

Parish Council Briefing re. Reservoir Plans

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Group Against Reservoir Development

www.abingdonreservoir.org.uk

PARISH COUNCIL BRIEFING – Reservoir Plans

- ◆ Thames Water still has plans to build a 'Mega Reservoir' sited on the land between Steventon, Hanney, Drayton and Marcham. What do we mean by 'mega'?
 - **Area 4 square miles;**
 - **height of water level above fields about 100 ft;**
 - **150 Million cubic metres of water (weighing 150 Million tons!)**
- ◆ This is in spite of the fact that the 2010 Public Inquiry resulted in the rejection of this proposed massive 'Abingdon – Upper Thames' reservoir.
- ◆ The reservoir is still in proposed in the latest interim report issued by Thames Water as part of their 'Draft Water Resources Management Plan (dWRMP) for 2019-2024. The plan is now in public consultation and GARD have written a response criticising the choices for Water Resources for London and the South East (SE) and criticising in particular Thames's biased assessment of the reservoir compared to other sources.
- ◆ Thames Water's new draft plan calculates that there will be a large water supply deficit in the SE area by 2045 and a much larger deficit by 2080, caused by:
 - increased demands from population growth in London, and
 - the need to plan for more severe droughts due to climate change.

There will also be a much smaller deficit in our Swindon and West Oxfordshire area, **but the main driver for the need for large new water sources comes from London.**

- ◆ GARD is not yet in a position to fully dispute the forecasts, **although it is noteworthy that they are disputed by the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)**, but we are strongly contesting with Thames Water the ways in which the forecast shortfalls can best be tackled. We work alongside organisations such as CPRE and Cotswold Canals Trust who also oppose some of the proposals.
- ◆ **Everyone agrees** that the problem can only be solved by a balance between a **range of 'new' water sources** (also in the Thames Water draft plan) including:
 - much more recycling of treated water in the London area;
 - a second desalination plant in the Thames;
 - transfer of water from the River Severn;
 - reducing demand by tackling leakage losses and metering
- ◆ Thames Water also believe that **a large new reservoir is needed**. This is very much on the cards again, and the maximum proposed size is as big as the rejected 2010 proposal. **Once again the only reservoir site being considered is the Abingdon site between Steventon, Hanney, Drayton and Marcham.** Thames Water invested a lot in this option pre 2010 and clearly wants to capitalise on this, although **it only stores water extracted from the Thames and is not a 'new' source of water.**

GARD'S VIEW AND NEXT STEPS

- ◆ GARD believes that **the alternative sources of water in Thames's draft plan can supply the predicted shortfall out to 2080. There is thus no need for the reservoir.**
- ◆ The reservoir, with a construction period of more than six years, with many thousands of road movements of materials onto- and off-site, with the need to tunnel a pipeline under Drayton/Steventon from the reservoir to the Thames, with the necessary closure of the A34 to take the pipeline under **will lead to a long period of deteriorated environment and facility in the locality.** The massive dislocation of the flood plain and groundwater locally **will enhance the flooding risk we face.** (previously this area was cited by the Environment Agency as a useful flood plain, and the north-east side of the site is foreseen to be used in this manner by Abingdon Flood Relief plans).
- ◆ GARD is challenging many aspects of the emerging Plan, and is supported by the expertise of our consultants. The work of our consultants shows that such a reservoir is not proof against climate change and could not survive more prolonged drought periods. Only water re-use, desalination and water transfers can help in these cases.
- ◆ **We will continue to oppose Thames Water's reservoir plans and argue for a more effective balance of water sources.**
- ◆ **If, in 2018, Thames Water's final plan still features this reservoir, we will demand a Public Enquiry** (note Ed Vaizey MP has already supported this position on Radio Oxford in 2015).
- ◆ We will need strong public support, as in 2010, in the looming battle.
- ◆ We intend, as we enter the next phase, to keep Parish Councils better informed, and to try to work with Parishes on our opposition to the plan.
- ◆ We are keen to attract new members (lifetime membership is only £5).
- ◆ We are also keen to add talent to our committee.
- ◆ Please get in touch if you feel you can offer either technical input or administrative/secretarial help, or if you would like to join GARD.
- ◆ Our website (currently undergoing reconstruction) is at <http://www.abingdonreservoir.org.uk>

This is a battle to preserve our countryside, and the next two years will be crucial if we are to succeed in resisting a massive reservoir looming above our village

Derek Stork,
Hon Chairman, GARD