

FeCRA – The Federation of Cambridge Residents' Associations



Email to : Robin Price, Managing Director of Water Resources East
<robinprice@wre.org.uk>
Cc: FeCRA Committee <committee@fecra.org.uk>

04/06/ 2020

Dear Robin,

Subject: Water Resources East Draft 3 Year Business Plan- open for comment

Thank you very much for giving FeCRA an opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan and an extension of time to do so. We are very pleased that a body exists that looks across the artificial boundaries of the water companies.

Residents of the Cambridge Water Company area are almost totally reliant on the chalk aquifer, from which others are also drawing. Yet we have Grafham Water just down the road, the Great Ouse feeding that, the 40 foot and 100 foot drains taking any surplus up to King's Lynn, and water going out of the fen system through the tunnel and 'over the hump' at Kirtling to feed Ipswich via Abberton Reservoir, a feed recently augmented. This seems madness when the chalk streams fed by the aquifer are dying. We are alarmed to see that the Draft Plan contemplates further exports and no imports.

With the UK losing 3bn litres of water every day to leaks and facing daily 20% shortages by the 2050s, the Public Accounts Committee has this week challenged regulators and government over chalk streams, water savings campaigns and fines for companies if they do not reduce leakage.

Given this and the background of various 2018/2019 Government initiatives set out in pp 2, 3 and 4 of the Draft Plan, we would have hoped to see a series of specific concepts and responses that taken together might have at least a remote chance of reducing average demand on the public water supply to the target of 129 litres per person per day, and make good the shortfalls in public supply that have been identified in WRE's own Initial Resource Position Statement, and set out some of the ways the non-public supply users will

need to change their approaches. We need to see how, at a micro level, demand and supply pressures on Cambridge and CWC, and the chalk streams will be alleviated.

The Drinking Water Inspectorate made reference to more innovative approaches. Should we now hope for a changed attitude to mixing sources of supply? If not, Cambridge will continue to be reliant on the chalk aquifer and the streams are finished.

It is good to see that there are two relevant WRE 'Flagship Projects' on p 21 :

- The Cambridgeshire chalk streams ELM project and less relevantly to our crisis
- Future Fenland - Integrated Adaption Strategy.

Whilst we sympathise with the difficulty of drawing a programme together as you are seeking to do, we note with some dismay that on page 2 you say 'WRE's focus since 2014 has been on multi-sector water resource planning'. We would have hoped that in 5 years something more action- and project-focused, with more numbers attached to it, could by now have been generated, so that the reader could see steps towards making the Vision set out on page 2 a reality.

The background papers identify the need to reduce abstraction by between 1,200 MI/day and 2,200 MI/day by 2050. That is a huge challenge, and now we are only 30 years from 2050. If it takes 10 years to make an infrastructure concept (reservoir + pipeline) a reality, a gear change is clearly needed right now.

Beyond that we need a huge shift in the expectations made of development across the region, so that 'Eddington' standards are demanded universally, not just for SUDS but for grey water and so on. Are these standards being applied in the many other large developments taking place across the region? We need something ambitious and clearly stated that local authorities can engage with in making their own plans and requirements on developers.

We need enough task and action focused items to give confidence that the challenges which have been reasonably well articulated at the macro level will be met with specific and achievable steps at Company and sub-regional level, so that coherently the whole will come close to meeting the overall regional challenges.

We believe the Plan should be more outward looking and avoid jargon and leaps of understanding and address the long term drinking water availability; to actively reduce the amount of drinking water quality water used inappropriately and really change the way water is conceived - literally and figuratively. Like others who have commented on this plan,

we too would have liked to have seen much more of this in the WRE Business Plan and WRE's thinking.

Best wishes,

Wendy

Wendy Blythe

Chair, The Federation of Cambridge Residents' Associations (FeCRA),
For the Committee

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