

Dear Sir/ Madam

Please accept this email as a further submission in the Water Determination 2020 following the publications of the Preliminary Findings. This is a submission from the North East England Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is the largest business representative organisation in the North East of England covering the entire region, an area co-terminus with Northumbrian Water's operational area. The Chamber represents approximately 3,000 businesses drawn from most industrial sectors and business sizes and we estimate that the combined membership employs around one third of the total workforce of the North East of England.

The Chamber would like to make the following comments –

1. Whilst we welcome the recognition of the need for investment in some of the schemes put forward by Northumbrian water and support the significant investment being made in the region, the Chamber feels the findings should have gone further as the rejection of the proposed Sewer Resilience Scheme is a cause for concern.
2. The proposed Sewer Resilience Scheme is designed to alleviate the prospect of flooding and disruption at times of heavy rainfall. Flooding even in short bursts can cause considerable disruption and costs to business and any scheme which can mitigate such risks and provide certainty to business must be welcomed and allowed to proceed. We have seen in recent years increasing incidents of flooding which we know from the businesses affected can cause real economic hardship and in some cases the closure of the business. Such incidents will only become more frequent due to climate change and the Chamber feels the proposed scheme represents value for money in the longer term.
3. The reduced risk of flooding and foul water ingress has a knock on effect in reducing insurance premiums and therefore further reducing business costs. Any scheme which reduces risk is of wider benefit to the business community and their workforce as well as home owners. We would therefore ask that this scheme be reconsidered reflecting reduced costs to businesses and householders elsewhere.
4. The Chamber re-iterates the belief investment in utilities is crucial to ensure that the Region's economy is resilient but also sustainable and at the forefront of technology. It is increasingly becoming apparent that the Region's ample, consistent, high quality water supplies and efficient waste systems are a factor in attracting inward investment to the area. Maintaining and developing these systems requires long term, well planned and funded investment. As we begin to see increased flooding and drought in many regions, continued investment infrastructure will mitigate the risks of such events and maintain the Region's social and economic wellbeing.
5. We entirely support Northumbrian Water's commitment to environmental protection and sustainability and their willingness to invest to ensure the highest standards. The benefits of previous investment has meant water quality at the region's beaches has significantly improved and the quality of drinking water is some of the best in the country. In addition, the company's commitment to the social wellbeing and tourism has seen large scale environmental investment in assets such as Kielder Water to develop them as visitor hubs. In addition to water infrastructure, we also fully support Northumbrian Water's investment in anaerobic digestion as a means of carbon neutral power generation using solid waste and the company's commitment to working towards carbon neutral operations.

- Increasingly, the North East is being recognised as a region where there is the potential for an excellent quality of life and this is being used to attract a new workforce to the region. The investments Northumbrian Water make play a huge role in maintaining that quality of life and the Chamber firmly believes the Company should be allowed to raise money for investment to allow them to continue to do that. Northumbrian Water play a significant role in the social and economic fabric of the region both through their day to day operations but also through their environmental programmes and corporate social responsibility and we have no doubt that any investments made are made wisely and provide real value for money.

If you would like any further information or clarification on the points above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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