



16 March 2017

Pipeline to protect River Kennet due to open 31st March

A new pipeline to supply water to south Swindon from Farmoor Reservoir will open at the end of this month. Thames **Water's Axford pipeline project** will protect the fragile River Kennet and River Og, by providing an alternative water supply for Swindon when river levels are low.

The new pipeline will see groundwater abstraction greatly reduced at Axford water works and cease completely at Ogbourne, in order to meet new Environment Agency requirements to protect the River Kennet.

The river is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and one of fewer than 200 chalk streams in the world, home to wildlife such as water voles and brown trout. Chalk streams are unique and important habitats and ARK has campaigned for more than 20 years to reduce the amount of water exported from these rivers.

Charlotte Hitchmough, Director of Action for the River Kennet (ARK), said: **'We're delighted** this new pipeline will protect the little River Og and the River Kennet downstream from Marlborough during low flows. The pipeline is very welcome and we congratulate Thames Water and the Environment Agency for making it possible.'

Action for the River Kennet's battle to reduce water abstraction from the River Kennet began in the early 1990s and has seen the group give evidence at public enquires, present at the Houses of Parliament and film an episode of BBC's Panorama.

ARK's Chairman, Richard Clarke said 'Action for the River Kennet's concerted campaign has finally delivered results which will improve the water situation for the Rivers Kennet and Og.'

Rose O'Neill for WWF said 'These Rivers are just two of England's chalk streams suffering from over-abstraction. This welcome investment by Thames Water marks the start of a new approach which better values and protects our chalk streams'.

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