

Ant Valley and Broads SAC Sustainable Abstraction:

Keeping you informed – January 2024

The Broads SAC Sustainable Abstraction Plan

The Environment Agency's (EA) Sustainable Abstraction Project Team continue to liaise and work with our consultancy group to deliver new modelling work as set out in 'The Broads Sustainable Abstraction Plan'. This aims to investigate the effects of abstraction on other parts of The Broads Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Modelling work carried out for the relevant river catchments will culminate in the production of further Technical Reports. The modelling will help to inform the EA's approach to any licence change proposals in the area. As previously outlined, it is anticipated that the technical investigation for all parts of The Broads will be completed by October 2024, and any relevant licence changes will be implemented following a suitable period of notice. The EA continues to consult with partners and stakeholders throughout this work and remains committed to updating licence holders throughout this process.

Determination of applications to renew time limited licences/variations and new applications received within the wider Broads area will be put on hold until 31 March 2025. This will enable the applications to be determined using the latest Technical Reports. The EA have been writing to all those implicated to make applicants aware of these timescales.

Delivery of Groundwater Modelling Data

The EA continue to make progress with the technical tasks set out in the Broads Sustainable Abstraction Plan that was submitted to the High Court in December 2022.

While there have been some delays in the timescale expected for the delivery of modelling results from our external consultants, the EA are expecting the first model outputs to be delivered within the next few weeks.

This will mean that the sustainable abstraction projects team will shortly be able to begin analysis of the model outputs and start early communication with any abstraction licence holders that may need changes made to their licence(s).

The EA will also look to publish the groundwater modelling results by the end of March this year.

Progress of Ant Valley Licence Changes

In January and February 2023, the EA served notice of proposals to change permanent abstraction licences, using our powers under Section 52 of the Water Resources Act 1991. The EA also made decisions to refuse applications for previously exempt abstractions (New Authorisations) and applications to renew existing time limited licences (TLLs).

These proposals and decisions led to objections and the following appeals from licence holders:

- 6 technical objections against our proposals to change permanent licences;
- 3 appeals against our decision to refuse New Authorisation applications;

- 2 appeals against our decision to refuse TLL applications.

During December, the EA received a start date letter for an inquiry from the Planning Inspectorate and all parties must now submit their Statements of Case to the Inspectorate by 11 March 2024.

The case will be heard in a public inquiry which is expected to last 11 days during May 2024 (exact date TBC).

Will we receive further updates?

Our next newsletter will be released via the GOV Notify Service in March 2024.

The Citizen Space website for Sustainable Abstraction in East Anglia remains live and will be updated regularly to provide important information and updates in relation to the Ant Valley and Broads Sustainable Abstraction Plan.

You can access this page by visiting: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anglia-c-e/sustainable-abstraction-in-east-anglia>

How can I contact the Environment Agency?

Please direct any enquiries relating to the EA's work in the Ant Valley or the Broads SAC, to the Sustainable Abstraction Project Team's inbox, by emailing

SustainableAbstractionProjects@environment-agency.gov.uk