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Report from GARD - March 2018

Thames Water draft plan released for consultation – Reservoir still top priority 'in longer term'

Recently (12th February), Thames Water released their draft Water Resources Management Plan for 2019-2024 (dWRMP19). The public (and the regulator bodies such as the Environment Agency and OFWAT) now have about 12 weeks (until 29th April) to submit comments. Thames Water then have a further period to respond to all the comments, and release a revised draft for the Government to approve. We are likely to reach the revised draft stage in the Autumn.

We have only had a few days to look at this plan (the documents run to over 2000 pages!), but we can see already that:

- pressure from consumers, regulators (OFWAT) and stakeholder organisations such as GARD has forced Thames Water to aim for more ambitious reduction of leakage and better water efficiency as their first measures, but they are still not aiming for the ambitious targets that, for instance Southern Water are already reaching;
- pressure from GARD, CPRE and local organisations has forced Thames Water to defer the proposal to build the mega-reservoir in our local fields until the 2035-2045 period;
- instead, as a first measure, Thames Water propose to set up an 'indirect re-use' water scheme, where treated London wastewater is diverted from its normal discharge into the Thames Estuary, and piped upstream to the Thames above Teddington Weir, from where it can be extracted to fill the London storage reservoirs. This scheme is proposed for the 2030 timeframe. It is interesting that this scheme, rubbished by Thames Water at the Public Inquiry in 2010, was first put forward by GARD's consultants in 2008, and is now Thames Water's 'go-to' scheme. Proof of GARD's influence in these matters.

Public Meeting on the Thames Water plans

We are holding a series of Public Meeting on the Thames Water plan where we can explain why the Reservoir plan is a danger not only to this area, but is also a bad idea for the future water security of the South-East.

The meetings will be in:

- ***Drayton Village Hall, Small Hall from 7.30pm on Wednesday 28th February (presentation from 8.00pm onwards);***
- ***Steventon Village Hall, Millenium Room from 7.00pm on Monday 5th March (presentation from 7.30pm onwards);***
- ***East Hanney War Memorial Hall – Olde Hanney Room from 7.00pm on Tuesday 6th March (Presentation from 7.30pm onwards)***

Please come along and hear the arguments and let us know your opinion



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GARD's work during the consultation

The next few months are extremely important for the opposition to Thames Water's reservoir plans, so we urge everyone to look and comment on these (we will be giving information about how to do this). We are now sure that the reservoir occupies a key place in Thames Water's long-term plans. Even though it is now scheduled more than 15 years down the road, strong opposition at this stage is essential to get the idea ditched, or kicked so far down the road that it will essentially die as an option. We have succeeded so far, 'one more push' should do it.

GARD will:

- look through the proposals in detail, using our expert consultant's help;
- press for more action on Leakage and Water Efficiency (we already know from brief look at the plans that Thames Water's proposals on these will be completely inadequate);
- work with CPRE to expose the faulty logic in Thames Water's predictions of the water shortage in the South East (this depends heavily on dubious population growth predictions);
- brief local Parish Councils and the Vale of the White Horse DC on our findings, and press them to put in opposing criticism on the reservoir plans;
- keep everyone informed through our website (www.abingdonreservoir.org) and Facebook pages, and lobby the local MPs;
- continue to lobby the Environment Agency and OFWAT about the fact that the reservoir will not be resilient against long droughts and is not environmentally the best solution;
- submit our final report to the consultation at the end of April.

Joining GARD

Once again, thanks to all those who have recently joined GARD, and to existing members who have sent donations into our fighting fund. Our numbers continue to grow, but we still need your support.

You can contact me (email gard.chair@gmail.com) or our, secretary, Deborah Bennett (email gard.secretary@gmail.com) if you would like to help, or to join GARD (lifetime membership is only £5).

Derek Stork,
Hon Chairman,
Group Against Reservoir Development