



PRESS RELEASE 16th July 2010

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO THAMES WATER'S PLANNED ABINGDON RESERVOIR ADJOURNED UNTIL 16th AUGUST

After five weeks the public Inquiry into Thames Water's draft Water Resources Plan, which was due to end on 16th July, has been adjourned until 16th August when each main participant will make its closing representation from 16th to 18th August.

The first two weeks of the Inquiry covered the opening positions of each main party followed by Thames Water's detailed justification of their Plan. The Environment Agency response followed; their position was essentially that Thames Water has unjustifiably included additional demand which cannot be evaluated by the Environment Agency until their detailed research has been completed in 2013. In accordance with the Agency's strict guidelines no estimate is allowable for inclusion in Thames Water's Plan in advance. By doing so, Thames Water have sought to inflate the demand in their Plan to bolster their justification for the construction of the massive, Heathrow sized reservoir.

The Agency is also clear that Thames Water has failed to evaluate properly options relating to treated water re-use in its supply programme; these would be far quicker to construct as well as being cheaper and more environmentally sustainable than their proposed reservoir.

Thames Water argue that it wishes to include the reservoir in its Plan for it to form part of the National Plan due later this year. This would enable them to proceed with the reservoir construction at a time of their choosing for completion by 2027 or whenever it suits them thereafter.

Oxfordshire County Council and the Vale of the White Horse District Council combined to give evidence; together they raised environmental objections and challenged the need for a reservoir.

GARD (Group Against Reservoir Development)- formed 18 years ago and reinvigorated by support from CPRE- next gave evidence, contending that Thames

Water's forecast demand figures were significantly overstated to the point that their proposed reservoir is not needed, and should in any event be excluded from their current Plan. GARD also pointed out that Thames Water's draft Plan fails to include analysis of several highly appropriate, cheaper options, including water transfer from the Severn (see GARD's website as above). The unsupported transfer (ie. a pipeline without a reservoir to back it up) would be a cheap, sensible and highly appropriate solution to supplement the Thames flow. All the alternative options proposed by GARD have been thoroughly researched by their experts.

The CPRE focussed on the environmental impacts of the proposed reservoir including the permanent destruction of several thousand acres of prime farmland. The Cotswold Canal Trust proposed the use of sections of their canal system as a cheap way of transferring water from the Severn to the Thames which would have the dual advantage of enabling restoration work to be carried out on some of their canals.

Once the Inquiry has been completed on 18th August, the Inspector (who chaired the Inquiry) will present her report and recommendations to the Secretary of State for DEFRA later this year.

ENDS

For more information or to arrange an interview with Nick Thompson, Chairman of GARD, contact 01235 832077

GARD's website www.abingdonreservoir.org.uk.

About GARD:

GARD is a campaign group not only opposed to Thames Water's plans to build a massive and unnecessary reservoir in the countryside south west of Abingdon, but also to propose well researched, viable and more sustainable alternative options to meet whatever increased water demands are made over the coming 25 years, particularly from London. The campaign has the support of parliamentarians, district and county councillors from all parties, the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and local residents.