

Matter 19 The Natural Environment – 9am Monday 27th November Issue 2

By Roger Lovegrove for Transition Town Letchworth and Letchworth Sustainability Forum.

"We are concerned at whether the proposed developments will be deliverable in the plan period, in terms of water supply constraints that are specific to this area." *[pause to check that he is ready for you to proceed...]*

The Plan does not appear to address the issue of climate change with respect to water supply. We consider it reasonable to assume 3 years of drought, which would result in the inability of the water companies to maintain supplies without serious damage to the environment.

Indeed, NHDC have memorandums of understanding with Anglian Water and Thames Water which are concerned with flooding and sewage, but neither of these directly supply any water to North Herts customers. The Local Plan merely mentions there have been discussions with Affinity Water ----- which supplies all of NHs water.

There is a legal obligation for the water authorities to supply water but there is no legal requirement for the planning authority to collaborate with the water supply companies. However we contend that exceptional climatic circumstances apply in this geographical area, as I am about to identify. Practically, the ability to supply water depends on rainfall.

Affinity Water published it's 128 page draft Drought Plan plus 105 pages of appendices this summer and interpolating some of the data, we note that serious damage to the environment kicks in after about a 2.5 year drought. This is quite possible in the Plan period.

Serious damage to the environment typically results from a stream drying up and taking 10 years for the bio diversity to return.

North Herts has a number of factors working against it:

- 1 NH is in the rainshadow of the Chilterns
- 2 Hertfordshire water consumption is well above the national average, (160 litres per person per day compared with the national average of 130 litres.)

3 EU regulations (supported by the UK) are bringing in stricter regulations with regards aquifer depletion.

4 Last year's low rainfall in the Chiltern area, affected Affinity Water more than other suppliers and it led to the depletion of water in the aquifers and the drying up of water beds. Affinity Water was the only company contemplating a hose pipe ban.

Greater capture and storage is the answer. In discussions with Affinity Water I can state that there are no firm plans for a major project in the East of England, eg another Grafham Water or a pipeline from mid Wales.

Sir - All this is in direct conflict with SP12 which has the words: 'ensuring the natural environment is protected and enhanced' and also 4.139 words: 'not have an adverse impact upon groundwater) and Policy NE10 a which includes the words 'it does not result in the deterioration of any watercourse.....'

In conclusion, we have no evidence of Affinity Water being able to mitigate against this increase in serious damage to the environment. We would like the plan to provide the evidence of how the extra water can be provided for the extra housing ----and/ or ----- quantify the extra damage to the environment.