

Kent Water Resilience Partnership

Draft Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Kent Water Resilience Partnership ("the Partnership") is established to provide strategic leadership, coordination and collective action to improve water resilience across Kent.

The Partnership will bring together national, regional and local stakeholders to:

- Promote a shared understanding of water resilience challenges facing Kent.
- Influence national policy, regulation and investment decisions.
- Support the development and delivery of Kent's long-term approach to water resilience.
- Identify and remove barriers to resilient water supply and infrastructure.
- Strengthen collaboration between organisations with responsibilities or interests in water management.
- Develop and oversee delivery of a shared action plan aimed at improving resilience for residents, businesses, public services and the environment.

2. Strategic Objectives

The Partnership will support the delivery of Kent's emerging Water Resources Strategy and wider resilience programme by focusing on:

a. Integrated Water Planning

- Embedding water resilience within spatial planning, growth strategies and infrastructure decisions.

b. Supporting Economic Prosperity

- Ensuring water security for homes, businesses, agriculture and key economic sectors.

c. Balancing Supply and Demand

- Promoting water efficiency, conservation and demand reduction.

d. Investment and Infrastructure Resilience

- Supporting investment in water infrastructure, storage, recycling, innovation and alternative supply solutions.

e. Environmental Sustainability

- Protecting and enhancing water-dependent ecosystems through catchment-based and nature-based approaches.

3. Scope

The Partnership is a strategic and advisory body. It does not replace the statutory responsibilities of individual organisations.

Its remit includes:

- Water supply resilience.
- Emergency preparedness and response.
- Long-term water resource planning.
- Climate adaptation and resilience.
- Growth, infrastructure and housing implications.
- Environmental resilience and catchment management.
- Community preparedness and vulnerability support.
- Investment, innovation and emerging technology.
- Policy and regulatory reform affecting Kent.

4. Membership

Membership will be drawn from organisations with a significant role or interest in Kent's water resilience system, including:

Core Members

- Leader and relevant Cabinet Members from KCC
- Water companies serving Kent
- Environment Agency
- Ofwat

- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
- Kent and Medway Resilience Forum
- District and Borough Councils
- Medway Council
- National Highways and key infrastructure providers
- Local Planning Authorities
- KCC Group Leaders

Sector Representatives

- Farming and agricultural organisations
- Chambers of Commerce and business representatives
- Major employers and infrastructure operators
- Environmental organisations
- Consumer and community representatives
- Academic and research institutions

Additional organisations may be invited where their expertise would support the Partnership's objectives.

5. Chairmanship

- The Partnership will be chaired by the Leader of Kent County Council and administrated by Kent County Council.
- A Vice-Chair may be appointed by the Partnership.
- The Chair will provide strategic leadership, set meeting agendas and represent the Partnership externally.

6. Governance and Accountability

The Partnership will:

- Operate through collaboration and consensus.
- Make recommendations to member organisations and relevant decision-making bodies.

- Report periodically on progress, emerging risks and delivery of agreed actions.
- Maintain alignment with the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum, local authority governance arrangements and national policy developments.

The Partnership has no executive decision-making powers over member organisations.

7. Key Functions

The Partnership will have the following key functions:

Strategic Leadership

- Develop a shared understanding of current and future water resilience challenges.
- Provide a forum for discussion of strategic risks and opportunities.

Influence and Advocacy

- Coordinate engagement with government, regulators and industry.
- Advocate for investment and policy changes required to improve resilience in Kent.

Action Planning

- Develop and maintain a Partnership Action Plan.
- Identify lead organisations and timescales for delivery.
- Monitor progress against agreed actions.

Information Sharing

- Promote collaboration and data sharing.
- Encourage the use of evidence and best practice in decision-making.

Emergency and Community Resilience

- Support improved preparedness for water disruption incidents.
- Strengthen arrangements for vulnerable people, communities and businesses.
- Promote public awareness and water efficiency measures.

8. Meetings

- The Partnership will meet at least twice annually.
- Additional meetings may be convened by the Chair where required.

- Task-and-finish groups may be established to support delivery of specific workstreams.
- Meeting papers will normally be circulated at least five working days in advance.

9. Outputs

Key outputs will include:

- A Kent Water Resilience Partnership Action Plan.
- Annual assessment of strategic risks and opportunities.
- Recommendations to government, regulators and water companies.
- Contributions to Kent's Water Resources Strategy.
- Progress reports on resilience initiatives and partnership priorities.

10. Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed after the first year of operation and thereafter at least every two years to ensure they remain fit for purpose.