

**ABERDEEN CITY & SHIRE
STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY**

Date: 14 December 2012

**Title: Shaping the Future of your Water and Waste Water Services -
Consultation Response**

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) to consider and agree a response to the Scottish Water consultation on the future of water and waste water services.

2 Background

2.1 Scottish Water is responsible for all water supply as well as waste water treatment and disposal in Scotland. It was established in 2002 following the merger of the three water authorities (including North of Scotland Water) which had themselves been formed in 1996.

2.2 Members of the SDPA have long had an interest in water supply issues at a strategic scale, particularly in light of the River Dee's economic, social and environmental importance to the area.

2.3 Scottish Water are a 'Key Agency' in the development planning process and participate actively in the preparation of the strategic and both local development plans.

2.4 The SDPA have been working with Scottish Water, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and the Dee District Salmon Fisheries Board over recent months around water supply issues to inform the strategic development plan. The multi-agency working group has been a useful forum for taking this work forward and will continue to meet during 2013 to take forward particular work streams, focusing in particular on issues of resilience.

2.5 Scottish Water has just published a consultation document which sets out what they think are the key challenges and opportunities facing Scotland's water industry in the years to come and its long term strategy to address them (Appendix 1). The consultation document is also available online (http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/assets/Consultation%20Site/Consultation_guide_2012.pdf).

2.6 The consultation started on 14 November 2012 and closes on 12 February 2013.

3 Proposed Response

- 3.1 The opportunity to comment on the future of water and waste water services in Scotland is welcome, as is the work undertaken with Scottish Water over recent years to facilitate development in Aberdeen City and Shire.
- 3.2 This response focuses on the strategic planning issues raised by the consultation which are relevant to Aberdeen City and Shire and highlights three key areas – responding to demographic change, improving the resilience of water supplies and making significant improvements to water efficiency.
- 3.3 The demographic changes being experienced by Scotland is rightly identified as one of the key trends impacting on the services delivered by Scottish Water. As shown graphically (p10), Aberdeen City and Shire is projected to be one of the fastest growing areas of Scotland over the next 25 years which is part of a wider shift from the west of Scotland to the east. It is vital that this demand is able to be met in a timely way if the economy of Scotland is not to be held back by a lack of infrastructure. Scottish Water need to be responsive to the development industry – investing in those areas of Scotland with the greatest capacity to grow. The scale of growth will mean that a planned programme of projects will be essential, rather than a reactive response which can cause delay and piecemeal infrastructure development.
- 3.4 Identifying improvements to the resilience of water supplies as one of Scottish Water’s key strategic priorities (p26) is welcome. Particularly welcome is the identification of the water taken from the River Dee to serve Aberdeen and large parts of Aberdeenshire as in need of attention. The SDPA would wish to be involved at the earliest stages as this project develops and suggest that timescales should be developed which could lead to outputs feeding into National Planning Framework 4 and the first review of the strategic development plan if required. The multi-agency working group established last year provides a useful forum to take forward these early discussions.
- 3.5 While the consultation document highlights the potential for a new upland storage reservoir as well as better linkages between water treatment works in the area, it will be important to actively consider all options to address the challenges faced. This should include softer measures such as progressed water efficiency measures, leakage reduction and co-ordinated water shortage planning which can all be implemented on a shorter timescale. The current structure plan and proposed strategic development plan rightly place a strong emphasis on resource efficiency in driving Aberdeen City and Shire forward.
- 3.6 The focus of the document on water efficiency is welcome, both those elements within Scottish Water’s supply-side control (such as leakage) as well as those from a demand side (domestic and commercial use). Water is rightly identified as a precious resource (p24) which needs to be managed, both because of its environmental value itself as well as the carbon emissions required in treating, pumping and disposing of water. Energy efficiency activity should initially be focused on those areas of the country where water availability is most constrained or where the potential environmental, social and economic impact of water shortages is greatest.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that the SDPA agree to submit this report as its response to the Scottish Water consultation.

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