



BAWAG Newsletter

June 20 2022

Foreword

By Steve Moncaster, Membership & Technical Advisor

Hi there – it's been a couple of months since the last Newsletter and there are a few things to update you on.

We've started implementing the changes voted for at the EGM & AGM and have set out our plan for doing this in a paper that's working its way through the Committee. We'll get a summary to you in the next few weeks, which will include our proposed new name for BAWAG.

Elsewhere, we have updates from the NFU and the Ant Broads and Marshes as well as an irrigators survey to complete for the EA. This asks how we'd respond to large reductions in water availability. Since we're fast approaching common-end-dates in many parts of Norfolk, this is far from an academic question. The time to influence the debate is now & we need those questionnaires filled in to do this.

On a lighter note, it's the month of the Norfolk Show and we hope to see as many of you as possible as we work our way through the stands.

Regards

Steve

BAWAG Change Process: Next Steps

The changes we're planning to BAWAG have been summarised in a Strategic Business Plan for 2022-30, which is currently being reviewed by the Committee. This proposes a new Mission Statement, from which we have set a series of goals and objectives and have started the process of finding a new name. Our new name needs to be appropriate for all abstractors in Norfolk and capture the importance of the work we do producing food &

protecting nature. Once the Committee has finished working on the draft, we'll produce a summary of everything that has been agreed that we can circulate & put on the website. Feedback on this will be welcome and we're planning meetings over the summer & autumn to check that everyone is happy with everything we're doing.

Subscriptions

Just a quick reminder that we have a subscription call out. Although we have made several grant applications since the EGM & AGM and are exploring other potential sources of funding, it's going to be a while until we find out if we've been successful. Till then, we're critically dependent on the subscription and so encourage everyone who hasn't already done so, to send in their cheques.

Ant Broads & Marshes Update

It's been a busy few weeks with the Ant Broads and Marshes RSA project. For those who don't know, the EAs process has been called in for another Judicial Review, with the hearing scheduled for July 7 2022. The issue that will be determined is whether the Closure Report accounts for all the abstractions that need to be changed, and so it is of fundamental importance to all BAWAG members in the area. At the same time, the EA has indicated that Section 52 notices will not be issued for another few weeks, with a date of late August/early September now being discussed. In terms of the Ant Valley Masterplan, we're awaiting the EAs response to the Rebuttal Report and in the meantime, are working with the abstractors and others on planning & licensing issues and on sources of funding for the new infrastructure that's required. In respect of this, we've also made an application for one of the new Defra Landscape Recovery pilots and are waiting to hear if we've been successful. If we are, we'll be funded for the design work that's needed and for work on contracts with third parties for private funding. The timeline through to September 2024 (the deadline for making the changes) is critical and this week we will be taking a draft of the program to the EA to discuss this with them.

Overall, there is still much to do, but the dialogue with the EA, Natural England and others is positive and so are hopeful of making progress.

NFU News

There are a couple NFU updates from Kelly this month:

1. Tom Bradshaw and Kelly Hewson-Fisher will be on the NFU Stand No.97 on Third Drive at the Royal Norfolk Show on Wednesday 29th June. We would love to see you there 945am (until 1015am) to talk all things water.
2. Common end dates. A total of 71 no. licences will expire on 31/3/24 in the Broadland catchment, the majority of which are for groundwater direct spray irrigation. The Ant, Bure and Spixworth Beck catchments are all covered by this ALS and the 2024 changes will be followed by further changes in 2030. The background to all of this has been explained by Kelly:

In 2013 the Water Framework Directive looked to prevent environmental deterioration across groundwaters and surface waters. The Environment Agency (EA) then reviewed abstraction licences with respect to their effect on surface and groundwater bodies and identified those abstraction licences where reductions needed to be made to meet the no deterioration requirement. In 2015 the EA postponed the changes required to agricultural abstraction licences to 2018 to look at alternative options to the default cap to recent actual levels of abstraction. This work culminated in the Area approach to cap licences to their max annual use between 2000-15. Renewed licences were time limited to 2024, to allow for review of the approach and if required, changes to be made to licences in time to meet the RBMP objective of getting water bodies to good ecological status by 2027. In 2018 reductions were made to licences with immediate effect. Comms at the time stated that further licence changes to groundwater licences could not be ruled out.

There are a significant number of Time Limited Licences (TLL), across East Anglia, which are being reviewed in 2024 to assess whether further reductions are required. The expiry date of other TLL's is from 2025 onwards. Therefore, the agricultural abstractors could see further reductions across these licences. The reductions would take place with immediate effect.

Irrigation Prospects

The May 2022 Hydrological Summary has been published by the National Hydrological Monitoring Program and is available here:

- https://nrfa.ceh.ac.uk/sites/default/files/HS_202205.pdf

This shows:

- Soil moisture is notably dry in parts of eastern England
- Groundwater levels in the Norfolk Chalk are in the normal range
- Flow in the Wensum at Fakenham is in the normal range

Rainfall in our area over the period March-May 2022 is between 30% and 70% of the 1991-2020 average.

The updated irrigation prospects (April 2022) can be found here:

<https://www.farmingadvice.service.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2022-05/April%202022%20EA%20Area%20updated%20irrigation%20prospects.pdf>

For East Anglia (East) these are officially “moderate” with current levels of risk in the normal range:

The current resource state of the Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex catchments is very close to normal for the time of year and there is nothing to report that would cause particular concern for irrigation prospects in 2022. Dry weather flow triggers could be met in late summer if it is notably dry.

This situation is being kept under review by the NFU and others.

EA Irrigation Survey

As part of the Water for Tomorrow EU Interreg project, the EA are currently undertaking a survey to determine what impact water scarcity would have on abstractors. In relation to 20% and 50% reductions in water availability, the EA are seeking views on the impact of this on:

- Type of crop
- Crop yield
- Quality of crop
- Economics, and
- Work force

To help them with the survey, they are also seeking related information on sources of supply. The survey form is attached. If you have the time, please complete this and get it back to me – I will then collate our responses and forward them to the EA.

Membership & Committee Meetings

The following Committee (C) and Membership (M) meetings are proposed for 2022/23:

1. July 2022 (C)(M): Breakfast meeting with
 1. Technical presentation based on Ant Valley Masterplan & draft Water Resource Management Plan, and
 2. Details of the 2022-30 Strategic Business Plan
2. October 2022 (C): Target date for incorporation
3. December 2022 (C)(M): Target date for draft Water Resource Management Plan & Social Event
4. March 2023 (C)(M): Annual General Meeting