

ELIZABETH TRUSS MP

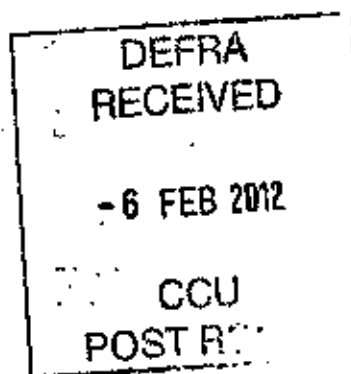
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Richard Benyon MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3RJ



Dear Richard,

1 February 2012

Further to my letter of 23 January 2012 about water shortages in South West Norfolk, I thought you would be interested to see the recent coverage of the issue in the Eastern Daily Press. Drought is a major problem in East Anglia, which Anglian Water are warning could be the worst in living memory. A meeting to discuss strategies for dealing with water shortage is urgently needed. As I mentioned in my previous letter, it would be particularly helpful for a delegation of farmers to attend, which I would be happy to arrange.

Best wishes,

Elizabeth Truss MP

Canaries draw Leicester in cup

Pull-out

Eastern Daily Press

Monday, January 22, 2012 6p

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WATER FEARS FOR COUNTY

East Angles are bracing itself for the worst drought in living memory as the continued lack of rainfall threatens to dry up precious supplies of domestic and agricultural water.

Anglian Water has warned that if current weather patterns continue, the region could be heading for its worst severe shortages since 1921, raising the prospect of its first hose pipe ban for 90 years.

The prolonged period of below-average rainfall now stretches back almost 18 months, with eight out of the last 12 months seeing significantly less precipitation than the previous year.

In the west of the region it has

By CLARE MEE

Rural affairs correspondent

drained rivers and reservoirs in well below capacity, while in the east the extended drought is even threatening groundwater boreholes which are usually more resilient to seasonal changes.

And while farmers are already working on ways to preserve dwindling supplies vital for irrigation, households have been told they must take urgent action now to save water for the peak demands of the spring and summer.

Anglian Water (AW) spokesman Claren Nelson said: "The rainfall

figures show that the only year in the last 100 when it was lower than this was in 1921. So we are looking at something which could potentially be the worst in living memory.

"We cannot predict the weather, but we can plan for its worst impacts. We are already thinking about what we might have to do in the summer. It has been 90 years since we last issued a hose pipe ban in the AW region. We would have for it not to happen, but we are planning for a worst-case scenario just in case.

"What I would say is that we have already managed to get through one dry year without having to do

it. That is the kind of resilience we have had to build into the network for long periods of dry weather.

"This is not about scare-mongering, it is about letting people know that the things they do now can genuinely make a difference on what the summer looks like."

Jim Bacon, a forecaster with Norwich-based Weatherquest, said the groundwater shortages stemmed from a period of exceptionally dry weather in the critical period leading up to the winter.

"Looking at 2011 overall, then in terms of water, then

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Friday 2nd February 2012
Commencing at 10am

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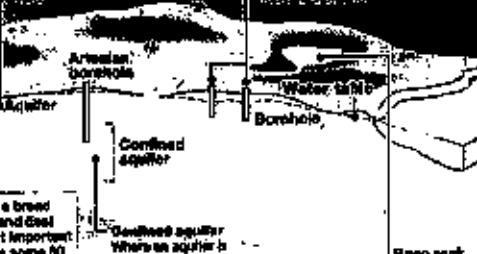
Where our water comes from

Aquifer

It is the main source of water for the region. It is a natural underground store of water, which is replenished by rain. It is the most important source of water for the region.

Borehole

It is a hole drilled into the ground to access water. It is used to pump water from the aquifer to the surface. It is a common method of obtaining water for agriculture and industry.

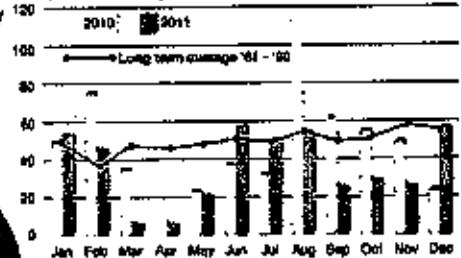


The phreatic zone is a broad outcrop in East Angles and East Lincolnshire. These rocks are some 50 to 130 million years old.

Confined aquifer
Where an aquifer is sandwiched between two layers of impermeable rock it is called a 'confined aquifer'. Water which collects in a confined aquifer builds up pressure at certain points. By drilling a hole through the upper layer of rock, water will come to the surface without any artificial assistance. This is called an 'artesian borehole'.

Reservoir
Water is often abstracted from rivers, sometimes direct to a treatment works and then into the supply system of towns - more usually it is first pumped into open storage reservoirs. This means water is readily available during times of low flows in the rivers. Stocks would usually be replenished during the winter when river flows should be high.

mm Annual rainfall by month



Wash your hands in the morning and evening. Use the water to wash your face.



If you do water your plants, do it early morning or late evening to prevent evaporation. Water the garden and collect around 5,000 litres of rainwater a year to water your plants using a watering can rather than a hosepipe.

Don't forget to check the weather forecast. It might rain tomorrow.



Change - Current and Future Water Availability, predicts warmer and drier summer weather, particularly to the south-east of England, causing rivers and reservoirs to dry up. Meanwhile, a forecast population growth of 9.5m in England and Wales by the 2030s will produce a leap in demand, exerting severe pressure on already-stretched supplies.

The report says reducing the public's lavish usage of water for washing, flushing and cooking will be crucial - although "demand management" alone will not be enough.

Mr Thompson said: "What we are asking people to do is take simple

steps. Now taking a shorter shower, turning the tap off when they clean their teeth, or replacing their taps and showers with water-efficient devices.

"At the same time, the water companies need to address leakage and the taps are already knowing to winter storage reservoirs so they can take water when river flows are higher."

John Clay from Anglian Water said millions of pounds were already being invested to improve the efficiency of the region's infrastructure.

"The potential impacts of climate change and population growth are by

far the biggest challenges we face," he said.

"The EA's study report highlights the kind of future we could face if we ignore the dangers, but there is no reason why the future cannot be one in which our region continues to thrive, with enough water to supply our homes and businesses, keep our rivers flowing and our wetlands wet."

"To make that happier future a reality, we all need to use water as the precious, shared and finite resource it is and do all we can to conserve it."

www.edp.co.uk/news

Farmers in call for action as drought concerns grow

By PETER HARRIS

The rainfall in East Angles and Norfolk is generally running at 50-70pc of the long-term average, he said.

"You would normally expect the autumn and winter months to contribute, but for the autumn we were running at a staggering 30-50pc of average. That is the crucial part of the year when the water soaks into the aquifer and evaporation rates are at their lowest. We have already lost half a winter's worth of rain, and instead of making up the losses we've actually added to the deficit."

"It would have to be a hugely wet spring to bring things back to average and for it to be anything other than a concern, certainly for farmers and growers. It is a continuing problem and the growers are more to do with managing limited resources than worrying about how much rain we are going to get."

The Environment Agency sets limits on abstraction licences in order to preserve the ecological health of rivers. But in November the EA granted Anglian Water a temporary drought permit to refill its reservoirs by extracting extra water from the River Great Ouse, even though the river's threshold had been reached. Any environmental impact will be closely monitored.

Most of Norfolk and Suffolk's water comes from groundwater abstraction, while the western counties are more dependent on rivers flowing into reservoirs, which are more vulnerable to drops in rainfall.

Mr Nelson said

reservoir levels on average are about 50pc full, but there can be large variations across neighbouring catchments.

"It is fair to say that our concerns are slightly worse in the west of the region, but that is not to exclude areas like Norfolk and Suffolk from being in the danger zone," he said.

"The boreholes are more resilient to seasonal changes. If we had seen things return to average towards the end of last year we wouldn't be as concerned. But the winter recharge period has started later and is adding longer than usual which means we cannot be confident that borehole sources will be at the levels where we need them to be in the spring, when we need to call on those resources."

Meanwhile, a Norfolk MP has vowed to take a delegation of farmers from his constituency to meet DEFRA minister Richard Barber to stress the challenges they currently face.

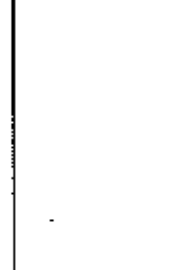
Farmers in West Norfolk and the West have told South West Norfolk MP Elizabeth Truss of their concerns at the ongoing drought in the region.

The Conservative MP was also urged to champion their concerns at a meeting during a farming forum she hosted at Sharnham Thorpe, near Downham Market, which was attended by 19 farmers.



GOMERED: are slightly worse in the west of the region, but that is not to exclude areas like Norfolk and Suffolk from being in the danger zone," he said.

SNOWDROP HEAVEN



The first signs of spring are here

EDP Norfolk Magazine

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