

What do we need to know about water's future?

The world of water, through the eyes of GWI publisher [Christopher Gasson](#).



It would have been the Global Water Summit next week. Yet again we miss the opportunity to catch up with each other and figure out what the future means for our industry. I still have ten urgent questions I would like to ask about what happens next in water, and so we have set up an online get-together at **3 p.m. UK time on 2nd June** to talk about them. We will also be announcing the winners of this year's [Global Water Awards](#), so do come along. This is what I want to know:

1. How will the Veolia-Suez merger change the water business?

Veolia CEO Antoine Frérot has bet €13 billion that the deal will dramatically change his company's ability to lead the ecological transition. If he is right, then everyone else in the water business is going to have to pay attention, because it is your lunch he will be eating. Either way, there is going to be a well-funded and super-scrappy Suez in the market, looking to build a new kind of business.

2. Where is the opportunity in the energy transition?

Right at the centre of the ecological transition that Veolia wants a bigger piece of is the switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy. Where is the biggest opportunity for water in that? Is it in energy from wastewater and sludge, in the supply chain for the materials needed for energy storage, or in the emerging hydrogen economy?

3. Why is private finance in water suddenly growing?

It doesn't make immediate sense. Thanks to the pandemic, public money is cheaper than ever, yet according to our public-private partnership tracker, demand for private investment in the water business is set to rise by 42% between 2021 and 2022, and remain high in 2023 and 2024. What is driving it?

4. What's next for desal after the Gulf boom?

The desal market has more than doubled in size over the past decade, but it has become dramatically more concentrated in the GCC region. As that market passes its point of peak demand, how are the opportunities beyond the region evolving? What will be the key to opening them up?

5. How has COVID reshaped the water market?

The impact of the pandemic has been extraordinarily uneven, both in terms of its human impact and its economic impact. It has also created new priorities for utilities. 14 months after the pandemic began, what do we now know is going to be different?

Source: Water Intelligence Magazine (May 13th, 2021),

6. How will Biden's \$111 billion funding plan change the US water sector?

As they say when people win the lottery: it is a life-changing amount of money. It is potentially an opportunity to reinvent the utility as an agile, customer-focused provider of urban sustainability. It could equally be just another reason not to address the structural problems of the US water sector.

7. What will the emerging contaminants landscape look like in 2025?

Regulators in North America and Europe sense public support for tighter controls on micropollutants and forever chemicals, but the costs and the implications are much less well thought out. Where will we be when the current raft of regulation is in place in 2025?

8. What are the trends in industrial water stewardship?

Over the past decade, most of the quick wins for water use reduction have been implemented. It means that going forward, businesses are going to have to be a lot more sophisticated in their water management. What kind of opportunities is this creating?

9. How many countries can meet SDG6 goals by 2030?

The biggest opportunity in the world for water is among the underserved, yet increasingly the attention of development finance institutions seems to be diverted by climate change investment. Can we still expect a spurt of investment into connecting people with safe drinking water and sanitation, or has the opportunity moved elsewhere?

10. What are the hottest technologies in 2021?

During the pandemic, it has been extraordinarily difficult to launch new technologies, but quite easy to develop them. It means that as we move towards recovery we will see a flood of new solutions come to market. Which are the ones to watch?

The meeting will start with four-minute talks by our in-house specialists addressing the ten key questions above, followed by the announcement of the awards winners. We will then break into informal round table discussions. I want to hear what everyone in the GWI community is thinking. Sign up for it [here](#).

Source: Water Intelligence Magazine (May 13th, 2021),

