

## **Felixstowe Peninsula Project Meeting re Licencing 8 January 2018**

**EA Office, Ipswich. 9.30am**

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Present:

Rory Callan	Emma Hay	Caroline Trevaskis
Giles Bloomfield	Katy Steed	Huw Richards
Paul Bradford	Peter Willett	John Patrick
Tim Darby	Jonathan Thompson	Sarah Hollingham
Jane Burch		

### **1. Background**

Tim Darby summarised the Holistic Water Project. The main points were:

- Suffolk County Council as part of the Greening Suffolk Project were looking at better water management throughout the whole of Suffolk.
- After considering the possibilities of all the rivers in Suffolk, the River Deben was chosen.
- By trialling ideas on one river, there is the possibility to replicate these water management measures on different rivers in Suffolk.
- The project is co-ordinated by Jane Burch
- Felixstowe Peninsula Project is one aspect of the Holistic Project

[Holistic Water Mgt Project](#)

John Patrick summarised the Felixstowe Peninsula Project. The main points were:

- Project utilises drainage water that would otherwise be pumped out to the estuary. This is new water for irrigation and for the growth of agriculture on Felixstowe Peninsula.
- There are about 10 farmers who are interested in investing in infrastructure to move this water to their land for reservoir storage and subsequent spray irrigation. All these abstractors already have an abstraction licence and have justification for using this additional water and most have existing capacity to store new water.
- This additional water is needed as there is now greater demand from supermarkets for quality crops such as carrots and onions from Suffolk.
- As there is extensive investment needed in the pipeline and pumps to move water from the Kings Fleet to individual farm reservoirs, a 20-year abstraction licence is requested.

- Environmental benefits such as soil health and soil sustainability are also being considered by abstractors, as well as restoration of designated saltmarsh habitat that is being damaged by current drainage activity.
- Grants are available to reduce the infrastructure costs by 40%, but the application window closes June 30 2018. Therefore, it is necessary for the project to submit a full application to the EA by the end of January. Grants can only be applied for once there is an abstraction licence and planning permissions in place.
- It is thought that surplus water from the scheme may be sold to Anglian Water and be pumped to Alton Water, so the capacity to store abstracted water is not a factor. Any surplus water could also be utilised to supplement low flows for environmental enhancement.

Emma Hay and Jonathan Thompson summarised the environmental requirements from an EA and EN perspective. Further information on this is on the environmental position statement circulated last year.

Katy spoke about the Abstraction Plan which was published by DEFRA mid December 2017. This is an EA and DEFRA joint plan. There are two parts to this (i) sustainable abstraction and (ii) improved access to water for abstractors – which both Rory and Katy are leading on.

The improved access to water project is an opportunity to trial new tools under the current legislation. This is to utilise higher flows, more dynamic flow management and the move to electronic Environmental Permits.

The Deben has been chosen as an example catchment and is highlighted in the Abstraction Plan, but the scale of the 'catchment' is not finalised – this will be done by April 2018. Katie emphasised that this project is only just starting.

Both ESWAG and EA would favour the pilot is for the whole East Suffolk catchment (e.g. using the East Suffolk CAMS boundary), but greater EA staff resources are required (Huw Richards and Jonathan Thompson to discuss)

### **Abstraction licence**

The main points from this discussion were:

- The Licence holder would be the IDB.
- There would be one licence to abstract water and this water would be moved to the separate farms by a network of pipes.
- The application information sent direct to Caroline would include; details of the justification for this new water and information on existing licences. A land owners map, land use and cropping information.

- EA confirmed that they could licence an abstraction of 600,000m<sup>3</sup> without hands off flow constraints (subject to meeting environmental outflows detailed below). There is possibility of additional water available at high flows in the winter. PW and NPS will consider how licence 'hands off flow' conditions could be drafted to accommodate this additional water and charges calculated. Pete Willett agreed to review flow information and whilst he feels that 600 ML is the reliable yield he did accept that on occasion additional water may be available.
- A long duration licence of 20yrs will be applied for due to the high infrastructure costs of the project.
- The application will need to be advertised.
- The base licence of 600,000 m<sup>3</sup> will not be subject to a Hands off Level or Hands off Flow although existing level controls will need to remain in place to protect the fishing club and existing abstraction from the Kings Fleet.
- A 5 litre per second environmental flow is likely to be discharged from near the golf course – an IDB site previously known as Laurel Farm. This water will be flowing across mudflat as opposed to salt marsh. Emma Hay stated that she was comfortable with this suggestion. There will also be a similar flow maintained at Falkenham
- The project would support a saltmarsh restoration project at Kings Fleet to help restore the salt marsh habitat.
- As this is a pumped catchment, water levels need to stay fairly constant for water voles etc.
- There are limited resources on the flows required in transitional water bodies.
- The EA when licensing this will need to take into account existing abstractors and be consistent to other licensing policy.
- EA to revisit UK TAG guidance note.
- There is an expectation that all this new water will be charged at a 'high flow' or winter rate.

Meeting closed 11.45am