
Our Drought Plan 2027

What does it mean for you?

Our Essex & Suffolk Water region is one of the driest in the country. We provide water to 2.1 million customers in mid and south Essex, the London Boroughs of Barking & Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge, north east Suffolk and the Great Yarmouth area of Norfolk. The essential needs of our customers and caring for the environment are at the heart of everything we do.

Water in our Essex & Suffolk region comes from rivers, groundwater-fed lakes and water-bearing rock known as aquifers. We split our region into four Water Resource Zones (WRZ). Water for our Essex WRZ comes from local rivers including the Chelmer, Blackwater, Stour, Roman River and Sandon Brook, which support reservoirs at Abberton and Hanningfield.

In a drought year, two thirds of water supplied comes from within the Essex WRZ, with the rest transferred in from outside the area because water from our local rivers is not enough to meet demand.

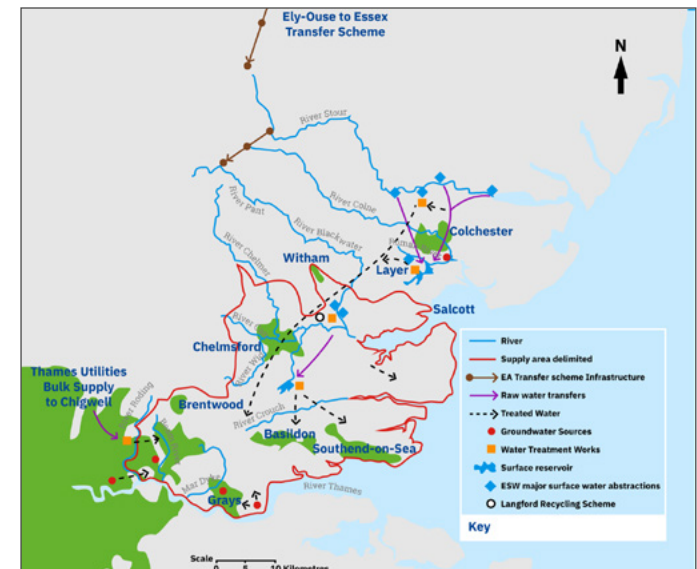
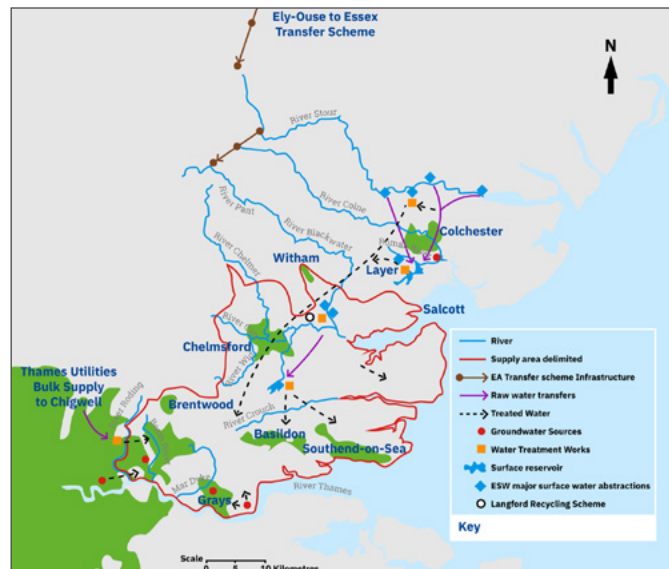
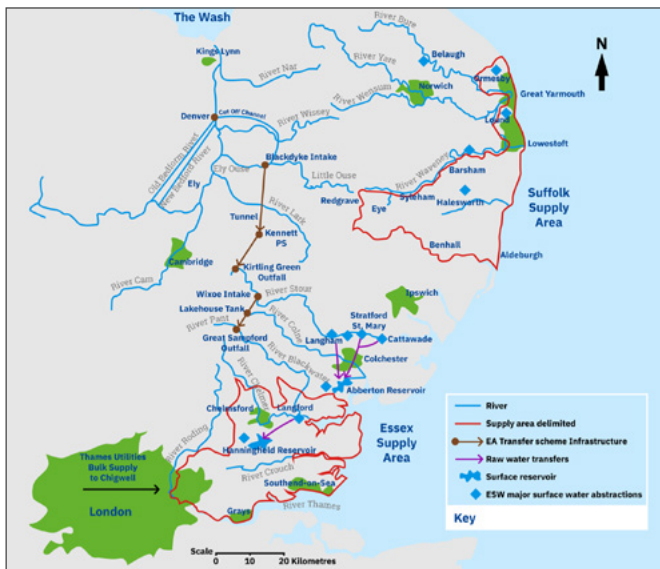
There are three Water Resource Zones in Suffolk. The Blyth and Hartismere WRZs are mostly supplied from the Chalk and Crag aquifers and the Northern Central WRZ uses water from the Rivers Waveney and Bure and groundwater-fed lakes at Ormesby, Lound and Fritton, with the rest coming from the Chalk aquifer.

When planning our water supply, we consider many scenarios such as new housing developments, increases in water-intensive businesses and the effects of climate change. We also plan for drought. **Find out** more about how we plan our water supply.

In Suffolk we are planning to improve the resilience of our water supply with:

- An advanced water recycling plant, capable of producing 11 million litres per day of purified recycled water,
- Strategic network enhancements (a pipeline to connect all three Suffolk WRZs and two covered service reservoirs)
- A new reservoir

These projects are in the very early planning stages.



What is a drought and how do we plan for it?

We live in a changing climate where hot weather and droughts are becoming more frequent. A drought occurs when water levels in rivers, reservoirs and aquifers – water stored naturally in underground rock – drop after a prolonged period of dry weather. We cannot allow these water sources to run dry by taking too much water because it could damage the natural environment.

We monitor our water resources all year round, looking at factors such as river flows and reservoir levels, demand from customers - which goes up in hot, dry weather - and long range weather forecasts, working with partners in government, regulators and the water industry.

What do we do in a drought?

In a drought, we are committed to supplying you with the water you need, whilst also protecting the environment. In our Drought Plan, which is a statutory requirement, we look at all eventualities and prepare tactics for dealing with three levels of drought. It follows current legislation and Government guidance. We have produced it after thorough consultation with our regulators and stakeholders.

The plan sets out indicators which trigger our drought response, starting with setting up a Drought Management Group which guides the company through each drought level. Other actions we can take to bolster water supplies in our Essex & Suffolk Water region during drought include:

- Optimising our water treatment works to conserve supplies
- Transferring additional water into Essex via the Ely Ouse to Essex Transfer Scheme
- Operating the Langford water recycling plant
- Operation of the Stour Augmentation Groundwater Scheme
- Operation of the Great Ouse Groundwater Scheme
- A Drought Order to increase the water available for transfer via the Ely Ouse to Essex Transfer Scheme
- Operation of the River Waveney Augmentation Groundwater Scheme
- Moving small volumes of drinking water by road tanker in our Suffolk supply area
- A Drought Permit to make more water available from one of our Suffolk boreholes.

We're sharing this information with you now because you can help us make our water go further. Water is a precious resource.

The Environment Agency is predicting the UK will become drier. We can all play our part in using water wisely, both now and in droughts.

Drought action	What it means to you	Frequency (on average)	
		Essex supply area	Suffolk supply area
Level 1: Appeal for restraint	We use all our communications channels to ask you to use reduce your water use.	1 in 10 years	1 in 5 years
Level 2: Temporary Use Ban	We restrict the use of hosepipes for non-essential activities like watering gardens, cleaning vehicles or patios and filling or topping up swimming pools, paddling pools or ponds.	1 in 20 years	1 in 10 years
Level 3a: Non-essential use ban	We place restrictions on businesses on the use of water for activities such as watering outdoor plants on commercial premises, cleaning any vehicles such as cars, boats, planes and trains and cleaning office block windows.	1 in 50 years	1 in 50 years
Level 3b	We remove any exceptions from Level 2 and 3a bans.		

How often do you need to impose a hosepipe ban?

Due to our careful water resource planning, we have not needed to introduce Level 2 restrictions such as a hosepipe ban since the 1996-98 drought, and we have never needed to impose Level 3 restrictions. However, changes in weather patterns are likely to place an additional strain on our natural resources in the future. This may include increased frequency and duration of drought periods.



How will you find out if Essex & Suffolk Water is affected by a drought?

We have many ways of communicating with you – information in your bills, emails from our Smart Meter team, updates on our website, posts on social media, adverts in the media, newsletters and visits from our community engagement teams such as Sandy and Carlton and Local Action. If there is a drought, we will make sure we keep you up to date by using a variety of communications to suit you.

Drought action	How we will tell you
Level 1: Appeal for restraint	We will use every communication channel available to us to promote water efficiency.
Level 2: Temporary Use Ban	We must place adverts in at least two newspapers in the affected region and put an article on our website one week before introducing a temporary use ban. We will also use social media, media articles, emails, text messages and ask our partners to help us let you know about the ban.
Level 3a: Non-essential use ban	This level targets business users, so we will contact them through the water retailer they use to buy water from us. We'll let you know too, with more communications campaigns and by email.
Level 3b	We will use all appropriate communication channels to inform you of increased restrictions on water use.

What will we do?

During a drought we will ask you to use less water and give you some useful **water saving tips**. At the same time, we will take actions ourselves to reduce water use including:

- Putting extra resources into detecting and fixing leaks
- Fitting water-saving devices in houses and businesses
- Running water-saving workshops in schools and communities
- Reducing water pressure in some areas
- Sending high use alerts to customers
- Encouraging our colleagues to reduce their water use both at home and at work

Water's worth saving

Water's worth saving all year round – even when there isn't a drought. Using less water helps protect local rivers and wildlife, now and in the future. We have plenty of tips to help you use less water on our [website](#).



Saving water in the bathroom

- Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth
- Use a plug in the sink to wash rather than running the water
- Put tissues, wipes, and cotton wool in the bin, not the loo.



Showers and baths

- A typical bath uses around 80 litres of water. Have a four-minute shower instead
- Request for a low-flow shower head: Uses around 6 litres per minute compared to 10-15 litres per minute for a standard shower head
- Aerated shower heads mix air with water to maintain pressure while reducing flow.



Saving water in the garden

- Leave the lawn – resist the urge to water your lawn in dry spells
- Use grass cuttings and mulch to help retain moisture in the soil
- Pick plants that require little watering and group them together
- Water in the early morning or evening to reduce evaporation
- Choose plants with hairy, leathery, waxy, thin needle-like, or tiny leaves to reduce water loss.



Toilets

- Toilets use about 25% of household water. Upgrade to a water-efficient toilet: Dual flush toilets use only 4-6 litres per flush
- Cistern Displacement Device (CDD): Reduces each flush by at least 1 litre
- A leaking toilet can waste up to 400 litres of water per day.



Saving water in the kitchen

- Check for dripping taps and fix them
- Keep a covered jug of cold water in the fridge
- Only boil as much water as you need in the kettle.



Dishwashing

- Dishwashers on eco settings are often more efficient than washing by hand
- Avoid pre-rinsing dishes – scrape them instead
- Use a washing-up bowl to catch excess water.



Laundry

- Fill your washing machine to its recommended load size
- Modern washing machines can use as little as 7.5 litres per kilogram of laundry.



Clever gadgets

- Fit water and energy-efficient appliances
- Use tap inserts, adaptors, aerated shower heads, dual flush toilet retrofits, and shower timers.

How do you know when a drought is over?

There are many factors we consider before declaring a drought over. These include:



Rainfall



Reservoir and groundwater levels and river flows



Customer demand



Time of year



Weather forecasts



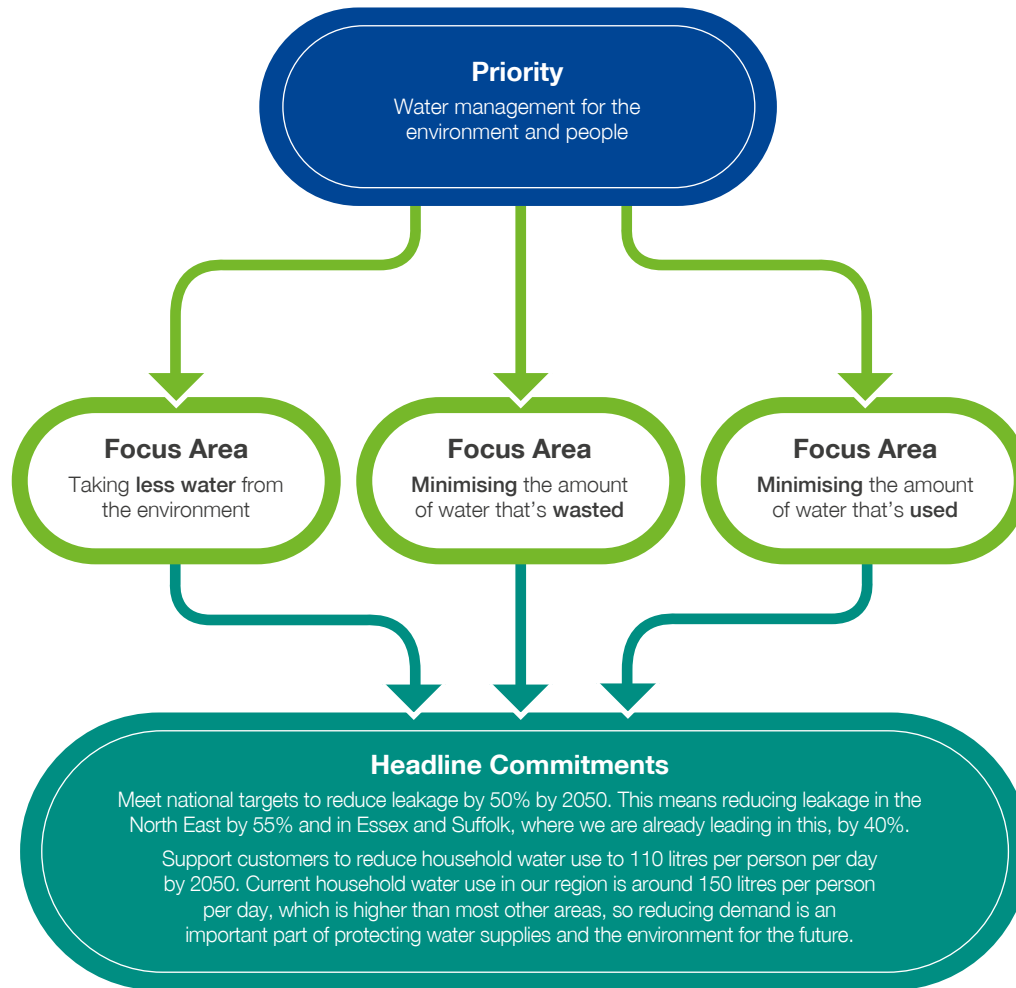
Views of neighbouring water companies and other partners

We will let you know that the drought is over by using the press, social media and our website and we'll inform our colleagues and stakeholders too. However, we would still ask you to use water wisely as we should all do what we can to look after this precious resource.

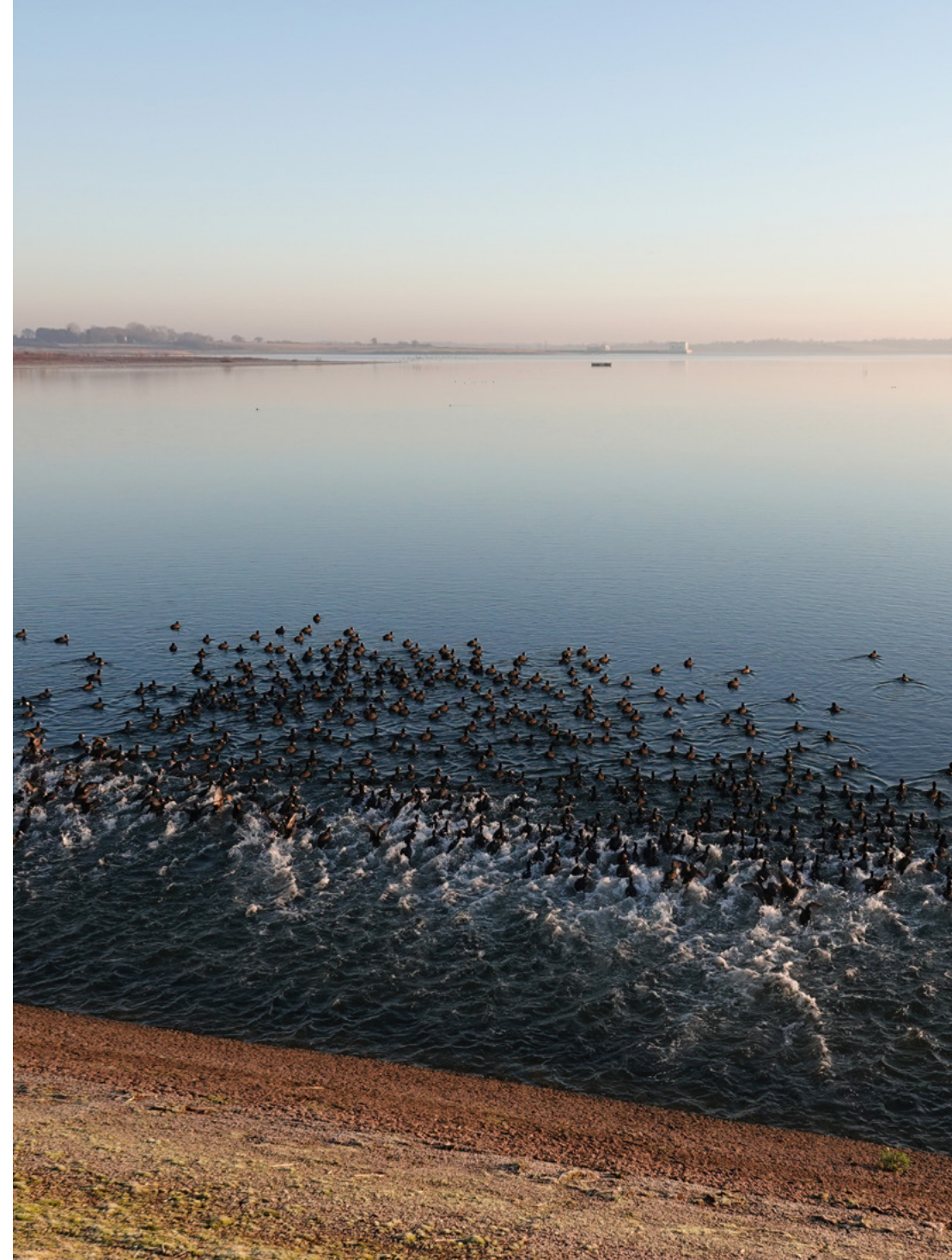


What about the environment?

One of our environmental priorities is to manage water for the environment and people. We aim to take less water from the environment and reduce the amount of water that is used and wasted.



In a drought we will aim to minimise the environmental impacts of continued customer water supply. We will achieve this by identifying any potential effects of our drought actions and how we can reduce them when preparing our Drought Plan. We use this information to tell us which of our drought actions has the lowest environmental impact, and implement those first. We monitor the environment before, during and after a drought to check how its coping and when it has recovered.



Further reading

You can read our **Drought Plan** for full details of all the actions we take to manage our water supply in every level of drought.

Find out more about how we plan our water supply

See what we're doing to protect the environment in our **Environment Strategy**

www.nwg.co.uk

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