



Enough to go round?

Water availability in the Broads

Tuesday 20 January

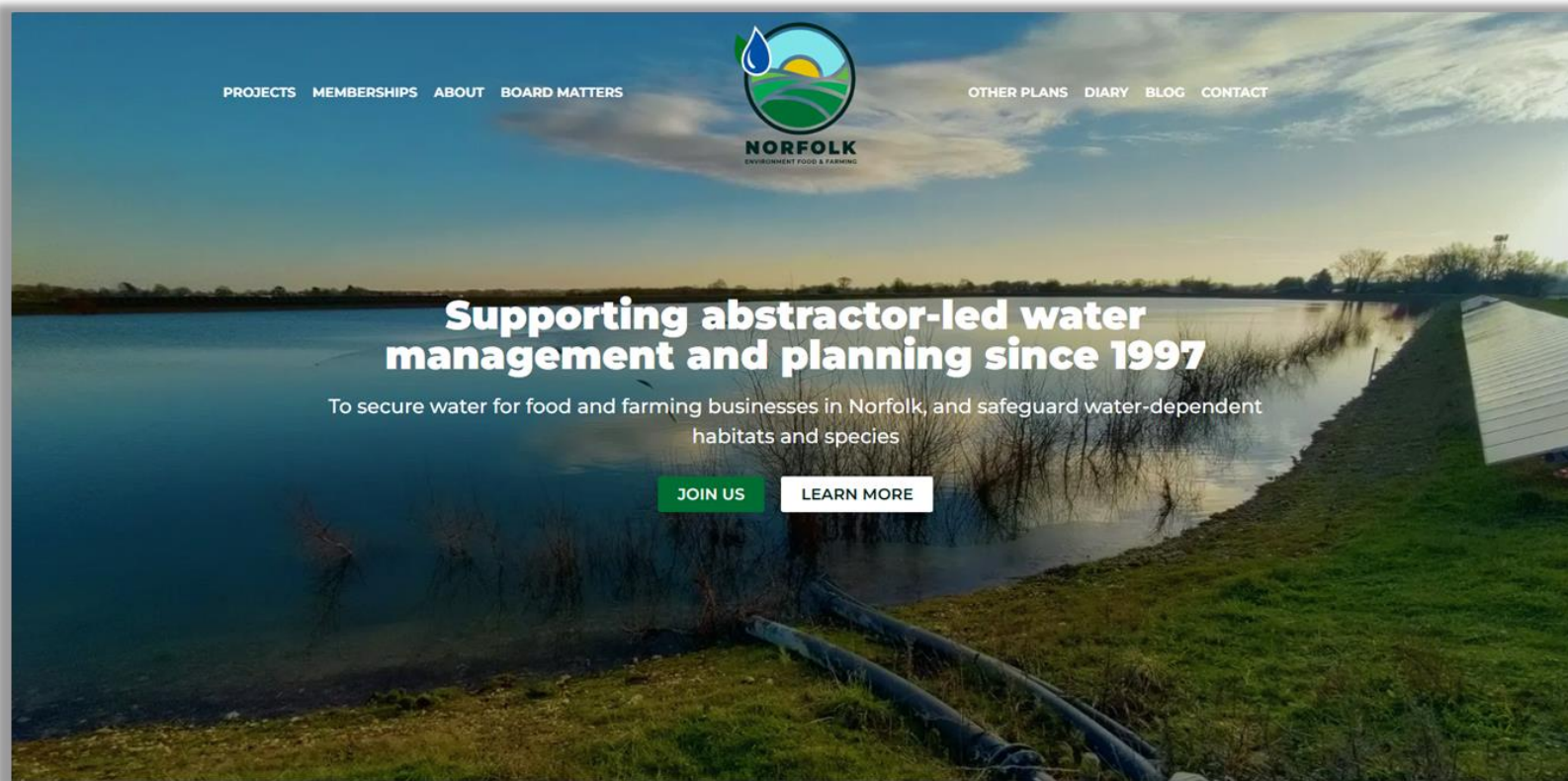
Managing Carbon & Water in Lowland Landscapes: Integrated Approaches to Floodplain and Peatland Resilience

Steve Moncaster

Managing Director

Norfolk EFF

A modern water abstractor group



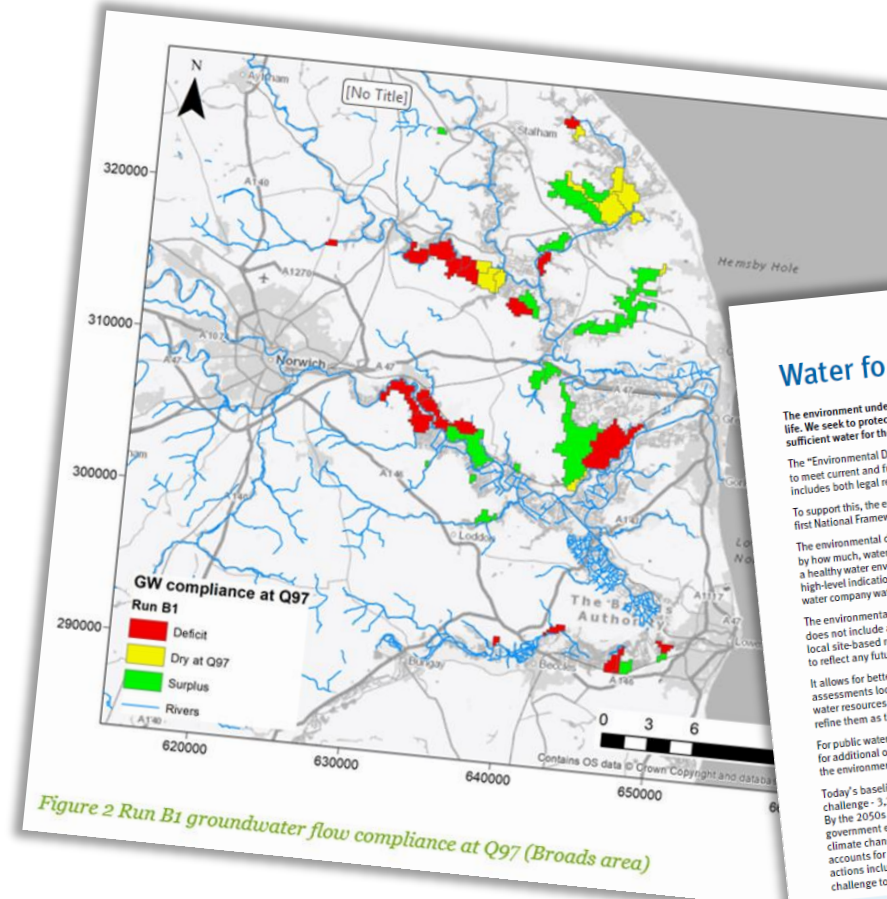
1. Evolved from BAWAG
2. Not for profit company limited by guarantee
3. Members across Norfolk that hold licences to abstract and use up to 17,000,000m³ per annum
4. Delivering a technical programme based on water resource management planning

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Policy & regulatory context

Broads Plan & Catchment Permit Reviews

1. EA has processes in place to make significant reductions in licenced quantities from now to 2035
2. Broads are at the front end of this effort, through the “Broads Plan”
3. For non-PWS abstractors, current programme is for decisions by July 2026, and implementation of licence changes in October 2028



<https://engageenvironmentagency.uk.engagementhq.com/the-broads-sustainable-abstraction-plan>



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Water for the environment

The environment underpins society and is fundamental to all aspects of life. We seek to protect and enhance the environment. Ensuring there is sufficient water for the environment and nature is essential.

The “Environmental Destination” defines the total water resources needs to meet current and future environmental requirements for nature. It includes both legal requirements and government commitments.

To support this, the environmental destination was developed as part of the first National Framework, and it has been refined further for this iteration.

The environmental destination for water resources identifies where, and by how much, water abstraction needs to change to achieve and maintain a healthy water environment, both now and in the future. It provides a high-level indication of need. It reflects the actions already included in water company water resources management plans.

The environmental destination is based on national modelling and does not include analysis that might have been undertaken for local site-based requirements and has not been adjusted to reflect any future “overriding public interest” decisions.

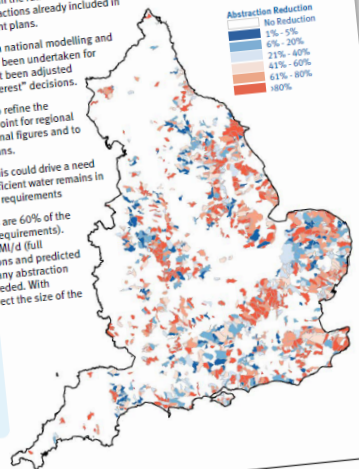
It allows for better evidence to be used to refine the assessments locally and is the starting point for regional water resources groups to take the national figures and to refine them as they develop regional plans.

For public water supplies in particular, this could drive a need for additional options to ensure that sufficient water remains in the environment to meet environmental requirements

Today’s baseline environmental needs are 60% of the challenge: 3,200 Ml/d (current legal requirements). By the 2050s this might rise to 5,400 Ml/d (full government environmental expectations and predicted climate change). Of this, water company abstraction accounts for 90% of the reduction needed. With actions included in WRMP24, we expect the size of the challenge to reduce to 2,700 Ml/d.

The Environmental Destination for water resources identifies where, and by how much, water abstraction needs to change to achieve and maintain a healthy water environment, both now and in the future.

Figure 5 - Potential abstraction reductions by 2050 (without consideration of water company actions to reduce pressure)



Restoring sustainable abstraction

& what a precautionary approach means in practice in the Broads



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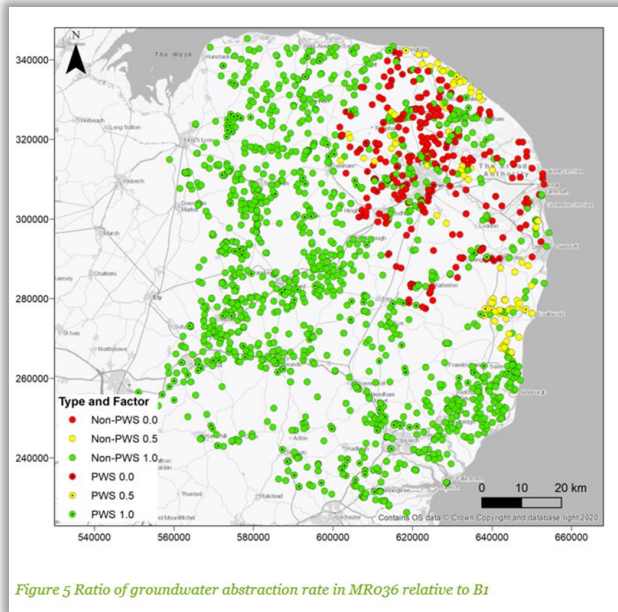


Figure 5 Ratio of groundwater abstraction rate in MRO36 relative to B1



Figure 4 Ratio of surface water abstraction rate in MRO36 relative to B1

The value of water for
food production to the
local and national economy



Credit: ESWAG

Final Report

East Suffolk Water Abstractors Group
(ESWAG) and
Norfolk Environment Food and Farming
(Norfolk EFF)

September 2025

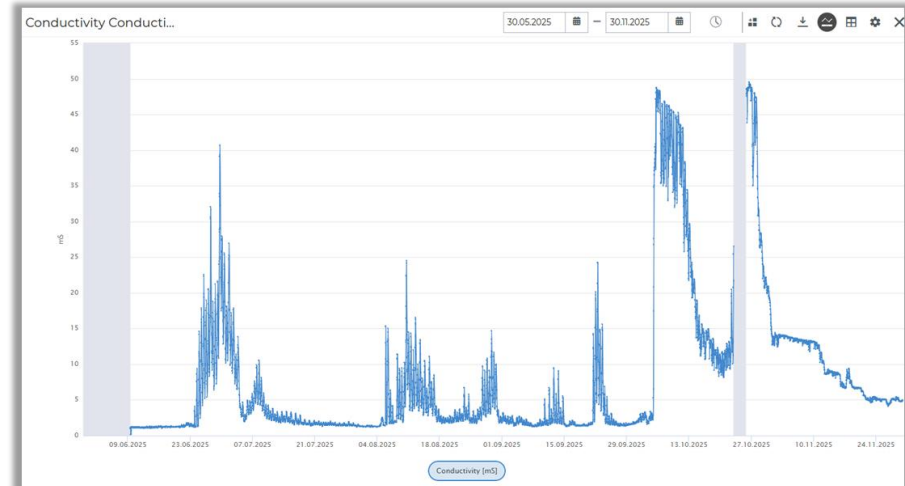
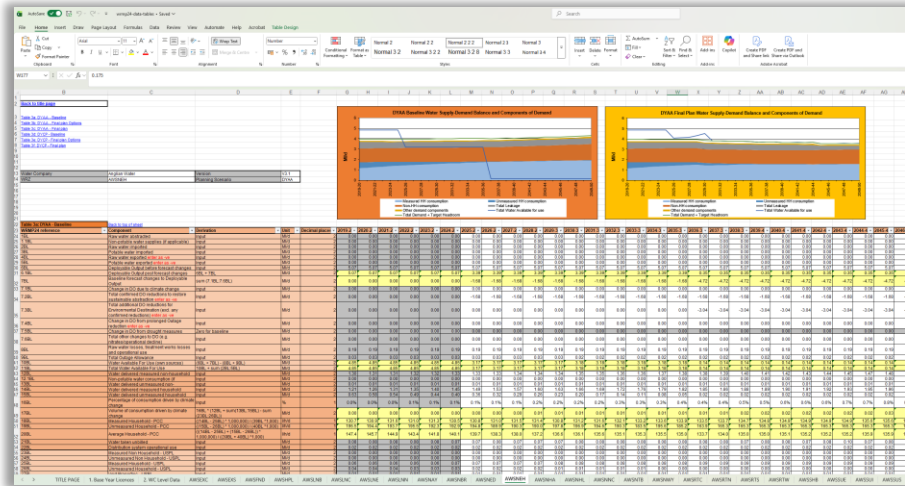


Preliminary work shows that to meet the Broads Plan targets and thresholds, large scale reductions in groundwater and surface water abstraction are needed

Recent Norfolk EFF & ESWAG economic analysis confirms that this will have a significant impact on jobs and growth

Opportunities

For outperforming the default regulatory pathway



1. EA & Norfolk EFF work on the Broads Plan shows there is not enough water to “go round”
2. But these are **conservative assessments** based on minimum flow and groundwater level conditions
3. While we accept that licence changes are needed, we need to find ways to minimise the cost
4. The answer lies in planning, joined-up planning and in managing our catchments as dynamic systems, prone to drought, flooding & poor water quality
 - *This approach is also needed for peat management, growth and to enhance climate change resilience*

Where next?

What looks sensible to us

1. Our modelling tells us that Broads Plan outcomes are very sensitive to water company decisions
2. We also know that “smart farming” has the potential to reduce demand and increase supplies, and that these systems can be scaled to catchment level
3. By working closely with the others and continuing to invest in our smart farm technology, we can build a modern abstraction management system in the Broads that does more for nature, the economy and communities. This includes peatland management
4. What **we’re lacking** is (a) time, and (b) systems and processes for integrated water resource management



Summary

Key points



We're ready. Are you?

1. Farmers in Norfolk are adapting to the changes needed in licenced abstraction
2. Through our water resource planning and smart farming programmes, we are managing the transition to sustainable abstraction. Working with others, we can do even better
3. Remember, what we do for abstraction today we can do for flood risk and water quality tomorrow
4. What we need is a shared vision, with governance and structures that promote more effective collaboration



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Thank you for listening

Any questions?