

Public Question Time

Question submitted by Tim Harris

The Catfield Fen water abstraction licence case which has now been running for well over six years, has highlighted significant deficiencies in the way the statutory bodies monitor wetland sites. In particular there is now evidence that Natural England's Condition Assessment Reporting and the Environment Agency's AMEC owned and operated Hydrological Model are simply not fit for purpose in the exceptional environment of the Broads.

To give but one example of many, Prof Rushton, the eminent hydrologist employed by the Broads Authority to review the Environment Agency's processes, has recently commented (22.9.14):

"Most of the issues which I have raised have not been examined critically or constructively."

He goes on to say that key statements quoted by the Environment Agency are "Unsubstantiated judgements by AMEC. They are not appropriate for a scientific investigation."

I have only quoted Prof Rushton because he is the Broads Authority's consultant. He is not alone, there is a great deal more of a similar nature from many other eminent experts in hydrology, hydrogeology and the related ecology.

Does the Broads Authority recognise these deficiencies and accept that it is now time for a full and, most importantly, open review of how the statutory bodies are fulfilling their statutory obligation to monitor and protect the UK's top wetland sites a great number of which are in the Broads?

The Broads Authority response will be read out at the meeting.