

Gate three query process

Strategic solution(s)	SESRO
Query number	SER015
Date sent to company	03/10/2025
Response due by	07/10/2025

Query

This query is in relation to your gate three submission main report document for SESRO.

RAPID gate three guidance Section 2.2 expects solutions to provide recommendations and the output from an independent design review where proportionate, and how these have been taken into account.

Your submission states that the project has progressed two key independent design review activities:

- Technical review of critical reservoir safety design elements by the Reservoir Advisory Panel (RAP)
- Initiation of formal design review by the Design Council

You also state that two sessions have been undertaken to date, which provided a positive endorsement of the design at gate three but also provided key recommendations for development.

Could you please provide or signpost to the part of the submission that:

- Lists all organisations/individuals that constitute the RAP and the design council
- The assurance and mechanisms that maintain the independence of the design review activities

- The outcome of the design review activities and how have you incorporated recommendations into your design development
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Solution owner response – please note information contains individual names and must be treated as confidential

A short description of Gate 3 design assurance and the role of the Reservoir Advisory Panel (RAP) is included in supporting document A-1, Section 5.1. Members of the RAP and Design Council Panel are not listed in the Gate 3 submission. Further information is provided below.

Reservoir Advisory Panel (RAP)

During Gate 3 the RAP consisted of the following members:

- Chair – Independent dams and reservoirs expert
- Independent geotechnical expert
- Independent tunnelling expert

Regular meetings were held with the RAP throughout Gate 3 design development (every month to six weeks), where the RAP provided advice relating to reservoir safety, embankment design and conveyance tunnel design directly to the design team. The discussions included topics such as:

- Review of design approaches adopted for embankment and tunnel design (focussed on reservoir safety and including the reservoir emergency drawdown system)
- Discussion of emerging ground investigation data
- Specification of the Clay Compaction Trial

RAP members are independent of Thames Water and the design team. The panel reports to Thames Water Head of Dams and Reservoirs (and acting Engineering Manager for Thames Water during Gate 3), who also attends the RAP meetings.

Details of the discussions and advice provided fall under the National Protocol for the Handling, Transmission and Storage of Reservoir Information and Flood Maps but could be discussed further with RAPID in a closed session.

It is noted that towards the end of the Gate 3 design development phase a Construction Engineer was appointed to undertake the role specified in the Reservoirs Act. The role is held by:

- All Reservoirs Panel Engineer – employed through Stantec

Following appointment, the Construction Engineer attended RAP meetings and reviewed the Gate 3 design.

A further RAP member has been appointed in 2025:

- All Reservoirs Panel Engineer – employed through Mott MacDonald

Design Council (DC) Review

The project engaged with the DC towards the end of Gate 3 and two reviews have now been held. The first review was held over two days, with a visit to the Clay Compaction Trial site on the first day and presentations of the project followed by DC panel feedback on the second day.

The Design Council have a standardised approach to major project reviews of this type. A panel is set up consisting of relevant specialists in planning, infrastructure design (engineering, architecture and landscape as appropriate), and sustainability topics such as carbon reduction. The panel may change from time to time as the project progresses.

The first meeting was held during the transition period between the Gate 3 design team and the SESRO technical partner that is developing the project for DCO. Feedback received has been taken forward by the technical partner into DCO / Gate 4 design development. Feedback to design teams is not released publicly by the Design Council; however, the feedback for SESRO was generally positive, and recommended further development (pre-DCO) of issues such as:

- Conveying the vision, design principles and benefits for local people
- Continued consideration of access routes to site
- Continued focus on sustainability and renewable energy

The second DC review included attendance and contributions from representatives of local authorities and environmental stakeholders.

The DC panel are only involved in the project through the design reviews and are therefore entirely independent of the day to day design development.

Date of response to RAPID	07/10/2025
Strategic solution contact / responsible person	