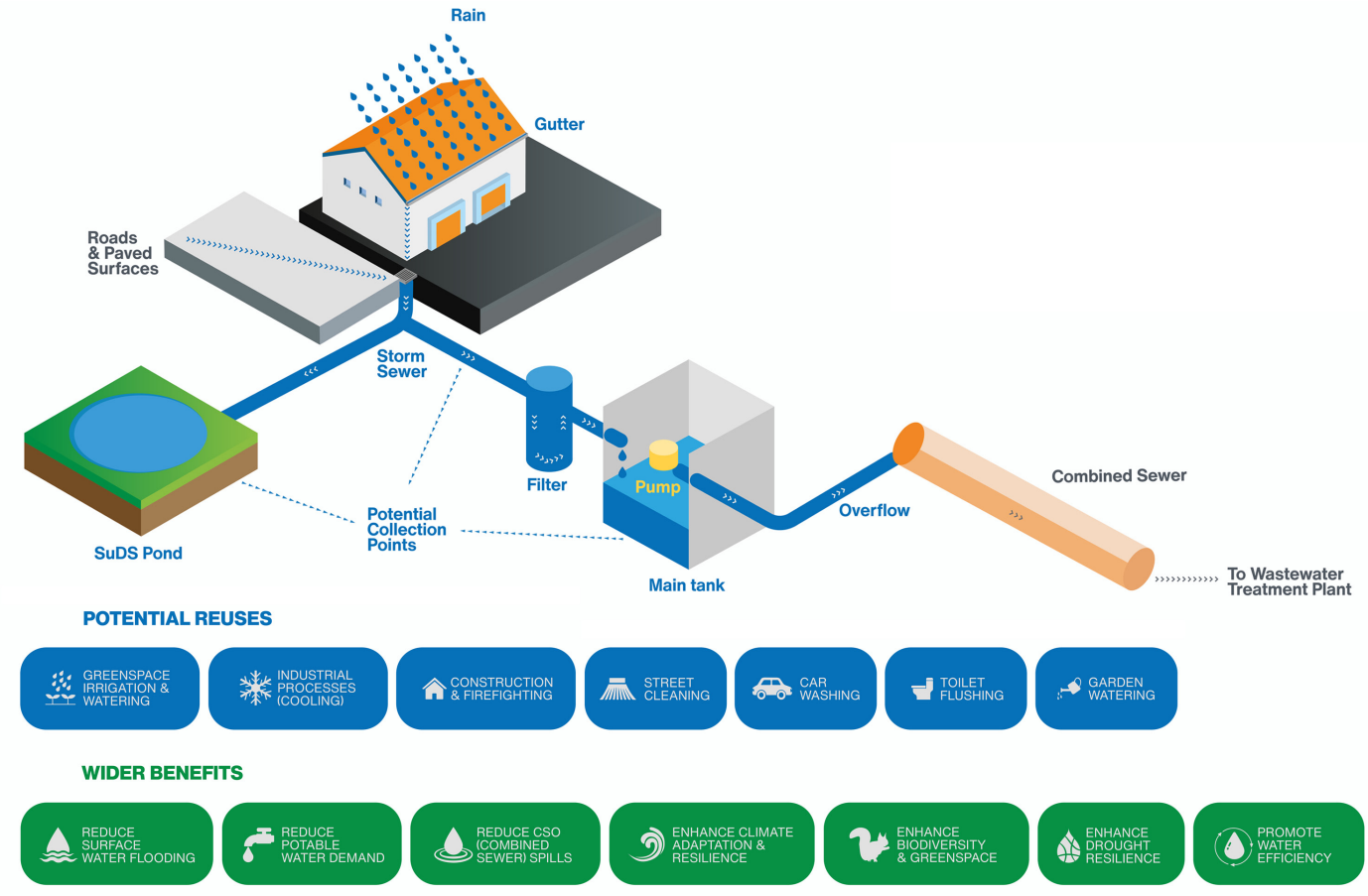
CREW CENTRE OF EXPERTISE FOR WATERS

Transitioning Surface Water Collection to Surface Water Reuse Systems

Annex F. Stakeholder Workshop Report

Cuthbertson A., Wade R., Black A., Duffy A., Hendry S., Leask F., Ralph E., Sezen E., Varghese A., Ward K.



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Annex F. Stakeholder Workshop Report

Transitioning Surface Water Collection to Surface Water Reuse
Date: Monday 1st of December 2025
Time: 1pm-4pm (GMT/UK Time)
Location: Teams (online).

Cuthbertson A., Wade R., Black A., Duffy A., Hendry S., Leask F., Ralph E., Sezen E., Varghese A., Ward K.

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Cover infographic courtesy of: Abertay University.

Please contact enquiries@crew.ac.uk, to request report in an alternative format.

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F1. Background and Workshop Objectives

Urban expansion and growing urban populations, are placing considerable pressure on critical water infrastructure and the urban water cycle. Key factors are increased water demand and the inability of combined sewer networks to cope with increasing volumes of surface water runoff generated from rainfall on to impervious surfaces. Urban water demand is expected to increase from present levels of 15–20% up to about 30% or higher of the total global water demand by 2050. These pressures are compounded by climate change impacts (e.g. increasing rainfall intensities) and inadequate or aging infrastructure (e.g. limited surface water drainage capacity) that can both increase urban flood risk and result in more frequent CSO discharges of untreated wastewater, increasing risks of habitat degradation and loss of biodiversity. In this context, it is crucial to learn from recent UK and international case studies on how decentralised and circular approaches to urban water management, including urban areas for non-potable uses, and provide additional ecosystem services and benefits (e.g. targeting net-zero).

A core component of the CREW research project 'Transitioning Surface Water Collection to Surface Water Reuse' was the inclusion of a stakeholder workshop. This took place online on the 1st of December 2025 (1pm–4pm). A key deliverable from the workshop was to identify the best approach to transition our surface water, and associated assets, from collection to reuse.

The preparation for the workshop utilised outputs from the other project methodologies (i.e. literature and legislation review; practical examples; data collection, mapping and GIS) to inform discussions and develop a strategic vision along which this transition can be realised. The workshop outputs identified the public sector, industry and private business opportunities, as well as the legislation currently acting as a barrier to this transition.

The stakeholder workshop was designed to gather feedback on our preliminary findings and to collate recommendations for inclusion in the report. The workshop brought together a wide range of key stakeholders relevant to the water sector, from researchers to practitioners and regulators, with participants joining from Scotland, across the UK, and internationally.

F2. Aims of Workshop

Project Aim: to explore emerging areas of interest in surface water reuse before next Scottish Water regulatory planning period (2027 – 2033).

Stakeholder Workshop Aim: to identify best approach to transition Scotland's surface water assets from collection to reuse.

F3. Stakeholder Workshop Methods

F3.1 Selection and recruitment of participants

Working with the CREW project steering group, the project team identified relevant stakeholders within their existing networks and based on recommendations from others. Some stakeholders for Scottish Water and Local authorities were consulted throughout the project, where pertinent. A wider group of stakeholders were invited to the online workshop. Invitations were sent to participants who would represent diverse and appropriate sectors.

The invitation letter and e-mail provided an explanation of the project and the purpose of the workshop (see invitation letter in Annex F6.1). Ethical approval for the workshop was gained via Abertay University research ethics committee as the workshop was coordinated by Abertay University project team members.

F3.2 Data collection during the workshop

Operational methods chosen for workshop delivery, data collection, and subsequent analysis were a mix of the following methods:

1. Quick-fire Q&A (using Mentimeter – an online polling tool)
2. Small group discussion (breakout rooms – mix of recordings and note-taking)
3. Large group discussion (plenary – recording and note-taking).

F3.3 Data Analysis

Once collected the data were analysed in the following ways:

- Descriptive stats directly from Mentimeter outputs (method 1)
- Thematic analysis of qualitative, spoken contributions and notes (methods 2 and 3).

F4. Stakeholder Workshop Results

This section contains an overview of the results obtained from the methods described above:

F4.1 Participant Recruitment

Very positive responses were received from those invited to join the workshop. The project team and steering group identified approximately 75 – 100 potential participants, with the hope that 30 – 50 participants would be available and willing to attend. Several invitees suggested other potential participants, recognising the relevance of the topic for others in their own networks. Invitation e-mails were sent out to individuals (rather than as a group mail out). Recruitment was very successful with more than 50 participants joining the call (excluding the project team members).

At the beginning of the workshop participants were introduced to the project aims and activities with a short PowerPoint presentation.

F4.2 Descriptive statistics from Mentimeter Q&A

The Quick-fire Q&A (using Mentimeter) questions asked were as follows:

1. Where are you joining from?
2. What sector do you work in?
3. Which term do you use for rainfall runoff in an urban space?
4. What non-potable water uses would not require treatment?
5. What non-potable water uses would require treatment?
6. What benefits could come from stormwater reuse?
7. What Barriers do you see for transitioning to stormwater reuse?
8. What would you like to get from todays' event?
9. Post a question that you would like to discuss.

The results of the Quick-fire Q&A (using Mentimeter) are shown below.

1. Geographical location of workshop participants

Sixty-two participants joined the workshop from diverse locations, with the majority from Scotland (48 participants) but also with expertise from England (9 participants); Europe (4 participants: France & Netherlands) and the USA (1 participant).

2. Sector affiliation of workshop participants

Participant sector affiliations can be seen in Figure F1. The highest sector affiliation was research and academia (17 participants), followed by local Authority/Council (8 participants), then water utility (6 participants), consultancy (5 participants), NGO (3 participants), regulator (3 participants), and Government (2 participants) with 6 participants selecting 'other' and adding the following affiliation to the chat area: CREW (2 participants), Consumer Scotland, Nature Scot, a non-affiliated hydrologist, and an additional NGO.

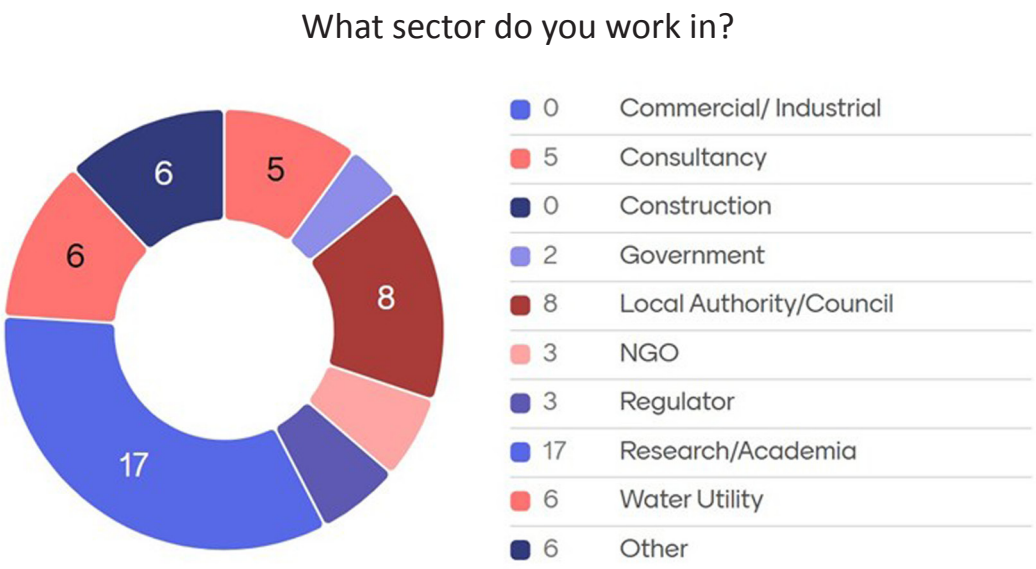

Figure F1. Sector affiliations of Stakeholder workshop participants

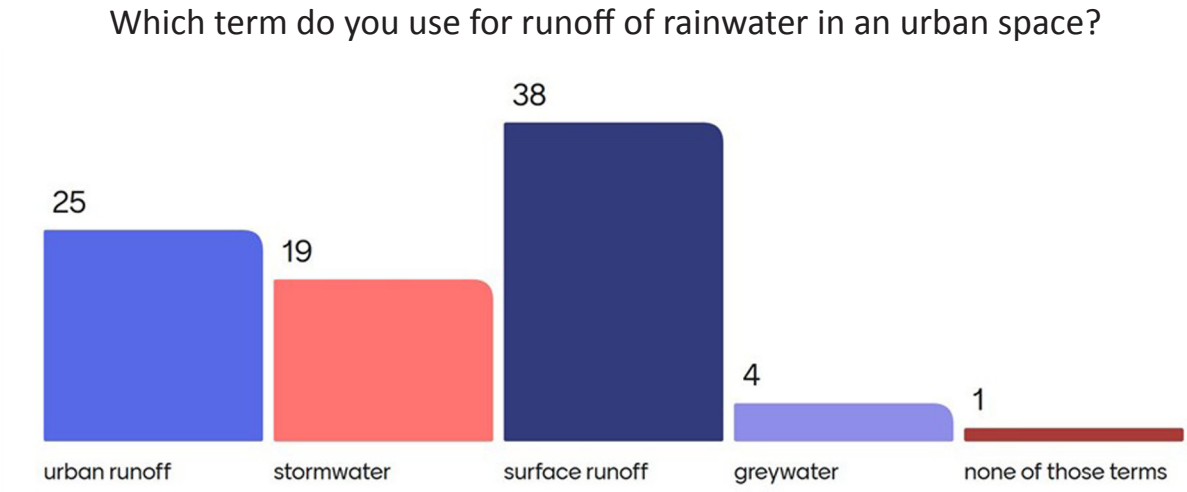

Figure F2. Preferred terminology used by Stakeholder workshop participants to describe runoff of rainwater from urban spaces.

3. Terminology question:

When asked ***"Which term do you use for rainfall runoff in an urban space?"*** the most popular response was 'surface runoff' with several responding that 'surface water' is also commonly used. Figure F2 shows the responses (participants could select more than 1 response to this question). Additional comments on terminology included

"What we find in the literature is that surface runoff / surface water runoff/stormwater and urban runoff are used without much distinction" (project team member)

"'Surface water' has other definitions under River Basin Management Planning and the classifications of surface water...so be great if we can have clear and agreed definitions around 'water'" (participant)

4. Non-potable water uses which *would not* require treatment

Table F1: Stakeholder answers to the question "What non-potable water uses would not require treatment?"	
Use	**Votes**
Watering greenspaces/gardens/non-food	38
Toilet flushing	30
Ag/irrigation	25
Car washing	12
Street cleaning/washing outdoor spaces	12
Industry (inc. cooling & construction)	11
Firefighting	3
Energy production (hydro)	1
Canal top-up	1
Depends on source	5
None	4

During these questions (4 & 5) participants asked for some clarification and made several comments, specifically in relation to runoff water quality.

"What is the quality of the stormwater runoff?"

"It depends where it's collected from. Roof water can be high in lead content so not suitable for irrigation."

"the extent of treatment will vary depending on end use"… "and on the source"

"It could be used for washing cars"

"Would its use depend on how contaminated the water is? Could it be used for laundry purposes?"

"Non-potable may become usable as an alternative to no-water in certain circumstances" (with another participant answering: *"indeed but might still need treated")*

"Need to be very careful when using water for irrigation as contaminants can accumulate in the soil – and risk making it unsuitable for growing."

"I presume different scenarios would result in different priorities for water reuse (such as drought or just normal weather scenario)?"

"…Again would this depend on the scenario we're in? industrial local use might be best when not needed for food or fire prevention?"

"I think the roof water we use in our [company name] office toilets still needs some treatment to remove bugs due to the bird poo."

"There are 63 viruses in bird faeces that are transmissible to humans...and many of them can be transmitted via aerosols."

5. Non-potable water uses which *would* require treatment

Table F2: Stakeholder answers to the question "What non-potable water uses would require treatment?"	
Use	**Votes**
Food Growing	37
All	26
Industry (inc. cooling & heating)	16
Toilet flushing	13
Car washing	7
Hydrogen production	6
Firefighting	3
Run off from lead roof	3
Laundry	1
Energy production	1
Golf course	1

One participant, who had to leave the workshop at this point contributed:

"Remember that we have to make water available to wildlife during dry weather. It needs to be at ground level for hedgehogs, amphibians etc, and captured rainwater is excellent for that. Secondly, please note that in England, water companies are not allowed to capture rainwater in a street and then provide it to the homes in that street in purple pipes for toilet flushing etc. This is because the legislation only allows water companies to provide wholesome water to properties and captured rainwater doesn't satisfy the definition of 'wholesome'. Water UK are trying to get that changed so that we can have community level rainwater capture and reuse."

In response another participant offered this comment: *"Careful controls (technical solutions and regulatory requirements) are needed for any use of non-potable water in homes, to ensure public health is a priority. The risks of misconnections, back-syphoning into the public water supply, etc, etc need to be considered."*

With agreement and a question from another participant: *"Yes and that is vital but perhaps also a barrier...?"*

Another response to the above 2-part comment was as follows: *"Why would community level re-use be preferable to longer-range transport? Is it just because you need less pipes, or are there other perceived benefits?"*

With the response: *"Collection and use of rainwater, close to where it falls should be encouraged to reduce pumping, piping, etc."*

6. Benefits from stormwater reuse

When asked ***"What benefits could come from stormwater reuse?"*** participants were asked to add their responses in 'free text' enabling them to enter responses in their own words. The answers were displayed as a word cloud (Figure F3) so that all participants could see the range of responses and the most prominent issues arising.

A word cloud is a visual representation of text data that displays words or phrases where the size of each word corresponds to its frequency of occurrence within the dataset. This type of visualisation primarily depends on the frequency of the same words or phrases being used, and highlights them, however this can overlook essential contextual elements, misspellings or abbreviations that may have been included in the participant responses. As such a subsequent thematic analysis was undertaken on all text responses to cluster them into categories/themes collated from the full list of submitted responses. The results of the thematic collation are presented in Table F3.

Comparing the data visualisation with the table of collated themes shows that the main (top 5) areas of concern as benefits of non-potable stormwater reuse, according to the participants, are: **Reduced sewer flooding/CSO spills/reduced pressure on sewers and treatment plants; Reduced flooding; Reduced potable water demand; Improved biodiversity and greenspace; Climate resilience, adaptation & mitigation**. These responses are well represented in both Figure F3 and Table F3, however with some difference in the prominence of terms in the word cloud visualisation (Figure F3), compared to the thematic frequency reported in the table (Table F3).

Figure F3. Word cloud showing Stakeholder answers to the question "What benefits could come from stormwater reuse?" The most popular responses are displayed most prominently.

Table F3: Stakeholder answers to the question "What benefits could come from stormwater reuse?"	
Benefits	**No. of responses**
Reduced sewer flooding/CSO spills/reduced pressure on sewers and treatment plants	27
Reduced flooding	13
Reduced potable water demand	12
Improved biodiversity and greenspace	12
Climate resilience, adaptation & mitigation	12
System and cost efficiencies	7
Energy saving	6
Drought resilience	5
Pollution reduction and improved environmental water quality	4
Circular economy benefits	4
Carbon reduction	3
Less treatment/chemical use	3
Behaviour change	2

7. Barriers for transitioning to stormwater reuse

When asked ***"What Barriers do you see for transitioning to stormwater reuse?"*** participants were asked to add their responses in 'free text' enabling them to enter responses in their own words. The answers were displayed as a word cloud (Figure F4) so that all participants could see the range of responses and the most prominent issues arising.

To ensure that closely similar text responses and contextual elements were collated a subsequent thematic analysis was undertaken on these responses also, to cluster them into categories or themes collated from the full list of submitted responses. The results of the thematic collation are presented in Table F4.

Comparing the data visualisation with the table of collated themes shows that the main (top 4) areas of concern as barriers to non-potable water reuse, according to the participants, are: **Infrastructure/ retrofitting/technology; Public perception/ acceptance; Cost/Funding; and Regulation/ Policy/Legislation.** These responses are well represented in both Figure F4 and Table F4.

Figure F4. Word cloud showing Stakeholder answers to the question "What barriers do you see for transitioning to stormwater reuse?" The most popular responses are displayed most prominently.

Table F4: Stakeholder answers to the question "What barriers do you see for transitioning to stormwater reuse?"

Barriers	No. of responses
Infrastructure/retrofitting/technology	24
Public perception/acceptance	22
Cost/Funding	20
Regulation/Policy/Legislation	10
Lack of incentives/drivers/urgency	8
Management and maintenance	7
Silo working/piecemeal approach	5
Water quality concerns	5
Treatment	4
Reliability of supply/seasonality	4
Space	3
Lack of education/understanding	2
Conflict with wildlife	2

8. Participant motivations for joining the workshop

The Mentimeter quickfire Q&A also provided an opportunity for participants to let us know what they hoped to get from the workshop. Participants were asked the question: ***"What would you like to get from todays' event?"***. There were forty-two individual responses. These were collated into common themes as follows:

1. **Knowledge gain (individual and collective capacity building):**

a. A desire to better understand the project and the sector

b. A desire to understand the challenges to making surface water reuse happen

c. A desire to understand possibilities for water recycling and opportunities for reducing potable water use

d. Gain insight into what's happening in the sector and in Scotland

e. A desire to understand how policy/ legislation will be delivered

f. A desire to enhance understanding of the need to plan for strategic urban drainage networks to achieve water resilient places.

2. **Hope and momentum**

a. Gain momentum for change

b. Enhance hope for the future

c. Moving from research to reality

d. Gain recommendations for the future

e. Hear positive suggestions for moving the agenda forward.

3. **Partnership and Collaboration**

a. A desire to contribute to the effort

b. Consensus on partnership

c. Collaboration (for individuals, sectors and organisations).

4. **Public perception and participation**

a. An interest in plans to take public along on the journey

b. "water is everyone's challenge"

c. A desire to raise profile for climate resilient cities.

The participants 'hopes' for the workshop are positive and proactive. It is reasonable to suggest that the workshop recruited successfully because many people in the sector are interested in moving this agenda forward. The participants indicated a desire to learn more, to contribute and to collaborate.

9. Participant questions for discussion

The Q&A tool also provided an opportunity for participants to drive the direction of the plenary discussion session. When asked to ***"Post a question that you would like to discuss"*** in the plenary session the most popular (upvoted) questions were:

a) Who do we think needs to lead on water re-use?

b) How can we establish strategic drainage networks to support multiple benefits including water re-use?

c) How will water quality needs and expectations change over time?

d) How should water reuse be rolled out in a way that involves all key stakeholder sectors and the public?

e) How is current infrastructure placed to enable surface water reuse, what needs to change, and what this may look like/cost?

f) How does water metering factor in?

g) How to determine what uses should be prioritised for surface water reuse in first instance? What uses/subset of uses should we be starting with to explore feasibility further?

Several of these questions were picked up and discussed in the plenary session. Results from that part of the workshop are presented below.

F4.3 Small group round table discussions

Small group discussion, in online breakout rooms, were designed to:

- Share sectoral perspectives on what a more water resilient future, including surface water reuse, might look like and how to get there.
- Consider "vision" for 2030 and "roadmap" to widespread implementation by 2050.

Participants chose or were assigned to one of four breakout rooms, each with different focus:

Room 1. Technical/delivery aspects

Room 2. Behaviour change/adoption

Room 3. Environmental/ecological issues

Room 4. Policy/law/regulation

The themes were identified from the literature and policy reviews. Each 'room' had a themed focus but had flexibility to discuss other themes and related topics. After the small group discussions. Facilitators provided feedback from breakout room discussions. A summary of some of the themes discussed in each room is provided below.

Technical (Room 1)

- Need for highly flexible and adaptive infrastructure. Multi-use spaces
- Availability of space, and appropriate technologies
- Resource hubs for reclaimed water distribution
- Development of new local networks or pipes. Systems capable of handling increased weather variability and extremes
- Responsibilities – who owns what?
- Data – Monitoring and Telemetry needed to manage the supply/demand. Some systems are there and could be used better, but strained resources to do thi.
- Collaboration needed (not silo working), systems and strategies will need careful thought at the beginning of this process, to ensure opportunities are not lost
- Additional areas of discussion: treatment and reuse, storage and smart networks, challenges, risks, monitoring, governance, responsibilities, innovation & collaboration.

Behaviour (Room 2)

- Look at the obvious opportunities, large roofs etc.
- Cost to public and businesses (but what is the real cost of water?) when compared with energy sector increased costs (behaviour changed with increased costs)
- The 'Yuck factor' (recognition that talking about drains and sewers can be difficult)
- Care needs to be taken when re-using water in terms of potential unintended pollution/health impacts
- Importance of public messaging around behaviour change (at the right time, and making it accessible and affordable)
- Infrastructure challenges (de-dualling), particularly the space, and cost needed to separate inputs to existing combined sewer systems
- Need to close the skills and competency gap.

Environmental (Room 3)

- Scope of interest – Direct +/or indirect water use/re-use
- Link to climate adaptation and urban cooling
- 2050 Scenario discussion – what if we had 50% of the water we have now?
- Partnership working considered to be important in terms of recognising connections to public amenity, habitat, biodiversity, carbon, water environment. Some comments on the efficacy of regional interconnectedness in Scotland (in the past), and which operate in other countries (examples from New Zealand and Germany were shared)
- Scale is important, the impact of a small-scale project can be wider than the site of interest, again interconnections are important and wider opportunities may be possible
- Water quality – Standards and treatment needs (discussion around microplastics and other pollutants)
- Balancing demand (water and energy) with ecological gains/trade-offs
- Additional areas of discussion included: direct and indirect reuse. Multiple benefits (and balancing areas of need). Feasibility and urgency.

Policy and legislation (Room 4)

- Scenario discussion: shift to water resilient cities. By 2050 we will need to make best use of every available water resource and the things we use it for take far less to achieve the same outcome/experience. The group expressed enthusiasm for this vision

- Need to think holistically. Linking water to land use. Integrated strategic drainage networks, water resilient cities, adapting all buildings for Climate resilience. Critical systems planning needed
- Barriers – Risk to public health
- Need for use standards (water quality), what uses are feasible/appropriate and what treatments would be needed?
- Many approaches are technically possible but not financially feasible
- Additional areas of discussion: Definitions used by industry, metering, education.

F4.4 Large group plenary discussions

Data collection for this part of the workshop was largely qualitative, with data collected via recording, notes and transcript. Thematic analysis of the contributions made during this section were predominantly spoken contributions with some text notes added to the online chat area.

The workshop participants generously shared their perspectives, informed each other regarding developments and exchanged information. Throughout the workshop many examples and case studies were shared, with web and other resource links and contacts shared.

We tackled questions such as:

- Who should lead on the water reuse transition?
- The need for cross-sector working
- The importance of Planning and standards
- Partnering with the public
- The value of water
- Stick and Carrot – drivers/levers, requirements/ incentives
- Learning lessons from other transitions (e.g. to solid waste recycling).

Some of the themes arising from the main discussion included:

1. **Responsibility – Who should lead?**
    - Should it be a shared responsibility?
    - Water utility/company and Local Authorities are key partners
    - With respect to 'just transition' principles – at the property/business scale – who can afford to make the changes?
    - Water-based approach tends to suggest the Water Utility/company should lead
    - Place-based approach tends to suggest the local Authority should lead
    - Local Authorities (representing the public and elected members in a place) currently don't have the responsibility to look after elements of the water cycle
    - How do we ensure the appropriate partners are in place to deliver for each place?

2. **Collaboration**
    - Collaboration across sectors is needed but the facility is not there to 'allow' us to work together (with reference to legislation and statutory responsibilities)
    - There is a need for shared ownership across all water management
    - Partnership working examples exist elsewhere, and in other sectors (e.g. Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act). Lots to learn and reflect on
    - Reflection on shared responsibility already in place in Scotland where consensus working 'works' and could be replicated to local/regional levels
    - Place–based solutions are needed, including all stakeholders (e.g. Glasgow smart canals, Falkirk, Water Resilient Dundee), noting that the 'public' are not homogeneous, appropriate approaches needed.
    - How do we partner with the public? (educate, engage, communicate, encourage).

3. **Planning/urban planning/Policy/legislation**
    - An example from France was cited – water management is more integrated; planning and design are linked
    - The importance of place and place-based approaches
    - Place-making principles
    - Business case needed, and legislation to drive change

- New policies in development (New Government will set out the timetable for consultations etc in the new parliamentary session)
- Outputs from previous consultations were shared.

4. **The value, or perceived value of water**
   - A general perception that water is cheap or is perceived as 'cheap'
   - However, recent polling by Scottish Water shows that 94% of people agree that water is a precious resource worth saving
   - Whilst water is seen as a precious resource, use data suggests it is not conserved in practice
   - With changes in design and behaviour it is possible to have a feeling of water abundance without depleting resources (e.g. 50 L home coalition).

5. **Basic principles for rainwater/surface water reuse**
   - Catch rainwater where it falls – to reduce downstream impacts and quality issues
   - Recognition of interconnectedness of systems and practices
   - Better design of systems is needed.

6. **Reliability of supply (quantity and quality)**
   - Rainfall and surface water are more abundant in wetter parts of the year
   - Reliable storage needed to provide availability at drier times
   - Discussion regarding use of final effluent (treated wastewater) and surface water resources to balance supply
   - Control/monitoring of quality in domestic property-level systems could be challenging.

7. **Levers/drivers**
   - Guidance and policy
   - People, processes and funding
   - Capabilities and skills gap to be filled
   - People who are willing to coalesce around a place, roll up their sleeves and make it happen are already showing us the way – e.g. MGSDP (Glasgow), WRD (Dundee), Edinburgh and the Lothians Water partnership
   - Accelerate the agenda via non-household sectors (large space/roof areas).

F5. Summary and Conclusions from Stakeholder Workshop

The stakeholder workshop was successful in that it recruited well, was well attended and produced a wealth of information. The event contributed to delivery of direct and in-direct capacity building, in-keeping with the aims of the project.

Many of the insights gained from the workshop participants have consolidated the initial findings from the outputs from the other project methodologies (i.e. literature and legislation review; practical examples; data collection, mapping and GIS). Each component of the project has informed discussions and will contribute to development of a strategic vision along which this transition can be realised.

F6. Additional Information and Resources on Stakeholder Workshop

F6.1 Stakeholder Workshop Invitation and Workshop agenda

You have been identified as an important stakeholder within the water sector, and we would like to invite you (or a colleague) to join us for a 3-hour online workshop on the 1st of December 2025 (1pm–4pm). The stakeholder workshop is part of a project commissioned by CREW (Centre of Expertise for Waters) on behalf of Scottish Water and Consumer Scotland. The research phase of the project is ongoing, and we would very much appreciate your feedback on our preliminary findings & recommendations.

Learning from this research will help us support Scottish Water's ambition to reduce the volumes of rainwater entering the combined sewer network by transitioning Scotland's surface water collection and treatment systems to surface water reuse systems. The work also supports Scottish Government and UK national policy agendas such as net zero goals and circular economy.

The areas of investigation within this surface water reuse project include:

- identifying practical examples of surface water reuse in the wider UK/internationally and transferability to the Scottish context;
- exploring opportunities, barriers and limitations of surface water reuse in the Scottish context;
- mapping potential source types, accessibility and volumes available for surface water capture, storage and reuse;
- understanding future alignment with policy and regulation.

Draft Workshop Agenda (online event – 3 hours in total).		
Session times	**Activity**	**Duration**
13:00–13:30	Presentation of draft findings, key lessons learned, initial recommendations and next steps	(30 mins)
13:30–14:30	Interactive session to identify perspectives on moving to a more resilient surface water reuse system (including future policy/regulation).	(60 mins)
14:30–14:45	Break	(15 mins)
14:45–15:15	Discuss feedback from interactive sessions and group discussions to inform recommendations	(30 mins)
15:15–15:45	Roundtable debate: next steps, opportunities & barriers	(30 mins)
15:45–16:00	Wrap up and close	(15 mins)
Please sign up via this Eventbrite link: CREW Stakeholder Workshop Tickets, Mon, Dec 1, 2025, at 1:00 PM | Eventbrite		

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