



ACTION FOR THE RIVER KENNET

5 July 2012

Parliamentary Committee backs ARK

Action for the River Kennet's (ARK) Chairman Dr Geoffrey Findlay welcomed the Parliamentary Environment Committee's Report on the Water White Paper published today, 5 July 2012. He said "The Committee makes many of the points that ARK has been pressing for, they clearly listened to our evidence when we visited Parliament earlier this year. The report quotes our description of the Kennet as in "crisis" and uses an ARK photograph of dead fish in on the Kennet's dry river bed. They argue for much more urgency in reforming the abstraction regime in order to protect the environment, and like us they call for the Government to introduce water metering much more vigorously"

Introducing its Report the Committee said:

Ministers must act now to prepare for a future where water resources in England will come under increasing pressure, says the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee in its report published today.

MPs call on the Government to take rapid steps to tackle the environmental damage caused by the over-abstraction of water, and set more ambitious targets to increase levels of metering.

Launching the report, Anne McIntosh MP, EFRA Committee Chair said "We heard persuasive evidence about the environmental damage unleashed by over-abstraction. The Government's current plans - to reform the abstraction regime by the mid-to-late 2020s - will not take effect rapidly enough given that our rivers are already running dry.

"The reform of abstraction licences must be brought forward to protect against the effect of severe droughts such as the one we saw earlier this year. Defra must also work with Ofwat and the Environment Agency to tackle urgently those abstractions which are already causing severe damage to our rivers.

The Committee also finds it "extremely disappointing" that the White Paper fails to set a target to increase levels of water metering.

"It's hard to see how the White Paper's call for water to be managed as a precious resource can be reconciled with the lack of any clear target to increase metering levels. Installing a meter is the most effective way to improve water efficiency, providing a clear incentive for householders to minimise wastage."

/ENDS

Information about Action for the River Kennet is available at www.riverkennet.org

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