

Kent Water Summit 2012

Summary of Follow-up Actions

Introduction

The Kent Water Summit was held on 26th June 2012 with the aim to:

- Update on current drought situation
- Alignment of communications and action
- Raise awareness on the condition of water in Kent
- Present new information on agricultural water demand
- Review and challenge current work programmes
- Build consensus on key, long-term, water-related risks and opportunities

Recommendations

The summit called for:

- More rapid introduction of domestic water metering to conserve water.
- Greater understanding of the true value of water through a public awareness campaign.
- Further expansion of facilities for on-farm water storage.
- Increased efficiency in both domestic and agricultural water use.
- Wastewater reuse to be considered more seriously as a potential solution to improving water supplies.
- Greater leadership in and enhanced co-operation to deliver technological innovation in water conservation.
- A drive to cut out all forms of water wastage.

Follow-up actions

A number of actions have been taken to follow up these recommendations:

1. KCC Deputy Cabinet Member, Andrew Wickham met with DEFRA ministers in July to explain the concern from the summit regarding the slow pace of domestic water metering and to stress the importance of domestic water savings. Immediately after the government cabinet reshuffle this was followed up by a letter from KCC Cabinet Member, Bryan Sweetland to Richard Benyon, copied to the new Secretary of State for Environment, Owen Paterson.
2. A new Kent Water Task Group has been set up to address issues of water availability for agriculture and horticulture. This includes representatives from KCC, Kent Economic Board, Kent Forum, EA, South East Water, East Malling Research, National Farmers Union and the Country Land and Business Association. The group held its first meeting on 3rd October and some early actions have already been initiated.

3. Further work has been done on the baseline report on Water Demand for Agriculture and Horticulture by HR Wallingford. The final draft reports are now awaiting approval by UK Water Industry Research.
4. Several summit participants provided comments on the Kent Water Resilience Framework. The draft document entitled 'Analysis of Long Term Risks and Opportunities for Water Systems in Kent' is now being finalised and a methodology developed for mapping these risks and opportunities across the county.
5. A new DEFRA project has started to investigate the link between land management, climate change and water resources. Opportunities are being explored with DEFRA for a Kent case study as part of this project to look at the relationship between land management on the Kent Downs and recharge of the chalk aquifers.
6. The Kent Water Demand Management Group met on 20th September and its revised work programme now describes 28 ongoing or completed water efficiency projects.
7. Support is being sought for a study to investigate the behaviour of high domestic water users. DEFRA and several water companies have expressed interest and a proposal is now being prepared by a specialist consultant.
8. Water companies are preparing their draft Water Resources Management Plans for the period 2015 to 2040. A number of summit participants are involved in this process and the merits of wastewater re-use schemes are being stressed.
9. Innovative water technology businesses are eligible for a number of Kent business support packages. Further information can be found at http://www.kent.gov.uk/business/business_support_centre.aspx. Other forms of support are also being investigated.

Further details on these actions are available from alan.turner@kent.gov.uk