



**Claire Perry**

*MP for the Devizes Constituency*

News release

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For immediate release

## **Claire Perry MP and Parliamentary Anglers urge swift action to help the struggling River Kennet**

On 14<sup>th</sup> January 2012, Claire Perry, MP for the Devizes Constituency, took the current and former Chairmen of the Parliamentary All Party Angling group to see the unprecedentedly low water levels on the River Kennet.



*(Photograph courtesy of Marlborough News Online)*

The group met representatives from Action for the River Kennet (ARK) and local residents at Manton near Marlborough to inspect the dry river bed and discuss solutions.

Commenting, Claire Perry said:

“Rainfall has been low for the last 18 months but it is the abstraction of water from the Kennet by Thames Water that is the real concern. I welcome the Government’s commitment to reforming abstraction tariffs in their recent White Paper and we know that Thames Water are working hard to educate people on the need for water conservation with their “Care for the Kennet” campaign. Ultimately, though, we need to get the relief pipeline built for Swindon as this is the only thing that will protect the Kennet long term. By working with my Parliamentary colleagues including those here today we can keep the pressure up on Thames Water, Ofwat and on Ministers to get this urgent project underway”.

Charles Walker MP, current chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Angling Group said:

“As much as I enjoyed visiting Claire’s constituency, I was horrified at the tragic state of the River Kennet. As a passionate fisherman and in my capacity as the Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Angling, I will fully support Claire and the ARK’s Campaign to restore flows to this beautiful river. The Angling group will be lobbying the Government.”

## Notes

- Claire was joined on her visit by; Charles Walker MP for Broxbourne, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Angling Group; Martin Salter, formerly MP for Reading, who is now the Campaigns Director for the Angling Trust; Dr Geoffrey Findlay, Martin Gibson, John Lawson and Charlotte Hitchmough from ARK and local residents.
- Figures from Thames Water show that rainfall in the local catchment area (Upper Thames) for 2011 was on average 20.42mm less than the 90 year long term average. Thames Water has said it would need around 80% of its long-term average winter rainfall to rule out the likelihood of drought-related water-use restrictions next year.
- The proposed pipeline by Thames Water would link the water supplies for South and North Swindon to enable more water for the town to be taken from the Thames. Discussions between Thames Water and the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat) are ongoing.
- In December 2011, the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) published its Water White Paper, *Water for Life* with the aim to publish a draft Water Bill for pre-legislative scrutiny in early 2012 and subsequently introducing a Water Bill as soon as Parliamentary time allows. More information about the White Paper can be found at: [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/water/legislation/whitepaper/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/water/legislation/whitepaper/).
- More information on ARK can be found on their website: <http://www.riverkennet.org/>.

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