



Future Water
Association

Shaping the Future of RAPID

FWA Member Briefing 17 July 2026



What is RAPID?

- Partnership of Ofwat, Environment Agency & Drinking Water Inspectorate - formed 2019
- Now overseeing 30 major infrastructure projects (up from 17)
- Fast-tracks complex, multi-party schemes — Severn–Thames transfer, Tideway etc.
- Widely regarded as an exemplar: cross-regulator coordination at a time of doubled AMP investment
- Consultation closes midnight, 21 July — outcome expected Autumn 2026



Why this consultation, why now?

- Triggered by the Cunliffe Review and government white paper
- RAPID sits within a wider regulatory reform programme — new integrated regulator on the horizon

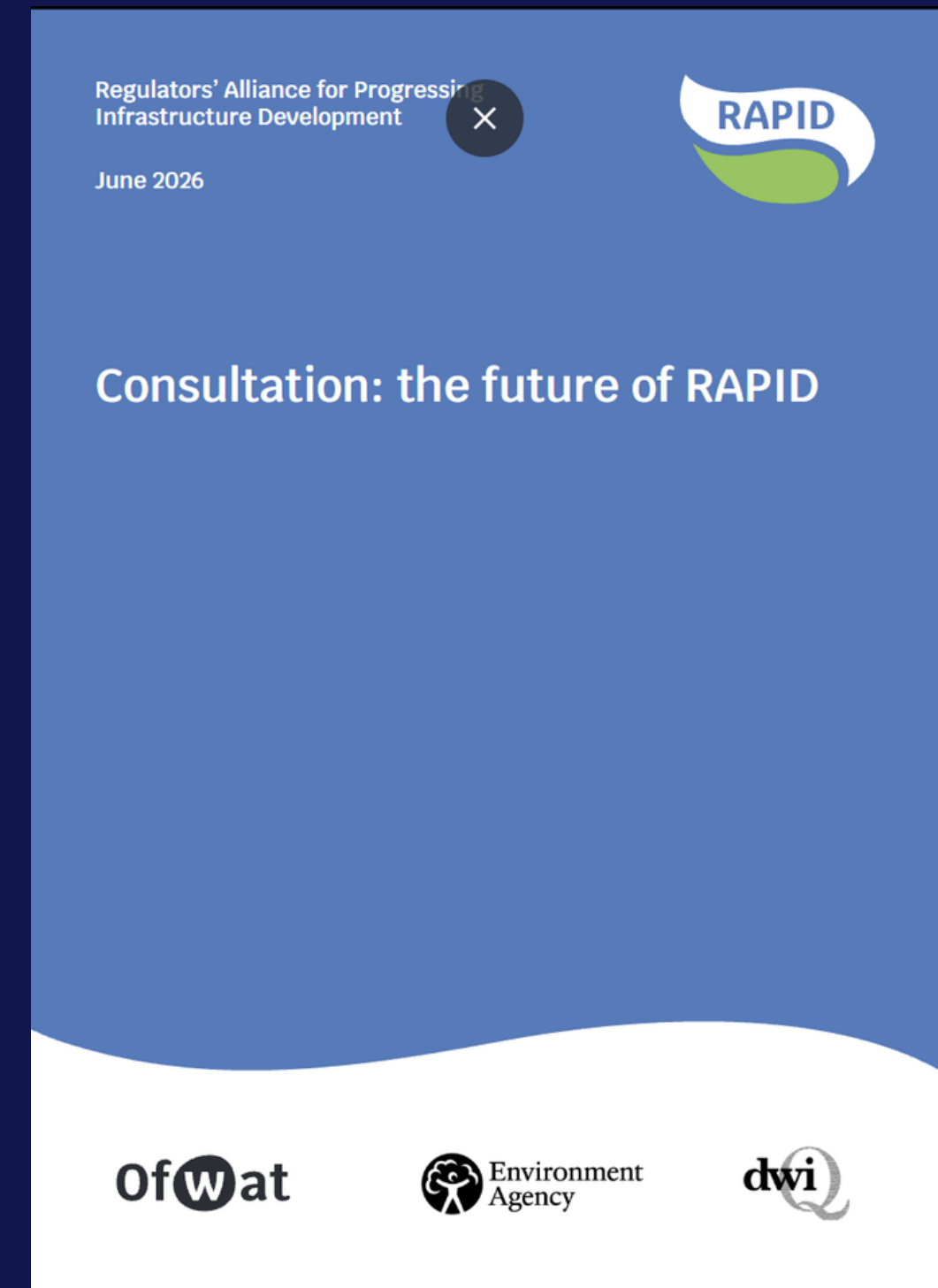
Four questions under consultation:

- National oversight of the programme
- Enhanced role in early project development
- Expansion of eligibility criteria
- Extension to wastewater and other strategic projects

**Key question: what should RAPID
become inside the new regulator?**

The Consultation Picture

- Responses via Citizen Space or email
- Deadline: midnight Tuesday 21 July
- FWA has submitted a formal response



What the Sector Is Saying?

“Don’t rush to expand - do a few things well”

Water efficiency does the heavy lifting before large infrastructure comes online

By 2055: projected shortfall of 6,000 Ml/day - direct abstractors (energy, food) are “missing one sixth of the picture”

National function should enable regions, not override them “complementary and symbiotic”

Half of future water shortfall driven by environmental sustainability (reducing harmful abstractions)

Industrial water: currently each user finds its own solution - RAPID could change this

FWA's Response: What We Said

We support national oversight - but targeted and proportionate

“The test should always be whether national oversight improves outcomes, speeds resolution of issues, and provides confidence to stakeholders.”

On benefits:

coordination across regulators; strategic coherence; investor and supply chain confidence; better visibility of dependencies across water, environment, housing, industry and agriculture

On limitations:

must not become an additional bureaucratic layer; must not dilute regional and company roles; discipline of scope is essential

FWA's Response: What We Said

On eligibility expansion:

we somewhat support - but based on function, not scale alone. Key criteria: nationally/regionally significant; multi-party complexity; early cross-regulator alignment needed; creates dependencies for later investment

On wastewater extension:

selective inclusion - water recycling/reuse, major interconnectors, strategic resilience schemes. Case-by-case for strategic wastewater treatment and large transfer schemes

FWA's Core Position

RAPID's future should be embedded inside the new integrated regulator - not layered on top of it

Our five principles for the future design:

- 1. Proportionate in scope** - targeted where coordination failure is otherwise likely
- 2. Embedded in the future regulatory structure**
- 3. Focused on strategic coordination, not institutional expansion**
- 4. Enabling, not an additional approval gate**
- 5. Collaborative** - multidisciplinary, practical, delivery-focused

What We Also Flagged: Structural Barriers

FWA highlighted issues beyond the traditional regulatory perimeter that RAPID should help address:

- Weak and inconsistent uptake of SuDS
- Insufficient policy support for reuse and rainwater harvesting
- Poor alignment between water management and planning policy
- Gaps between drainage, highways, local government and water sector responsibilities

RAPID's role: identify and articulate these barriers — not duplicate existing institution

What This Means for Members

- More integrated, long-term planning = more demand for whole-system solutions
- Greater supply chain scrutiny as water companies face tighter programme oversight
- Dependency as a new eligibility criterion — timing and performance of one project affects later schemes
- Almost no reform scenario leads to less money being spent on water
- The transition period is critical — phased expansion preferred; don't overload the system during change





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Your Views Matter

**Consultation closes midnight 21 July, respond directly or
feed views through FWA**

FWA has submitted, your input shapes our next steps

