


STATEMENT OF INTENT BETWEEN WESSEX
WATER, THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY, ENGLISH
NATURE AND OFWAT TOWARDS RESTORING
RIVER FLOWS IN THE RIVER WYLYE, RIVER
PIDDLER AND UPPER BRISTOL AVON



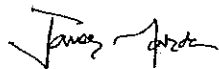
Signed
Keith Harris

Wessex Water



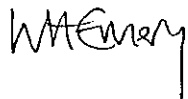
Signed
Richard Cresswell

Environment Agency



Signed
James Marsden

English Nature



Signed
Bill Emery

Ofwat

June 2002

Date

BACKGROUND

- Wessex Water's abstractions for public water supply cause unacceptably low river flows in the River Wylfe, River Piddle and Upper Bristol Avon. This loss of flow impacts on the ecology, fisheries and amenity value of these rivers. It has also impacted detrimentally on the chalk river species for which the River Wylfe and its tributary the Till are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and a candidate Special Area of Conservation under the EC Habitats Directive.
- To resolve these issues, the Environment Agency proposed that Wessex Water should stop abstracting at Chitterne and Cowbridge and abstract less from Alton Pancras in order to restore flows in the Wylfe, Upper Bristol Avon and Piddle respectively. Wessex Water said that to do this, they would need to develop a new source of water to maintain a secure public water supply.
- When the Director General of Ofwat determined Wessex Water's prices for the period 2000 – 2005, he recommended to the Minister of State for the Environment that the proposal put forward was not cost effective. The Minister agreed that more appraisal work was needed. This triggered a series of reviews to establish a way forward.
- In November 2001, a staged way forward was proposed, with the first phase being that Wessex Water should minimise their abstractions from sources at Chitterne, Alton Pancras and Cowbridge by implementing a number of measures as soon as possible.
- This statement sets down the proposed way forward and how we will work together to implement it. It records our aspiration that, by implementing this first phase, there will be a significant reduction in abstraction from Chitterne, Alton Pancras and Cowbridge, which will work towards restoring acceptable flows and improving the water dependent environment of the River Wylfe, River Piddle and Upper Bristol Avon.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

1. We will work together to put in place the first phase of the staged solutions to restore flows in priority order to the River Wylfe, the River Piddle and the Upper Bristol Avon.
2. By implementing the measures listed in the attached annex, Wessex Water will minimise abstraction from their sources at Chitterne (River Wylfe), Alton Pancras (River Piddle) and Cowbridge (Upper Bristol Avon), as far as possible, by March 2003.
3. By the same date, Wessex Water will mitigate any continuing impacts of their abstraction through the provision of stream support.
4. During the implementation and subsequent operation of the first phase, Wessex Water and the Environment Agency will monitor and review its effectiveness in restoring flows in the River Wylfe, River Piddle and Upper Bristol Avon whilst also ensuring continued security of public water supply and the proper use of water resources.
5. Wessex Water and the Environment Agency will use an operating agreement under section 20 of the Water Resources Act, 1991 to formalise the details of these arrangements. A timetable is attached to this statement.
6. The monitoring during phase 1 may show that acceptable river flows have been restored. Alternatively, further measures may be required. If this is the case, we will work together to develop a common view of the appropriate other work needed. Wessex Water will then bring forward timely proposals to secure funding for it.
7. We will regularly inform interested parties of our progress and will report progress to DEFRA annually for a period of 5 years starting in December 2002.

ANNEX

During the first phase, Wessex Water will minimise abstractions from their sources at Chitterne (River Wylfe), Alton Pancras (River Piddle) and Cowbridge source (Upper Bristol Avon) by, amongst other measures:

- Maximising the use of their existing 11.3 MI/d bulk supply from Bristol Water if necessary;
- Taking an extra bulk supply, estimated at between 1.8 MI/d and 3 MI/d, from Bristol Water if necessary;
- In accordance with their Drought Contingency Plan, taking appropriate actions in severe drought conditions to conserve resources and investigating how these actions impact on river flows;
- Following best practice leakage control measures to reach their economic level of leakage during 2002/03 and maintaining leakage at the economic level;
- Continuing to pursue actively economic demand management measures in order to achieve best practice for an area where water resources are limited;
- Pursuing a variation in their existing abstraction licence to take an additional 3 MI/d from Wimbleball reservoir during winter months within existing treatment capacity and infrastructure constraints.

OPERATIONAL TIMETABLE

Measure	Plans complete	Full use commissioned
Maximising the use of their existing 11.3 MI/d bulk supply from Bristol Water if necessary	June 2002	March 2003
Taking an extra bulk supply, estimated at between 1.8 MI/d and 3 MI/d, from Bristol Water if necessary	September 2002	March 2003 ⁽¹⁾
In accordance with their Drought Contingency Plan, taking appropriate actions in severe drought conditions to conserve resources and investigating how these actions impact on river flows	Review April 2000 Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) by March 2003	March 2003
Following best practice leakage control measures to reach their economic level of leakage during 2002/03 and maintaining leakage at the economic level	June 2002	March 2003
Continuing to pursue actively economic demand management measures in order to achieve best practice for an area where water resources are limited.	June 2002	June 2002 onwards
Pursuing a variation in their existing abstraction licence to take an additional 3 MI/d from Wimbleball reservoir during winter months within existing treatment capacity and infrastructure constraints	March 2003	September 2003
Mitigate any continuing impacts of their abstractions through the provision of stream support:		
Chitterne Brook	Abstraction licence application November 2002	March 2003
River Piddle – upper section	Abstraction licence application November 2004	March 2005
Upper Bristol Avon –Luckington, Stanbridge and Tetbury	Abstraction licence application November 2004	March 2005
Formal review of operation of first phase	December 2006	December 2006 ⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ may need to be adjusted in the light of the investigation

⁽²⁾ may need to be adjusted in light of climatic conditions