

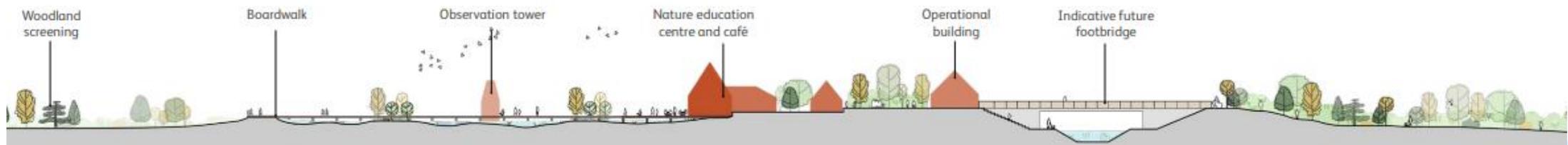
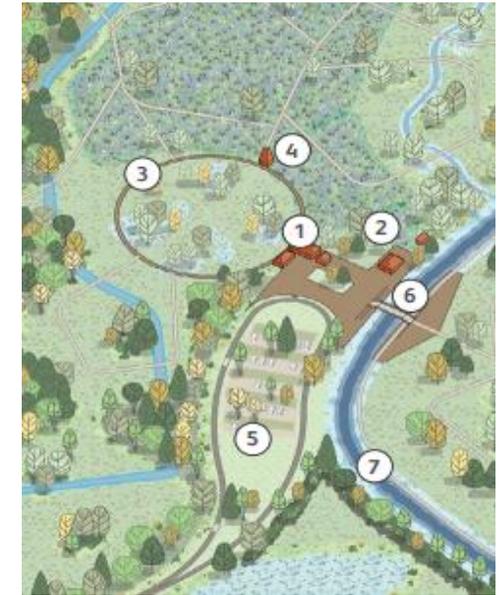


White Horse Reservoir – Update

5th March 2026

Agenda

- Welcome & introductions
- Statutory Consultation update
- Project updates
- Clay Compaction Trial
- Development Consent Order Process – overview
- Next steps



Statutory Consultation – Update

CONSULTATION HIGHLIGHTS

Statutory Consultation
ran for **11 weeks**
from **28 October 2025**



We set up a dedicated
consultation webpage
thames-sro.co.uk/sesro/statcon2025



We delivered over
78,000
postcards to local
residents, organisations
and businesses

We've received over

2,500

consultation
responses



We held **7** in-person
community information events



2

online webinars

&

1,261

attended our events



Promotional activity
across social media,
print and digital
media, and local rail
stations

Project updates

Project update

Water Resources

- We are working with Water Resources South East on comparing costs of the White Horse Reservoir with the Severn Thames Transfer. Updates will be provided in the summer as part of water company annual review of Water Resources Management Plans.

Main Works Contractor procurement

- At the start of 2026, we published a tender notice to appoint a main works contractor to design, build, test and commission the reservoir.

Landowner engagement

- Continuing our engagement with landowners, including on environmental management opportunities
- Small number of additional landowners being written to where new interests have been identified through latest land registry review.

Site surveys and ground investigations

- As we move into Spring, our presence on and around the site will become more visible as we continue our programme of ecology and archaeological surveys.
- Ploughing took place recently on land west of Drayton ahead of archaeological trial trenching planned for later in the Spring.

Biodiversity

- We are looking at opportunities for planting trees, hedgerows and creating low nutrient grasslands, ponds and scrapes locally over the next 12 to 18 months. These biodiversity enhancements will support habitats for bats, water voles, badgers, newts and curlew



Project update

White Horse Reservoir

- From 22nd January 2026, the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) project name changed to White Horse Reservoir, with a strapline of 'A space for nature, a place for people.'
- It's important that we give the project a new identity: one that better reflects the crucial role it will play in shoring up water supply, as well as the broader benefits it will deliver for future generations.
- It is the same project, with the same vision, but with a new name that will help people recognise it more easily.



Farmoor

Reservoir water levels

- Farmoor reservoir levels are over 90%.
- The reservoir is slightly below top water level (10cm below top water level as of last week) as we carry out routine maintenance work.
- During the year we closely monitor river flows and water quality, planning for the reservoir to be full by the early summer to ensure sufficient water for our customers.
- For White Horse Reservoir we have modelled its filling plans reflecting weather patterns and different climate change scenarios – this has been carried out for water resource planning and as part of our reporting to the regulators (RAPID).



Water quality

White Horse Reservoir water quality

- River water quality is carefully monitored before filling any of our reservoirs, and we'll use those same stringent practices for White Horse Reservoir.
- Water will be aerated and mixed within the reservoir to help with water quality and to avoid the build-up of algae.
- We will also monitor water quality in the reservoir itself.
- Water will be treated at water treatment works before being put into the supply network for homes and businesses.
- The recreational lakes will be primarily filled by rainwater and possibly also from the newly created water channel



Clay Compaction Trial – update

Clay Compaction Trial update

The Clay Compaction Trial has helped us to:

Support our understanding of the characteristics of the clay at different depths, for example identifying areas of weathered clay and clay stone bands at specific depths.

This has helped our understanding of what clay would be suitable to be used for the embankment core and what clay would be more suitable for the embankment shoulders. It also helps us with developing and refining the tunnelling strategy.

Support our understanding of the the physical strength and moisture content of the clay

This has helped us understand the degree of clay moisture conditioning (adding water) and physical conditioning required to build the embankment clay layers.

It has also supported our understanding of the appropriate thickness of clay to layer and the number of times each clay layer should be rolled to construct the embankments.



DCO Process - Overview

DCO Overview

What is a Development Consent Order (DCO) application?

- A consenting regime for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), which are determined by **thresholds set out in the Planning Act 2008**.
- **Dams and Reservoirs (section 27)** - construction of a dam or reservoir **carried out by a water undertaker in England**, it is expected that the volume of water stored in the reservoir will exceed **30 million cubic metres**, or the deployable output will exceed **80 million litres per day**.
- Where the type of development does not qualify as a NSIP under the thresholds set out in the Planning Act 2008, **section 35** of the Act allows for the Secretary of State to issue a direction which brings other projects into the remit of the NSIP consenting process.



Planning Act 2008

CHAPTER 29

CONTENTS

PART 1

THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING COMMISSION

- 1 The Infrastructure Planning Commission
- 2 Code of conduct
- 3 Register of Commissioners' interests
- 4 Fees

PART 2

NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENTS

- 5 National policy statements
- 6 Review
- 7 Consultation and publicity
- 8 Consultation on publicity requirements
- 9 Parliamentary requirements
- 10 Sustainable development
- 11 Suspension pending review
- 12 Pre-commencement statements of policy, consultation etc.
- 13 Legal challenges relating to national policy statements

PART 3

NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

General

- 14 Nationally significant infrastructure projects: general

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2014 No. 0000

INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

The Thames Water Utilities Limited (Thames Tideway Tunnel)
Order 2014

Made - - - - 3rd September 2014
Coming into force - - - 24th September 2014

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PART 1
PRELIMINARY

1. Citation and Commencement
2. Interpretation

PART 2
WORKS PROVISIONS

Principal powers

3. Development consent etc. granted by the Order
4. Authorisation of use
5. Maintenance of authorised project
6. Limits of Deviation
7. Defence to proceedings in respect of statutory nuisance

Benefit of order

8. Benefit of Order
9. Transfer of benefit of Order

Streets and traffic regulations

10. Street works
11. Power to alter layout, etc., of streets
12. Construction and maintenance of altered streets
13. Stopping up of streets
14. Public rights of way and permissive paths
15. Temporary stopping up
16. Access to works
17. Agreements with street authorities
18. Traffic regulation

Supplemental powers

19. Discharge of water
20. Protective works to buildings and structures

DCO Overview

Why pursue a DCO?



Scope

One-stop shop of relevant consents including compulsory purchase in **single consenting process**. Less complexity and overlapping consenting programmes.



Decision-maker

SoS is the ultimate decision maker offering a **more certain consenting outcome** once DCO accepted.



Policy position

National Policy Statements (NPS) apply which provide a **clear framework** within which Inspectors make recommendations, establishing the need in principle of that development type.



Timeframes

Longer timeframe (~43 months) but outcome **more certain** and achieves single all-encompassing consent. **Fixed timescales** for examination providing clarity and certainty for applicants.



Flexibility

the consent **allows for flexibility within prescribed parameters** subject to the material environmental effects and approved limits of deviation and order limits.

What's the best way to make a decision on a national infrastructure project?

Some key considerations



National vs Local Interest

How do you decide in the national interest without compromising local interest?



Making a fair decision

How do you reach a fair decision on national infrastructure projects?



Public Engagement

How should community feedback be incorporated?



Public vs Private

Should the same processes apply for public projects and for private developers?



Decision-making

Who knows best about what powers are needed?

DCO Overview

National Policy Statements

There are 12 designated National Policy Statements (NPS), setting out government policy on different types of national infrastructure development.

These are planning documents that provide the primary basis for making decisions on development consent order applications.

National Policy Statement for Water Resources Infrastructure

April 2023

2. Government policy and the need for water resources infrastructure

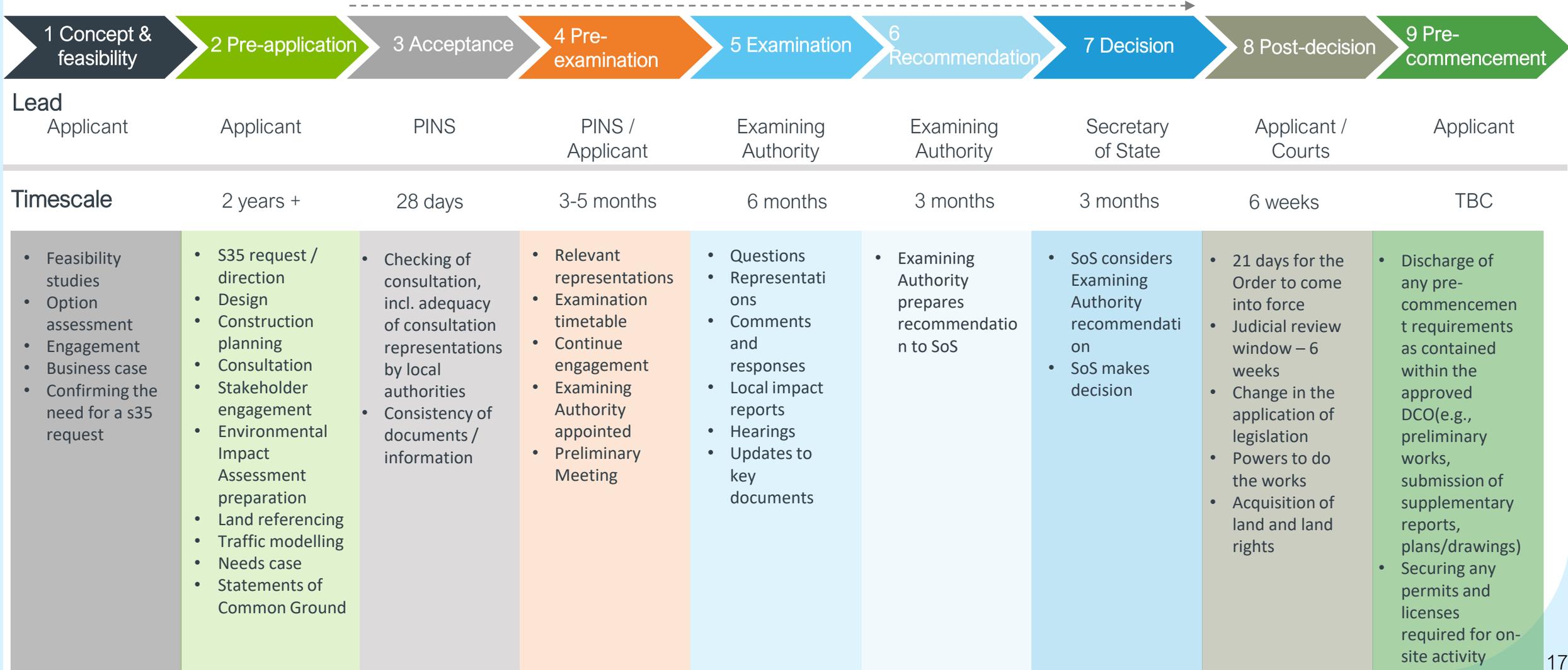
2.1. Introduction

- 2.1.1. Water is essential for life and livelihoods. England's water supply currently comes from a mix of underground sources (aquifers), rivers and reservoirs. The pressure on our water resources is increasing due to:
- population growth
 - the impacts of climate change
 - the need for sufficient water in our watercourses, lakes and wetlands to enhance biodiversity and protect the environment²¹
- 2.1.2. There is an immediate need to build resilience in the water sector to address pressures on water supplies. Clean and plentiful water is a goal set out in the government's 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (the 25 Year Environment Plan)²² and in its first revision, the Environmental Improvement Plan (2023) for improving the natural environment^{23,24} (the Environmental Improvement Plan). The government's vision is a water industry that works for everyone providing reliable, robust services now and in the future, without compromising the needs of the environment.
- 2.1.3. Securing long term resilience involves planning for future events (such as drought events) as effectively as we can, to mitigate the impacts whilst ensuring value for money for consumers, in line with the government's strategic priorities for Ofwat's regulation²⁵. This is achieved through the statutory water resources management plan process²⁶. There is more information on this process in section 2.5.

DCO Process

Overview

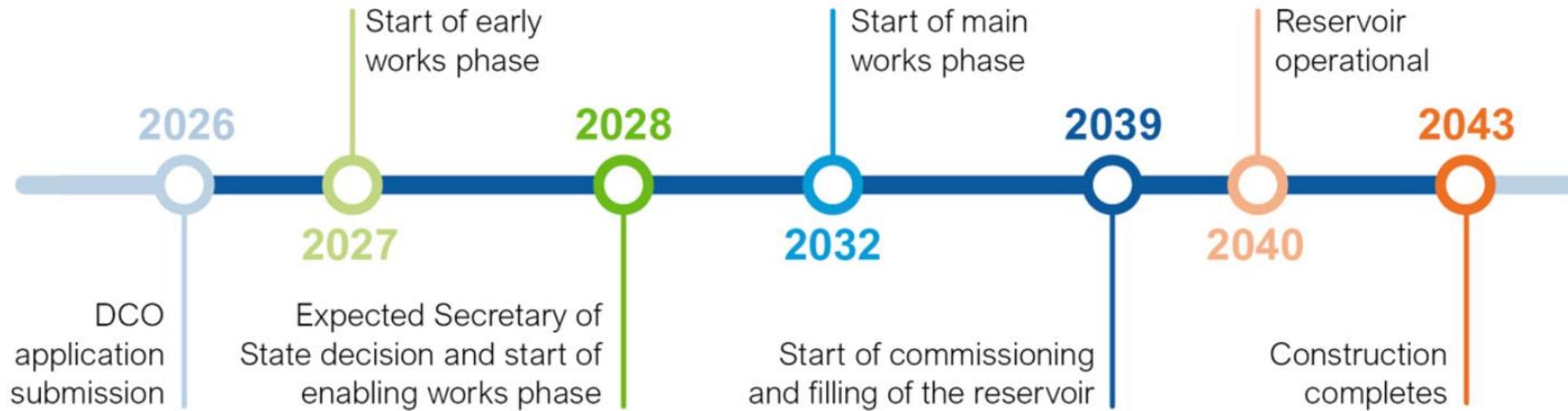
Indicative timeframe from DCO Application to Decision = 18 months



Next Steps

Next Steps

DCO submission and future project timeline



Questions

Disclaimer

All information released is draft, work in progress and should not be relied upon. It reflects work in progress towards a future DCO application. For this reason, it should only be used for the purposes of providing indicative information on the White Horse Reservoir scheme. The information does not represent any sort of formal definition or delineation of the White Horse Reservoir project and should not be treated as such.