# Thames Water advances Severn to Thames Transfer project with expert joint venture amid drought pressures



Thames Water is advancing plans for a critical infrastructure project designed to bolster water supply resilience during periods of drought. The Severn to Thames Transfer project aims to secure additional water by transferring resources from the River Severn to the River Thames through either a newly constructed pipeline or by restoring the historic Cotswold canals. This initiative forms a key part of Thames Water’s long-term strategy to manage future water demand sustainably, as outlined in its Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP24), which received government approval last year and projects needs for the next 50 years.

To develop the project’s conceptual design and technical planning, Thames Water has appointed a joint venture between AtkinsRéalis and Stantec. This partnership brings together expertise in environmental science, engineering, design, and long-term water resource management, tasked with ensuring the project is prepared for a range of potential future scenarios. Additional water inputs under consideration involve collaboration with Severn Trent Water and United Utilities, broadening the scope and capacity of the transfer system.

The urgency of such measures is underscored by increasing pressures on water resources due to climate change and population growth. England recently experienced its driest spring in over a century and the warmest on record, intensifying concerns about water scarcity and drought frequency. Regulators have directed Thames Water to pursue this adaptive project to ensure resilience in the face of scenarios where customer demand may exceed available supply.

This project is part of a broader national strategy encouraged by Ofwat to improve water supply resilience across the UK. Thames Water’s overall resource management plan also includes other significant initiatives, such as constructing a new reservoir in Oxfordshire and developing a water recycling scheme in West London. Yet, these plans are not without controversy. Environmental campaigners have launched legal challenges against the reservoir project, arguing it poses environmental risks and is costly, advocating instead for potentially less disruptive alternatives like leakage reduction, water transfer schemes, and recycling.

The Severn to Thames Transfer project, therefore, sits at the intersection of technological innovation, environmental stewardship, and regional water security strategy. Thames Water’s collaboration with industry leaders and neighboring water companies aims to balance these complex factors, anticipating more frequent droughts by ensuring that safe, reliable water supplies remain available to millions across southern England.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.watermagazine.co.uk/2025/07/11/thames-water-appoints-technical-partner-to-develop-water-transfer-project/), [[3]](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/news/2025/jul/thames-water-appoints-technical-partner-to--develop-water-transfer-project), [[4]](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/about-us/regulation/strategic-water-resource-solutions/water-transfer-from-the-river-severn-to-the-river-thames), [[6]](https://thames-wrmp.co.uk/projects/water-transfer-projects/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.watermagazine.co.uk/2025/07/11/thames-water-appoints-technical-partner-to-develop-water-transfer-project/), [[2]](https://www.stantec.com/uk/news/2025/atkinsrealis-stantec-joint-venture-appointed-technical-partner-severn-to-thames-transfer-project), [[3]](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/news/2025/jul/thames-water-appoints-technical-partner-to--develop-water-transfer-project), [[4]](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/about-us/regulation/strategic-water-resource-solutions/water-transfer-from-the-river-severn-to-the-river-thames), [[5]](https://www.stantec.com/uk/news/2024/stantec-atkinsrrealis-appointed-joint-venture-thames-waters-technical-partner-framework)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.watermagazine.co.uk/2025/07/11/thames-water-appoints-technical-partner-to-develop-water-transfer-project/), [[4]](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/about-us/regulation/strategic-water-resource-solutions/water-transfer-from-the-river-severn-to-the-river-thames), [[6]](https://thames-wrmp.co.uk/projects/water-transfer-projects/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.watermagazine.co.uk/2025/07/11/thames-water-appoints-technical-partner-to-develop-water-transfer-project/), [[5]](https://www.stantec.com/uk/news/2024/stantec-atkinsrrealis-appointed-joint-venture-thames-waters-technical-partner-framework), [[6]](https://thames-wrmp.co.uk/projects/water-transfer-projects/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.watermagazine.co.uk/2025/07/11/thames-water-appoints-technical-partner-to-develop-water-transfer-project/), [[7]](https://www.ft.com/content/cea81321-263c-46c9-aaec-90c3273690ce)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.watermagazine.co.uk/2025/07/11/thames-water-appoints-technical-partner-to-develop-water-transfer-project/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.stantec.com/uk/news/2025/atkinsrealis-stantec-joint-venture-appointed-technical-partner-severn-to-thames-transfer-project> - Stantec and AtkinsRéalis have been appointed as the technical partner for Thames Water's Severn to Thames Transfer project. This initiative aims to enhance water supply resilience during droughts by transferring water from the River Severn to the River Thames. The project involves conceptual design studies and may include constructing a new pipeline or restoring the Cotswold canals. Additional water sources from Severn Trent Water and United Utilities are also considered. The project is part of Thames Water's broader strategy to secure a sustainable water supply for the next 50 years, as outlined in their Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP24).
3. <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/news/2025/jul/thames-water-appoints-technical-partner-to--develop-water-transfer-project> - Thames Water has appointed a joint venture between AtkinsRéalis and Stantec to develop designs for its Severn to Thames Transfer project. This project aims to protect water supply during drought periods by transferring water from the River Severn to the River Thames. The initiative is part of Thames Water's adaptive plan to address future water needs and follows the approval of their Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP24), which outlines strategies for a secure and sustainable water supply over the next 50 years.
4. <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/about-us/regulation/strategic-water-resource-solutions/water-transfer-from-the-river-severn-to-the-river-thames> - Thames Water is exploring a water transfer project to move water from the River Severn to the River Thames, aiming to support the South East of England during drought events. The plan includes transferring water via a new pipeline or by restoring the Cotswold canals. Additional water sources from Severn Trent Water and United Utilities are also considered. This project is part of Thames Water's broader strategy to enhance water supply resilience in the region.
5. <https://www.stantec.com/uk/news/2024/stantec-atkinsrrealis-appointed-joint-venture-thames-waters-technical-partner-framework> - Stantec and AtkinsRéalis have been appointed as a joint venture to support Thames Water's Technical Partner Framework. This framework is designed to assist Thames Water in delivering its Strategic Resource Options (SRO) Programme, which includes projects like the Severn to Thames Transfer. The partnership aims to address future water supply challenges and enhance water resilience in the South East of England.
6. <https://thames-wrmp.co.uk/projects/water-transfer-projects/> - Thames Water is collaborating with other water companies to develop new water transfer options, including the Severn to Thames Transfer project. This initiative aims to move water from the North West and Midlands to the South East during drought periods, enhancing water supply resilience. The project is part of Thames Water's broader strategy to secure a sustainable water supply for the next 50 years.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/cea81321-263c-46c9-aaec-90c3273690ce> - Campaigners are launching a High Court challenge against Thames Water's £2.2bn plan to build a large reservoir in Abingdon, Oxfordshire. The reservoir aims to secure water supply for 15 million people across southern England amid anticipated shortages and population growth. Thames Water argues the reservoir is essential to address a projected daily shortfall of 1bn liters by 2050 due to reduced river and groundwater abstraction requirements. However, environmental groups oppose the project, claiming it is environmentally damaging, financially excessive, and unnecessary. They advocate for alternatives like fixing leaks, building cheaper water transfer pipes, and implementing water reuse systems.