

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Planning and Housing Commission

For

Briefing from David Hodcroft

5 February 2025



Background

Launched by the UK and Welsh governments on the 23 October 2024, the Commission will report back in Q2 this year with recommendations to the Government on how to tackle inherited systemic issues in the water sector to restore our rivers, lakes and seas to good health, meet the challenges of the future and drive economic growth.

The commissions terms of reference acknowledge that: *“The pressures on the system are increasing in the face of climate change, population growth, the crisis in nature, and the need to deliver economic growth. The water sector faces multiple challenges and resolving these will require transformative change and involve trade-offs, such as the need to ensure affordability whilst securing the investment needed to achieve better customer outcomes and deliver clean rivers, lakes and seas”*.

The regulatory framework for water has emerged in a piecemeal way since privatisation, resulting in a fragmented system. Concerns about pollution of our waterways, pressures on the water supply, bill increases, protection for vulnerable customers, the sector’s financial and infrastructural resilience, and ability to attract investment are all symptomatic of the broader need for change.”

Sir Jon Cunliffe is the former Deputy Governor of the Bank of England.

The Commission has chosen Greater Manchester as the location to launch the **call for evidence** as a result of our nationally leading work on partnership working through the Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP).

The event will include national and local media and will take place at The University of Manchester (Graphene Engineering Innovation Centre (GEIC)).



Commission Terms of Reference (TOR)

The objectives of the Commission are to recommend measures to ensure the regulatory system delivers:

- **Clear Vision:** Establishing clear outcomes for the future and a long-term vision for delivering environmental, public health, customer, and economic outcomes.
- **Strategic Planning:** Adopting a collaborative, strategic, catchment approach to managing water, tackling pollution and restoring nature.
- **Better Regulation:** Rationalising and clarifying requirements for companies to secure better customer and environmental outcomes.
- **Empowered Regulators:** Ensuring regulators are effective in holding water companies accountable, for example for illegal pollution.
- **Improved Delivery:** Enhancing the sector's ability to meet obligations, including clean rivers, lakes, and seas, while driving innovation.
- **Stable Framework:** Ensuring a regulatory environment that attracts investment and supports financial resilience for water companies.
- **Consumer Protection:** Safeguarding consumer interests and affordability through transparent and fair governance.
- **Resilient Infrastructure:** Delivering and maintaining robust infrastructure on time, anticipating future needs and climate challenges.

- Timings: The review will report by Q2 2025.
- Ask from the Commission: To provide evidence and input to the strategic planning and resilient infrastructure elements of the TOR