

Abstraction Plan priority catchment update

Coronavirus outbreak

May 2020

As a category 1 responder we are currently in 'incident mode' responding to the coronavirus outbreak, meaning that the less urgent activities are stopped or slowed to focus on 3 strategic priorities:

- protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of all our people
- protecting lives
- preventing serious harm to the environment

Unfortunately, we have slowed our priority catchment work, as we need to prioritise our resources to deliver business critical activities and because many stakeholders are not able to fully engage with the priority catchment trials, either because staff have been furloughed or because they are prioritising their own business critical activities. We are continuing priority catchment work where it is safe to do so under government guidelines (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>).

We are committed to the Abstraction Plan objective of developing a stronger catchment focus and modernising abstraction management through working with partners. We want water resources catchment groups and catchment partnerships to become central to making decisions about how to improve access to water and achieve sustainable abstraction. The priority catchment work will inform our future approach to water resources management.

The majority of our priority catchment leads are funded until the end of June 2020. We are working to secure a long-term business model for the priority catchment work. Options may include finding funding from elsewhere, strengthening links to the local CaBA catchment partnership and stakeholders taking on additional responsibility to lead trials.

We will not promote priority catchment work during the coronavirus outbreak. This means we will not be sending out further updates or briefings. We will resume promotion of work in priority catchments when the time is right.

In the meantime, if you have a query about anything related to priority catchment work please email Abstraction_Reform@environment-agency.gov.uk.

We look forward to resuming this important work with you and thank you for your understanding.

