



**Canal &
River Trust**

Making life better by water

West Country Water Resources Emerging Regional Plan Consultation Response

West Country 
Water Resources

January 22

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**Emerging Plan for Consultation and
Comment**

January 2022

CONSULTATION ON WEST COUNTRY WATER RESOURCES EMERGING REGIONAL PLAN

The Canal & River Trust (the Trust) is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales. We are among the largest charities in the UK, maintaining the nation's third largest collection of listed structures, as well as museums, archives, navigations and hundreds of important wildlife sites. We believe that our canals and rivers are a national treasure and a local haven for people and wildlife. It is our job to care for this wonderful legacy – holding it in trust for the nation in perpetuity and giving people a greater role in the running of their local waterways.

We believe the Trust can play a significant role supporting the water sector as it strives for resilience and affordability in delivering public water supply. Our waterway infrastructure already exists and with investment from the sector could unlock resilient and cost-effective water transfer schemes across England and Wales.

Importantly for the water sector, the Trust has an extensive track record of managing raw water transfers for public water supply. For many decades, we have and continue to provide resilient water transfers for Bristol Water, Thames Water, United Utilities and Wessex Water.

Water transfers along our network can also support several other business sectors including the energy sector, agricultural sector, housing sector, construction sector, pharmaceutical sector and manufacturing sector. The water transfers can also support low carbon energy for heating and cooling.

Canal & River Trust demands in the Regional Context

The waterways we care for have the power to make a positive difference to people's lives, making us healthier and happier. Ensuring we have a secure long-term water supply will help us to achieve this.

In order to assess our baseline requirements for water, the Trust provided consumptive abstraction data from 2011-2017 (inclusive) licensable abstractions to the Environment Agency's National Framework and the various Regional Groups.

A summary of this data can be found in figure 1 below.

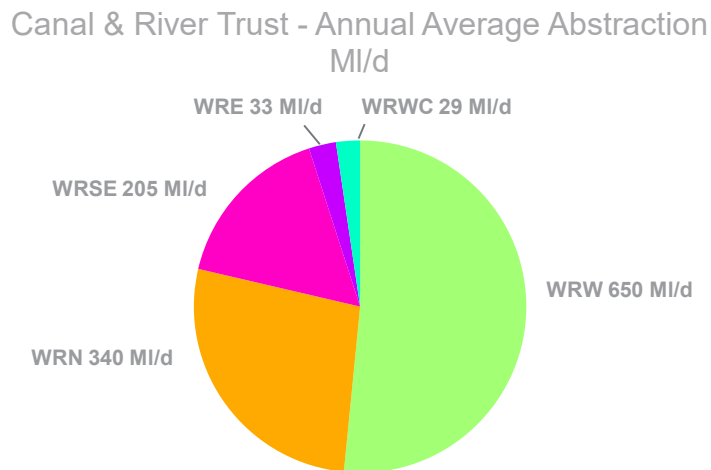


Figure 1 – Canal & River Trust abstraction data by region (actual annual average abstraction 2011-2017 MI/d).

The working assumption the Trust have applied to this data is that all abstractions are 100% consumptive, meaning that we are the third largest non-PWS abstractor in the West Country Water Resources (WCWR) region. Although the Trust only abstract c.2.5% of our total average daily volumes in the WCWR region, a significant proportion of raw water is imported into the region via the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal. At the moment it is unclear why the non-PWS navigation demand hasn't been recognised in the WCWR emerging plan and would suggest that this is reviewed ahead of publishing their draft plan later this year. Canal demands for water are complex and abstraction supports environmentally sensitive water bodies and ecological needs, as well as statutory navigation functions.

The Trust would recommend that the emerging plan does not account for any increase in this navigational abstraction over planning period, which we believe is a sensible approach at this stage, assuming there are no reductions in non-PWS licence conditions. The Trust will continue to work with WCWR to better understand longer term demands and impacts for abstractions on our existing network.

There are, however, hundreds of miles of abandoned waterways and many are being restored by dedicated volunteers. The Trust provides several support tools for restoration groups and encourage them to factor water resource management early in their projects. One of the challenges this presents is predicting the timing and quantum of water demands for future canal restorations. The Trust can support WCWR in this area by linking them to the appropriate restoration groups and societies.

Canal & River Trust future water transfers within and beyond the Region

The Trust are encouraged to see that the WCWR emerging plan recognises the potential for Gloucester & Sharpness Canal to play an important role in delivering more public water supply into the region because of there being more water available in the River Severn as a result of the Severn to Thames transfer.

We also recognise that Water Resources West region have identified further raw transfer opportunities to export upto 100 Ml/d for either Bristol Water and/or Wessex Water.

The Trust have also had initial discussions with WCWR about the viability of using the existing canal infrastructure to transfer a proportion of the repurposed Mendip quarry source to the Water Resources South East region.

The Trust will be happy to engage with WCWR further on these options in order to evaluate them fully.

Undoubtedly there will be future transfer opportunities identified in the region that potentially utilises the Trust's infrastructure, that could have multi-sector benefits and we look forward to developing these further with WCWR.