



Representing Abstractors in Broadland CAMS & North Norfolk CAMS

Newsletter

3rd December 2015

Dear member

Licence Reform post 2020.

BAWAG wrote to Defra again to make points about how the proposed licence changes would impact on agricultural abstraction licences. To date Defra have not announced the changes they would like to make to licence reform, which only takes into account normal conditions. Our main concern is what happens in a drought?

Defra's 25 year Food & Farming Plan

In Eastern region water resources is certainly the number one issue in the next 25 years. Please see summary of these events.

Countryside Productivity Grants and LEADER Grants

Countryside Productivity applicants have, for water resources projects, been hit hard by the lack of money available. Money for smaller water resources projects is available through LEADER in Norfolk. However Article 46 applies to all water resources projects. Following the launch of LEADER in London and a question to George Eustace MP (Minister for RDPE) we have had a meeting with Defra to try to find a way through Article 46 which results in successful grant applications. Defra would not relax their interpretation of Article 46 for the first round of Countryside Productivity but would look at training appraisers for LEADER and future rounds of Countryside Productivity because applications were likely to come from capital rich businesses but jobs could be further down the supply chain. Defra would not comment whether there would be any further rounds of Countryside Productivity due to lack of funding in RDPE.

Water Framework Directive Groundwater No deterioration assessment.

This assessment will be completed by 2018. Cam & Ely Ouse CAMS area will be the first to be affected. We are concerned that the way in which cuts to annual volume are set in this catchment will not be correct for the very large Broadland Rivers Chalk & Crag Groundwater unit. It looks like the area in North Norfolk CAMS not affected by this assessment because it is classified as "good" has increased but Broadland Rivers Chalk & Crag is "poor" for Nitrates and the Quantitative Status is also poor due to it failing the Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems test (GWDTE). We are trying

to find out the detail here as this groundwater catchment was classed as “good” when Anglian Water moved their abstraction out of Strumpshaw to Postwick about 4 years ago. We believe it is something to do with Anglian Water Ludham abstraction possibly having an effect on Ant Broads & Marshes SSSI component Snipe marsh which was flagged up by the Broads Authority in May 2014 as not being assessed in Review of Consents back in 2008. Or possibly because of a Natural England annual assessment of Fen Orchids on Catfield Fen which put a “threat of water abstraction” to the population of Fen Orchids.

This classification is also linked to Article 46 above and any farmer applying for a grant for water resources where the abstraction is from this groundwater catchment will feel the effects of Article 46.

The cuts to abstraction to bring the catchment back to in balance (No water available) can only be made to time limited groundwater licences. These licences are due for renewal in March 2018.

There is no compulsory method of reducing perpetual licences except for serious environmental damage and this assessment is not serious environmental damage.

In order to understand this process and to limit the cuts to abstraction, the committee is considering some outside help from either a geologist or a hydrogeologist.

See page 38 of first document

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/river-basin-management-plans>

Make sure you go to October 2015 version

Precautionary Principle.

This is being challenged by an abstractor at Catfield. After 5 months expert witnesses have been allowed onto Catfield Fen to carry out the topographical survey and collect ecological evidence. The NFU LAS have provided considerable funding to date to fight this nationally important case. Norfolk Wildlife Trust and other landowners adjoining Catfield Fen have been extremely helpful in providing access to their land to conduct the various surveys required. We still do not know exactly when this appeal will be held but it is likely to be between February and October 2016.

RSPB Interreg Bid

We believe that this bid has been submitted. The bid has been toned down by RSPB following intense lobbying by farmers in the Ant valley. The bid is attached but is basically looking at the effect of diffuse pollution on the integrity of the EU site. This is possibly a larger threat than any abstraction issue to modern farming practices.

This bid has led to discussions about whose responsibility is it in agriculture to monitor this bid and to protect farmers’ businesses from this threat. We have Rob Wise (NFU Environment Advisor for Eastern Region) but he has to deal with all Water Framework Diffuse pollution and Habitat Directive issues in Eastern Region, whilst Paul Hammett (NFU National Water Resources specialist) deals with abstraction issues. BAWAG just deals with water resources issues, there is nobody locally leading on diffuse pollution. Is it time farmers got organised?

Sediment Finger printing report

We have recently questioned the validity of this recent report on sediment finger printing in Ant, Bure and Muckfleet catchments. The report identifies the sources of sediment in these catchments. Arable farming comes out much better than expected. However some of the data seems to be missing or not assessed by ADAS. It will be vital that we interrogate this report fully to be able to challenge the RSPB Interreg bid when those results are made available. We have also come across an EA/NE report on Ant Broads & Marshes SSSI on diffuse pollution. Natura 2000 sites must achieve good water status by 2015 (rather than just improve over time). Contrary to the sediment finger printing report, this report appears to be blaming agriculture for the diffuse pollution and lack of farmer engagement with NE’s

CSF. The report does conclude with Broads Authority lake restoration strategy in that cleaning mud from lakes does not solve water quality issues. What the report misses is the role of 1000 acres of reedbeds in the SSSI which historically cleaned the water and acted as a flood plain. We are also assuming that similar reports exist for the other SSSI's through which 17 catchments flow. This report has been sent to NFU Regional Office who will hopefully look at the situation on our behalf.

Environment Agency Inspections

It would appear that the Environment Agency are making more inspections to check abstraction records than historically. Please ensure that all annual returns for summer and winter abstraction are returned to the Environment Agency even if the abstraction is zero. It is a licence condition and potentially a fine on BPS.

BAWAG AGM

Please note that the AGM will be held at Anglia Farmers' office at 2pm on Thursday 4th February 2016

Invitation and agenda to follow shortly. Speakers include Jenny Bashford (AHDB Potatoes), Belinda Clarke (Agri-Tech East), Paul Hammett (NFU).

Things to do

Annual returns to Environment Agency

Look at grant funded opportunities for water resources projects

Drain systems- the forecast is for a cold winter

Review abstraction licences to check that hourly, daily and annual quantities are sufficient and apply to make the necessary changes. The process is getting more onerous but please abstract within the parameters of your licence.

BAWAG will be sending out invoices shortly, if you have changed your licenced volume in the last 5 years, please e mail Jo@burefarm.co.uk BAWAG is not automatically upgraded as to what volumes abstractors hold.

We value all members' support and look forward to representing you and your water rights in a very difficult year in 2016 for water abstraction.

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