

Changes to Environment Agency's abstraction charges to safeguard water supplies for people and wildlife

- **New charging framework to protect the environment and England's long-term water supply**
- **It will provide a fairer system where people pay for the services they receive and those abstracting a lot of water will pay more**
- **The funding is needed to secure sustainable water resources for the environment, business, and society, now and into the future**

The new rules have been approved by government and published in the Environment Agency's response to the review of water resources abstraction charges and the outcome of its consultation.

The Environment Agency regulates the abstraction and impoundment of water, working with water companies, farmers, industry, businesses and others to protect access to water and make sure that the water in England is abstracted sustainably.

England is facing increased pressure on its water resources due to population growth and climate change. Without action, by 2050 significant water shortages in parts of the country have been predicted and some rivers could have between 50 and 80 percent less water during the summer. Based on recent projections, more than 3.4 billion additional litres per day will be needed in England by then, an increase of 23% on today's supplies.

The Water Resources Review of Charges aims to create a fairer system where people pay for the services they receive and those abstracting a lot of water, such as water companies, will pay more, supporting behavioural change to use water more economically.

The new charges – which have not changed for the past 10 years – will be based on:

- the volume of water taken from the environment
- where the water is taken from

- how much of that water is returned to the environment

The new charging framework will secure £25 million in additional income each year to protect access to water and meet environmental challenges, including to help protect England's sensitive habitats, such as chalk streams.

The increase in funding from charges will enable further investment by the Environment Agency in:

- protecting future supplies through maintaining and operating infrastructure, including water transfer schemes, gauging stations, weirs and sluices
- modernising the water abstraction licensing system through digital transformation
- protecting and enhancing the environment through a more sustainable approach to water abstraction with increased emphasis on rare and sensitive habitats, such as England's unique chalk streams

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said:

The biggest long-term threat to the environment, our economy and our lifestyle is water quantity – simply having enough for people and wildlife.

In the face of the climate emergency, population growth and rising demand for water, we need to ensure that all those who use water, and rely on it for their business, can continue to do so now and into the future, as well as better protecting our rivers and aquifers.

As part of this we need a system that allows us to charge fully and fairly for the services we provide to preserve water supplies and help businesses meet their needs in a sustainable way that protects the environment.