

The Future of RAPID: Consultation Summary

What is RAPID?

The **Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development** (RAPID) brings regulators together to coordinate their input on major water infrastructure projects, helping to progress delivery. Since its creation in 2019, the number of major water supply projects under RAPID oversight has grown from 17 to 30 and RAPID has been recognised for reducing barriers to project development and driving greater cross-sector collaboration. Find out more about RAPID [here](#).

Why is this consultation happening?

England faces a serious water supply challenge. Without action, the country could face a shortfall of 5 billion litres of water per day by 2055 – roughly a third of current supply. Alongside this, **there needs to be consideration given to the increased needs of wastewater and other strategically important infrastructure**, which similarly could benefit from enhanced regulatory coordination and oversight.

In July 2025, the Independent Water Commission (IWC) chaired by Sir Jon Cunliffe published its final report, and **recommendation 75 called for RAPID to be expanded and strengthened**. The Government's White Paper, *A New Vision for Water*, published in January 2026, backed this recommendation and asked RAPID to consult on expanding its role to include wastewater projects and strategically important projects. This consultation delivers on that commitment in respect of provisions for England.

Whose views are being sought?

This consultation has been developed by RAPID in consultation with its regulatory partners following pre-consultation dialogue with a wide range of organisations. We particularly welcome responses from:

- Water companies, delivery partners and regional groups
- Planning, growth and infrastructure authorities
- Environmental and consumer groups

The water sector is at a significant moment of change. The evidence gathered through this consultation will **shape RAPID's remit during the transition period to a new, integrated regulator in England**. This consultation will not be pre-empting what the new regulatory arrangements may be but **will be used to inform them**.

What is the consultation asking?

1. Systems planning

The water sector is moving towards a new planning framework. Two core planning frameworks are proposed – one for the Water Environment and one for Water Supply – supported by a stronger regional water planning function. This will enable more joined-up planning across water companies, farming, local authorities, transport and other sectors, and better cost-benefit analysis at national and regional levels. RAPID already works to ensure consistency between regional plans and project-level delivery. **The consultation asks how RAPID's approach to coordination and delivery-focused role can best complement the changes underway** – by identifying new infrastructure options, managing cross-boundary dependencies and providing national coherence – while supporting better connections between national priorities, regional planning and catchment-level delivery.

2. Delivery and outcomes

Applying for the legal consents needed to build nationally significant infrastructure is a lengthy and complex process. It requires due consideration and ongoing assessment of environmental outcomes, catchment impacts and delivery risks. RAPID helps water companies to engage early with planning and environmental requirements by reviewing detailed information ahead of final plans going into formal statutory processes. **The consultation asks how RAPID might better align its processes with key planning and procurement checkpoints.** This could enable a single set of submissions across regulatory, planning and procurement where possible, while reducing duplication. RAPID has already begun work on this by streamlining its gated process, updating guidance and promoting cross-sector collaboration. We are now exploring whether further steps are needed.

3. Entry criteria

At present, major projects enter the RAPID programme primarily based on scale and complexity. The consultation explores whether this should change. The IWC recommended that RAPID's remit should include projects that do not necessarily meet current size and complexity thresholds but that would still benefit from coordinated regulatory oversight. **The consultation asks whether future entry criteria should focus more on the nature of a project's challenges**, that is, their need for regulatory input and their relative complexity over long timescales. The consultation asks for views on whether this broader, more flexible approach to entry criteria, and how the thresholds should be drawn in practice. It does not assume any or all wastewater infrastructure should come within RAPID's remit; but rather explores where RAPID-style oversight could add value, while helping to streamline existing plans and processes.

4. Scope and remit

RAPID currently oversees water supply infrastructure only. The consultation asks whether the remit should be extended to include two further categories.

Wastewater infrastructure

This covers the collection, treatment and management of domestic sewage, industrial effluent and surface water drainage. Potentially in-scope wastewater activities include: major storm overflow reductions through upgrades to treatment works; improvements to water quality such as phosphorus removal; expansion of water quality monitoring; and enhanced flood and drainage packages. It is considered that large, complex wastewater schemes, similar in character to the Thames Tideway Tunnel – which benefited significantly from regulatory input – could be suitable for RAPID-style oversight if they came forward in the future. **The consultation asks whether this extension is right, what value RAPID could add, and how its role could be designed.**

Other strategically important projects

This involves a broader range types of infrastructure that fall outside the formal scope of existing water resource planning frameworks. They place significant demand on water and wastewater systems and may benefit from more coordinated regulatory input. Examples include infrastructure serving data centres and industrial clusters, where demand is high and long-term; infrastructure to manage bioresources, particularly in response to sludge-to-land practices; city-wide sustainable drainage solutions; and major drainage upgrades requiring development consent. **The consultation asks which, if any, should be brought within RAPID's remit and what the priorities are.**

What is not covered?

RAPID will consult separately on its remit in Wales at a later date, to reflect differences in the Welsh regulatory landscape and the timeline for establishing a new Welsh regulator.

What happens next?

Evidence and views gathered will inform post-consultation recommendations. RAPID will publish an outcome summary, expected in autumn 2026.

How to respond

To share your response please [click here](#) to visit our consultation platform.

If for any reason you cannot submit your responses via Citizen Space, you can also email your response to: rapid@ofwat.gov.uk or send by post to: Consultation: the Future of RAPID Ofwat, Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham, B5 4UA. The consultation opens on 9 June and closes 21 July 2026. If you have questions or would like to discuss any aspect of the consultation please contact rapid@ofwat.gov.uk