

Dacorum Environmental Forum Water Group

Held at Council Chambers Berkhamsted Town Council

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2011 at 7.30pm

Draft Minutes

Attendees:

Sue Frearson – Ver Valley Society  
Andrew Calderwood – Upper Gade Flyfishers  
Di Hammond – River Restoration Centre  
Brian Etheridge – Northchurch Parish Council  
Claire Covington - Dacorum Borough Council  
Mike Heylin – Colne Valley Anglers Consultative  
John Leonhardt – Retired field studies teacher  
Hugh Howes – Chiltern Society Rivers and Wetlands Conservation Group  
Brian Jones – Northchurch resident  
Allen Beechey – Chilterns Chalk Stream Project  
Rob Sage – Veolia Water Company  
Rob Oates – Thames River Restoration Trust  
Marion Baker – Dacorum Environmental Forum Water Group  
Roger Hands – Dacorum Environmental Forum Water Group – chair

1. Apologies:

Victor Brooks – Water End & Upper Gade Valley Preservation Society  
Nicola Mitchell – Field Studies Manager Hudnall Park  
Alex Back Veolia Water Company  
Jean de Selincourt – Chiltern Society Rivers & Wetland Conservation Group  
Roger Lerry – Chiltern Society Rivers & Wetland Conservation Group  
Miles Morgan – Environment Agency  
Melanie Challis – Environment Agency

The meeting commenced with a minute's silent reflection on the recent passing of Beryl Buckingham who has contributed so much for water environmental matters for many years and her valuable contribution towards water table recording deserved to be acknowledged.

2. The Minutes of 20<sup>th</sup> April 2011 were approved.
3. There were no matters arising for the agenda covered all matters of interest.
4. Water Resources – Rob Sage, Veolia Water, gave a very detailed report upon the current water resource situation which are of great concern to both Veolia Water themselves as well as many other organisations and individuals. Rainfall has been 40% to 50% of average so far, resulting in significantly reduced recharge so far. An

increase of 120% to 150% of rainfall each month until the end of April 2012 is now needed to return groundwater levels to more normal conditions.

RS reported that Veolia Water are currently engaged in promoting their Draft Drought Management Plan 2011 and his Power-point presentation highlighted that the water table is likely to decline dangerously close to their category Zone 4 if the lack of rainfall continues. This is a very rare occurrence. In addition to calls for restraint, restriction may need to be imposed and inter water company bulk transfers utilised. Local river flows will also be impacted, and will be suffering an ecological damage.

The EU Water Framework Directive is aimed to improve the ecological status of rivers and the River Basin Management Plans are already in formulation, with the aim to restore most rivers to good status by 2027.

The matter of full scale implementation of water metering was again raised. RS reported that this has been refused during the current water management period up to 2015 by Ofwat and Defra. Attendees considered this to be problematical because to commence planning for such an exercise post 2015 indicates little practical progress of implementation until at least 2016.

Veolia's Draft Drought Management Plan 2011 is now available for Public Consultation, and they would appreciate responses and comments from customers and interested persons. The document is available on [www.veoliawater.co.uk/drought](http://www.veoliawater.co.uk/drought) planconsultation. Responses are requested either in writing or via e-mail to the Secretary of State. The consultation period **closes on 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2012.**

Please write to: Secretary of State, Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Drought Plan Consultation, Water Availability and Quality Programme, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Area 2c, Ergon House, Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 2AL. Or e-mail, [waterresources@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:waterresources@defra.gsi.gov.uk).

5. Thames River Restoration Trust – Rob Oates had been invited to this meeting to progress discussion at previous DEF Water Group meets related to the potential of forming a Colne Rivers Trust and the need to implement the recent Environment Agency draft Dacorum Chalk River Restoration Plans for the rivers Bulbourne, Gade and Ver.

Rob gave a Power-point presentation in explanation of the philosophies of the Thames River Restoration Trust which are based upon the London Rivers Action Plan of 2009 and provided examples of previous projects such as the River Quaffy and the vision for the Colne Catchment which DEF Water Group also supports.

Thames River Restoration Trust would be able to advise and support DEF Water Group in locating funds, such as the Defra River Restoration Fund. Rob offered to attend the April meeting of DEF Water Group in order to further explore collaboration. It was recommended that DEFWG collate other river organisations

contact details in the Colne Catchment who may be interested in collaborating jointly to form a Colne Rivers Trust.

Due to the vigorous discussions related to the two previous items on the agenda it was agreed that agenda items concerning Restoration of Sustainable Abstraction re river Bulbourne together with the proposed verbal reports on Gadebridge Park project; Tow Waters Open Space project; and Two Waters Lake project be deferred to the April meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm