

Water Scarcity Group

Tuesday 15 July 2026, 14:30–16:30

1. Chair's introduction

The Chair welcomed members and noted those joining the Water Scarcity Group for the first time.

2. Fens Reservoir

Anglian Water updated the Group on the Fens Reservoir, including progress on design, source reassessment and the current delivery timetable. The reservoir remains a critical strategic infrastructure project for long-term water supply resilience and growth in the Cambridge area. The Group discussed risks around environmental consenting, cost, deliverability and the treatment of the scheme in Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) 2029 and mitigations.

Action(s):

- **Defra to consider** how Fens Reservoir can be treated pragmatically in WRMP29, to ensure continued delivery and investment.
- Future **Water Scarcity Group agenda** to include a focused item on the Fens Reservoir, WRMP29 treatment, key assumptions, risks and steps needed to maintain confidence in the 2036 delivery date.

3. Water Efficiency Cambridgeshire Fund

MOSL updated the Group on Round One of the Water Efficiency Cambridgeshire Fund. Twenty-two applications have been approved, representing around £1.25 million of grant funding and estimated savings of approximately 628,000 litres of water per day. The Group welcomed the breadth of applications and noted the need to capture learning for future funding approaches.

Action(s):

- MOSL to return to the Water Scarcity Group in the autumn with an implementation update and lessons learned.
- MOSL to work with delivery partners to ensure there is no overlap across programmes in the government's water efficiency package/programme.

4. Future funding strategy

MHCLG outlined early thinking on a further phase of the Cambridge water efficiency programme. The Group discussed lessons from current delivery, including the value of fund-based approaches, non-household interventions and household measures. The Group also noted the need for robust evidence on water savings to support planning decisions and future growth.

Action(s):

- MHCLG to develop proposals for the next phase of the water efficiency programme and bring them back to a future Water Scarcity Group meeting.
- WSG members to consider how future funding could better align non-household, agricultural and other water efficiency interventions.

5. Greater Cambridge Development Corporation

MHCLG updated the Group on the proposed role of the Greater Cambridge Development Corporation in relation to water supply and water infrastructure. The Group noted that the Development Corporation will support an infrastructure-first approach to growth, using planning powers and delivery capability to integrate land, infrastructure and investment.

Action(s):

- MHCLG, GCDC and relevant partners to develop a transition plan for the GCDC to stand up water-related functions.

6. Government work on the water regulatory framework

Defra updated the Group on their work to explore alternative ways of finding, storing or saving water by working with organisations outside the main water companies. Potential options include Canal and River Trust assets, mine water, Network Rail assets and farm reservoir proposals. The Group noted that this work remains relevant to Cambridge and wider regional planning.

Action(s):

- Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID) to lead an alternative options workshop in the autumn.
- Defra, RAPID and relevant partners to continue assessing third-party water supply options and consider any implications for Cambridge and wider regional water resource planning.

7. Programme Management Office update

The Group discussed future project management reporting, delivery progress on water efficiency measures, monitoring issues, the Agricultural Water Resilience Grant Scheme and communications report publication plans. The Group noted positive feedback on the Cambridge work at the Water Delivery Task Force.

Action(s):

- MHCLG to prepare a short project management snapshot for the next meeting, covering key achievements, issues, risks and successes.
- WSG members to review the project slide pack and flag any slides that are outdated, no longer needed or could be removed.
- GCDC and the Environment Agency to continue work to resolve monitoring issues for installed water efficiency devices.

8. Any other business

The next **Water Scarcity Group** meeting is scheduled for **2 September 14:00 – 16:00**.