



ACTION FOR THE RIVER KENNET

## PRESS RELEASE

16 January 2012

### MPs visit dry river Kennet

Action for the River Kennet (ARK) hosted a visit to inspect the dry river bed at Manton on Saturday morning (14 January). Claire Perry MP for Devizes was joined by Charles Walker MP who chairs the All Party Parliamentary Angling Group, and former Reading MP Martin Salter, who is now the campaigns director for the Angling Trust. Action for the River Kennet was represented by Dr Geoffrey Findlay, Martin Gibson, John Lawson and Charlotte Hitchmough. A group of concerned local residents also joined the visit.

Charles Walker, who as a child used to fish the Kennet with his grandfather, was depressed and upset to see the deep swirling mill pool where he caught his first trout reduced to a small puddle. 'My grandfather would be turning in his grave', he said.

Claire Perry MP said that the critical drop in river levels was caused by the short term low rainfall the area has experienced over the last 18 months combined with excessive water abstraction. She said there needed to be a system which stops water companies abstracting water when rivers are drying up. The new Water White Paper places a value on water which reflects its scarcity and value to the natural environment.

Geoffrey Findlay, ARK's chairman welcomed the aspirations and ideas in the Water White Paper, but pointed out that the need for action was incredibly urgent and ARK would like to see clear deadlines for action from the government.

Claire Perry welcomed the 'Care for the Kennet' and 'Save Water Swindon' projects which could help households to reduce their water consumption.

Information about Action for the River Kennet is available at [www.riverkennet.org](http://www.riverkennet.org) or call Charlotte Hitchmough on 01672 513672.

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