2027 DRAFT Drought Plan
Appendix J
Liaison with the Environment Agency & Data Exchange

APPENDIX J LIAISON WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY AND DATA EXCHANGE

J1 Drought Liaison

We maintain a close working relationship with the Environment Agency (EA), both during normal operating periods and drought periods, and routinely liaise with them on water resource issues. As the onset of drought becomes apparent through the routine monitoring of the water resource situation the event procedures described in Section 2 of our Drought Plan will be implemented.

Proper implementation of the drought protocols means that in the early stages of a drought, regular and systematic liaison with the EA is vital. The continuous water situation monitoring and the use of the protocols will enable the early identification of drought risk and this would provide the trigger (Drought Event Level (DEL) 1) for formal drought liaison with the EA to be instigated. Liaison with other Environment Agency areas would also be undertaken if appropriate.

Drought liaison is set up at various levels with the EA:

1. Water resource situation update meetings
2. Director level meetings
3. Drought preparedness meetings
4. Drought permits working group
5. Operational drought meetings

During DEL0 we communicate our water resources situation to the EA on a monthly basis. This focuses on the current water resources situation and the outlook based on rainfall, groundwater levels, soil moisture deficit, reservoir levels and river flows. We use this information to set our Drought Event Level, which we also inform the EA on each month. During the onset of a dry weather event we increase the frequency of updates to the EA, moving to fortnightly as we move into DEL1 and DEL2.

At DEL2 we escalate the communications with the EA such that a director-level call would also be carried out monthly between TW and the EA. If we were to move into DEL3, these updates would become weekly. As well as communicating the water resources position, we update on drought measures (including, for example, drought permit applications) and on our ongoing customer communications and on progress on other measures, for example leakage and water efficiency campaigns.

In 2025 we implemented regular ‘Drought Preparedness’ meetings with senior staff in the EA and Thames Water. These meetings were well received and will form the basis of future drought engagement. We established targeted meetings on key topics such as river management and abstraction. We set up a Drought Permits working group with local EA staff, the National Permitting Service (NPS), Natural England, and our consultants to efficiently coordinate the development of our Drought Permit applications.

We also liaise with the EA at an operational control level. This liaison is required to manage the impact of our abstractions on issues that are managed by the EA, for example, navigation. This liaison takes place on a regular basis during which the respective TWUL and EA Control Centres exchange information and agree abstraction rates in relation to navigation requirements. our liaison is led by our Water Control Manager.

J2 Data Exchange - Water Resources data

Data exchange between TWUL and the EA is a critical requirement for water resource management and becomes even more vital during drought. This data requirement is increased under the drought management protocol. To ensure that we are able to provide water situation updates we require that the drought reporting, and model predictions undertaken by the EA is provided on a regular basis. The Environment Agency measure and record the principal components of the hydrometric cycle and are therefore they are the principal providers of hydrometric for use in water resources and drought management.

The EA provides us with a range of the hydrometric data, as shown in Table J1 below, and further explained in Appendix D.

Table J1 Breakdown of Weekly Data Supplied by the Environment Agency

Name	Purpose
Gauged & Natural Flows	Updating river flows in WSR/Aquator
Natural Flows [Lee flows (7 days) plus Farmoor, Sutton Courtenay & Kingston (7 days)]	Updating river flows in WSR/Aquator
Cray & Darent Flows	Updating river flows in WSR
Flow Constraints	Updating flow constraints in WSR
SESMM Data (Includes 12 Station Rainfall)	Updating rainfall & SMDs in WSR/Aquator
Key Wells	Updating groundwater in WSR/Catchmod
OBH Levels (mAOD) (Riverhead)	Updating GW in WSR
Catchment Situation	Assessing latest situation

WSR = Water Situation Report
Aquator = Water Resources model used for monthly simulations of reservoir storage and river flows for water resources position and DEL (Drought Event Level calculation
Catchmod = Groundwater model used for monthly simulations of reservoir storage and river flows for water resources position and DEL (Drought Event Level calculation

The EA also sends hydrological data on a 3 to 6-monthly basis, which is used to update our Water Resource Modelling System (WARMS, see Appendix I) and various other models.
We provide information on our abstractions and reservoir water storage to the EA on a regular basis, including updates of reservoir storage on the Lower Thames Control Diagram (LTCD) and SWOX_0006 Control Diagram (FCD). The LON_0011 abstraction data is provided on a daily basis during drought periods.