

## Annex 4

### **OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL RESPONSE ON THE EMERGING WEST COUNTRY WATER RESOURCES REGIONAL PLAN Consultation closing date: 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

1. Oxfordshire County Council is responding to this consultation along with the consultations on some of the other emerging water resources regional plans.
2. We believe that West Country Water Resources East (WCWR) and Water Resources South East (WRSE) need to work more closely together, and with adjoining regions, to address water needs, and that such work should lead to changes in the emerging regional plans.
3. Of particular interest, on pages 43 and 66 of the West Country consultation document, it is identified that there is potential for an inter-regional transfer to the South East from the Mendip Quarries Strategic Resources Option which involves repurposing of a quarry in the Mendips as a reservoir once mineral extraction is complete. The earliest completion date is 2042. We have not seen this proposal referred to in the WRSE documents. We agree that such a proposal should be progressed and that further work should be undertaken with a view to confirming the potential for this transfer into the WRSE area.
4. Also on pages 43 and 68 of the document, there is reference to the potential of the Severn to Thames Transfer option including a transfer via the Sharpness canal to Purton (near to the River Severn itself). This would be an inter-regional transfer from the West region to West Country region. Such a transfer could provide for 35 Ml/d. The earliest completion date stated is 2033. In the WRSE documents, the proposal for the Severn to Thames Transfer delivering water to the Thames at a point near Culham in Oxfordshire is seen only as a post-2040 option and we have not been aware of this additional proposal to also transfer water en route to the WCWR area, which would appear to be possible if the Cotswold Canal option is chosen. We note that the Cotswold Canal option is referred to in the RAPID gate one documents as providing for up to 300 Ml/d, and assume that even if 35 Ml/d is made available for the WCWR area, that the scheme would be little different. The WCWR consultation document in fact refers to the full amount of water still being available to WRSE if needed, as it says: 'The linkage we have identified is that if that scheme was progressed to meet the needs of the South East it could potentially have benefit to the West Country. That is because if the South East was not in a drought but the West Country was, that water may be able to travel further down the River Severn or existing canal systems to be abstracted into the supply system of Bristol Water for onward distribution'. We agree this is a matter that the water companies should further explore in order to create best value regional plans. Oxfordshire County Council is also responding to WRSE suggesting that the work to develop the Severn to Thames Transfer proposal should be progressed more quickly.

5. We appreciate the inclusion of a clear table on page 84 of the strategic schemes for the region. We ask that it be amended in future to include more costs rather than indicating that many are not available.
6. Please take the above comments as an answer to your consultation question: *'Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the region?'*