



Action for the River Kennet

24 October 2022

Action for the River Kennet's response to Thames Water's application for a drought permit for Axford borehole.

Action for the River Kennet recognise that there is a drought, water resources are stressed and the Axford Drought Permit application complies with Thames Water's statutory Drought Plan.

The river Kennet is already exhibiting ecological stress, which is evident from the increase in algal growth, declining invertebrate scores and reduced flow in the river.



Images of the Kennet at Chilton Foliat, Marlborough and Axford. October 2022

Abstraction from the Kennet at Axford and the Og at Ogbourne has been significantly reduced since 2017 and Thames Water's drought permit application represents a temporary increase. However, we have the following concerns about Thames Water's application:

1. We are not convinced that Thames Water's efforts to manage demand have been sufficient, evidenced by the above average water consumption for the time of year. We perceive a low level of awareness of drought. Opportunities to raise awareness with customers have been missed. For

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example a water bill received on 22 October 2022 contains no reference to either a temporary use ban or a drought.

2. We are not satisfied that Farmoor reservoir is managed to meet the optimum potential to reduce the need to export water from the Kennet to Swindon. ARK have repeatedly asked for the balance of use between Farmoor and Axford to be managed in a way that makes more use of Farmoor when water is available, in order to allow groundwater in the Kennet to build to a resilient level so that it is available when water resources are stretched. We have seen no evidence that this has been seriously investigated.
3. Thames Water is still failing to meet leakage targets.

We believe that chalk streams must be given protected status in law. This is the only way to drive necessary investment to secure a sustainable water resources without damaging fragile chalk stream ecology in future. On behalf of our members we will continue to work to achieve that.

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