



STATEMENT BY GARD 4th March 20110

RESERVOIR REJECTED – PLAN MUST BE RE-EVALUATED

The Secretary of State for DEFRA has now published the report by Inspector Wendy Burden on the Thames Water draft Water Resources Plan following the Public Inquiry last year. She has accepted the Inspector's conclusions which were that the plan did not meet the statutory requirements under the Water Industry Act, and that the measures Thames Water proposed should be adopted were not fully justified by the evidence.

The Inspector concluded that changes to the plan were needed including:

- *Deletion of TW's premise of 'long term risk' associated with future, unknown, sustainability reductions.*
- *Deletion of all programmes with the objective of meeting that long term risk.*
- *Inclusion of a wider range of feasible options.*
- *Changes to be made to the methodology for programme appraisal to bring it in line with good industry practice, with a clear description of the process set out in the plan.*
- *Use of a sensitivity analysis to cover the potential for future sustainability reductions and identifying a choice of options from the feasible options list to meet the different levels of sustainability reductions.*

The Inspector also believed that the minimum necessary, should the Secretary of State take a pragmatic approach, would be for Thames Water to demonstrate a security of supply, and to revise its programme appraisal to identify a new preferred programme for the London and South west Oxfordshire water resource zones.

GARD concludes from this that the reservoir proposal is therefore ruled out for the immediate future.

GARD has played a major part in opposing Thames Water's flawed plan to build a massive reservoir on 5,000 acres of productive farmland South West of Abingdon. The proposal would cost £1Bn, take about 10 years to construct and result in considerable additional charges to consumers.



At the Public Inquiry last summer GARD was represented by an outstanding QC, Nathalie Lieven, using the evidence of two nationally acknowledged expert water resources witnesses, Chris Binnie and John Lawson. Their evidence clearly demonstrated that the need for the reservoir had not been proved, and that if the need for a large additional water resource arose in future there were cheaper, quicker and less environmentally damaging alternatives to the reservoir which the company had not properly considered.

In addition to GARD's evidence, the CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England), Oxfordshire County Council, the Vale of the White Horse District Council, and significantly, the Environment Agency presented well prepared cases against the plan.

The Secretary of State's ruling means that Thames Water must now investigate fully and objectively several alternative long term water resource proposals, including Severn-Thames transfer, which they failed to consider properly in the preparation of their 2,000 page plan, because, it must be assumed, Thames Water's owners regarded their water customers' interests were secondary to those of their shareholders.

GARD is most grateful for the support given by our local MPs, Ed Vaizey and Nicola Blackwood, other elected representatives including Iain Brown, and of course our members.