

Dear Sir/Madam,

26 July 2018

**Low water levels: Advice to Internal Drainage Boards and landowners**

Due to the current long period of dry weather and the high temperatures, we are responding to several incidents in local rivers. We are not expecting the situation to improve in the short term.

**During this period we would like all Internal Drainage Boards and landowners to help us conserve water and minimise the impact on river flows.**

**We will be reviewing any requests to abstract more water on a case by case basis as a result of the current conditions and recommend the following actions:**

- Repair leaky sluices or level control structures to preserve valuable water resources.
- Maintain non-viewed rhynes and ditches to help in distributing the limited water available throughout the system while taking care to prevent sediment pollution or fish kills.
- Low water levels in the ditches will stop wet fencing from working; so you may need electric fencing instead to control cattle movement. Cattle drinking from the watercourse may also become an issue so you may need to provide pasture pumps instead.

Please note:

- We will not be able to respond immediately to requests to alter water levels for wet fencing. We will have to consider the impact of such changes on the wider river network and the moors.
- Sudden storms after long periods of dry weather can lead to major pollution when stagnant ditch water is released into the main rivers and rhynes. Water level management structures should therefore be opened slowly and with care during heavy rainfall. This will minimise the chance of fish kills.
- We are targeting our compliance visits to ensure that abstractors are only taking water where they are able to do so within the limits set by their permit.

If you see any fish in distress in any river system please tell us immediately by calling our National Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Given the number of incidents we are currently responding to across the Wessex area, we are supporting our staff in prioritising their workload and wellbeing so that we can respond in the most effective way possible. We are also reviewing those areas of our day to day work where we may need to stop, slow or reset our work in order that we can prioritise our incident work. We will also be looking at how we recover and get back to normal over a busy holiday period and enabling our staff to rest.

With the dry weather set to continue this could affect us for some time and will have a knock on effect on our routine work. We are sorry for any delays this might result in and appreciate your support and understanding during this busy time.

**Andy Hicklin  
Area Duty Manager**

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**customer service line  
03708 506 506**

**incident hotline  
0800 80 70 60**

**floodline  
03459 88 11 88**