



Newsletter

From: SM
To: ND & AS
Copy: n/a
Date: August 3 2023
Reference: BAWAG Newsletter 20230803
Subject: Newsletter August 2023

Dear BAWAG member

We're writing to you because the Environment Agency has sent 400+ letters to abstractors who could be affected by their work on the Broads Plan. Some of you will have received one of these.

As we explained at the AGM, the Broads Plan follows the *Harris v. Environment Agency* Judicial Review and involves reviewing all licences in the Bure, Thurne, Yare & Waveney catchments. From this, action will be taken to remove or change licences that are considered to be environmentally damaging. Because the work is focussed on wetland sites of special scientific interest, and these have the highest levels of environmental protection, the Environment Agency will set very challenging thresholds for any potential adverse effect and will further act on a precautionary basis.

While the threat is very serious, we want to reassure you that our Norfolk Sustainable Abstraction (NSA) programme has been set up to enable us to work with the Environment Agency and get the best possible outcome for our members. Where possible, this will involve reducing the scale of the licence reductions and changes which are proposed. Where this cannot be done, it will involve working with the affected abstractors & their advisors to help them find affordable, more sustainable sources of supply.

If you have one of these letters, we want you to know that we are totally committed to representing your interests in the work that the Environment Agency does.

We have some of the funding we need to start the NSA programme, and on this basis have commissioned preliminary work. This will report in the autumn and once we have it, we will come and meet with you to discuss the level of risk to which you are exposed and what the next steps will be. We will organise you into Planning Groups so that we don't have to spend too much time or money on meetings (we want to reserve as much funding as possible for the technical work), but this doesn't mean that we won't also be available for 1-2-1 meetings, if these are needed.

A couple of requests in the meantime:

1. We still have outstanding bills. If you're sat on one of these please get your payment in, as we can only commission work to the value of our funding. As well as being technically challenging, the Environment Agency has set a very tight deadline for getting the work done. We need to be there with them every step of the way, and we can't afford to delay or stop while we chase invoices.
2. There are a lot of abstractors in the Bure, Thurne, Yare & Waveney who are not BAWAG members. If you know one of these, please speak to them about the Environment Agency letter, and let them know that if they join BAWAG we can help them deal with it. It will cost them, but by being member the costs will be shared & the more members we have the cheaper it will be. It could be that a quiet word is all that is needed.

Finally, a word from our Chair:

Dear abstractor,

During the last couple of days the EA has written to licence holders in the Bure, Thurne and Waveney catchments stating it's intention to carry out a similar process to the one that is about to be completed in the Ant catchment.

The committee put a proposal to you at our AGM asking for funds to carry out technical work to help everyone to have the ability to argue their case for continuation to abstract in the strongest way with the best data.

Recently you will have received your new subscription request which is vital for us to continue this project on your behalf. It would be very easy for people to put the bill at the bottom of the pile believing that "it won't be me" and "I'll be alright".

If anybody is feeling this way, you may want to contact one of the affected abstractors in the Ant catchment and ask what it's like to receive a section 52 notice. The only course of action remaining will be a public enquiry, most likely resulting in the loss of licence, the option to grow high value crops and the loss in capital value of the land base asset. I cannot stress the importance of the collective approach that needs to be actioned now.

Your committee is working with other WAGs on this and collectively we can make a difference with data and evidence to strengthen our fight.

Please pay the bill. Being pro-active will make a difference,

Kind regards

Anthony Seaman
Chairman