

Report on the Mere Rivers Group meetings

19/01/2018 Bath

25/01/2018 Mere

Wessex water reduced the amount of water it takes from the bore holes from 8m litres per day to 4m litres per day from may until the end of November last year. A couple of very short periods of time, no water was taken from the bore holes and this showed up on the river flow graphs. Wessex Water stated that 2017 was successful from an Abstraction incentive mechanism perspective.

However, Mere Rivers Group noted that the Ashbourne river dried from spring head through mill pond at Burton, water remained a White Bridge all year. The spring head dried on the Shreen River with flow commencing at Steep Street. Mere Rivers group consider that the flow observed during 2017 was insufficient. Flows had recovered by 9th November. The River Sources Had been dry up until the previous week.

The Wessex Water hydrologist was asked if there was a cumulative effect of extracting large amounts of water over a period of years. He demonstrated that there is no abstraction legacy issue, groundwater levels recover each winter and the system 'resets'. Noted that Wessex Water have found reference to Ashfield springhead drying in the autumn in a letter dated March 1905, prior to development of the Mere source (implying the stream is a winterbourne)

Wessex water has asked if MRG (Mere Rivers Group) could find dated photos showing good summer flows.

Mere water treatment works is undergoing maintenance/repair from Nov 2017 to Autumn 2018, primarily for disinfection process improvements. This will involve a site shutdown, currently planned April to end of July 2018, exact timing subject to progress on site. Mere water will be supplied from Codford during the shutdown. This will give us a unique opportunity to observe the river flows.

Wessex Water was delighted with the good uptake of Home Check water efficiency visits in Mere: 34% of households offered have taken the offer up about 40% offered have booked visits, 662 visits delivered to date in Mere. Gillingham area not started yet but will shortly.

Mere rivers Group expressed concern that the large housing development plans in Gillingham and Mere could put Mere rivers under more pressure.

Wessex Water spokesman said it may be possible for Wessex Water to trial reduced connection charges with developers in Gillingham if they include extra water efficiency measures. Wessex Water would explore this option.

Mere Rivers Group Members noted that Garden waste has been put in the river at Burton. MRG has asked Mere Town Council if they could write a letter to all the residents in this area asking them to not to throw waste in the river.

Plans for beyond 2018

2018 will be the Abstraction incentive mechanism (AIM) with no abstraction during the period of site outage. Wessex Water's Business Plan is currently in development and includes continuation of AIM from 2020 to 2025. Depending on outcome of monitoring from 2018, AIM approach may be adapted with different trigger levels which could extend the AIM implementation period.