

Restoring Sustainable Abstraction

River Beane (Whitehall Pumping Station)

Affinity Water Limited (Affinity) hold a licence that allows them to take water for public water supply from groundwater in the River Beane catchment. The quantities this licence permits them to take from the river has the potential to damage this sensitive and important water environment so we want to use our legal powers to change this.

Background

The River Beane is classified as a chalk stream with a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) designation. In the 1990s we identified the River Beane as suffering from low flows. We have been working with Affinity investigating the reasons for this. These investigations found that the river was suffering from low flows primarily due to groundwater abstraction and that reducing abstraction at Whitehall Pumping Station would lead to a significant improvement in flows.

What is the problem?

Pressures on river flows have impacted the ecological communities of the river. These have become generally impoverished, with a notable lack of species that do well in fast moving water (both plants and macro-invertebrates).



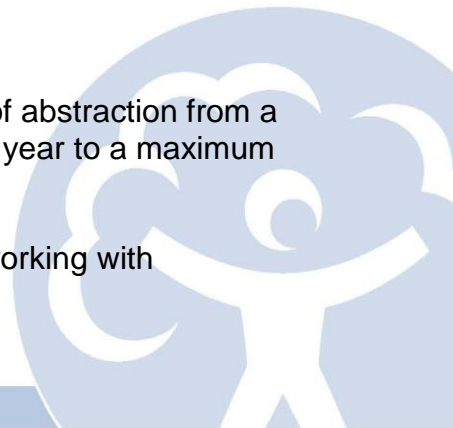
River Beane at Whitehall Pumping Station

There is a clear link between abstraction in the catchment, water consumption and the low flows in the river. Low flows along with other factors such as poor channel morphology and siltation are limiting the quality and abundance of ecology. In their place, terrestrial and poor quality ecological communities now dominate the river.

What do we want to do to solve the problem?

We are proposing to change Affinity's licence by reducing the quantities of abstraction from a maximum of 30,459 cubic metres (m^3) of water a day and 8,296,623 m^3 a year to a maximum of 10,000 m^3 a day and 730,000 m^3 a year.

To make up for this loss of abstraction Affinity will be reducing leakage, working with customers to reduce consumption and investing in new infrastructure.



Affinity has included this in their Business Plan and Water Resources Management Plan, which has been approved by the Secretary for State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This reduction would become effective on 1 April 2018 and the new licence will be time limited to expire on 31 March 2030.

What will this achieve?

The proposed reduction in abstraction and change to the licence will improve the amount of water available in the river, improving the ecology of the river. Abstraction in the catchment will be more sustainable.

What is happening now?

We have formally notified Affinity of the change to the abstraction licence at Whitehall and they have until 23 July 2014 to tell us if they object to or agree with this licence change.

You also have the chance to comment on this proposal. You can do this by sending us an email to rsa.representations@environment-agency.gov.uk or by writing to us at the following address:

Environment Agency,
Restoring Sustainable Abstraction Team,
Water Resources Technical Services,
Horizon House,
Deanery Road,
Bristol,
BS1 5AH

You need to make sure your letter or email arrives with us on or before 23 July 2014, otherwise we won't be able to consider it. If you want to find out more detail about this abstraction licence change scheme then you can contact Miles Morgan on 01707 632725 or send an email to rsa.representations@environment-agency.gov.uk.

We hope you will support this scheme as we believe it to be good value for people, the economy and the environment.

If Affinity objects to our proposal we will refer this case to the Secretary of State. The ultimate decision on whether to uphold our proposed abstraction licence changes or not rests with them.