

JOINT CORE STRATEGY FOR BROADLAND, NORWICH AND SOUTH NORFOLK

Statement of common understanding on water resources

Anglian Water, Environment Agency, Natural England

Background

- The River Wensum Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is presently in unfavourable condition for a number of reasons, one of these is low flows. Restorative action will be required for all of the reasons for unfavourable condition.
- The Environment Agency's Review of Consents (RoC) process has established that flows, particularly in the lower reaches, are significantly reduced by abstractions from the river and these prevent the site from meeting its environmental objectives.
- Anglian Water's abstraction at Costessey has the single greatest effect on river flows. The Environment Agency has identified that this needs to be significantly reduced in order to restore the river to favourable condition.
- Anglian Water has been asked to reduce its Costessey abstraction by up to 49 million litres per day (ml/d). This can be achieved progressively over successive business planning cycles as follows :
 1. a 20 MI/d reduction by 2015
 2. and if required a further reduction of up to 29 MI/d by 2020 or soon thereafter.
- Anglian Water may choose to implement the required reduction via a single solution if this is more cost-effective. This has implications for the period of time the SAC will remain in unfavourable condition.
- During this interim period there is a legal requirement to prevent any further deterioration of the River Wensum SAC. It is therefore necessary that until the solution is in place, the level of abstraction at Costessey should not increase beyond historic levels for the period up to 2015.
- After 2015, when it is expected that some flow improvement will be achieved, no further deterioration in these improved flows would be acceptable from increased levels of abstraction.
- Natural England, in responding to planning applications in the catchment, has advised local authorities that any proposals coming forward ahead of the adoption of the Joint Core Strategy and the implementation of the Review of Consents' solution for the River Wensum SAC, should not exacerbate the adverse affect on the Wensum by requiring increased abstraction from Costessey.
- In the short term, maintaining the Costessey licence at its historical levels of abstraction would satisfy Natural England's concerns for the interim period.

Present situation

- All three parties have signed off a commitment that Anglian Water will aim to meet the first part of the solution by 2015.
- Anglian Water is presently appraising its options to achieve the initial reduction of 20 MI/d and will have identified its preferred option by January 2012. We agree that if a solution to deliver a 20 MI/d reduction cannot be found then Anglian Water will deliver as much of a reduction as they are able to by 2015.
- Once the preferred option is identified, Anglian Water will need to secure funding from Ofwat for the scheme .
- The earliest that Anglian Water is likely to be able to begin implementation of the interim (or full) scheme required to meet the Review of Consents solution is April 2015.
- Anglian Water is assessing the level of proposed JCS housing growth that could be supplied by its sources in the Norwich area other than by increasing the level of abstraction from the Costessey licence above the agreed historic thresholds.

3 November 2010.