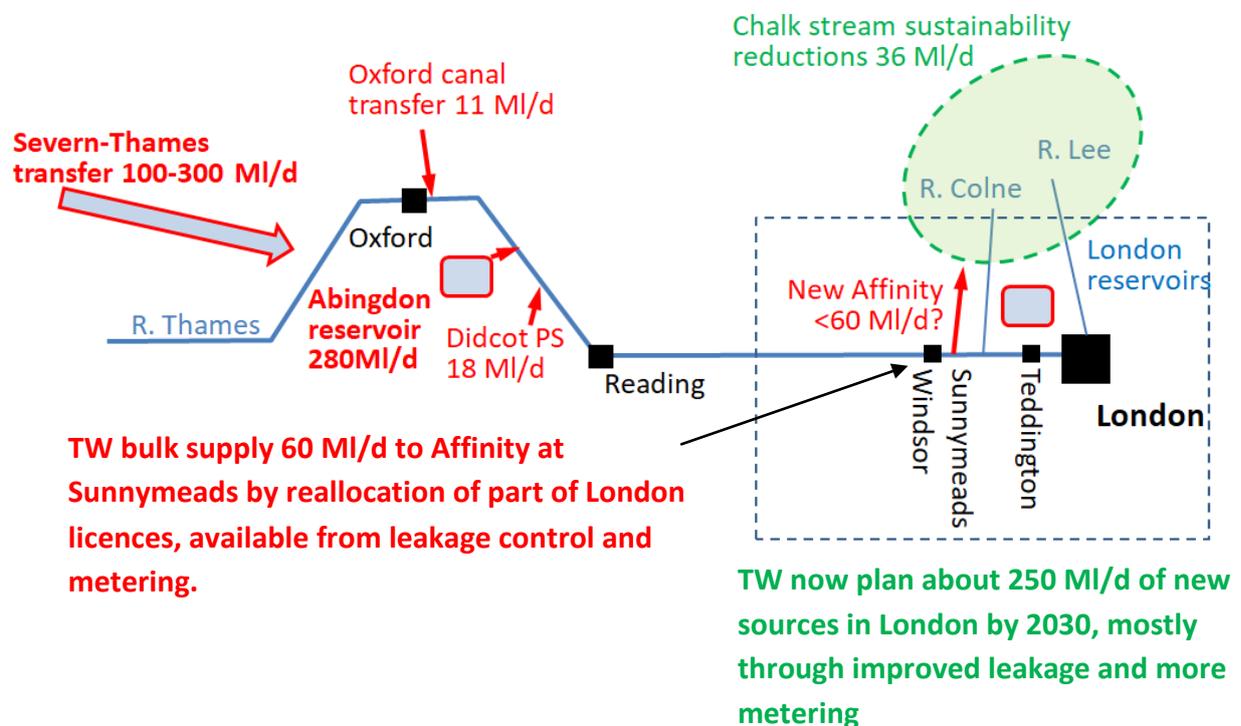


Meeting the needs of Affinity and Thames Valley chalk streams

Having been obliged to adopt more ambitious leakage and metering programmes, Thames Water have seized upon the needs of Affinity and chalk streams to rescue their ambitions for a reservoir. Abingdon reservoir has been re-branded as the South East Strategic Reservoir Option and portrayed as the saviour of chalk streams. This is a misrepresentation of its function and capabilities. In view of the reservoir's almost non-existent refill in 18-month droughts, the "Abingdon tank" would be a more accurate description.

Affinity (with its over-abstracted chalkstreams) is the only Thames Valley water company with a possible need for more water from the Upper Thames. Their needs have been over-stated by Thames Water as being 100 MI/d, required in full by 2039. Based on Affinity's own figures for their more ambitious 'Alternative Plan' in their first draft WRMP, the deficit would still not arise until 2057 and be only 60 MI/d at their 2080 planning horizon.

About half of Affinity's need is to replace supplies that are reducing flows and damaging ecology in chalk streams in upper valleys of the Rivers Colne and Lea, to the North of London. GARD fully agrees the urgent need to deal with this problem, but has proposed solutions that would be faster, less costly and less environmentally damaging than the Abingdon reservoir. The options for supplying 60 MI/d for Affinity and chalk streams are illustrated below:



TW's now planned large leakage reductions in London would free up more than sufficient water for Affinity and chalk streams.

The Abingdon reservoir, with TW's estimated yield of about 290 MI/d, is much too large for Affinity's needs. It should not be the solution for Affinity, if not already needed for London. The same applies to the Severn-Thames transfer, although an STT option that would meet Affinity and chalkstream needs would probably be much less costly than Abingdon reservoir and less environmentally damaging.

The Oxford Canal transfer and Didcot power station licence reallocation, both already in Thames Water's revised plan, could provide half of the 60 MI/d that Affinity ultimately need. They would both be implemented by 2026 and would enable most of Affinity's planned 36 MI/d of chalkstream sustainability reductions (although the Didcot power station reallocation would need to continue beyond its currently planned 2025 end date).

A bulk supply by Thames Water to Affinity at Sunnymeads, via reallocation of 31 MI/d of Thames Water's London licence allocation, would be a better way of meeting any remaining Affinity need. There would be no violation of the "no water available", classification in EA's abstraction management strategy for the lower River Thames.

The availability of the Sunnymeads bulk supply option should be properly communicated to stakeholders with chalk stream interests, rather than implying that the only way of alleviating the undoubted over-abstraction of chalkstreams is the early construction of Abingdon reservoir.