

Regulators' Alliance for Progressing
Infrastructure Development

June 2026



Consultation: the future of RAPID



About this document

The Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID) is a partnership between three water regulators: Ofwat, the Environment Agency (EA) and the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) established in 2019. It also works closely with Natural England and Natural Resources Wales.

In July 2025, the Independent Water Commission (IWC) published its final report, recommending that RAPID in England and Wales should be expanded and strengthened to further support strategic infrastructure delivery ('IWC Recommendation 75').

The UK Government's White Paper, *A new vision for water*¹ was published on 22 January 2026 and stated that RAPID should continue to coordinate and assure major infrastructure delivery and asked RAPID to consult on reviewing its remit to include wastewater and other strategic projects, aiming to enhance regulatory coordination, accelerate delivery, and strengthen infrastructure resilience across regions.

This consultation, supported by Defra, seeks stakeholder views on the future of RAPID during the transition period while the new regulatory arrangements referenced in the White Paper are being put in place. Government has outlined its intention to establish a new single regulator for water. This consultation will not be pre-empting these new arrangements and responses will be used to inform policy and operational development of the functions of the new regulator.

This consultation covers England only. We will consult separately on RAPID's remit in Wales, reflecting differences in the Welsh regulatory landscape and the timescales for establishing the new Welsh regulator.

¹ [A new vision for water - GOV.UK](#)

Executive summary

IWC Recommendation 75 proposed that RAPID should be expanded and strengthened to support strategic infrastructure delivery. In particular, the recommendation highlights: expanding RAPID's scope to include wastewater projects and other strategically important projects that do not meet current thresholds; continuing to coordinate delivery through a gated process and support projects to secure permits/consents; improving engagement and coordination with regulators in Wales; and aligning submissions with key planning stages and procurement checkpoints to reduce duplication.

We are seeking stakeholder views on:

- defining the role of RAPID alongside systems planning;
- how RAPID can improve regulatory coordination to accelerate delivery of major water infrastructure;
- defining the entry criteria for projects entering the RAPID programme and consider the thresholds which could trigger RAPID involvement;
- RAPID's scope and remit including wastewater and strategically important projects which do not currently have RAPID oversight.

This consultation covers England only. We will consult separately on RAPID's remit in Wales, reflecting differences in the Welsh regulatory landscape and the timescales for establishing the new Welsh regulator.

We welcome evidence-based responses on the benefits, risks, costs and practicality of any changes to RAPID's remit proposed in this consultation.

1. Introduction and context

1.1 Purpose of this consultation

This is a consultation about RAPID's future role, prompted by the Independent Water Commission's (IWC) Final Report², Recommendation 75 and the Government's stated support in "A new vision for water"³ for RAPID to consult on reviewing its remit including wastewater and other strategic projects as well as RAPID's role alongside regional systems planners in England and a national system planner for Wales.

RAPID currently oversees the development of water supply Strategic Resource Options (SROs)⁴. This consultation will explore whether this remit should be expanded to include wastewater and other strategic projects during the transition period to a new regulator. This consultation will not be pre-empting what the new regulatory arrangements may be but will be used to inform them.

This consultation covers England only. We will consult separately on RAPID's remit in Wales, reflecting differences in the Welsh regulatory landscape and the timescales for establishing the new Welsh regulator.

1.2 RAPID: background

The Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID) is a partnership between three water regulators: Ofwat, the Environment Agency (EA) and the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) established in 2019. It also works closely with Natural England and Natural Resources Wales. Its creation followed growing evidence of the scale of future pressures on our water resources. In the same year, the National Infrastructure Commission projected that by the mid-2030s the UK would require new water supplies equivalent to the consumption of more than nine million people, as set out in the National Infrastructure Commission report *Preparing for a Drier Future*⁵. The Environment Agency's first National Framework for Water Resources⁶ further highlighted the scale of long-term water deficits expected in England and Wales by 2050, a message reinforced in its most recent 2025 update⁷.

RAPID was created to help the water infrastructure sector tackle long-term challenges by helping to identify and accelerate the development of new strategic resource options. It works to remove barriers to developing joint water infrastructure and assesses the feasibility

² [Independent Water Commission Final Report](#)

³ [A new vision for water - GOV.UK](#)

⁴ [Types of projects in the RAPID pipeline - Ofwat](#)

⁵ [Preparing for a drier future: England's water infrastructure needs](#)

⁶ [National Framework for Water Resources 2020: meeting our future water needs - GOV.UK](#)

⁷ [National Framework for Water Resources 2025: water for growth, nature and a resilient future - GOV.UK](#)

of strategic resource options (SROs). At the time of RAPID's inception, the water sector initially faced several challenges in delivering these complex infrastructure solutions, including:

- Limited institutional memory in the sector as the UK had not built water infrastructure on the scale now required for over thirty years.
- Many of the proposed solutions depend on collaboration between two or more water companies, requiring them to work across company boundaries and navigate complex regulatory and commercial issues.
- Ensuring value for money for customers by developing projects efficiently.
- Coordinating input from all water regulators to overcome regulatory barriers and provide a clear, aligned approach to delivery.

RAPID brings regulators together as projects progress through a gated process to help address some of the problems listed above, provide the oversight, guidance, coordination, and support needed for this major programme of new investment.

1.3 How RAPID has evolved

Since RAPID was established in 2019, we have used ongoing evaluation and regular stakeholder engagement to shape how we work. This has included structured feedback from partner regulators, water companies, regional groups and delivery partners, alongside lessons learned from projects as they progress through the gated process.

As the programme has matured, this evidence has led us to evolve our role further upstream in the development cycle. Alongside delivery assurance, we have increasingly focused on stimulating new water resource options and strengthening early problem definition. We have commissioned work to consider future approaches to strategic planning and drawn on experience from other sectors. This includes thinking about how “national system planning” for major infrastructure could work for water (broadly analogous to the national planning role for the transmission energy network), while remaining complementary to regional planning.

In recent years, Ofwat has also invested in a strengthened major project delivery function. Beyond the development and option development focus of RAPID, the creation of the Major Projects team recognises the specialist skills and relationships needed to deliver complex, multi-party infrastructure successfully.

The RAPID programme has expanded significantly through Price Review 2024 (PR24), reflecting both the growing need for strategic water resource solutions and the value of coordinated regulatory engagement. The initial RAPID programme at PR19 included 17 Strategic Resource Options (SROs). This portfolio has since grown to 30 SROs since PR24.

RAPID continues to work with water companies and third parties to explore additional options that could be added to the future programme to help address future projected water need.

1.4 Independent Water Commission Recommendation 75

In July 2025, the Independent Water Commission (IWC) published its final report⁸ which provided a comprehensive review of the water sector. The report set out a number of recommendations for reform of the sector, many of which the UK government has taken forward in its White Paper: *A new vision for water*⁹ (hereafter referred to as the White Paper) which we discuss further below.

This consultation responds to Recommendation 75 of the IWC report which states that:

⁸ [Independent Water Commission Final Report](#)

⁹ [A new vision for water: white paper - GOV.UK](#)

Recommendation 75: RAPID, in England and Wales, should be expanded and strengthened to support strategic infrastructure delivery.

The scope of RAPID should be expanded to include wastewater projects and strategically important projects that do not meet current size and complexity thresholds across England and Wales. It will be for the UK and Welsh governments to define which strategically important projects are complex or high risk and which should be included in an expanded programme. RAPID should continue to work with water companies and the independent systems planners, as outlined in Chapter 2, given the key role they would play in the oversight of major projects in a region. The exact nature of the interaction with the systems planners and the supervisory approach will depend on the response to recommendations in Chapters 2 and 5. RAPID should continue to coordinate major or strategically important infrastructure project delivery through a gated process and support projects to gain the permits and consents needed before construction.

There has been limited engagement between NRW and the current RAPID programme. There should be greater engagement and coordination with the regulators in Wales to ensure benefits of the programme are being realised.

When considering an expansion of RAPID, lessons regarding the development of the Ofgem's Accelerated Strategic Transmission Investment (ASTI) regulatory framework should be taken into account. Ofgem has recently implemented the ASTI regulatory framework to streamline the previous Large Onshore Transmission Investment gated process. ASTI's purpose is to deliver large projects more quickly by providing automatic development funding, providing access to early construction funding, and incentivising delivery with rewards and penalties.¹³⁰⁸ Ofgem estimate the ASTI process will reduce delivery time for large projects (defined as those costing more than £100 million) by around 4 years.

Streamlining RAPID to avoid duplication with planning consent processes, such as DCOs, would reduce resourcing need from companies. Water companies report that RAPID often requires high levels of planning detail prior to the DCO process requiring it, which can be inappropriate for the stage projects are in. RAPID should seek to align with key DCO stages and procurement check points, to reduce duplication by enabling one set of submissions for all processes.

Water companies could benefit from a more joined up approach across the industry

Some water companies may not be well placed to deliver major infrastructure projects. There is a need to facilitate a more joined-up approach to infrastructure delivery across water companies to ensure expertise and best practice are shared and infrastructure delivery is efficient. This is especially critical for types of projects that are unlikely to be needed regularly in each water company region, such as water transfer

projects or reservoirs. Greater standardisation may also provide efficiency benefits for core infrastructure elements such as pumping stations or other smaller infrastructure.

1.5 A new vision for water: White Paper

Following the IWC report, "A new vision for water: White Paper" builds on the recommendations and outlines the UK government's commitment to strengthening the regulatory framework for the water sector. It endorsed IWC Recommendation 75 and supported RAPID consulting on reviewing its remit, including potential expansion to wastewater and other strategically important projects.

A new vision for water: White Paper: "As we progress new infrastructure through planning, we will ensure the Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID) continues to coordinate and assure major infrastructure delivery, supporting faster delivery and avoiding duplication before being incorporated into the new regulator. We will support RAPID's consultation on reviewing its remit to include wastewater and other strategic projects, aiming to enhance regulatory coordination, accelerate delivery, and strengthen infrastructure resilience across regions" (p. 40)

1.6 Purpose and scope of this consultation

This consultation is in response to the IWC recommendation 75 and subsequent White Paper and seeks views on how RAPID could implement Recommendation 75, including:

- **RAPID's role alongside system planning:** how RAPID's delivery-focused role should complement regional system planning arrangements and could supplement national co-ordination and coherence. This reflects the ongoing evolution of RAPID's role as described in section 1.3 which has expanded from project assurance into earlier-stage coordination, option development and broader strategic oversight.
- **How regulatory coordination could be improved:** how the gated process can better align with planning stages and procurement checkpoints to reduce duplication.
- **Definition of entry criteria:** what criteria should trigger RAPID involvement. For example, complexity, long time horizons, uncertainty, environmental sensitivity, interdependencies, and the need for multi-regulator alignment.
- **RAPID's scope and remit:** whether RAPID should go beyond Strategic Resource Options to include wastewater and other strategically important infrastructure

projects and how these could be defined. Considering what types of projects would (or would not) benefit from RAPID oversight.

Recommendation 75 and the White paper both mention Wales in terms of the expansion of RAPID and engagement with Natural Resources Wales. We will be consulting on this part of the recommendation at a later date.

2. Consultation proposals

2.1 RAPID's role alongside systems planning

The IWC report and the White Paper recognise that the current water planning frameworks are complex and inefficient, and have proposed to improve the water planning model to a comprehensive systems planning framework. The new water systems planning framework would consolidate existing water industry plans and processes into two core planning frameworks – one for the Water Environment and one for Water Supply. These two frameworks will enable cross-sectoral plans to be developed, underpinned by consistent assumptions and metrics at national and regional levels, as well as better options development and option cost-benefit analysis.

The new water system planning frameworks will be supported by a more coordinated regional water planning function. This will enable a more holistic and coordinated approach to planning for the water environment and water supply, supporting delivery of national strategic objectives such as economic growth, housing targets and nature recovery, while also enabling regional and local priorities to be upheld. Regional water planning will also enable collaboration between key stakeholders including water companies, farming, local authorities and transport, to identify lower-cost and higher-impact solutions to improve water quality and supply.

The IWC report and the White Paper both highlight the need for strategic national oversight. By the end of 2026, the government intends to consult on the first iteration of strategic guidance for the water system. This guidance will set out the government's priorities for PR29, alongside longer-term outcomes for the wider water system. It will also provide a framework to help decision-makers balance national priorities and manage trade-offs.

RAPID already works closely with water companies and regional planning groups by overseeing a national pipeline of strategic resource options and supporting consistency between regional plans and project-level delivery. Through the gated process, RAPID helps to surface interdependencies between schemes, highlight issues and sequencing risks, and ensure that projects are being developed in a way that supports wider system resilience.

As set out in section 1.3, RAPID has already evolved beyond project assurance to take on elements of national strategic oversight, including managing the SRO pipeline, supporting the identification of new options, and helping to address cross-cutting risks and interdependencies. Additionally, RAPID has supported national water resources modelling since 2020. This has seen collaboration with the Universities of Oxford and Manchester and ongoing support to the EA modelling team. That team is now working towards publishing phase iii of the national system simulator work and we are working with them to understand how our current modelling capacity could best develop to support the regulatory structure set out in the White Paper.

We consider there is further scope for RAPID to build on this national strategic oversight role for the planning and delivery of future strategic schemes by guiding water companies, the new regional water planning function and other sectors. The new regional water planning function is likely to be established with the introduction of the single water regulator as well as through the upcoming the Clean Water Bill¹⁰. While this wider reform is taking place, there could be opportunities to make improvements in parallel.

IWC recommendation 75 suggests that RAPID should continue to work with water companies and the systems planners, given the key role RAPID plays in the oversight of major projects in a region. As the sector moves toward more formalised system planning arrangements, we are keen to understand how RAPID's existing co-ordination and delivery focused role could best complement the various planning functions and support the translation of strategic plans into deliverable infrastructure while avoiding duplication of responsibilities. Given the uncertainty around the future regulatory landscape, we are seeking stakeholder views to inform our understanding of the way forward, rather than consulting on specific options at this stage.

Questions

1. To what extent do you support or oppose national oversight of the programme of strategic infrastructure projects from conception to delivery?

Select one option from the following:

Strongly support, somewhat support, neither support or oppose, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose.

Please briefly explain your answer below.

2. What benefits and/or limitations, if any, do you consider national oversight brings to the development of strategic water resource infrastructure?

Please provide evidence or examples where possible.

3. How should water companies, regional groups and other relevant stakeholder groups be involved in setting the national direction for the programme?

Please set out the principles, barriers, limitations or governance arrangements you believe should apply.

¹⁰ [A new vision for water - GOV.UK](#)

2.2 Accelerating delivery of major water infrastructure through regulatory coordination

Insufficient attention to key planning and environmental matters during the early stages of project development is a major cause of delay in applications for Development Consent Orders (DCOs) under the Planning Act 2008. Failure to address these issues comprehensively early in the project's development, can lead to costly late-stage changes to the project to resolve outstanding concerns after an application has been submitted. Post-submission change requests are becoming an increasingly common feature of the DCO process, adding complexity to examinations, and increasing the number of hearing days required, driving up overall project costs.

RAPID operates a gated process designed to provide progressive scrutiny as projects mature, helping to de-risk schemes before major investment decisions are taken. This includes coordinating multi-regulator input, setting common expectations for evidence, and encouraging early consideration, and progress towards resolution of, planning, environmental permitting and commercial risks. RAPID has already undertaken work to improve its processes, including:

- Streamlining the RAPID gated process and Ofwat Major Projects procurement processes.
- Updating the guidance to add requirements that should assist companies with their planning and consenting processes.
- Improving gated process guidance and working with companies to embed these changes.
- Promoting cross-sector collaboration and innovation with water companies and other organisations (eg Canal and River Trust, Mine Remediation Authority)
- Capturing and applying lessons learned from leading projects.
- Supporting a more joined-up regional approach by working with the all-company working group.
- Working with Ofwat Major Projects team to develop guidance on market engagement, early project set-up and delivery architecture, good practice for engaging with regulators, and templates for multi-party legal agreements.
- Investigating how early cost publication can affect credibility.

IWC recommendation 75 suggests RAPID should align with planning stages and procurement checkpoints to reduce duplication, enabling one set of submissions where possible. RAPID has already undertaken work to improve its processes. We are gathering stakeholder views on whether there are additional activities we should undertake to ensure that environmental outcomes, catchment impacts and delivery risks are considered earlier and more consistently, while reducing duplication where possible.

Questions

4. Should RAPID have an enhanced role to identify and facilitate additional resource development options for further consideration by regional water system planners and water companies?

Select: yes, maybe, no.

Please briefly explain your reasons and any perceived gaps below.

5. What more can RAPID do to assure major projects during early development to help reduce delivery risks and enable robust applications to statutory authorities for planning and environmental consent?

On a scale of 1-10, please rate the following options in order of importance (1 = most important, 10 = least important), then provide any further comments below.

- a) Strengthen challenge and escalation to resolve important issues earlier.
- b) Troubleshoot common problems, share learning and best practice.
- c) Increase the frequency, transparency and/or quality of information flows.
- d) Engage with wider catchment demands across sectors.
- e) Secure government backing to support programme delivery.

6. In what ways, if any, should RAPID do more to help determine national priorities, trade-offs and sequencing across the programme?

Please set out the principles or arrangements you believe should apply.

2.3 Future entry criteria into RAPID programme

Expanding RAPID's remit could include refining the entry criteria into the programme. Currently under the PR24 methodology, projects are considered suitable for RAPID oversight where they are strategic in nature, high-risk, or high-complexity, and where enhanced multi-regulator coordination would materially improve deliverability and value for money¹¹. RAPID's focus remains on Strategic Resource Options (SROs) which are major infrastructure schemes that are nationally or regionally significant, involve cross-company or cross-regional delivery, or present material planning, environmental, commercial or regulatory risks.

Projects entering the RAPID programme are expected to address clearly evidenced long-term needs, align with regional and national water resources plans, and demonstrate the potential to deliver improved outcomes for customers and the environment. In line with the PR24 methodology, RAPID applies a gated assurance process, with flexibility over timing and evidence requirements. This ensures that regulatory scrutiny is proportionate with project

¹¹ [11.-PR24-final-determinations-Major-Projects-development-and-delivery.pdf](#)

maturity and risk, while protecting customers and supporting efficient progression of investment.

Future entry criteria could be expanded to focus on:

- Multi-party complexity ie projects where complexity is a defining feature for needing RAPID involvement
- Projects with issues that would benefit from early cross-regulator alignment
- Not being based on scale alone ie scale is not a deciding factor by itself
- Material projects with conflicting policy drivers (ie where compromises and/or clearer policy guidance may be needed)
- Projects that would benefit from ring fenced and phased development funding (to support longer planning and earlier development activity)
- Cross-AMP projects, particularly where RAPID can provide:
 - earlier visibility of future funding needs, and
 - support for potential changes / in-period adjustment

IWC Recommendation 75 proposes that RAPID's remit should be expanded to include projects that do not meet current size and complexity thresholds. We are seeking stakeholder views on whether RAPID's remit should be expanded and the potential criteria for inclusion of projects within an expanded RAPID programme.

Questions

7. To what extent do you support or oppose the expansion of entry criteria for projects entering the RAPID programme?

Select one option from the following:

Strongly support, somewhat support, neither support or oppose, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose.

Please briefly explain your answer setting out your preferences and any reservations below.

8. If the entry criteria are expanded, should this happen as a priority during the transition period or in the longer term as infrastructure challenges evolve under a new single regulator?

Select one option from the following: as a priority, over longer term.

Please briefly explain your answer.

9. How important are the following criteria in deciding whether a project should enter the RAPID programme?

On a scale of 1-10, please rate the following criteria in order of importance and provide any further comments below (1 = most important, 10 = least important).

- a. The project involves significant multi-party complexity;

- b. The project would benefit from early cross-regulator alignment;
- c. The project involves conflicting policy drivers or trade-offs that require regulatory input;
- d. The project spans more than one cost control and asset management period;
- e. The project may require ring-fenced, phased development funding
- f. The project may require in-period adjustment to development funding to support long-term planning;

The project is nationally or regionally significant for resilience, the environment or customers.

2.4 Scope and remit: should projects other than Strategic Resource Options be included in RAPID oversight

RAPID already plays a central role in coordinating and assuring the development of strategic water resource solutions, primarily focused on long term, large, complex supply-side projects such as reservoirs, transfers, desalination plants. Its remit also covers water recycling and mine-water remediation schemes enabling a more circular approach to wastewater management.

Through the gated process, RAPID provides structured oversight of feasibility, deliverability, scheduling, efficient development costs, environmental risk, and interdependencies across regions and companies. This has supported earlier identification of risks, greater consistency in evidence provided to regulators, and improved coordination between Ofwat, the Environment Agency, DWI, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales.

IWC Recommendation 75 builds on this existing role by proposing that RAPID's remit should be expanded and strengthened, including consideration of whether similar oversight and coordination would add value if applied to wastewater projects and other strategically important infrastructure that currently sits outside RAPID's formal scope.

2.4.1 Wastewater projects

Wastewater projects cover the collection and treatment of water that has been used and discharged, including domestic sewage, industrial effluent, and surface water drainage. For consideration in this consultation we have taken it to include storm overflow reductions (primarily through upgrades to existing wastewater treatment works), improvements to sanitary determinants, expansion of continuous water quality monitoring, and enhanced phosphorus removal capabilities. Other potential in-scope activities could include flood and drainage packages, water reuse and place-based resilience programmes but we will cover some of these under the "Other strategic water infrastructure projects" section below.

Under PR24, the sector secured the largest environmental investment programme in its history, amounting to £24 billion to reduce pollution, cut storm overflow harm, improve river water quality and support biodiversity. A significant portion of this investment is directed towards enabling companies to meet their Water Industry National Environment Programme¹² (WINEP) obligations. Most WINEP projects are relatively small, site-specific, and integrated with existing treatment sites and systems.

PR24 did not identify any new wastewater schemes that met the criteria for inclusion in the Major Water Infrastructure Programme¹³, which applies to projects valued at over £200 million and technically discrete enough to be delivered via the Direct Procurement for Customers (DPC) or Specified Infrastructure Project Regulations (SIPR) model. The only waste water project that does meet these criteria is the Thames Tideway Tunnel (TTT)¹⁴ which has already been constructed. We are not currently aware of any future potential waste water projects of this type in the next several years. This raises questions about whether RAPID, which is designed to provide cross-regulatory, cross-boundary support for large, complex, multi-company infrastructure would add meaningful value to projects of this scale and nature in the short to medium term.

Expanding RAPID's remit to include wastewater would require additional capabilities and careful resourcing, including clear governance and leadership arrangements to maintain focus on RAPID's core programme during any transition. An expanded remit may also involve a wider set of delivery partners (eg local authorities and highways bodies), requiring clearly defined interfaces, roles and decision rights.

In considering how any expanded role would operate, differences in planning and delivery arrangements across the sector may affect the appropriate level for coordination (for example, where solutions are developed and delivered at company or catchment level, with limited cross-regional overlap, versus where there is benefit in stronger regional coordination alongside a national role).

Large wastewater schemes could emerge in the future and these could benefit from the type of cross-regulatory coordination RAPID offers. As mentioned earlier a useful historical precedent is the Thames Tideway Tunnel, the first project delivered under the SIPR model. Although developed before RAPID was established, it benefitted significantly from aligned regulatory engagement throughout its lifecycle, allowing issues to be addressed at pace. RAPID could play a constructive role in facilitating the development of similar major wastewater projects to Thames Tideway Tunnel if they were identified in the future. The composition of stakeholders would likely differ, for example, the DWI may have less involvement, while organisations such as Natural England and the Environment Agency may take on greater prominence.

¹²

¹³ [The RAPID gated process and the proposed water resource solutions - Ofwat](#)

¹⁴ [Thames Tideway - Ofwat](#)

IWC Recommendation 75 proposes that RAPID's scope should be expanded to include wastewater projects that do not meet current size and complexity thresholds across England. We are seeking stakeholder views on whether they think wastewater infrastructure projects should be included in RAPID's remit and what value RAPID could add.

2.4.2 Other strategic water infrastructure projects

There are strategically important projects which fall outside the formal scope of Strategic Resource Options (SROs) and Water Resource Management Plans (WRMPs), yet still place significant demand on water and wastewater infrastructure within their respective regions. These types of projects could benefit from RAPID style oversight. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Large non-household growth hubs for AI/data centre-type demand or industrial hubs with longer planning horizons and multiple stakeholders where a coordinated set of positions from regulators would help delivery.
- Infrastructure to manage bioresources, particularly in response to the growing risks associated with sludge-to-land, where a national strategy supported by regional coordination could add value. This is more likely to be relevant in the longer term than during the near-term transition.
- Sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) particularly where these are planned at a city-wide scale.
- Major DWMP (Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan) identified upgrades, for example new works, tunnel, requiring development consent orders.
- City wide infrastructure solutions to waste water flood/storm overflow issue.
- Connecting industrial clusters to public water supply or develop a specific non-public water supply resource.

Although these schemes are not technically classified as SROs, they may still require enhanced oversight, regulatory coordination and third-party engagement to ensure the sector remains responsive to evolving infrastructure needs and regional supply pressures.

IWC Recommendation 75 proposes that RAPID's scope should be expanded to include strategically important projects that do not meet current size and complexity thresholds across England. We are seeking stakeholder views on the type of strategic project that could benefit from RAPID oversight.

Questions

10. What types of wastewater and other strategically important projects should be included within RAPID's national oversight remit?

Please select one option for each project type.

Project type	Definitely include	Probably include	Neutral	Probably exclude	Definitely exclude	Don't know
Strategic wastewater treatment projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Large-scale wastewater transfer schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water recycling and reuse schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Desalination schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Major interconnectors or transfer schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategic resilience schemes, including drought resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other nationally or regionally significant water infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain your answer and/or use the space below to suggest other types of project that should be included or excluded.

11. Reflecting on how you've responded above, what value, specifically, do you believe RAPID could add if its remit was extended to cover the wastewater and other strategically important projects you think should be included?

12. Finally, how should any extension to RAPID's national role be designed to avoid duplication with existing regulatory, planning or funding processes and avoid unintended consequences?

If you have any further comments, evidence or alternative proposals on RAPID's future role, remit, governance or implementation that have not been covered in your responses to the questions above, please share them below.

3. Collated consultation questions

RAPID's role alongside systems planning

1. To what extent do you support or oppose national oversight of the programme of strategic infrastructure projects from conception to delivery?

Select one option from the following:

Strongly support, somewhat support, neither support or oppose, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose.

Please briefly explain your answer below.

2. What benefits and/or limitations, if any, do you consider national oversight brings to the development of strategic water resource infrastructure?

Please provide evidence or examples where possible.

3. How should water companies, regional groups and other relevant stakeholder groups be involved in setting the national direction for the programme?

Please set out the principles, barriers, limitations or governance arrangements you believe should apply.

Accelerating delivery of major water infrastructure

4. Should RAPID have an enhanced role to identify and facilitate additional resource development options for further consideration by regional water system planners and water companies?

Select: yes, maybe, no.

Please briefly explain your reasons and any perceived gaps below.

5. What more can RAPID do to assure major projects during early development to help reduce delivery risks and enable robust applications to statutory authorities for planning and environmental consent?

On a scale of 1-10, please rate the following options in order of importance (1 = most important, 10 = least important), then provide any further comments below.

- a) Strengthen challenge and escalation to resolve important issues earlier.
- b) Troubleshoot common problems, share learning and best practice.
- c) Increase the frequency, transparency and/or quality of information flows.
- d) Engage with wider catchment demands across sectors.
- e) Secure government backing to support programme delivery.

6. In what ways, if any, should RAPID do more to help determine national priorities, trade-offs and sequencing across the programme?

Please set out the principles or arrangements you believe should apply.

Future entry criteria into the RAPID programme

7. To what extent do you support or oppose the expansion of entry criteria for projects entering the RAPID programme?

Select one option from the following:

Strongly support, somewhat support, neither support or oppose, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose.

Please briefly explain your answer setting out your preferences and any reservations below.

8. If the entry criteria are expanded, should this happen as a priority during the transition period or in the longer term as infrastructure challenges evolve under a new single regulator?

Select one option from the following: as a priority, over longer term.

Please briefly explain your answer.

9. How important are the following criteria in deciding whether a project should enter the RAPID programme?

On a scale of 1-10, please rate the following criteria in order of importance and provide any further comments below (1 = most important, 10 = least important).

- a. The project involves significant multi-party complexity;
- b. The project would benefit from early cross-regulator alignment;
- c. The project involves conflicting policy drivers or trade-offs that require regulatory input;
- d. The project spans more than one cost control and asset management period;
- e. The project may require ring-fenced, phased development funding
- f. The project may require in-period adjustment to development funding to support long-term planning;
- g. The project is nationally or regionally significant for resilience, the environment or customers.

Scope and remit: wastewater and other strategic water infrastructure

10. What types of wastewater and other strategically important projects should be included within RAPID's national oversight remit?

Please select one option for each project type.

Project type	Definitely include	Probably include	Neutral	Probably exclude	Definitely exclude	Don't know
Strategic wastewater treatment projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Large-scale wastewater transfer schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water recycling and reuse schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Desalination schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Major interconnectors or transfer schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategic resilience schemes, including drought resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other nationally or regionally significant water infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain your answer and/or use the space below to suggest other types of project that should be included or excluded.

11. Reflecting on how you've responded above, what value, specifically, do you believe RAPID could add if its remit was extended to cover the wastewater and other strategically important projects you think should be included?

12. Finally, how should any extension to RAPID's national role be designed to avoid duplication with existing regulatory, planning or funding processes and avoid unintended consequences?

If you have any further comments, evidence or alternative proposals on RAPID's future role, remit, governance or implementation that have not been covered in your responses to the questions above, please share them below.

Responding to this consultation

You are invited to respond to this consultation online via our consultation platform: [click here to visit the consultation platform](#).

If, for any reason, you are unable to use the consultation platform, you can also email responses to rapid@ofwat.gov.uk. or post responses to: RAPID consultation– the future of RAPID, Ofwat, Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham B5 4UA.

The closing date for this consultation is 23:59 on Tuesday 21 July 2026.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of this consultation, please email us at rapid@ofwat.gov.uk.

We intend to publish responses to this consultation on our website at www.ofwat.gov.uk. Subject to the following, by providing a response to this consultation you are deemed to consent to its publication.

If you think that any of the information in your response should not be disclosed (for example, because you consider it to be commercially sensitive), an automatic or generalised confidentiality disclaimer will not, of itself, be regarded as sufficient. You should identify specific information and explain in each case why it should not be disclosed [and provide a redacted version of your response], which we will consider when deciding what information to publish. At a minimum, we would expect to publish the name of all organisations that provide a written response, even where there are legitimate reasons why the contents of those written responses remain confidential.

In relation to personal data, you have the right to object to our publication of the personal information that you disclose to us in submitting your response (for example, your name or contact details). If you do not want us to publish specific personal information that would enable you to be identified, our [privacy policy](#) explains the basis on which you can object to its processing and provides further information on how we process personal data.

In addition to our ability to disclose information pursuant to the Water Industry Act 1991, information provided in response to this [type of document], including personal data, may be published or disclosed in accordance with legislation on access to information – primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA), the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) and applicable data protection laws.

Please be aware that, under the FoIA and the EIR, there are statutory Codes of Practice which deal, among other things, with obligations of confidence. If we receive a request for disclosure of information which you have asked us not to disclose, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that we can maintain confidentiality in all circumstances.

RAPID (Regulators Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development) was established in 2019 to facilitate the development and funding of new strategic water supply options by the water companies. It is a partnership of the three water regulators – Ofwat, the Environment Agency and the Drinking Water Inspectorate.

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