

**Reassessment of 'Updated WFD compliance assessment' as per point 1 of Schedule 5 notice dated 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021 (Application number: EPR/RB3557SW)**

**Dr Ruth Hall, Senior Specialist – Standing Waters**

The EA have issued a schedule 5 request in relation to Natural England's Flood Risk Permit application for the installation of three barriers on Hoveton Great Broad, as part of Hoveton Great Broad Restoration Project, application number: EPR/RB3557SW. The schedule 5 highlights an error in the WFD data reported by Environment Agency for the River Bure (Horstead Mill to St Benet's Abbey - GB105034050931). The EA informed us:

*'River Bure macrophytes – the Environment Agency has made an error in CPS and two sites are included in the tidal Bure waterbody (GB105034050931) that are actually in the section above. In fact no sites have been assessed for macrophytes in this section of the river.*

*The report says there is no assessment for phytobenthos but CPS has results recorded from Horning Ferry.'*

Consequently, the WFD assessment submitted as part of application EPR/RB3557SW has reported and assessed the impact of the proposal on the River Bure (GB105034050931) using this incorrect data. The schedule 5 requests Natural England:

*'consider whether these errors have a bearing on your WFD assessment and if they do provide an amended WFD assessment.'*

Natural England have reviewed the WFD assessment and have come to the conclusion that the error in data does not change the WFD assessment of *'no deterioration in this element is to be expected because of the installation of fish barriers'*.

For clarity: Natural England do not have access to the CPS (Catchment Planning System) which is an internal Environment Agency database. Therefore, the WFD assessment is based on the publicly available WFD data reported on the EA's Catchment Data Explorer (<https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/>). The catchment data explorer reports on macrophytes and phytobenthos combined, and not as separate elements. The WFD assessment therefore has based its assessment on macrophytes and phytobenthos combined, which are reported in the WFD assessment as *'macrophytes'*.

The incorrect data are reported on catchment data explorer as a WFD status of high for macrophytes and phytobenthos combined for the River Bure (GB105034050931). Following further correspondence with the Environment Agency, Natural England understand the correct WFD status for these elements on the River Bure (GB105034050931) is:

- macrophytes – not assessed
- phytobenthos - high

It is worth noting that the Environment Agency have indicated in their correspondence that such results would still be reported as 'high' status for macrophytes and phytobenthos combined. Phytobenthos and macrophyte biological quality elements should tell the same story about the pressures on the site. These biological quality elements were developed to detect nutrient pressures. The absence of data on one of these biological quality elements does not alter the conclusion that the operation will not increase the nutrient pressure and therefore impact the WFD classification be it high or otherwise.

So even if we consider the correct status' of macrophytes and phytobenthos separately, it has no bearing on our WFD assessment conclusion as follows:

*'Long-term inputs of phosphate can impact on the macrophyte element. Any inputs of suspended nutrients and thus phosphates into the River Bure from HGB will be small and of a temporary nature, therefore no deterioration in this element is to be expected because of the installation of fish barriers.'*

This is because silt curtains will be used to protect the river whilst the works are undertaken. This means that the small amount of sediment that may be resuspended as a result of the proposed works will be prevented from moving into the River Bure and any sediment, and therefore nutrients, which evade the silt curtains will not be sufficient to have an impact on the macrophytes and phytobenthos within the River Bure, regardless of their WFD status.