

Meeting on Water Resources on 30 January 2020 at Christ's College, Cambridge

Participants

		Initials used in text
Anglian Water	Hannah Stanley-Jones	HS-J (AW)
Cambridge Ahead	Dan Thorp	DT (CA)
Cambridge City Council	Cllr Katie Thornburrow	KT (CCity C)
Cambridge University	Prof Ian Leslie	IL (CU)
Cambridge Water	Daniel Clark	DC (CW)
Cambridge Water	Caroline Cooper	CC (CW)
Cambridgeshire County Council	Councillor Lina Nieto	LN (CCountyC)
Cam Valley Forum	Stephen Tomkins (notes)	ST (CVF)
Environment Agency	Rob Bakewell	RB (EA)
Greater Cambridge Planning Service	Paul Frainer	PF (GCPS)
National Trust	Helen Dangerfield	HD (NT)
Natural England	John Torlesse	JT (NE)
National Farmers Union	Paul Hammett	PH (NFU)
Natural Cambridgeshire	Peter Landshoff	PL (NC)
OfWAT	John Russell (Senior Director)	JR (OfWAT)
OfWAT	Carys Goodwin	CG (OfWAT)
South Cambs DC	Cllr Bridget Smith	BS (SCDC)
Water Resources East	Robin Price	RP (WRE)
Wildlife Trust	Martin Baker	MB (WT)

Aim of Meeting

Peter Landshoff welcomed those invited, and all briefly introduced themselves. He outlined the need to have discussion about water resources, in view of the drought events of 2019 and widely shared concerns about water availability and development. Irregular rainfall and hotter summers clearly affect the resilience of our present water supplies which are needed for an increasing human population as well as for guaranteeing our stewardship of the natural environment.

Key Actions suggested at the end of the meeting by each participant

- Cambridgeshire County Council needs to give top priority to a strategy for improving its chalk streams that are Cam tributaries. LN (CCountyC)
- Work through the planning process to support and build better standards. HS-J (AW)
- Seek stronger support for protection through regional plans and seek water saving technologies through better building standards. DC (CW)
- Cambridge Water should continue to be responsive to local feelings about the River's health and would continue work on reducing per capita water consumption CC (CW)
- The County must raise the status of its River Cam streams by building the public pressure for reform and working within the Cam Catchment Partnership. MB (WT)
- Water consumption reduction towards 80 litres per head per day must be sought. BS (SCDC)
- Growth rates need to be accurately responded to. Businesses need to work with Water Resources East to assure that water demand is sustainable. DT (CA)

- The Environment Agency is bringing together Affinity Water, Anglian Water, Cambridge Water and Essex and Suffolk Water in a combined drought group to review and improve planning and response to future droughts RB (EA)
- The importance of the Cam to our region, for its biodiversity, environmental benefits and recreational significance demands that action be immediate and sustained. ST (CVF)
- If Doubling Nature is to be secured in development then achieving it with optimal water resource management is essential. PL (CA)
- Engaging with Water Resources East and thereby co-creating a sustainable future is essential to all the different parties involved in this meeting. RP (WRE)
- Lobbying for water economy will produce a more sound local plan. PF (GCPS)
- Water Resource Management Plans need to be better integrated with natural capital planning and investment through Water Resources East. JT (NE)
- We need to clarify our environmental ambitions locally and work with such bodies as NFU and water users/ abstractors to optimise nature conservation. HD (NT)
- Coordination essential for meeting objectives and encouraging economy of water use. JR (OfWAT)

Projected Growth

DT (CA) outlined why Cambridge development is so important for the local economy and why it needs to be achieved by sustainable growth. Cambridge is nationally and internationally significant. Development is likely to be fastest in the biosciences and new technologies, but there is presently huge variance in estimates of the rates of growth that is occurring at present and in the knowledge of what is being planned. Local planners are working to population growth of 1.8% per annum. Business surveys of growth are currently recording 2.4% , whereas the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) sees it as being 4 - 6% per annum. The Office of National Statistics is again at variance with this and needs to coordinate with those involved with our local planning. Nationally Cambridge Ahead feels the area is under-allowed for, by government, in its ambition for development. Businesses are very keen to come to Cambridge. Astrozeneca has recently brought 2,500 people and this has attracted others, such as Amazon and Huawei. There is unquestionable demand to be part of the Cambridge area.

Meeting the human water demand

PL (NC) asked if water companies can manage to meet the demand for water. HS-J (AW) said that all water companies follow local authority planning projections and can only look a short distance ahead to housing and business expected demands. DC (CW) said that they were expecting the growth rate to double. BS (SCDC) said that 50,000 more houses were planned between Cambridge and Bedford, 30,000 of which might be at Cambourne. *Per capita* water demand would be needed to be reduced in a draconian way. LN (CCountyC) asserted that water companies would need to set statutory limits to water consumption and use. HS-J (AW) said that presently water companies were not involved in the planning process, but are just required by statute to supply. They do understand the problem of lack of resilience and could move water from north to south, but cannot put in the investment until there is demand in local plans. Anglian Water has a plan to offset the increase in demand by cutting leakage and by reducing demand. Unrestrained growth would cause deficit. DC (CW) said that Cambridge Water had the same message. They did make forecasts of supply but as above (leakage reduction, reducing demand) and increasing

metering would all help. DC indicated that there are supply limits and that utilising licences beyond agreed limits would be illegal, as would non-compliance with the Water Framework Directive. MB (WT) asked when revised growth figures would be published. HS-J (AW) confirmed that Anglian water is having discussions with OfWAT about regional demand. JR (OfWAT) confirmed that interconnections between water companies would not be constrained. Cambridge Water has a number of small cross border supplies with Anglian and Affinity operated at commercial rates. JT (NE) asked how demand management can be used so as to help reduce demand. HS-J (AW) replied that for them measures of increased demand management activity would trigger change. JR (OfWAT) asserted that demand could be brought down (from >140 litres at present) to 100-120 litres per head per day; such gains can be made and increased metering provenly reduces consumption. PH (NFU) asked for compulsory metering or at least an increase in it. DC (CW) said Cambridge Water customers were 76% metered. Most unmetered customers do not support compulsory metering, but most do support the principle of metering and paying for what you use, with appropriate protection for vulnerable customers.

'Water stress' and improving environmental planning

LN (CCountyC) asked if we were or were not in a water stressed area? KT (CCity C) said that Cambridge used to be in a 'water stressed' area but that designation had been removed. This was not helpful at all when we were stressed. Low-water-use building design could not help unless implemented by all local builders. RB (EA) said the EA carried out water stress assessments in 2012/13 to aid water companies with landing water meters; there are no current formal plans to revisit this but a local EA team do intend to review the assessment. MB (WT) was emphatic that that we were undoubtedly in a water stressed region and that water was clearly undervalued. ST (CVF) wanted more people (and business) to realise that over exploitation of ground water had been a local issue for many decades and that the environmental harm was nothing new. To a large extent our streams and rivers are not what they once were. DC (CW) asserted that the aquifer could yield more water but more abstraction will impact the environment, despite the licensed limits. HS-J (AW) had researched the need for more water resources regionally. If climate change was also considered the present 150 megalitre/day surplus would soon be a 144 megalitre deficit within five years. More water can be piped from north Lincolnshire to Peterborough, Ely and south to Ipswich and Colchester. New supply sources (within region?) are also a possibility, but pressure is definitely on the Anglian Water system. She also asserted that all are working with WRE. The deterioration in supply is driving the development of this new network. RP (WRE) confirmed that this is WRE's role to understand demand and supply – "to store and enhance". This requires them to engage with local areas to produce new plans. HS-J (AW) welcomed WRE support and welcomed more localisation of supply on a catchment basis. JT (NE) asked if we had the pressures on environment sufficiently addressed and asked if Cambridge Water were sufficiently ambitious in their solutions? DC (CW) asserted that the River Granta would be better protected and was capping present usage which was already well within licence. HS-J (AW) said that National Environment Programmes need to be in management practice as a priority. MB (WT) asked what the base-line was for chalk aquifer abstraction. Where might this information be found? RB (EA) said that all ground water data was published and in the public domain and was regularly reported. Water Situation Monthly Reports for England are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/water-situation-reports-for-england> The Redlands Farm well was perhaps the deepest aquifer for long term monitoring and was showing improvements but still has some way to go towards expected normal levels. He

said that water company licences were mostly granted when these licences were first introduced in the late 1960s and were of sufficient size to allow for public consumption as understood at the time, pre-dating much of our current environmental legislation. Limited opportunities to change these licences and cost-benefit tests must be agreed to progress changes via the Water Industry Natural Environment Programme ((WINEP). MB (WT) questioned whether without a good groundwater model limits could be set to environmentally acceptable limits. RB (EA) confirmed that they do use a ground water model and, where possible, limits are applied. HS-J (AW) said that there was precedence for abstraction being limited by levels – as is operating on the River Lark. Through WRE such assessments could affect the implementation of local plans.

(Ian Leslie now joined the meeting)

Seeking better resilience

MB (WT) asked if OfWAT could help the situation? JR (OfWAT) relied that they were aware of the need to take a natural capital approach. However, such approaches have a weak framework. RP (WRE) asserted that WRE can do more to support this approach. HD (NT) felt that land could be taken out of agricultural production for conserving water and asked whether there was modification possible to our rivers. RP (WRE) said water storage exemplars do exist. PH (NFU) wished to assert that farmers on the Cam catchment use 35 times less water than is abstracted for water supplies. LN (CCountyC) said that businesses who locally take much more water than farming have no water resilience planning. IL (CU), speaking for Cambridge University's environmental commission, asserted that they were very conscious of the need to save water. They were well aware that the environment needed more support. LN (CCountyC) said that all companies might have their own plans but environment should come first for its own sake and for welfare and benefit. BS (SCDC) speaking on behalf of her role as environmental spokesman for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc said they were focusing on it being a 'Green Arc' spear-heading zero-carbon and green eco-options for water and energy. KT (CCity C) said that there was a great need to act locally now and to future-proof all developments. We really needed to be exemplars in our region but regulations are at present too limiting. JR (OfWAT) said that OfWAT was essentially a rule-taker from DEFRA. There is a national consultation going on at present on water efficiency. OfWAT had no powers to mandate metering.

Resolving the problem of Environmental abuse

ST (CVF) said that he acknowledged now that the water companies were well within licence, but when rivers dry up completely (despite augmentation) there is something wrong if people are supplied with unlimited water. RB (EA) said that it was correct that Water Companies are within their licences, but chalk streams do not have specific environmental protection. They come under the Environmental Framework Directive along with all other bodies. The EA is required to take a cost benefit approach to water supplies. RP (WRE) said more could certainly be done to locally reduce water usage. HS-J (AW) said Anglian Water was committed to improving on leakage, pressing for more metering (where 95% was possible) saving on customer-side leakage and improving building design. Water companies generally (she acknowledged) have been backward in promoting water economy. At present there is no trigger level on switching on economies. Anglian Water is addressing this and is part of the National Drought Group. Water Companies are more resilient than the environment. JR (OfWAT) receives all the water Companies' WRNP plans. OfWAT makes comparison and challenges them on their resilience. They are critical of companies'

affordability and performance in making savings or in environmental standards (leakage reduction and sewer spills). ST (CVF) asked if OfWAT could require water companies to charge more so that extra funding from consumers might be invested in greater resilience of water sourcing to save the environment. Would an increased tariff drive investment change? JR (OfWAT) categorically rejected this route as a solution. The role of OfWAT was to drive efficiency and ensure equity for users.

MB (WT) asserted forcefully that we desperately need ways of improving our chalk streams. How do we get a driver to make a step change. CG (OfWAT) said that South Cambridgeshire could set up a group as they have in the Chilterns. There this was a partnership between OfWAT, the EA, Affinity Water, DEFRA, Natural England, and Water Resources South East. Cambridgeshire could do likewise with such bodies and WRE. This suggestion from OfWAT was certainly welcomed.

Peter Landshoff thanked all present for their attendance and contributions. The meeting closed after 2½ hours. The following two pages are from the slides that served as the agenda for the meeting.

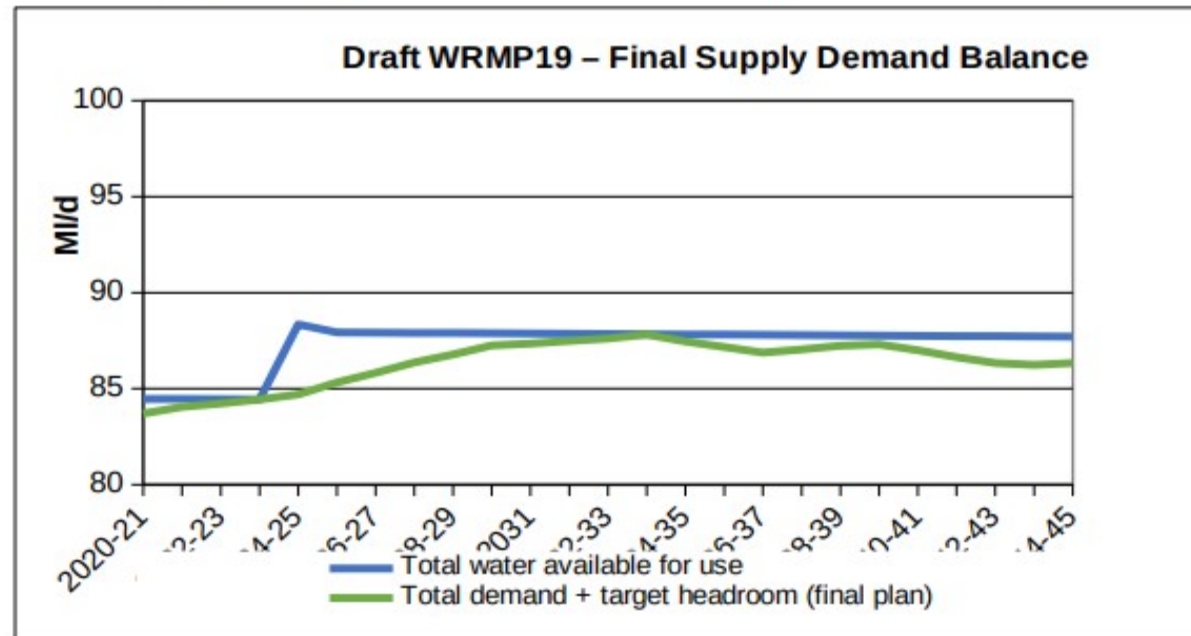
Our area's natural environment is under threat

Together with London and the South East, we pay for the rest of the UK – and our life sciences are internationally important.

Grant Thornton: area employment growth is 6.3% per year – so jobs double by 2035 (The ONS says 2.5%.)

City and South Cambs Local Plans: 33,500 more houses by 2031. (The new local plan will surely increase this significantly.)

Cambridge Water Company projections for next 25 years

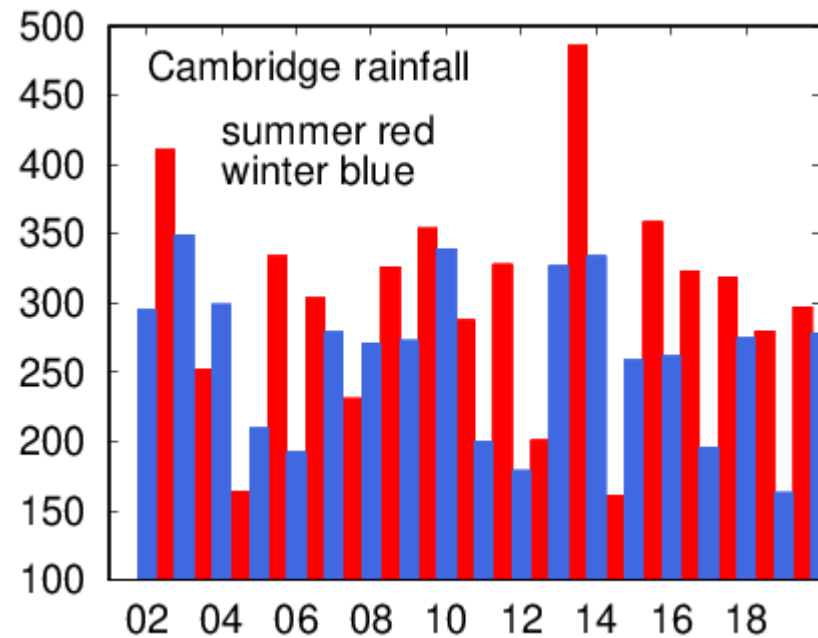


September 2019

The flow in the Cam was the lowest on record
Several of our waterways dried up



The River Granta at Stapleford
Photo: Rob Mungovan



Cambridge gets its water from the chalk aquifer, which should be replenished each winter – it stretches all the way to north London