

# Abstraction Plan Priority Catchment Update

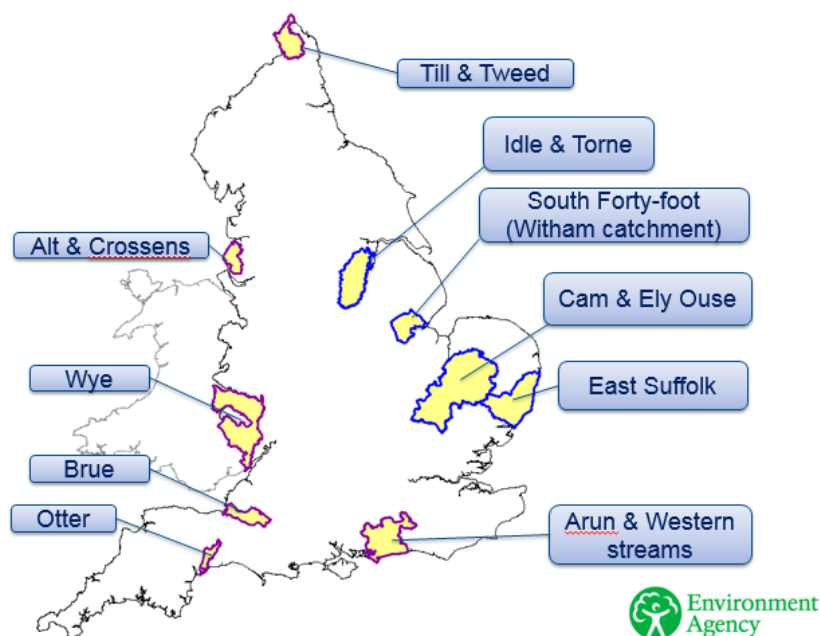
Improving the way we manage water

September 2019

This note provides an update on the work being undertaken and planned in Abstraction Plan Priority Catchments (PCs). It explains how the priority catchments are progressing, and where we will begin working in new PCs.

## New Priority Catchments

Following the announcement of the first 4 priority catchments in May 2018, we are now introducing six additional catchments. They will have a sustainable abstraction focus and will build considerably on the programme of work we are already doing by using the catchment based approach and seeking innovative new ways of reducing the impacts of abstraction. Recruitment of project leads is underway in most of these catchments with work expected to begin during October. The following opportunities have been identified in these catchments:



**Otter (Devon):** explore how working with natural processes (land use and groundwater) will improve sustainability

**Arun & Western streams (Sussex):** enhance collaboration between the water industry and agriculture sectors to achieve more sustainable abstraction.

**Wye (Hereford):** collaboration between water industry and agriculture sectors to ensure the Wye SAC is protected, working across the border with NRW and others in Wales.

**Alt & Crossens (Cumbria and Lancs):** work with stakeholders to address irrigation problems which were particularly highlighted during the 2018 dry weather.

Figure 1 – Abstraction Plan Priority catchments, purple catchments are new PCs

**Brue (Somerset):** address multiple pressures using a collaborative approach.

**Till and Tweed (Northumbria):** explore how the catchment approach can alleviate abstraction pressure from previously exempt abstractions.

## Progress in existing Priority Catchments

**Idle and Torne:** To better understand the impacts of high flow abstraction on ecology and geomorphology and potentially open up the Idle & Torne catchment we have secured funding for high flow modelling to be carried out this year. We are working with the Woodland Trust and RSPB to look into groundwater recharge using natural processes. We are working closely with our external partners and abstractors to refine innovative trial ideas on storage of water and better use of water. We are also working with the 'Water for Farmers and wildlife' project in the catchment which trials temporary wetland techniques. We will be holding our next catchment meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

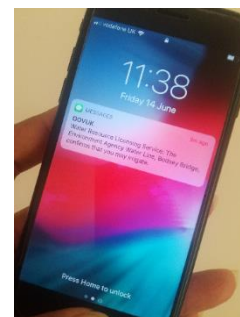
**customer service line**  
03708 506 506

**incident hotline**  
0800 80 70 60

**floodline**  
03459 88 11 88

**Cam and Ely Ouse and East Suffolk:** In CAMEO, since July 2019, 237 abstractors (representing 387 abstraction licences) have signed up for a text message notification service informing them when their Hands off Flow conditions are in force.

Groups of licence holders are working with us in both the CAMEO and East Suffolk PCs to aggregate licences, which will enable flexible allocation and sharing of water amongst abstractors at a sub catchment level. In Wicken Fen, a SSSI within the CAMEO, aggregation of local licences is seeking to reduce abstraction quantities by 30%.



The Felixstowe Peninsula Project in East Suffolk catchment, which sees water that would have been pumped out to sea by the IDB re-abstracted and piped to a group of abstractors with storage reservoirs, was granted an abstraction licence in May 2019, and we are looking at opportunities where this project could be replicated. This is part of a larger European funded project, which is also investigating storing abstracted water in aquifers, known as Managed Aquifer Recharge. Modelling is currently underway to identify a suitable location for a trial site, and identify other locations in East Suffolk where Managed Aquifer Recharge could potentially be used in the future.

Stakeholders are also assessing feasibility of their own projects, such as Suffolk County Council looking at whether new developments could funnel run-off to storage facilities for subsequent abstraction.

**South-Forty Foot:** In South Forty Foot we are working with an abstractor to develop a concept to change the way applications are submitted by enabling our stakeholders to make simple variations to licences through an alternative and faster permitting process called “vary my licence”.

**Rapid trading:** Building on experiences of trading during the dry weather over summer 2018, we have been developing a process for rapid trading. There are significant challenges around water availability and the risk of environmental damage in many parts of the country where trading is desirable, however we have developed a prototype approach to facilitating rapid trading for low risk trades, and will continue to refine and improve this in September for trialling in PCs thereafter. This will be supported by the licence trading opportunity map launched by the EA last year, which now covers East Anglia, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, East Midlands and West Midlands.

**Water for Tomorrow project:** We are working with Water Resources East to apply for EU funding (Interreg Intervention Logic) to develop a drought management toolkit, including a digital real-time catchment management system to allocate water. The Water for Tomorrow project will operate in 3 PCs (East Suffolk, Cam & Ely Ouse, Otter), and 3 French catchments, encouraging international collaboration and contributing to multi sector water resources planning.

**Working with natural processes:** Improved natural processes can help store more water in catchments and slow down the rate at which runoff enters river systems. A national project this year will identify potential to add features in Priority Catchments that provide benefits to water resources and other multiple benefits where possible.

**Engagement work in PCs:** We have also secured funding for a joint initiative with the Rivers Trust for communications and engagement activities involving catchment partnerships.

## Find out more on Priority Catchments and get involved?

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