

SUFFOLK WATER RECYCLING, TRANSFER & STORAGE

CUSTOMER Q&A

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Suffolk Water Recycling, Transfer and Storage (SWRTS) – Customer Q&A

1. What is the SWRTS Project?

The Suffolk Water Recycling, Transfer and Storage (SWRTS) Project is part of our long-term plan to secure reliable water supplies for Suffolk. It includes a new **Advanced Water Recycling Plant** in Lowestoft, new **pipelines** to move water where it's needed, and **two new storage reservoirs** near Sibton Green and Eye.

2. Why is the Project needed now?

Some parts of Suffolk already face water shortages, and new supplies for businesses are being limited. The SWRTS Project will create a more resilient and sustainable water supply, helping to support local growth while protecting the environment.

It also supports our Water Resource Management Plan 2024 and the wider regional strategy led by Water Resources East.

3. Who is delivering and funding the Project?

The Project is being delivered by **Essex & Suffolk Water** working with experienced supply-chain partners. It will be funded through customer bills, as all customers will benefit from the improved water security it provides. We work closely with our regulator, **Ofwat**, to make sure it remains the best-value option.

4. How will the Project be approved?

Instead of the usual planning permission process, large infrastructure projects like this one require a Development Consent Order (DCO) to proceed. This process is managed by the Planning Inspectorate and ensures that environmental, technical, and community considerations are properly assessed before work can begin. We'll consult widely with local people, councils, and stakeholders before submitting our DCO application in 2028, so everyone has the chance to share their views.

5. What is the Project timeline?

We plan to apply for permission (a **Development Consent Order**) in 2028.

Construction could begin in **2030**, with the new infrastructure expected to be **in use by 2032**.

6. Where will the pipelines go?

Pipelines will be buried underground within proposed corridors connecting Lowestoft, Barsham, Sibton Green, Eye, and Saxmundham. We are consulting on these corridors now, and local feedback will help share the final routes.

7. How will the pipelines be built, and what disruption should I expect?

Most pipes will be installed using open-cut excavation: digging a trench, laying the pipe, and reinstating the land. Where roads, railways or rivers are crossed, trenchless methods such as tunnelling may be used to minimise disruption.

You may notice some **temporary noise, dust or traffic**, but we'll use modern equipment and best-practice methods to reduce these as much as possible. We'll also monitor conditions closely and keep local communities informed.

Your **water supply will not usually be affected**. If short-term work ever requires a brief interruption, we'll let affected customers know in advance.

8. How does water recycling work?

Water recycling uses advanced treatment technology to turn highly treated wastewater into purified recycled water. This water passes through several treatment stages, including filtration and reverse osmosis, before being safely released into the environment.

At Lowestoft, treated wastewater from the existing Corton Water Recycling Centre will go to the new **Advanced Water Recycling Plant**, where it will be purified. The recycled water will then travel to the **River Waveney**, mix with natural river water, and later be treated again at **Barsham Water Treatment Works** before entering the drinking water network.

9. Is recycled water safe to drink?

Yes. The recycled water goes through multiple treatment stages and meets strict standards set by the **Drinking Water Inspectorate**. After additional treatment at Barsham, it will be completely safe to drink.

Water recycling is already used safely around the world, including in Australia, Singapore, the USA, and Belgium. We also have an existing Advanced Water Recycling Plant at Langford.

In addition, The Environment Agency (EA) recognises the need for water recycling as part of a diverse range of supply and demand options to secure resilient water supplies for the future. The EA's position statement can be found here: [Water recycling for public water supply: Environment Agency position statement - GOV.UK](#)

10. Why release the recycled water into the River Waveney?

In the UK, we use a process called **Indirect Potable Water Reuse**, where purified recycled water is first blended with natural water in a river, reservoir, or aquifer before being treated again for drinking. This adds an environmental “buffer” and provides extra assurance of safety.

11. How will the environment and local heritage be protected?

We are designing the Project to avoid sensitive habitats and heritage sites wherever possible. All discharges from the recycling plant will meet strict **Environment Agency standards**, ensuring that nutrient levels (such as ammonia and phosphorus) are kept very low to protect the River Waveney.

We're also working with organisations such as **Historic England** to safeguard cultural and historical assets.

12. Will the Advanced Water Recycling Plant be visible from nearby homes or roads?

The plant may be partly visible in some areas, but we'll include **screening and landscaping** so it blends into the surroundings. The final design will follow national planning guidance to minimise visual impact.

13. What benefits will the Project bring to local communities?

We're working with local schools and colleges to share knowledge about water treatment, and we'll create **jobs and training opportunities** during construction.

We also aim to spend more than **60p of every £1** with local suppliers, supporting Suffolk's economy and leaving a positive legacy for local communities.

14. Will the Project use a lot of energy?

Water recycling requires more energy than traditional water abstraction because of the extra treatment steps. However, it's a key part of reducing pressure on rivers and groundwater.

We'll use **renewable energy** where possible and continue to align with the UK's wider move toward a **low-carbon electricity system**.

15. I'm a landowner – how might this affect me?

If your land is within a proposed pipeline corridor, or within a certain distance of one, we'll contact you directly.

Our **Land Team** and partners at **Savills** will discuss access for surveys, land agreements, and reinstatement in detail with you or your agent.

Before any work begins, you'll receive full information about:

- What surveys are needed (ecological, archaeological, or engineering)
- How we'll manage access and reinstatement of land, drains, fencing, and planting
- How to raise questions or concerns during construction

We'll agree **field-by-field reinstatement plans** before any work starts.

16. Why is Sizewell C mentioned in the plans?

We've committed to supply water to the Sizewell C project under a legal agreement. The planned connection from **Saxmundham Water Tower to Sizewell C** is the only part of the SWRTS Project related to that development.

This ensures Sizewell C's demand won't affect supplies for local homes or businesses.

17. Is the Project mainly for Sizewell C?

No. The SWRTS Project is much larger and aims to **secure water for the whole region**. Sizewell C is just one customer connection. The main purpose is to improve water resilience for Suffolk, lift current supply restrictions, and support local growth across the area.