response, detailing our responses to all comments made through the consultation.

Level of feedback

We had 39 responses to the consultation, as well as direct engagement with over 300 customers via our online community.

The consultation consisted of 12 questions, covering eight themes and general comments. The summary of responses for each theme is below:

- **Priorities**

There was a wide mix of priorities highlighted by respondents with several citing all options listed but generally speaking there was a desire to see us prioritise investments towards pollution, enhancing the environment, sewer flooding, storm overflows and asset conditions. There was also very little difference between short/medium term and longer term priorities.

- **Climate change**

Most respondents suggested that a two-degree climate change scenario be used for the medium and longer-term planning, referencing the Met Office, COP26 and IPCC reporting on this. Although there were several responses that referenced the UK Committee on Climate Change's suggestion that 'it is prudent to plan adaptation strategies for a scenario of four degrees' and suggested that at the very least we should consider what a four degrees rise would mean for assets in the longer term.

- **Growth**

Most respondents supported the DWMP growth projections, although a significant number declined to answer this question. However, there was some support to use Local Plan data, but only where it is up to date. As well as concerns that if Local Plan figures were higher than those used then would the DWMP's plans be sufficient to account for this level of growth.

- **Green solutions**

There was almost unanimous support for green solutions where appropriate, with respondents referring to the wider benefits they can bring. Most respondents were in favour of a fully (100%) green solution approach, where found to be cost beneficial with a few suggesting that it was hard to score this when it wasn't clear what this might entail. Although some were in support of a fully green approach regardless of costs, most responses suggested a smaller percentage of the plan should focus on green solutions, where not found to be cost beneficial.

- **Surface water reduction**

Overwhelming support of removing surface water from drainage to the sewer system.

- **Partnership working**

Overwhelming support for partnership working with the majority scoring it at 5/5. Further clarity is sought by several respondents about how the catchment areas for partnership working were identified.

- **Overflows**

Responses appeared to link to the respondent's location, with coastal areas more likely to suggest that bathing waters should be a focus. However, there was equal support for protecting river habitats alone and a combination with bathing waters. There were several reminders that the lack of official bathing water status does not mean a lack of human use and therefore concentration shouldn't necessarily only be in these areas. In addition, it has been noted that rivers are not the only inland waterbodies that overflows can discharge into and that these should also be considered.

- **Plan confidence**

The general scoring suggests a reasonable level of confidence in the DWMP to address the risks faced and the ability to meet these at the right time (both >3/5). There was a recurring comment about a lack of detail on locations for proposed works and the investment that will be allocated to this programme. Several respondents stated that without appropriate investment and joined up thinking with other plans and partners, the DWMP will not achieve this purpose. There were several calls to see further details related to the works being proposed as part of the Storm Overflow Action Plan, which, due to timings, were not able to be included within the draft document. These will be shared in the spring and included within the final DWMP. It is also worth noting that the majority of respondents believed that the DWMP "mostly" meets our company's purpose.



- **General comments**

The views of the online DWMP were mixed, with some finding it a helpful way to visualise the data and others feeling it needed to be more user friendly. Some respondents felt it would have been helpful to have a short summary document highlighting the key information.

Some responses requested that certain key catchments had additional information included following discussions, as well as further reference to other strategic plans in the area.

Regulator feedback

In addition to their consultation responses, our regulators held individual meetings with all sewerage companies to provide additional information and to outline some expectations for the final DWMP. A new deadline for the final DWMP has been offered to give companies enough time to fully represent these additional requirements.

Therefore, we are now looking to publish the final DWMP by the end of the May 2023.

Next steps

Over the next six months we are completing several actions to finalise our DWMP ready for publication. We are:

1. Holding meetings with stakeholders who requested further discussions in their consultation response.
2. Incorporating the views, challenges and suggestions from the consultation into our final DWMP.
3. Completing our Statement of Response to publish alongside the final DWMP.
4. Updating our DWMP document to reflect the comments, and creating a new summary document.

By February 2023 we will share with our stakeholders how we intend to meet the targets set within Defra's Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan. All consultation comments will be incorporated into our final plan which will be published by the end of May 2023.

Finally, thank you again for your input to the DWMP so far and we look forward to working with you as we progress through to publishing the final DWMP and beyond.

Kind regards,

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