



January 2018

UKIA is the only independent organisation representing irrigation in the UK. We are a voice for a fair share of water for agriculture. We advocate the wise use of water for agriculture and amenity and promote good irrigation design and management.

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Leader: from 2017 into 2018...

A busy 2017 ends and another begins. The year began with a worrying agricultural drought in the spring, though summer rainfall brought welcome relief for many relying on rainfed crops. But despite a really wet Christmas and New Year, the underlying trend is still less than average rainfall throughout the autumn and winter months in the east and south east.

Lots of activity on the water resources administration front. Defra, although unable to put a new Water Bill before parliament, is introducing changes designed to improve the way in which water resources will be managed in the future. So what does this mean for irrigators?

Changes are afoot...

As 2018 begins, irrigators are facing a raft of changes that impact abstraction as Defra and the Environment Agency seek ways to improve how water resources are managed for all in the future.

Defra publishes Water Abstraction Plan

The government's plans for a new Water Act are now firmly on hold and so Defra is taking another approach to delivering sustainable abstraction. In December 2017 Defra published a

plan which sets out how government will seek to reform water abstraction management over the coming years and how this will protect the environment and improve access to water. It addresses unsustainable abstraction and modernising the Environment Agency's services to licence holders.

But the main message is about changes in the way water will be managed in the future. This will be a catchment-based approach with existing local groups taking responsibility for managing catchments and solving local water management problems.

Cont'd on p2

UKIA spring conference

The changing nature of water management

How do irrigators engage with change

Wednesday 28 February 2018 Orton Hall Hotel Peterborough PE2 7DN

10% Earlybird discount

Many changes are afoot for abstractors as Defra and the Environment Agency seek ways to improve future water resources management for all. Defra has published a plan to reform water abstraction management by addressing unsustainable abstraction and modernising the abstraction service. New regulations are now in force which bring exempt abstractions, such as drip irrigation, into the licencing system. And building on Defra's catchment-based approach (CaBA) introduced in 2011, Defra wants to build a stronger catchment focus which brings together the Environment Agency, abstractors, and catchment groups to take more responsibility for managing catchments and developing local water management solutions.

What do all these changes mean for irrigators? Who will manage our catchments? How can abstractors engage with this process? Will this mean more or less water for food production?

Come and engage with - the Environment Agency's Head of Water Resources, and leading figures in irrigated farming to discuss available options. Plus new ways of looking at irrigation equipment and on farm water management to make best use of your limited water resources.

For full programme and registration go to www.ukia.org

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The catchment approach, rather than using some other administrative boundaries for managing water, has always been the preferred (and sensible) way of managing water resources. Defra introduced the catchment-based approach (CaBA) in 2011, essentially to improve water quality through better land management in line with the requirements of the WFD. Building on the success of CaBA, Defra now wants to strengthen this approach by enabling catchment groups, such as The Rivers Trust, to take on a more central role in managing catchments and developing local solutions to local water availability issues.

The question arises - how do abstractors fit in to this?

At present, abstractors are not at the CaBA table, but they are expected to be part of this new approach. What is not clear at this stage is just how this will unfold. Existing catchment management groups have little or no knowledge of managing abstractions, which are regulated by the Environment Agency. Some a relationship will be needed which brings all the parties together in a manner that provides abstractors with sufficient knowledge, confidence, and representation to enable them to engage in catchment management.

What is clear though is that abstractors will need to engage in developing this new working relationship, to make sure that local catchment management works for them. Sitting back and letting others sort it out will not be a good option. For some this may seem to be yet another administrative burden for abstractors. But others will see it as an opportunity to take more local 'ownership' of water resources management and to explore new ways of storing and sharing water.

Are abstractors ready to engage in catchment management?

Asking that question 10 years ago, the answer was probably 'no'. But today the answer must be a qualified 'yes'. Over the past decade or so, abstractors have formed and developed abstractor groups (WAGs) for various reasons, often to resolve local water supply crises. Most have continued to work together and have gradually built sufficient social capital (trust) to enable them to engage with confidence in developing this new catchment approach.

The UK is not alone in taking a locally managed catchment approach. In many countries across the world, Water User Associations have formed to protect and allocate irrigation water among farmer groups, some dating back centuries. So there is a great deal of experience out there for the UK to draw upon.

About 10 years ago the UKIA, together with Cranfield developed the booklet 'Working together to protect water rights'. This is an ideal start point for those wishing to form new WAGs and further develop existing WAGs to prepare them for engaging in catchment management (download from <http://bit.ly/2E5ZpW6>). The booklet is based on the excellent work of Elinor Ostrom, who won a Nobel Prize in 2009 for her work on managing common pool resources, such as land and water. We need to make good use of her work to build strong capacity among abstractors to enable them to contribute to water management responsibilities.



To find out more about Defra's plans and what local experts think, come to the UKIA Annual Conference on 28 February 2018 when this will be the main topic of discussion

'Agriculture drought' threatens the east and south east ...

Lots for irrigators to think about on the weather front for the coming season looking at the latest bulletin (December 2017) from the Centre for Ecology (CEH). Published monthly (download from <http://bit.ly/2IQmKnN>) they report that in south-east England groundwater levels are likely to be below normal, and potentially exceptionally low in places, during December and for the next three months.



River flows across east and south east UK are likely to be normal to below normal during December and for the next three months.

Melvyn Kay UKIA Exec Secretary

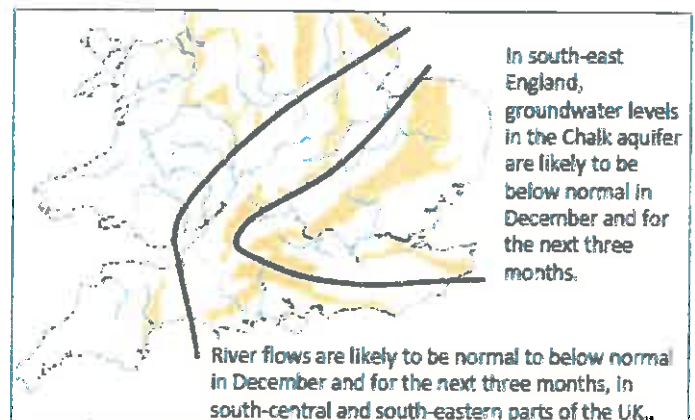


Figure courtesy of Centre for Hydrology (CEH)

Renewed your membership?

If not please do so asap. You can pay online from our website

www.ukia.org

Annual membership is still only £40

Irrigation and water resources - follow NFU online

Keep up-to-date with water and irrigation news with Paul Hammett NFU water policy adviser

<http://bit.ly/2eINFkN>

Mike Carr, an irrigation agronomist, a colleague and a friend, died on 2 January 2018

The more mature UKIA members will remember Mike as Professor of Irrigation Agronomy at Silsoe College, Cranfield University, and his influential role in bringing the UK Irrigation Association (UKIA) into being in 1980. Mike and Symon Murch, a Nottinghamshire farmer, came up with the idea of a farmer-led association, and persuaded Barclays Bank to part with a £5,000 grant (nearly the same as my annual salary in 1980) to get things going. The picture is of the first Executive Council (Mike 2nd from left) at the inaugural conference. Sir Nigel Strutt (centre) published the first report on 'Water for agriculture: future needs'. International guests included Marvin Jensen (left of Sir Nigel) and Jack Keller (right); two of the great names in USA irrigation in the 1980s; and Gerald Stanhill (3rd from left) from Israel. All helped to kick start the UKIA with a world class conference on irrigation - *Irrigation: The way ahead*.



UK irrigation was in its infancy in the 1970s, but the 1976 drought changed everything. Government advisory services were closing down, and farmers wanted to improve their knowledge of irrigation, collect and exchange information, and importantly raise standards of knowledge and competence in irrigation design and management. These became the guiding principles of the UKIA. An independent association of water users rather than a commercial trade association.

Mike's career began in the 1960s researching the irrigation of tea in East Africa for Brook Bond. His results revolutionised tea production. As one manager has since remarked - if Mike had negotiated a fee based on increasing tea production using irrigation, he would have been a very rich man today. Instead he came away with a PhD! Rich indeed, for us all at least. Following a spell on maize research at Wye College, he joined Silsoe College in 1975 to teach irrigation agronomy to international postgraduates. I joined at the same time, we shared an office and both thought we knew something about irrigation. But, as an engineer, I realised I knew nothing about agronomy, and Mike realised he knew nothing about engineering. So we set about teaching each other and the students how to bridge the disciplines of engineering and agronomy in our attempt to improve the world of irrigated farming. Agricultural Engineering they call it. We came from very different worlds and we have argued and sparred ever since for the past 40+ years!

In 1980, Mike brought all this experience to the embryonic UKIA and it is testament to his drive and enthusiasm that the organisation is strong, thriving, and influential today almost 40 years on.

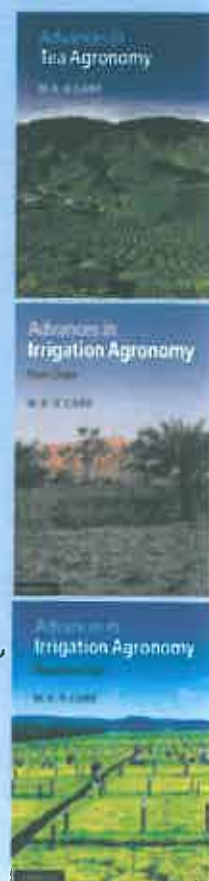
Mike 'retired' from Silsoe in 1999, and since then has spent much of his time writing in spite of illness. The result is an amazing trilogy on Advances in Irrigation Agronomy published by Cambridge Press. The first was on Plantation Crops published in 2012. Then came Fruit Crops in 2014, and the final book on Tea Agronomy (his favourite crop) is to be published in January 2018.

In 2012 Mike asked me to write a foreword for his first book. Writing for Mike was never going to be easy as most of his students will testify! I wrote that his book was typical of his thorough and uncompromising approach to evidence-based irrigation research. He synthesised (often) conflicting results from a range of sources of varying reliability. He provided good, practical advice for crop and water management professionals, and established an excellent foundation on which future researchers could continue to grow our knowledge and understanding of crop water requirements. What more can you ask?

I could tell you about the adventures that Mike and I shared over the years. How we 'highjacked' a British Airways Boeing 747 at Lagos airport; how we weighed our survival options on a Nigerian Airways flight in a thick dust storm, the pilot could not see the ground, and had warned us he was low on fuel; or how we high-kicked across the stage at a student review in wellies and shorts singing 'Meet the gang cos the boys are here' from 'It ain't half hot mum'. Most of these 'adventures' and others would probably get us sacked today! So rather than get us both into trouble perhaps we should leave these stories for another time and place!

Melvyn Kay UKIA Exec Secretary

Mike's books available from Cambridge University Press. Tea Agronomy will be published in January 2018



Deadline extended for reservoir grant scheme

Some good news! The grant scheme to support investment to secure water supplies and help businesses to grow has been extended from the original deadline of 3 April 2018 to 29 June 2018 following complaints that the original time scale did not give farmers enough time to get the necessary permissions.



Time-limited licences - a reminder

According to the Environment Agency there are a significant number of abstraction licences expiring at the end of March 2018, yet they have only received less than half of the expected renewal applications. If this affects you then you need to submit your renewal application without delay.

Tweets...

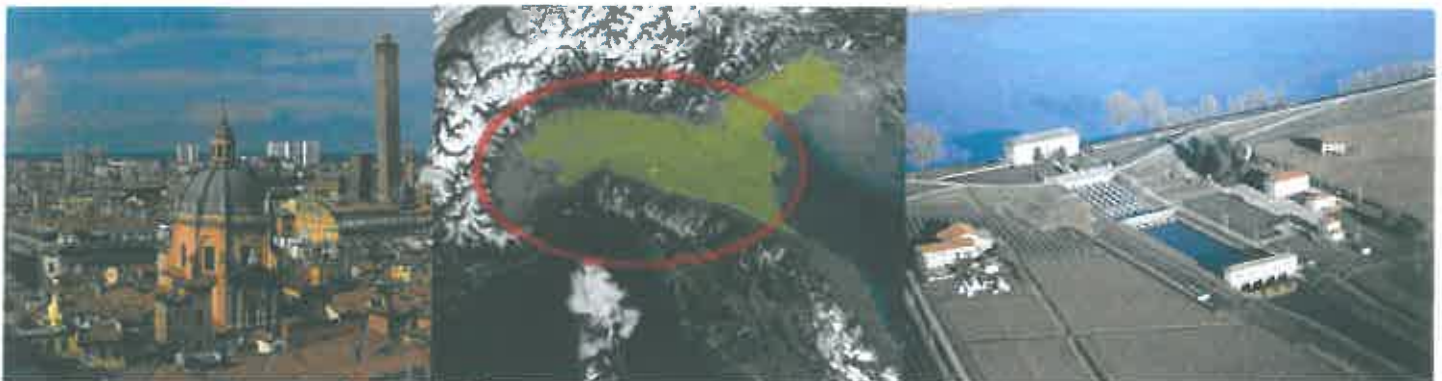
AHDB retweeted a report in *The Telegraph* about government wanting to increase UK food production
UKIA tweeted reply 'Yes but where is all that extra water coming from to grow the crops?'

Two-day irrigation and water management course

Cranfield University 20-21 February 2018

Details and booking information <https://www.aftp.co.uk/course/irrigation-and-water-management>

A great visit to the Po River valley Italy in October 2017



We organise short professional visits to experience how water for agriculture is managed in different countries across Europe. In previous years we visited France, Spain, Israel, and Morocco. Using our network across the irrigation world we organise those special visits and get to places others cannot. This year, thanks to colleagues at Caprari Pumps UK, the Association of Drainage Authorities, and friends in Italy, we visited Modena and the Po River valley in northern Italy.

We were guests of the Burana Reclamation Consortium (Consorzio Della Bonifica Burana) and Caprari Pumps whose HQ and factory is based in Modena. This was an opportunity to see how pumps are made and to learn how water is managed in the Po River valley including meeting irrigation farmers and water resources managers. The Po valley is also the home of Don Camillo! (for those who remember the post-war stories of the cantankerous priest and his adversary, Peppone the communist mayor).

The Jack Wright Memorial Trust kindly provided scholarships for three young professionals to come on this visit. We plan to publish their report on our website and in our **Irrigators' Handbook** due out later this year.