



APPG for Sustainable Flood & Drought Management

Notes of AGM and Meeting held on 15th May 2024

Present: Andrew Percy MP (Chair), Graham Stewart MP, Holly Mumby MP, Lord Taylor of Holbeach, The Earl of Caithness, Dan Gottschalk representing Ashley Ward MP, Connor Agius, assisting Dan Gottschalk, Lizzie Zisman, representing Peter Aldous MP, Julia Dunncliffe, PS to Lord Agnew, Rob Allen – Policy Connect, Catherine Moncrief – CIWEM, Steve Thompsett – CIWEM, Anna Daroy – CIWEM CEO, Jude Noro – CIWEM Policy Team, Archie Ruggles-Brise – Spains Hall, Kassim Qureshi – PA to Andrew Percy MP, Innes Thomson – ADA.

1. AGM

Noting that the AGM was quorate, Andrew Percy was proposed as Chair by Holly Mumby MP and seconded by Graham Stewart MP. There were no other proposals so Andrew Percy MP was elected Chair of the APPG.

In accordance with APPG rules, the following parliamentarians agreed to be officers of the Group;

- Ashley Dalton (Lab) – Vice Chair
- Lord Taylor (Con)
- Graham Stewart MP (Con)
- Peter Aldous MP (Con)

Other members of the group are to be confirmed.

ADA will act as the Group Secretariat and it was also confirmed and welcomed that the Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) was now working in partnership with ADA for this APPG.

2. APPG Meeting

2.1 AP welcomed everyone and invited introductions from all present.

2.2 The first presentation was given by Archie Ruggles-Brise from Spains Hall Estate on the subject of the Whole Farm Reservoir – a holistic approach to water management in East Anglia. Archie talked through the basic concept covering:

- the examination of high flows (flooding) and low flows in one report,
- linkages in risk reduction to other ecosystem services, e.g. drought attenuation,
- the quantification of relative stores (and impact) on an example holding,
- the determination of the relative scale of impact for various nature-based water management approaches.

Archie showed that one of the biggest stores of water could be the soil, quickly followed by shallow aquifers and ditches. He estimated that the potential storage of water on Spains Hall Estate was 6,892ML of which 85% could be stored in soils, 13% in shallow aquifer and 3% by wetland nature-based solutions. Archie estimated that this would provide between 5 – 10% more flow in summer and between 15 and 30% peak flood flow reduction.

He concluded by emphasizing the shared value of water between all the various users and beneficiaries and the importance of future policy considering the value of water as a service.



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APPG Officers and Members showed a keen interest in the subject with a range of questions from them asking about the wider potential for what Spains Hall Estate is doing, what is the economic “signal” needing to be given to Government, and what are the policy impediments in developing the idea ? There was also interest in understanding who pays.

- 2.3 The second presentation was given by Innes Thomson, ADA’s CEO covering the legislative changes needed to allow IDBs to manage water as a resource. The key point from this presentation was that IDBs are currently constrained by the Land Drainage Act as drainage authorities with no recognition of their role in managing water levels. Virtually all IDBs already function as water managers and so a change in legislation would help them to legally raise rates for working alongside the Environment Agency and Water Authorities as water resource managers.

Additionally, IT mentioned the importance of legislation currently moving through the parliamentary process for the enabling of a Land Valuations Statutory Instrument under the Environment Act 2021. This would enable IDBs to have a firm legal basis on which to raise rates in expanded district areas or for newly created water management boards. IT stressed that the legislation was being enabled as a tool for those wanting to explore this option.

Both the above points are then linked to the possible demaining of stretches of main river which the Environment Agency is not able to manage within the budgets allocated to it.

Whilst supportive, GS was wanting assurances that before any implementation of any legislation which could result in people having to pay for new services, that proper local consultation would take place. IT stressed that the intention of the legislation was to provide tools to allow people to make choices rather than have solutions imposed upon them.

- 2.4 The final presentation was given by Steve Thompsett, a past President of the Chartered Institute of Environment and Water Management (CIWEM).

Steve’s presentation covered the country’s need to set policy towards encouraging ‘a freshwater future’, citing CIWEM’s work to co-develop recommendations for this.

He urged that water needs to be more deeply embedded and integrated across government departments, through a number of key principles, including;

- Aligned funding and policies,
- Planning in all sectors MUST account for flooding and water resources,
- Recognise the critical role of nature,
- Catchment-based approach,
- Full clarity over responsibilities, rules & expectations.

Steve went on to recommend the initiation of a comprehensive, independent review of water management and regulation and finished by stating that taking water seriously will enable sustainable economic growth and avoid impact costs associated with floods and water scarcity

This promoted the start of a discussion about more localised water management and how this might be configured and achieved.

- 2.5 Closing the meeting, it was agreed that a short report would be prepared outlining the legislative and policy asks from the three presentations.