

Abstraction Reform Project Newsletter

July 2014

What we've been doing

Abstraction reform consultation

The abstraction reform consultation 'Making the Most of Every Drop' ran from December 2013 to March 2014. We would like to thank everyone who took the time to read the consultation document and answer the survey. We had 318 responses to the consultation and published our [Summary of Responses](#) on 9th July 2014.

During the consultation period we ran four consultation workshops in London, Peterborough, Cardiff and Manchester. The workshops gave participants the opportunity to tell us their views about the consultation proposals, hear more about the proposals and seek further information or clarification on them. The key themes from the consultation workshops are available in annex A of the Summary of Responses document.

Stakeholder perspective:

Paul Hammett – Water Resources Specialist for the NFU:

"The Peterborough meeting was dominated by farmers in terms of numbers (hardly surprising given the importance of crop irrigation in the eastern counties), but there was a fantastic range of business and sector interests represented around the tables. The workshop format gave us all the chance to understand much better how 'non-farmers' use water and to compare notes and ideas on managing water – and of course to challenge and cross examine the proposals presented to us by Defra and the Environment Agency."

"The Defra consultation presented the NFU with the perfect opportunity (and an extremely busy March) to encourage farmers to think harder about their short and long term water needs. We put together a set of meetings in our key catchments to tell members about the reform proposals and we encouraged them to respond (which I'm proud to see they did in large numbers). But while discussion of the reform proposals took centre stage, we made sure that the consultation was considered as one piece in the wider jigsaw of managing water, alongside advice on how to build farm reservoirs and the benefits of forming local abstractor groups."

Other work

We have been carrying out further work on a number of key areas including discharges, transition and drought.

We have been developing our proposals on how to manage discharges in the reformed abstraction management system. We have also been investigating how the interface between drought management and abstraction reform would function. We plan on providing you with an opportunity to give us your views on this work in September.

We have also started to examine how different transition options will affect licences in real life catchments. The purpose of this is to be able to explain to stakeholders the impact different transition options would have on real licences in real catchments. Initial results are expected later this year. Finally we are carrying out further work with water companies to investigate how transition options may impact upon their security of supply and the implications this has for public water supply.

Other engagement

Since the close of the consultation we have continued to engage with stakeholders, including holding two further workshops, one on our modelling and one on market development and regulation.

The modelling workshop was a chance for attendees to hear about and discuss the technical details of the modelling with the designers of the model.

The market development and regulation workshop was an opportunity for stakeholders to help develop the design of the water abstraction trading market; we explored what principles, requirements, processes and practical arrangements may be necessary to ensure the market is successful.

We have also continued to communicate with stakeholders through our DefraWater Twitter account. Follow us now: @DefraWater



What's coming up next?

- **Digital discussion forums:** We will be running two online discussions in September, one on the interface between abstraction reform and drought and the other on managing discharges. These will be carried out through the use of an online dialogue app. Further information will be sent to you nearer the time.
- **Abstraction Reform Advisory Group (ARAG):** We are planning another meeting in the autumn this year. If you're interested in finding out more about what's

discussed at ARAG the minutes of each meeting are published on our website:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/abstraction-reform>

- **Modelling:** Further modelling results are expected in September. We will be feeding back the initial results to ARAG later this year and will include the full results in our final impact assessment.
- **Legislation and implementation:** The UK Government is committed to being ready to legislate early in the next Parliament and implementing the reforms in the early 2020s.

Clarifications

Some consultation responses we received questioned how we defined certain words and terms, so in this section we have included some definitions:

Abstraction permission: Under abstraction reform proposals, abstraction permissions, such as allocations and local conditions, would replace an abstraction licence. Abstraction permissions would be issued by the Environment Agency or Natural Resources Wales.

Catchment: An area with several, often inter-connected, water bodies (rivers, lakes and groundwater). In the reformed abstraction management system the catchments would be similar to those used for Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS).

Basic and enhanced catchments: All catchments (basic and enhanced) would be reformed and benefit from a range of changes such as the removal of seasonality from licences, the introduction of reviews and the removal of time limits from licences. In some catchments there would be clear environmental and economic benefits of additional reforms to better link abstraction to availability and facilitate trading. The catchments that would benefit from these additional reforms would be called 'enhanced' catchments.

Reserves: In the consultation we proposed creating reserves of water held by the regulator which could be allocated to new or expanding abstractors in a catchment. This reserves water would be water made available for licensing by removing unused water from existing licences; it is not a physical reserve or reservoir of water.

Latest publications

- Risk Solutions, 2014, the Impacts of Abstraction Reform: This report provides further detail on the evidence base underpinning the consultation impact assessment and on more recent evidence following further development of the modelling.
- Cranfield University, 2014, Water for agriculture: collaborative approaches and on-farm storage: This report examines the costs and benefits of, and barriers to the delivery of on-farm storage.

- British Geological Survey, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and Cranfield University, 2014, Land use, climate change and water availability: Summary: This report summarises research to explore the relationship between land use and management and water availability under future climate change scenarios.

Contact details and further information

If you wish to get in contact with us or find out more about abstraction reform here are some useful details:

Email: abstraction_reform@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Visit our webpages on GOV.UK

Follow us on Twitter: @DefraWater