



BAWAG Newsletter

November 1 2021

Foreword

By Steve Moncaster, Membership and Technical Advisor

As the clocks change and the nights suddenly draw in, it seems that the season for consultations is upon us!

Current abstraction-related consultations include for water resource charges, moving into the Environmental Permitting Regulations regime and the next round of draft River Basin Management Plans. These follow consultations on the governments strategic priorities to the water industry regulator Ofwat and on Local Nature Recovery Strategies ~ both of which could affect abstractors. Closer to home, we're consulting with members later this month on the future direction of BAWAG, reporting back at the AGM in March 2022 on the results. Contents this month include:

- Committee & Membership meetings 2021/22
- Environment Agency consultations
- Water resource and abstraction related events
- Ant Broads and Marshes update

If you have any queries or wish to share any news, feel free to email (bawag@burefarm.co.uk) or ring me on 07710 60710. The next newsletter will be out in late December.

Regards

Steve

Committee & Membership meetings 2021/22

In the next week or so we will confirm arrangements for the membership meetings that are planned. We're aiming for dates between **15th November & 3rd December** and for either 1-2-1 or "Parish Hall" meetings depending on what individual members want. Where possible, each meeting will be supported by one of the Committee and we'll issue a briefing note next week to get the discussion started. This will be based on an "Options for Change" paper that was presented to the Committee last week. The overall aim is to set the future direction for BAWAG, making sure that we all get best value from it.

Following the membership meetings, the Committee will meet in both December & January. The provisional time & dates are:

- **2pm Friday 10 December, 2021**, and
- **2pm Thursday 20 January, 2022**

Both meetings will be held in the Boardroom at the AF Group Offices, Honingham Thorpe, Colton, Norwich, NR9 5BZ.

Attendance can either be in person or via Teams and an agenda will be circulated nearer the time. The intention is to discuss:

- Results of the membership survey
- Future BAWAG strategy, and
- AGM agenda & papers

The proposed time & date for the AGM is **2pm Wednesday 2 March, 2022**. This will also be held at the AF Group Offices, Honingham Thorpe, Colton, Norwich, NR9 5BZ.

Consultations

Consultations which are out at the moment include the following:

- **Water resource charges from April 2022.** The deadline for submissions is **Wednesday 10 November 2021**. The consultation website can be found here:

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/environment-and-business/water-resources-charge-proposals-from-april-2022/>

- **Transition to the Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR) regime.** The deadline for submissions is **Wednesday 22 December 2021**. The consultation website can be found here:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/water/abstraction-impounding-epr-consultation/>

- **Draft River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs).** The deadline for submissions is **Friday 22 April 2022**. The consultation website can be found here:

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/environment-and-business/draft-river-basin-management-plans/>

For NFU members, Paul Hammett will be hosting webinars on Friday 5 November (water resource charges) and Friday 26 November (transition to EPR regime) to explain the details. Key points include:

- Concern about scale of application charges, particularly for licence/permit variations which could have the impact of dissuading farmers from changing their abstraction conditions to be more sustainable/efficient
- Concern about some 'outlier' annual charges for those in agriculture on high volumes and from supported sources
- Disappointment that winter discount is only 50%, with greater incentives needed to support reservoir development, and
- Concern about a loss of transparency (30 pages of tables) and that charges may increase sharply

Water resource & abstraction related events

Arising from the WRE regional planning conference last month, a food and farming technical working group has been set up. The main aim of this is to improve the representation of agri-food issues in the planning process. The group is also supporting an initiative with Cranfield University to develop a 2-year water resource management planning Knowledge Transfer Project (KTP). If successful, this will become a significant technical resource for the abstractor groups in the region. Work on the regional plan will carry into next year, with a draft plan issued for consultation in **August 2022**.

We are aware of the following abstraction related events coming up this week:

WRE local catchment focus workshops. WRE are offering a series of catchment-based events for exploration of local water resource issues. For Norfolk abstractors these include for the Cam & Ely Ouse catchment on Tuesday 5th October 2021 (closed) and for the Broadland, North West Norfolk and North Norfolk catchments on Thursday 4th November 2021.

BAWAG will be represented at the November event & a briefing note will be issued in December summarising the discussion.

Ants Broads and Marshes update

Work with the Ant Valley Restoring Sustainable Abstraction (RSA) process is progressing, with details of schemes being considered by the affected abstractors collated and the “Rebuttal Report” in the process of being finalised. Over the next few weeks, these will be combined with alternatives to the approach laid out in the Environment Agency Closure Report and used to promote a more flexible & less “interventionist” approach to meeting short, medium and long-term environmental need in the lower Ant Valley. Arising from work to date, North Norfolk District Council are also putting in place measures to improve their ability to respond to reservoir planning applications and contact is being made with Defra to secure support with delivering any new infrastructure which is required.