



Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels Abstraction Licensing Strategy

A strategy to manage water resources
sustainably

Version 3

March 2019

We are the Environment Agency. We protect and improve the environment.

We help people and wildlife adapt to climate change and reduce its impacts, including flooding, drought, sea level rise and coastal erosion.

We improve the quality of our water, land and air by tackling pollution. We work with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. A healthy and diverse environment enhances people's lives and contributes to economic growth.

We can't do this alone. We work as part of the [Defra](#) group (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), with the rest of government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and local communities to create a better place for people and wildlife.

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1. About the licensing strategy

This strategy sets out our approach to managing new and existing [abstraction](#) and [impoundment](#) within the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels [catchment](#) in the South East river basin district.

The Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels ALS area covers an area of 528 km² and includes the Rivers Cuckmere, Pevensey, Wallers and Combe Havens. The Seaford and Eastbourne Chalk Block forms the distinctive landscape of the Sussex Downs and represents the furthest eastern extent of the South Downs National Park. The north-eastern part of the area lies within another area of Outstanding Natural Beauty called the High Weald, an ancient landscape of copses, hedgerows and small fields which extends into Kent. In the north of the area, the headwaters of the main rivers flow from the exposed older rocks of the Tunbridge Wells Sands and Ashdown Beds of the Hastings Beds Group, which provide some baseflow to these watercourses. The Hastings Beds secondary aquifer yields locally important groundwater resources including for public water supply, although the chalk aquifer provides the majority of water for abstraction in the area. In between the tracts of Weald Clay and Gault Clay in the middle of the ALS area, the mid reaches of the River Cuckmere are underlain by the Lower Greensand, another principal aquifer which provides baseflow and groundwater resources to this CAMS area. To the south lies Pevensey Levels, a low-lying area of fields and drainage dykes, much of which was reclaimed from the sea in the Middle Ages. The Levels, known locally as the Marshes, is recognised both nationally and internationally for its plants and animals and has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Our approach ensures that River Basin Management Plan objectives for water resources activities are met and we avoid deterioration within this catchment.

We apply this approach to the [water body](#) in which the abstraction is located. It also applies to all downstream [surface water](#) bodies that may be affected by any reduction in abstraction-related flow, or adjacent [groundwater](#) bodies affected by any reduction in groundwater level.

Please see [Managing Water Abstraction](#) for the technical explanation, legal and policy requirements behind the Abstraction Licensing Strategy ([ALS](#)).

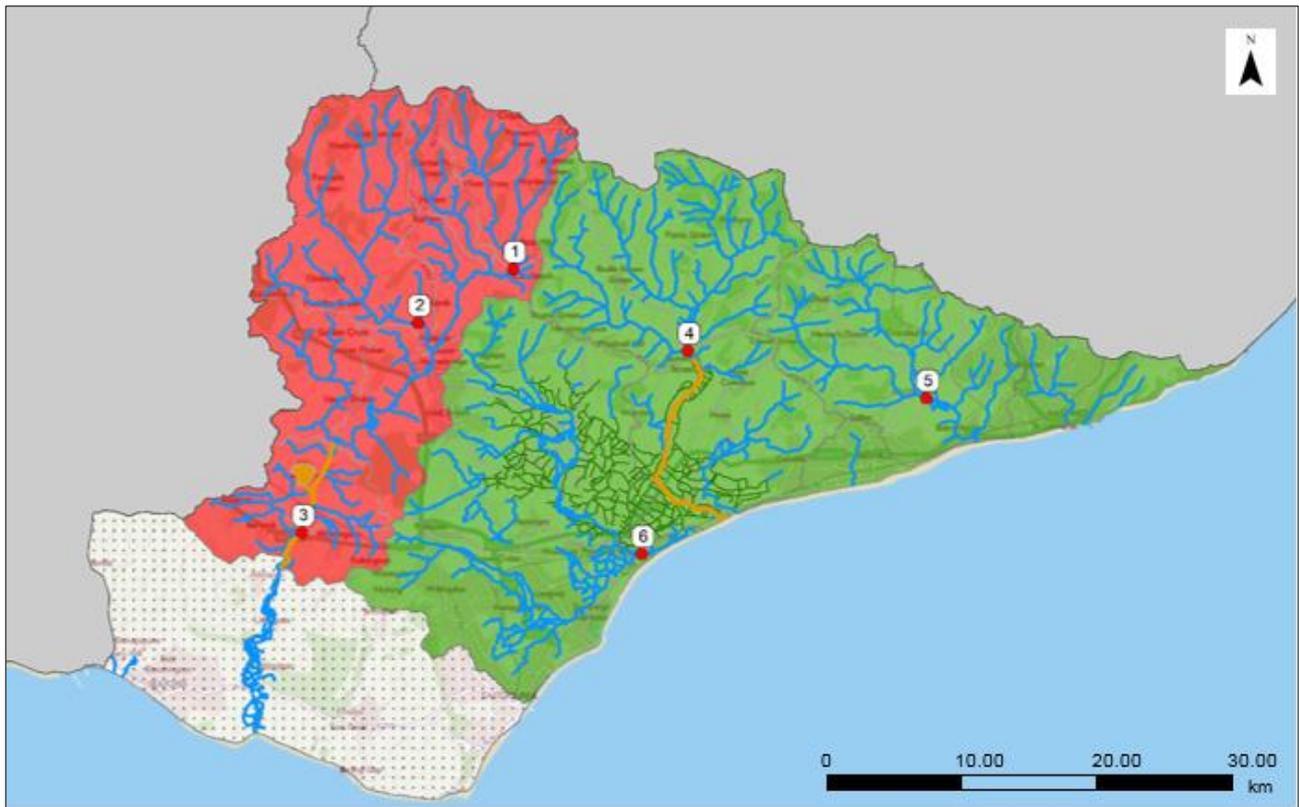
Please see [abstraction pages on gov.uk](#) for advice on who needs an abstraction or impoundment licence, and how to apply.

2. Water resource availability of the Cuckmere and Pevensey ALS

2.1. Resource availability

The water resource availability, calculated at four different flows, Q95 (the flow of a river which is exceeded on average for 95% of the time i.e. low flow), Q70, Q50, and Q30 (higher flow) for this ALS are presented and explained in Maps1-4 and Section 2.1.1 below.

Map 1: Water resource availability colours at Q30 for Cuckmere and Pevensey ALS



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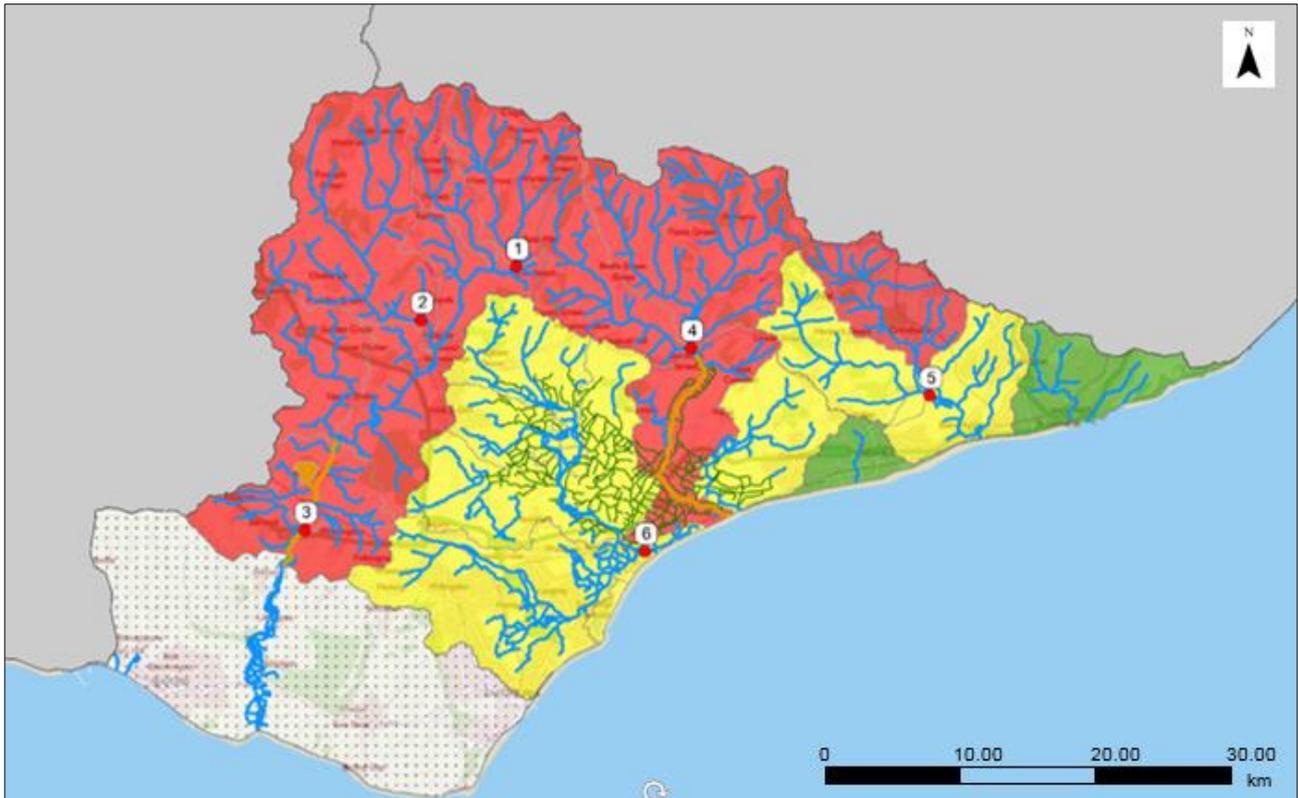
Legend:

-  Assessment Points
-  Chalk Block surface water body (licensed separately)
-  Heavily Modified and Artificial Rivers
-  Rivers
-  Level Dependant Environment

Water Availability at Q30:

-  Water available
-  Water not available

Map 2: Water resource availability colours at Q50 for Cuckmere and Pevensey ALS



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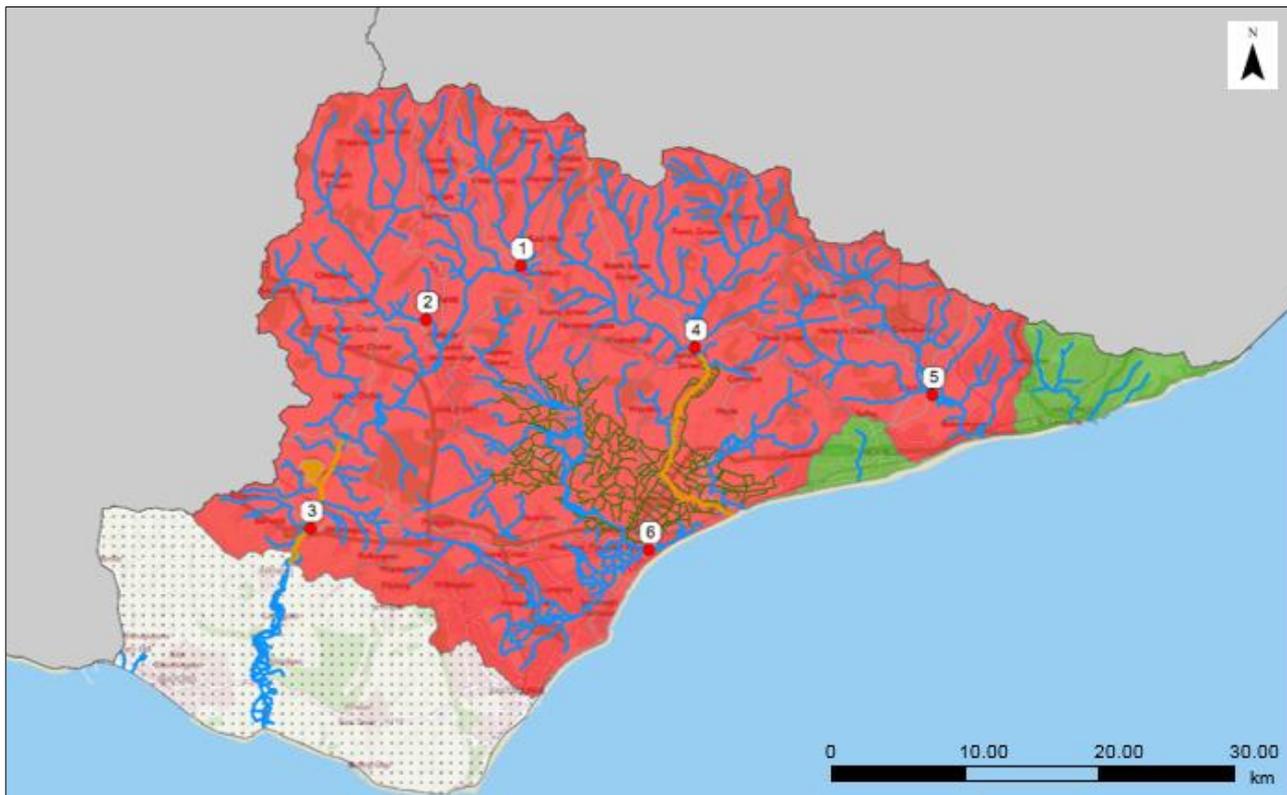
Legend:

-  Assessment Points
-  Chalk Block surface water body (licensed separately)
-  Heavily Modified and Artificial Rivers
-  Rivers
-  Level Dependant Environment

Water Availability at Q50:

-  Water available
-  Restricted water available
-  Water not available

Map 3: Water resource availability colours at Q70 for Cuckmere and Pevensey ALS



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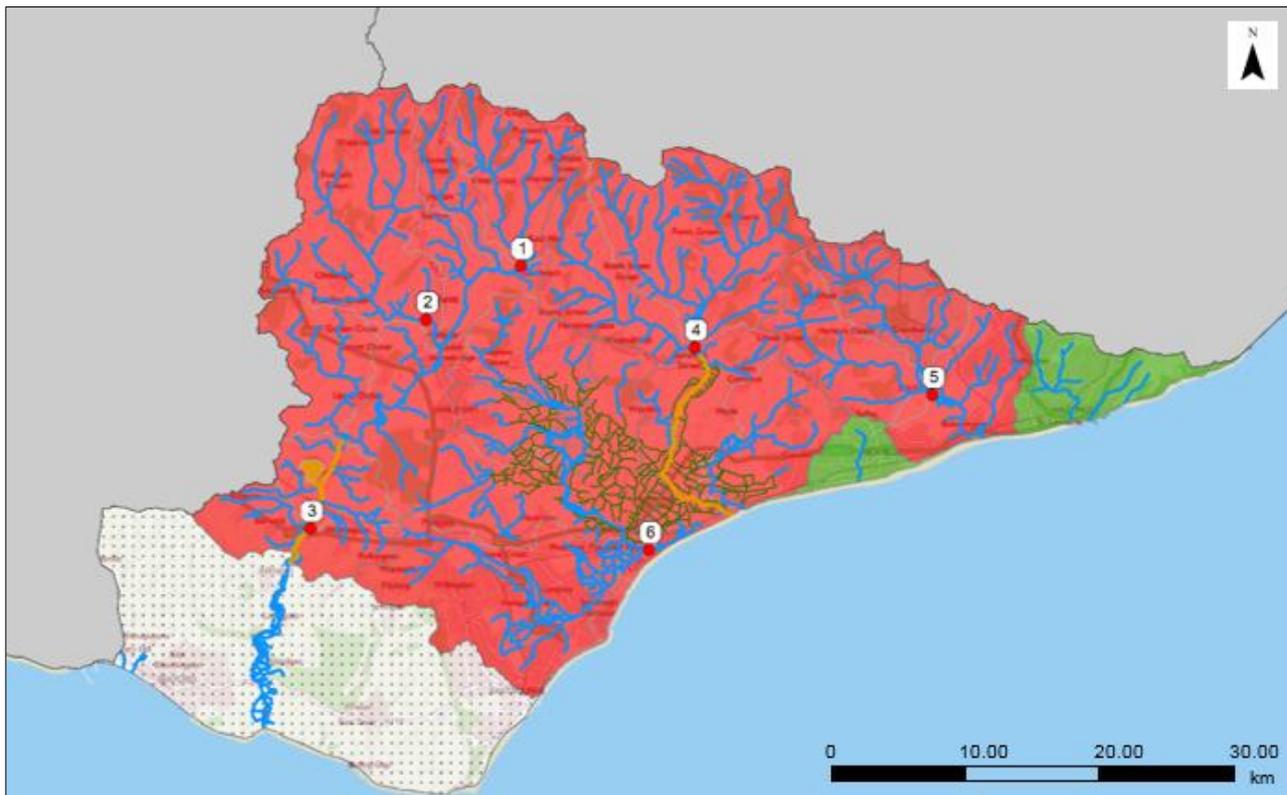
Legend:

-  Assessment Points
-  Chalk Block surface water body (licensed separately)
-  Heavily Modified and Artificial Rivers
-  Rivers
-  Level Dependant Environment

Water Availability at Q70:

-  Water available
-  Water not available

Map 4: Water resource availability colours at Q95 for Cuckmere and Pevensey ALS



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Legend:

-  Assessment Points
-  Chalk Block surface water body (licensed separately)
-  Heavily Modified and Artificial Rivers
-  Rivers
-  Level Dependant Environment

Water Availability at Q95:

-  Water available
-  Water not available

Water resource availability colours and implications for licensing

Water available for licensing

Green 

There is more water than required to meet the needs of the environment.

New licences can be considered depending on local and downstream impacts.

Restricted water available for licensing

Yellow 

Full Licensed flows fall below the [Environmental Flow Indicators EFIs](#).

If all licensed water is abstracted there will not be enough water left for the needs of the environment. No new consumptive licences would be granted. It is likely we'll be taking action to reduce full licensed risks. Water may be available if you can 'buy' (known as licence trading) the entitlement to abstract water from an existing licence holder.

Water not available for licensing

Red 

Recent actual flows are below the EFI.

This scenario highlights water bodies where flows are below the indicative flow requirement to help support a healthy ecology in our rivers. We call this 'Good Ecological Status' ([GES](#)) or 'Good Ecological Potential' ([GEP](#)) where a water body is heavily modified for reasons other than water resources.

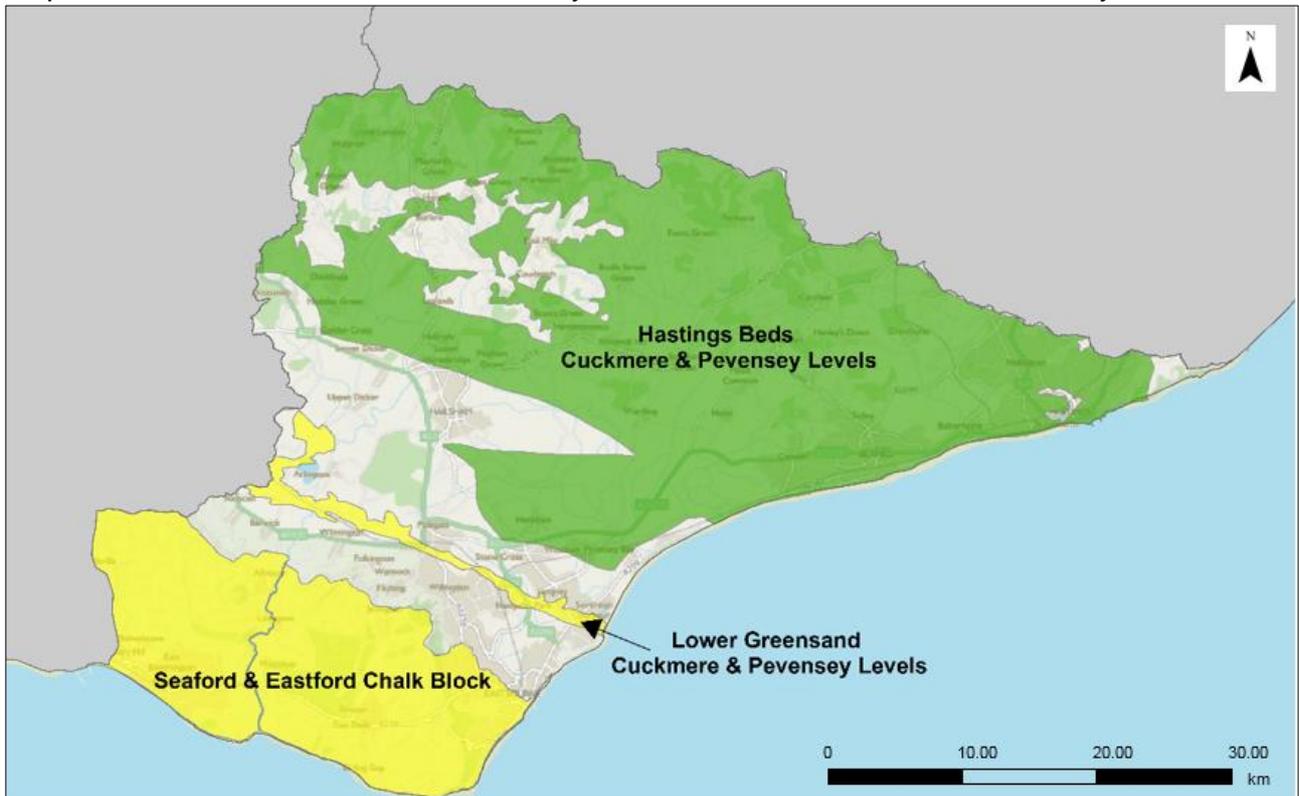
Note: we are currently taking action in water bodies that are not supporting GES or GEP. We will not grant further licences. Water may be available if you can buy (known as licence trading) the amount equivalent to recently abstracted from an existing licence holder.

2.2. Groundwater resource availability

Water availability is not the same for surface water and groundwater in the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels ALS.

In certain areas, resource concerns over groundwater mean that the standard water resource availability colours have been overridden. Section 2.2.1 explains the groundwater resource availability colours, and Map 5 shows these colours for groundwater in the Cuckmere and Pevensey area.

Map 5: Groundwater resource availability colours for Cuckmere and Pevensey ALS



Legend:

Groundwater Availability:

-  Water available
-  Restricted water available

Groundwater resource availability colours and implications for licensing

Water available for licensing

Green 

Groundwater unit balance shows groundwater available for licensing. New licences can be considered depending on impacts on other abstractors and on surface water.

Restricted water available for licensing

Yellow 

Groundwater unit balance shows more water is licensed than the amount available, but that recent actual abstractions are lower than the amount available OR that there are known local impacts likely to occur on dependent wetlands, groundwater levels or cause saline intrusions but with management options in place.

In restricted groundwater units no new consumptive licences will be granted. It may also be appropriate to investigate the possibilities for reducing fully licensed risks. Water may be available if you can 'buy' (known as licence trading) the entitlement to abstract water from an existing licence holder.

In other units there may be restrictions in some areas e.g. in relation to saline intrusion.

Water not available for licensing

Red 

Groundwater unit balance shows more water has been abstracted based on recent amounts than the amount available.

We will not grant further licences.

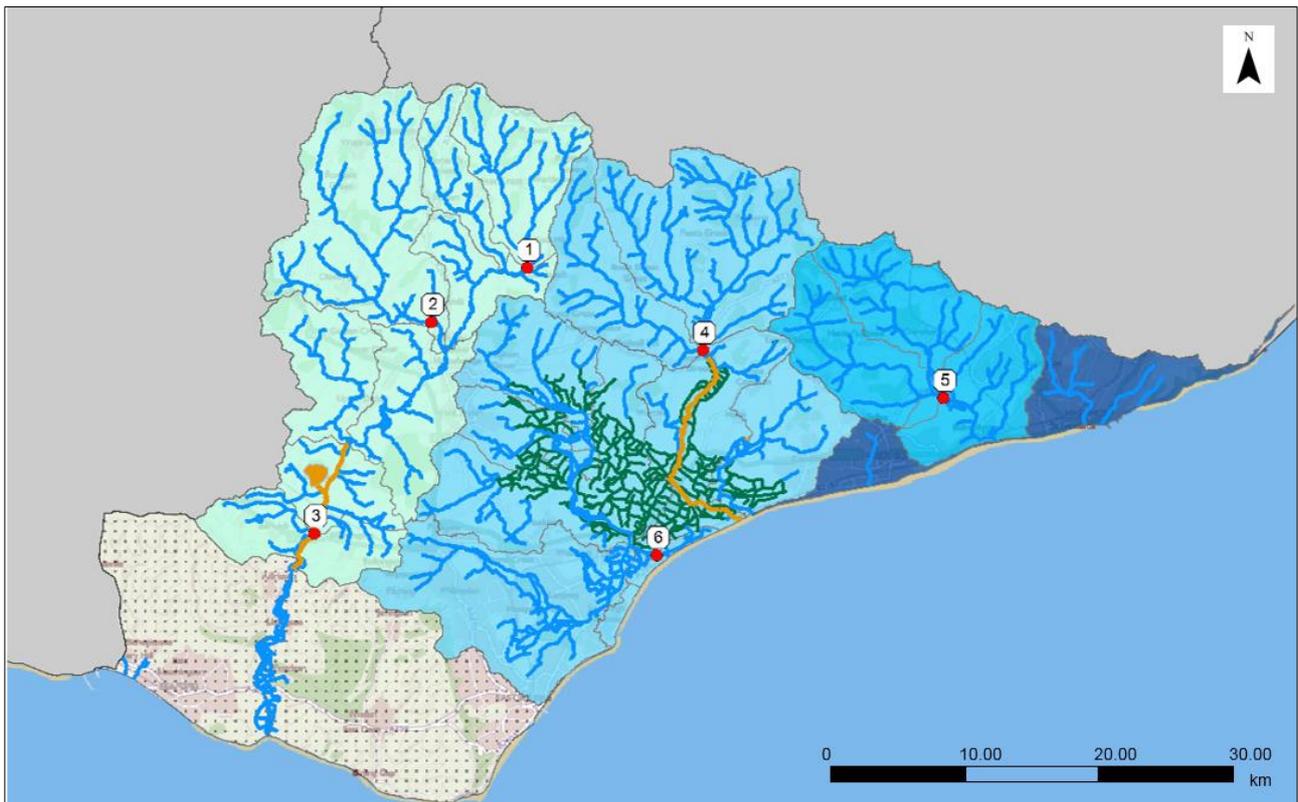
2.3. Resource reliability

If you want to apply for a licence, it's worth considering the reliability of your abstraction.

By assessing the quantity of water available at different flows it's possible to see when there is a surplus or deficit of water and the associated reliability of an abstraction. This is an indication only; actual reliability of a licence will be discussed when you apply.

Map 6 gives an indication of the resource availability for [consumptive abstraction](#) in the Cuckmere and Pevensy Levels area expressed as a percentage of time.

Map 6: Water resource reliability of the Cuckmere and Pevensey ALS expressed as percentage of time available



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Legend:

-  Assessment Points
-  Chalk Block surface water body (licensed separately)
-  Heavily Modified and Artificial Rivers
-  Rivers
-  Level Dependant Environment

Percentage of the time additional consumptive resource may be available:

-  Consumptive abstraction available less than 30% of the time
-  Consumptive abstraction available at least 30% of the time
-  Consumptive abstraction available at least 50% of the time
-  Consumptive abstraction available at least 70% of the time
-  Consumptive abstraction available at least 95% of the time

2.4. Other considerations for availability and reliability

We may have to add constraints to licences such as ‘[hands off flow](#)’ (HoF) conditions to protect the environment and the rights of other abstractors. As a result, when we grant a licence, it doesn't mean that we guarantee a supply of water. These conditions specify that if the flow in the river drops below what's needed to protect the environment, abstraction must reduce or stop. So, in dry years, restrictions are likely to apply more often, which will affect the reliability of supply.

Whilst this document may say that water is available for abstraction, this doesn't guarantee that all applications will be successful. This is because we have to determine each application on its own merits, and local factors may mean we're either unable to grant a licence as applied for, or even at all.

New licences within an ALS are usually given a Common End Date ([CED](#)), which allows them to be reviewed at the same time. The next CED for this ALS is 31/03/2026 and the subsequent one is 31/03/2038.

2.5. Impoundments

Applications for impoundments will be dealt with on a case by case basis. More information may be found on our [water management web pages on gov.uk](#).

3. How we manage abstraction in the Cuckmere and Pevensy Levels ALS

3.1. Assessment points

We assess surface water flows at [Assessment points](#) (APs), which are significant points on a river, often where two major rivers join or at a gauging station. APs cover multiple surface water bodies.

Where groundwater abstractions directly impact on surface water flows, the impact is measured at the surface water AP.

Table 1 gives an indication of how much water is available for further abstraction and the associated restrictions we may have to apply to new and varied [abstraction licences](#) from the main river. Tributaries to the main river may be subject to different restrictions and quantities and will be assessed locally on a case by case basis.

Each HoF is linked to an AP and is dependent on the resource availability at that AP. In some cases additional restrictions may apply to licences where there is a more critical resource availability downstream to protect the ecological requirements of the river. This is detailed in the last column of Table 1 if applicable.

All abstraction licence applications are subject to an assessment to take account of any local and downstream issues and may be subject to further restrictions.

Reading from top to bottom in Table 1 are the APs in the Cuckmere and Pevensy Levels ALS area. Reading across the columns you can see the potential HoF that may be applied to a licence, the number of days water may be available under this restriction and the approximate volume of water in [Ml/d](#) that may be available etcetera. In cases where there is water available at all flows we may apply a Minimum Residual Flow (MRF) to protect very low flows. We'll decide this on a case by case basis.

Table 1 Summary of licensing approach for the assessment points of Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels ALS.

AP	Name	Water Resource Availability	HOF Restriction (MI/d)	Number of days per annum abstraction may be available	Approximate volume available at restriction (MI/d)	Is there a gauging station at this AP?	Additional restrictions
1	Cuckmere at Cowbeeche GS	Water not available for licensing	20	105	20	Yes	Critical AP downstream
2	Cuckmere at Lealands GS	Water not available for licensing	38	105	45	Yes	Critical AP downstream
3	Cuckmere at Shermans Bridge GS	Water not available for licensing	91	105	112	Yes	
4	Uppers Wallers Haven at Boreham Bridge GS	Water not available for licensing	23	135	5	Yes	PWS groundwater compensation scheme and feeds Level Dependant Environment
5	Combe Haven at Crowhurst	Water not available for licensing	6	204	1	Yes	
6	Pevensey Haven at Rickney	Water not available for licensing	53	135	6	Yes	Level Dependant Environment and WLMP

River Cuckmere at Cowbeech (AP1), Lealands (AP2) and Shermans Bridge (AP3)

The combination of low abstraction and discharges from wastewater treatment works results in there being water available for licensing at all times in the waterbodies upstream of AP3 Sherman's Bridge GS. However, these statuses are overridden to protect the critical AP at Sherman Bridge GS due to the influence of the surface water public water supply abstraction which fills the Arlington reservoir. Therefore, in the Cuckmere catchment water is only available during periods of high flows with HOF conditions. At Sherman's Bridge GS (AP3) there is approximately 110 MI/d available which would be conditioned with a HOF which would make any new licence reliable for less than 30% of the time.

Wallers Haven and Upper Wallers Haven at Boreham Bridge (AP4)

The upper Wallers Haven runs to the Boreham Bridge assessment point. Beneath this point lays the Wallers Haven which is a Level Dependant Environment (LDE) otherwise known as a wetlands or marsh system. The Wallers Haven LDE forms part of the downstream Pevensey Levels SAC, Ramsar and SSSI site which is also an LDE. Level dependant environments have different water quantity and ecological requirements compared to typical river catchments.

Flow in the Upper Wallers Haven is supported by discharges and a groundwater compensation scheme. This groundwater scheme is associated a surface water public water supply abstraction below Boreham Bridge catchment boundary in the Wallers Haven LDE. The compensation water augments flow and is used for the downstream abstraction where it largely mitigates the effects of the scheme on downstream flows. The critical licensing point for the Wallers Haven is therefore the Pevensey Levels and Wallers Havens LDE waterbodies, which show that water is not available for abstraction at lower flows. Therefore, resource availability colours have been overridden for low flows in order to protect water resources for the downstream environment. Consequently, the Wallers Haven catchment only has approximately 5 MI/d available of water available for licensing at high flows which would be conditioned with a HOF, making any new licence reliable for less than 37% of the time.

Combe Haven at Crowhurst (AP5)

The Crowhurst catchment (AP5) is dominated by public water supply groundwater abstraction from the Hastings Beds which influences downstream flows at Combe Haven. As a result, water is only available for licensing at mid to high flows. This water is available in the catchment up to 55% of the time and would require a HOF of 6 MI/d. However, there is only 1MI/d remaining take at this HOF. The next HOF would be 10 MI/d with 3 MI/d available, and this would make any new licence approximately 50% reliable. We will be able to advise you further on these HOFs.

Pevensey Haven and Levels at Rickney (AP6)

The Pevensey Levels LDE is a SAC, Ramsar and SSSI and has different water quantity and ecological requirements compared to typical river catchments and is managed using a Water Level Management Plan. Winter water levels are kept low to increase flood storage capacity, and summer levels are managed to provide water transfer around the ditch network. During dry periods the magnitude of flows affects the ability of the rivers to feed the lowland ditch network, and low water levels are closely associated with low flows from the upstream catchments. In order to safeguarded flow and prevent ecological derogation, water availability in the Pevensey Haven has been over-riden to match that of the feeder streams.

Since there is no water available for licensing except at high flows in the Wallers Haven and in the west rivers then the water availability in the Pevensey Haven is over-riden to match those feeder streams. This means that there is water available for licensing only at mid to high flows. However, winter flooding levels also need to be maintained under the WLMP and so this should be taken into consideration when licensing those mid to high flows. We will be able to advise further during any assessment.

Small streams without assessment points and located in the tidal or coastal reaches are modelled in the Cuckmere and Pevensey ALS, but we have low confidence of resource assessment and reliability in these areas on account of no measured flow data or ecological monitoring. We will therefore consider potential applications in these water bodies on a case-by-case basis.

Due to restrictions on water availability we maintain our policy of encouraging potential abstractors to apply to take water during high flow periods to provide reservoir storage for subsequent re-use during drier months when other surface water resources are unavailable.

3.2. Groundwater

For major aquifers we may divide the area into groundwater management units (GWMU), which are sub-divisions of the groundwater bodies. In these cases we use the information and assessments on these units to determine water availability and licence restrictions.

Where groundwater abstractions directly impact on surface water flows, including reduction of base flow, the impact is measured at the surface water AP. In these cases, restrictions may be applied to licences, such as Hands off Level ([HoL](#)) conditions. The HoL is a groundwater level below which an abstractor is required to reduce or stop abstraction.

Other restrictions may apply where availability is limited or to protect the environment, for example to prevent saline intrusion.

Licence restrictions on groundwater abstractions in the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels ALS area

Seaford and Eastbourne Chalk Block

Restricted water available for licensing. No new consumptive licences will be granted

Lower Greensand

Restricted water available for licensing. There is no specific policy for this aquifer due to its limited extent. Decisions about an application will be made on a case by case basis and so customers wishing to enquire about the availability of a source should contact the Environment Agency.

Hasting Beds Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels (Tunbridge Wells and Ashdown Beds)

Water available for licensing. We have no specific policy for these secondary aquifers. These aquifers are highly complex due to faulting and geological variability and there is limited information on outflows and water levels. They only yield comparatively small volumes of water, although it is noted that these can be locally important. Decisions about an application will be made on a case by case basis and so customers wishing to enquire about the availability of a source should contact the Environment Agency.

3.3. Level dependent environments

The Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels ALS contains level dependent environments (LDE). We have divided the area into units, known as level dependent management units. We have completed an assessment on each of these units.

Licence restrictions on abstractions in the relation to LDEs in the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels ALS area

Pevensey Levels LDE

The Pevensey Levels LDE is a SAC, Ramsar and SSSI site located between Eastbourne and Bexhill in East Sussex. The SSSI is identified as a priority site nationally and Water Level Management Plan is fundamental in helping to restore and maintain the site. A WLMP was produced in 2006 for the whole LDE and identified water level management actions to bring the sites to favourable condition.

Walers Haven LDE

The Wallers Haven LDE is part of the Pevensey Levels SAC and Ramsar. A major public water supply abstraction is located on this river within the SSSI. The Wallers Haven watercourse is one of two main river systems that provides for the transfer of water around the ditch network of about two-thirds of the SSSI.

3.4. Coasts and estuaries

The Cuckmere and Pevensey ALS area coastline defines its southern border. The cliffs between Seaford and Eastbourne have been designated as Heritage Coast. This is a popular area for recreational activities and includes the Seven Sisters Country Park and Beachy Head. The Hastings Country Park stretches along the coastline east of Hastings and has diverse wild habitats.

The River Cuckmere is the only watercourse with a significant tidal reach. The river is tidal for 8 km inland – the tidal limit is not far downstream from the Arlington Reservoir. The Pevensey Levels outfall at Normans Bay is controlled by large sluice gates, as are the majority of the outfalls along that coast.

Beachy Head West and Rye Bay are both marine protected areas for wildlife conservation fed by rivers in this ALS area. Beachy Head West is a designated Marine Conservation Zone and Rye Bay is designated as a Special Protection Area.

3.5. Heavily modified water bodies

There are three main heavily modified uses for water resources in the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels CAMS area.

Arlington reservoir is an offline public water supply storage reservoir on the River Cuckmere. Water is pumped into it from the river and the reservoir must release a compensation flow in order to maintain flows to protect the downstream environment. These managed flows are only at the bottom of the catchment and so only a short stretch is heavily modified. Since the compensation release mitigates the effect of the abstraction then there is no water available for licensing at low flows as any increase in abstraction upstream would impact the scheme.

The Wallers Haven is heavily modified due to a public water supply groundwater compensation scheme. A series of boreholes in the upstream catchments pump water into their respective streams in order to maintain flows going into the level dependant SSSI. This compensation flow is to mitigate against the impact of the surface water public water supply abstraction below Boreham Bridge. This means that flows downstream and into the

main channel are “managed” when the scheme is in use. Any additional abstraction while the scheme is operating at mid to low flows would increase the pressure on the compensation scheme and puts the impact of the additional abstraction on an existing user which is not acceptable.

The Pevensey Levels while being a SAC, Ramsar and SSSI is also a “managed” system and so heavily modified. This system has a different set of ecological targets given its water level management system. A Water Level Management Plan is in place but this requires better overall management of water levels in order to maintain and improve water availability to the ditch systems. In the summer, water availability is critical. Additional abstraction during this period will impact on the amount of water available to transfer through the ecologically important ditch system.

3.6. Protected areas

UK law provides a very high level of protection to two types of designated sites due to their special environment. These are:

- Special Areas of Conservation ([SAC](#)), which contribute to biodiversity by maintaining and restoring habitats and species;
- Special Protection Area ([SPA](#)), which provides protection to birds and their nests, eggs and habitats

Ramsar sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest ([SSSI](#)) also carry a high level of environmental importance.

In the Cuckmere and Pevensey ALS area the key protected areas that need to be considered are:

- Seaford-Beachy Head SSSI
- Arlington Reservoir SSSI
- Milton Gate Marsh SSSI
- Pevensey Levels Ramsar, SAC and SSSI
- Combe Haven SSSI

4. Managing existing licences

4.1. Water rights trading

We want to make it easier to trade water rights. A water rights trade is where a person sells all or part of their water right, as defined by their abstraction licence(s), to another person on a permanent or temporary basis. In the majority of cases a trade will involve a change in abstraction location and/or use which we will need to approve through the issue or variation of abstraction licences.

In licensing trades, as with new abstraction licences, we need to make sure that we don't cause any deterioration in water body status both within the water body / bodies where the trade will take place and to downstream water bodies. The section below provides a guide to the potential for trading in water bodies of a particular ALS water resource availability colour.

To find out more about licence trading please go to our [water management web pages on gov.uk](#)

Guide to the potential trading in water bodies of a particular ALS water resource availability colour

High hydrological regime

Blue 

Opportunities for trading water rights will be limited

Water available for licensing

Green 

Allow trades of recent actual abstraction and licensed abstraction, but little demand for trading expected within water body as water available for new abstractions.

Restricted water available for licensing

Yellow 

There may be opportunities for licence holders to trade up to their full licensed quantities, but the quantities of water available to trade may be restricted once levels of actual abstraction reach sustainable limits. We will not permit licence trades in water bodies where we are taking action to prevent deterioration unless the trade is consistent with achieving water body objectives.

Water not available for licensing

Red 

We will only trade recent actual abstraction but no increase in recent actual abstraction is permitted in water body. Licensed abstraction will be recovered for the environment.

HMWBs

Grey 

Opportunities for trading will depend on local operating agreements and local management.

4.2. Taking action on unsustainable abstraction

Action being taken on unsustainable abstraction in the Cuckmere and Pevensy Levels ALS area

Where abstractions cause or potentially cause actual flows to fall short of the EFIs and result in environmental damage, we may need to change or even revoke existing abstractions in order to achieve a sustainable abstraction regime. Within the Cuckmere and Pevensy Levels ALS Area we have identified a number of waterbodies where recent actual flows have fallen below the EFI and one waterbody where fully licensed flows might fall below the EFI. The abstraction licences within these water bodies that cause these issues have been identified by CAMS and are being investigated as part of the RSA programme.

We have also been investigating whether reduced water flow may be causing problems under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). Any waterbodies identified through WFD have been included in the RSA programme.

Under the Habitats Regulations we have assessed the effects of existing abstraction licences and will assess new applications to make sure they do not impact on internationally important nature conservation sites.

For those licence holders where an adverse impact has been identified, are working with licence holders to agree options for ways to improve sustainability.

4.3. Regulating currently exempt abstraction

As the abstraction licensing system in England and Wales developed over the past 50 years, certain abstractions have remained lawfully exempt from licensing control. This meant that unlimited supplies of water could be abstracted, even in areas that are water stressed.

This means that those exempt abstractions could potentially take unlimited amounts of water, irrespective of availability and without regard to impacts on the environment or other abstractors.

Following two public consultations Government have introduced new Regulations to take effect from 1st January 2018. The Water Resources (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2017 have removed the majority of previous exemptions from licensing control, and current exempt abstractors will now require a licence to lawfully abstract water.

The main activities affected are:

- transferring water from one inland water system to another in the course of, or as the result of, operations carried out by a navigation, harbour or conservancy authority;
- abstracting water into internal drainage districts;
- dewatering mines, quarries and engineering works, except in an emergency;
- warping (abstraction of water containing silt for deposit onto agricultural land so that the silt acts as a fertiliser);
- all forms of irrigation (other than spray irrigation, which is already licensable), and the use of land drainage systems in reverse (including transfers into managed wetland systems) to maintain field water levels;
- abstracting within currently geographically exempt areas, including some rivers close to the borders of Scotland; and
- abstractions covered by Crown and visiting forces (other than Her Majesty the Queen and the Duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster in their private capacity).

Where we have details of these abstractions, we've included them in our assessments to consider how they impact on the catchment

5. List of abbreviations

ALS

Abstraction Licensing Strategy.

AP

Assessment Point.

CED

Common End Date.

Defra

Department of Environment Fisheries and Rural Affairs.

EFI

Ecological Flow Indicator.

GEP

Good Ecological Potential.

GES

Good Ecological Status.

GW

Groundwater.

HMWB

Heavily Modified Water Body.

HoF

Hands off Flow.

HoL

Hands off Level.

MI/d

Megalitres per day.

SAC

Special Areas of Conservation.

SPA

Special Protection Areas.

SSSI

Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

UKTAG

United Kingdom's Technical Advisory Group.

WB

Water body.

WLMP

Water Level Management Plan.

6. Glossary

Abstraction

Removal of water from a source of supply (surface or groundwater).

Abstraction licence

The authorisation granted by the Environment Agency to allow the removal of water.

Assessment point

A significant point on a river, often where two major rivers join or at a gauging station.

Catchment

The area from which precipitation and groundwater will collect and contribute to the flow of a specific river.

Consumptive abstraction

Abstraction where a significant proportion of the water is not returned either directly or indirectly to the source of supply after use. For example for the use of spray irrigation.

Discharge

The release of substances (for example, water, treated sewage effluent) into surface waters.

Environmental flow indicator

Flow indicator to prevent environmental deterioration of rivers, set in line with new UK standards set by [UKTAG](#).

Groundwater

Water that is contained in underground rocks.

Hands off flow

A condition attached to an abstraction licence which states that if flow (in the river) falls below the level specified on the licence, the abstractor will be required to reduce or stop the abstraction.

Impoundment

A structure that obstructs or impedes the flow of inland water, such as a dam, weir or other constructed works.

Surface water

This is a general term used to describe all water features such as rivers, streams, springs, ponds and lakes.

Water body

Units of either surface water or groundwater which we use to assess water availability.

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