

Putting the water into waterways

The Canal & River Trust is consulting on our Water Resources Strategy. We have set out the overarching vision for how the Trust intends to manage water resources across the network through to 2050.

• Why is a strategy needed?

Water is vital to the Canal & River Trust. Without enough, navigation would not be possible, the natural environment would suffer, businesses and communities would not thrive and the experience for many of our different towpath visitors (such as cyclists, walkers, anglers) would be much poorer. A reliable water supply will help us to meet our vision of living waterways that transform places and enrich lives.

It is therefore vital that the Trust delivers long term security of water supply to our canal network. To achieve this, we are developing a Water Resources Strategy to allow us to plan successfully for the future.

• Drought & Level of Service

To understand how reliable our water supplies are we need to know how often the canals are likely to be closed as a result of dry weather – we call this the level of service. In the consultation we are setting out some key terms, such as a 'navigational drought' and a 'drought closure'.

• What will it cost to reach a different Level of Service?

Currently, the aspirational level of service is 1 in 20 years, i.e. the Trust maintains and operates the canal network so that drought closures are implemented, on average, less than once every twenty years.

To change from a 1 in 20 year level of service to a more or less demanding standard will have a financial impact on the Trust. The consultation provides illustrations of those costs, for three different parts of the network.

• What are the Future Pressures we need to address?

Within the Water Resources Strategy we will assess the impact of:

- Climate change
- Reduced funding causing asset deterioration
- Environmental legislation (likely reduction in abstraction volumes)
- Changes to boating patterns (increased network usage)

We also set out how we plan to deal with restorations and new canals, water transfers, water sales and water rights trading.

• Five Year strategy Cycle

In the consultation, we are proposing a five year cycle, in which we will carry out detailed modelling of the balance between water supply and demand, before we identify and assess a range of schemes to address any deficits and allow us to meet our target level of service. The cycle will conclude by reviewing the baseline to see what has changed (future pressures) before we publish a new strategy to cover the subsequent five years.

• Our modelling approach

In the majority of cases, we will model the water resources of our canals using the industry standard Aquator modelling software package. Within five years the majority of the canal network will be modelled, the remainder will be modelled in subsequent cycles of the Water Resources Strategy.

• Prioritisation of water resource improvement schemes

Where we predict a water resource deficit we use our models to assess the benefits, in terms of improvements in the level of service, of various schemes to enhance water supplies and/or reduce water demands.

Water resources schemes will continue to be prioritised based solely on whole life costs and water resources benefits (expressed in £ per MI/d) as these methods are robust, transparent and well understood.

• Dredging, side ponds and lock leakage

Dredging, side ponds and lock leakage are frequently raised by our customers and users whenever water resources and droughts are being debated. There is often a misconception about the effect of these three issues on our overall water resources reliability. We have reviewed them from a water resources perspective and have made a number of recommendations.

We need your views on our plans

A copy of our consultation document, which contains 15 key questions, can be found at:

www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/consultations

The consultation runs from **9 September to 4 November 2014**