Providing high quality drinking water

from the proposed reservoir in the Fens

Introduction

Anglian Water, working in partnership with Cambridge Water, is proposing a new reservoir in the Cambridgeshire Fens that will secure water supplies to meet the needs of future generations, while helping to protect our most precious environments.

The reservoir will help to ensure a reliable water supply for decades to come and contribute to our long term goals of ensuring the East of England is resilient to the risks of drought and flooding. The reservoir will store water so it's on tap when we need it, meaning less water is taken from sensitive sources, helping us to protect and restore the environment.

As we develop our plans, we'll be looking at every aspect of the project that could impact people whose water will be supplied from the reservoir. Our top priority will be making sure the drinking water we supply is of a high quality.

How we plan for safe drinking water

From the very start of our plans we've adopted the World Health Organisation's globally recognised approach to planning water safety – the Drinking Water Safety Plan (DWSP). Following this approach allows us to identify any potential hazards and assess any risks to the water supply, before planning the measures and systems we would need in place to make sure these are managed properly.

The DWSP is already what every water company in the UK follows to make sure that, once treated, any water they take from the environment is wholesome and safe for customers to drink. It's also the same approach that the UK government uses to enforce drinking water quality. This includes regular assessments and checks carried out by the independent regulator – the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI). Following the DWSP approach has meant that both Anglian Water and Cambridge Water have an excellent track record of drinking water quality, as you can see on the DWI's **website**. It's also why we're confident that the water that will be supplied from the Fens Reservoir will be safe to drink and meet all the drinking water regulations.

Creating our own drinking water safety plan

To start our own DWSP for this project, we've done extensive quality checks on all of the water sources that could be used to fill the reservoir. We're now using this data to understand how the water quality could change once it's in the proposed reservoir. If we identify any risks, we'll then be able to understand what we need to have in place to manage these risks and treat the water before it's supplied to homes and businesses.

We're part way through our DWSP journey, and so far, we've identified key areas that we need to focus on:

- The large amount of agriculture in the region – which brings a risk of water run off including nitrates and phosphates from fertilisers and pesticides.
- The history of the region – with the Fens being a low-lying area that was once flooded by sea water.
- Climate change – in our modelling we're having to consider the effects of higher temperatures and more storm events.
- The need to abstract excess water at different times of the year – we're conscious of the different water quality challenges that are present during the winter.

Treatment and catchment management

To ensure the drinking water supplied from the Fens Reservoir will be safe to drink, we're looking at tried and tested treatment processes and catchment management to make sure everyone gets a safe and high quality supply of drinking water. These include:

- Catchment management to coordinate the planning and stewardship of land and water resources to reduce pollution at its source.
- Standard settlement treatment processes to clean particulates in the water.
- Carbon filters to remove harmful chemicals.
- Disinfection processes to remove harmful microbes.
- Using advanced treatment processes like the ones already commonly used around the country to successfully treat surface water sources.

Further design and water quality investigations are underway to confirm the best approach. As our treatment proposals and catchment management plans develop, we'll continue to engage with customers, regulators and other stakeholders.

Engagement

So far, we've conducted extensive engagement and consultation on the proposed reservoir in the Fens, including our phase one consultation in 2022, followed by our phase two consultation in 2024 on more detailed proposals. We've also been working closely with key stakeholders to get their input, including local authorities, the DWI and other statutory bodies.

It's really important to us that customers have confidence in the quality of water we supply them with. That's why we'll be continuing to consult and engage with customers, communities, and stakeholders as the project evolves. The next phase of engagement will focus on whether changing sources of water may have minor impacts on aspects like acceptability, taste, odour, and hardness.