Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans

1. What is a DWMP?

Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans (DWMPs) are new long-term planning studies that will identify our sewerage and wastewater treatment needs over the next 25 years. They will provide a platform for key stakeholders such as Welsh Government (WG), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Environment Agency (EA) and local authorities (LAs) to influence and collaborate with us on our long-term plans. This will support us to align with our Welsh Water 2050 vision to become “a truly world-class, resilient and sustainable service for the benefit of future generations”.

2. Why do we need DWMPs?

Decisions made by water and sewerage companies today can affect our customers and the environment for generations. We already undertake long-term planning of our wastewater services from our five-yearly business plans through our Sustainable Drainage Plans (SDPs). In particular, SDPs give us detailed assessments at the level of individual wastewater treatment works catchments\(^1\) on how we need to manage our wastewater network over the next 25 years to deal with current and future sewer flooding risk, reduce our impact on the environment, cope with climate change, provide capacity for growth, assess the impacts of network deterioration and ensure our assets and services are resilient.

However, unlike their counterparts in our Water Services part of the business (the Water Resources Management Plans), neither SDPs nor DWMPs are statutory requirements. Consequently, in common with other water and sewerage companies (WASCs), we have previously adopted the approach that works best for customers and the conditions that apply in our operating area\(^2\), making it difficult for those outside of our respective businesses to compare and consider plans from across the UK. Along with other inherent inconsistencies and the range of different approaches taken towards long-term wastewater planning, the industry, government and regulators were conscious of a lack of transparency and identified the need for a clear ‘line of sight’ in the industry’s planning for resilient drainage and wastewater services for customers and the environment. This has recently led to the development of the DWMP concept with the objective of bridging this gap.

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\(^1\) That is the sewerage network served by a single wastewater treatment works or parts of the network in the case of very large catchments such as Cardiff. Around 80% of the population served by DCWW will be covered by SDPs by the 31/3/2020.

\(^2\) For example ground water flooding is a significant issue of concern in some parts of the south east of England but not in Wales.
3. What will be included?

The DWMPs will consider wastewater networks (foul, combined and surface), interconnecting drainage systems, wastewater treatment works and the impact on the waters we discharge to including rivers, streams and other water courses, estuarial and coastal waters. The framework defines drainage within DWMPs as "the total water company network served by a wastewater treatment works (WwTW), and interaction points with non-water company drainage systems. Drainage also includes water company surface water assets not draining to a WwTW".

4. What will DWMPs do?

In conjunction with existing planning tools and the other initiatives from the Water UK 21st Century Drainage project, we will adopt DWMPs in order to achieve:

--- Long-term plans aligned to a common framework used by all WASCs
--- A consistent, risk-based approach to wastewater planning and the management of risk
--- Solid foundations upon which we can develop value-for-money investment plans that are affordable and updated on a five-year rolling cycle
--- Closer interaction between long-term planning for the collection of wastewater and the long-term planning for sewage treatment capacity
--- Easier and more meaningful consultation with customers, regulators, developers and other stakeholders on wastewater and drainage planning
--- Insight into the impacts of future trends on our wastewater services (e.g. growth, climate change) to ensure we and others are aware of the challenges and can plan ahead
--- Improved understanding of risk at the regional level to allow us to better target interventions and support efficient delivery
--- Opportunities for collaborative solutions to flooding and environmental problems
--- The unlocking of organisational funding constraints through joint funding/delivery
--- Provide multiple benefits from our investments to achieve best value to our customers, economy and the environment over the long-term.

5. What will they look like?

Our DWMP will consist of three levels:

--- Level 3 – At this level we undertake a detailed assessment of risks and opportunities for our wastewater catchment areas (or sub catchment areas for larger sewerage areas) and set out a long-term plan of interventions needed to meet the needs of the catchment and our company’s strategic plans.
--- Level 2 - Set at the 13 Water Framework Directive (WFD) River Basin Management District (RBMD) level. This is where we amalgamate the significant elements of level 3 plans within a RBMD and consult with stakeholders on what they are aiming to achieve in these areas. In this way we will identify opportunities to integrate stakeholder plans with our own and develop jointly owned long term plans for those areas.
--- Level 1 - A consolidation of the more-localised mapping in levels 2 and 3 in a published strategic report for our whole operational area. This will summarise our high level plan of how we will address the challenges we have identified and achieve our long-term wastewater and drainage aims.

It is important to emphasise the overlapping nature of the three levels as information is passed between the levels and further assessments take place evaluating the information. Eventually the output of the studies will form a suite of reports based on the standard framework that has been agreed across the industry.
6. How and when will they be delivered?

Welsh Water is currently establishing a team to deliver the DWMPs – and this will consist of a combination of in-house and consultant resources. The work will build on the success of the current SDP programme and, in collaboration with stakeholders and consultees, the first iteration of studies will be completed by the end of 2022. This will be a key source of information for our 2025-2030 investment plans for drainage and wastewater investment plans and for ensuring we are on target to meet our longer term goals for 2050.
7. What are the benefits for participants?

DWMPs will provide the opportunity for participants to integrate their immediate needs and long-term aims into our plans for the wastewater and drainage services that we provide. Collaboration and partnership working will be key with more successful outcomes being realised if organisations work together to delivering resilient wastewater and drainage systems in the future.

The benefits of wider stakeholders participating in our DWMP process will be:

— Opportunity to share ideas
— Understanding of the needs and constraints of others
— Cross-organisational working
— Access to expertise and resource
— Maximise the value of their (and our) investment through jointly funded and mutually beneficial schemes (unlock funding)
— Efficient scheme delivery by using the best placed resources
— Provide best value to the economy and society
— Alignment of management plans
— Develop common goals and objectives
— Consistency in messaging to each of our customers
— Regional, sub-regional and local adaptation plans to offset future trends that will affect us all
— Transparency and line of sight to customers and other stakeholders, where previously the outputs of long-term drainage planning have not been visible
— Consistent platform to share and discuss at participant’s specific forums and industry groups
— The output will be consistent and therefore at a national scale will enable key stakeholders to make objective comparisons.

We have good existing working relationships with our key stakeholders. As a ‘not-for-profit’ company we are different from the other UK water companies who will also be delivering DWMPs. This gives us a great starting point as we move into the evolutionary world of DWMPs and help support the delivery of outcomes set by Welsh Government in the Well Being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, for example. However, there is also an opportunity now for Welsh Government to consider how the regulatory and practical circumstances in Wales may be diverging from those in England. These may drive questions such as ‘can we do things differently here?’ and ‘can we do things better?’

8. What external resources do we depend on?

The successful delivery of DWMPs will be dependent on information, collaboration and support from other Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) such as LAs, HAs, LPAs, NRW/EA etc. Without this, DWMPs will be unable to fully realise their potential in delivering the outcomes we aspire to.