

**Public
Key Decision – Yes**

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Fens & Lincs Reservoirs

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 16th July 2024

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing

Report by: Chief Planning Officer

Wards affected: Lincolnshire Reservoir: Stilton, Folksworth & Washingley (Stibbington, Sibson and Chesterton parishes)
Fens Reservoir: Somersham and Holywell-cum-Needingworth (Bluntisham and Earith parishes)

Executive Summary:

Anglian Water, in partnership with Cambridge Water, is in the pre application stage of Development Consent Orders for Fens Reservoir and the Lincs Reservoir respectively, both with associated infrastructure requirements. Recognising the East of England as an area of high growth the reservoirs aim to secure a reliable supply of water for the future and create new opportunities for the region to thrive and grow.

In late 2022 a first phase of consultation on the sites identified was held and early concept designs.

The second phase of non-statutory consultation opened on 30th May and will close on 9th August 2024. This consultation outlines the preferred location of the associated water infrastructure needed for both reservoirs in order to fill them, treat the water and distribute the water to our homes and businesses.

Following this consultation there will be at least one further statutory consultation, likely mid- 2025, in line with the requirements of the Planning Act 2008, on the proposals prior to submission of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

The Council has been collaborating with a number of partners under the Fens Water Partnership in order to consider the potential development of the Fens Reservoir with an aim of creating a sustainable water resource for the area and future growth, whilst also enhancing the environment and wider social-economic opportunities for local communities.

During the current round of consultation, a number of events have been held as identified on their website (link in background papers)

Due to the statutory timings required, a short window of time is given in order for the consultation documentation to be considered and responded to by specialists across the council. As such it is not possible to prepare a draft response on this now or for a later Cabinet meeting. With that in mind, the proposal in this report is to seek authorisation for a response to be prepared with officers and authorisation to be delegated to the Chief Planning Officer, in consultation with the Leader and Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing, to prepare and submit formal comments on the current second non statutory consultation on the Fens and Lincs reservoirs and associated infrastructure proposals.

Delegation is further sought on the next stages of work due to the statutory time constraints to respond to DCO matters incorporating a range of specialist support.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is

RECOMMENDED

1. to authorise the Chief Planning Officer, in consultation with the Leader and Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing, to prepare and submit formal comments on the current second non statutory consultation on the Fens and Lincs reservoirs and associated infrastructure proposals; and
2. to delegate authority to the Chief Planning Officer to take all associated action necessary in the interests of the efficient and timely conduct of the Council's compliance with the Fens Reservoir and the Lincs Reservoir DCO procedures including but not limited to:
 - a) prepare the Council's responses to any written questions from Examining Authority during the DCO Examinations and to submit those to the Examining Authority;
 - b) settle the content of and submit any Written Representations to the Examining Authority;
 - c) to negotiate, settle and complete any legal agreements relevant to secure the granting of a DCO pursuant to the applications;
 - d) settling and the submission of the Statement of Common Ground to the Examining Authority;
 - e) the instruction of witnesses and legal advisors throughout the Examination process if required; and
 - f) the discharge of DCO requirements made under any development consent order granted by Secretary of State.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an outline of the details set out in the second non-statutory consultation on the Fens and Lincs reservoirs proposal and associated infrastructure. It sets out the background to these proposals at this stage, which is part of the pre-app stage prior to the submission of the projects as separate Development Consent Order (DCO) applications. Due to the timing of the consultation, delegation is sought to enable the Council response to be submitted within the statutory, short timeline.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Fens and Lincs reservoirs projects are recognised as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). They are both major investment proposals to secure a reliable supply of water for current and future communities and businesses across Huntingdonshire and the wider region. They will enable extra water to be stored, providing a level of resilience, volume of water and environmental opportunities that are not provided by other resource options such as desalination or water reuse.
- 2.2 Following the National Framework for Water Resources in 2020 the way water companies planned for the future changed. They are required to collaborate across boundaries to develop regional plans. Huntingdonshire sits within the Water Resources East. From these plans, the water companies then develop their Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP). This sets the plans and investments for the company such as building new water resources. Both the Anglian Water and the Cambridge Water WRMPs identify the proposals as crucial to meet the growing demands on water supplies and to protect the environment.
- 2.3 The Council has been collaborating with a number of partners under the Fens Water Partnership in order to consider the potential development of the Fens Reservoir with an aim of creating a sustainable water resource for the area and future growth, whilst also enhancing the environment and wider social-economic opportunities for local communities.
- 2.4 Through early engagement key priorities for the Parishes, residents and businesses of Huntingdonshire can be shared with Anglian Water. These include (but not limited to) ensuring key objectives of the Councils Corporate Plan and Place Strategy can be shared and included as part of the delivery strategy to deliver new water-related infrastructure. This includes matters such as maximising opportunities for active travel, enhancing the visitor economy of Huntingdonshire and ensuring skills opportunities in the delivery of the new reservoirs are made available to local residents.

3. RESERVOIR PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The proposed reservoirs have an important role to play in the future growth aspirations for Huntingdonshire and the wider region. The reservoirs themselves will sit outside of Huntingdonshire and will have a water surface areas of approximately 5km² - around the size of Grafham Water

- and hold up to 55 million cubic metres of water each. They will have the potential to supply up to 250 million litres of water a day between them for over half a million homes, as well as protecting the environment by enabling a reduction in the amount of water taken from rivers and underground aquifers elsewhere in the region. The associated infrastructure will be regional including within the district. The points relevant to Huntingdonshire District Council are:

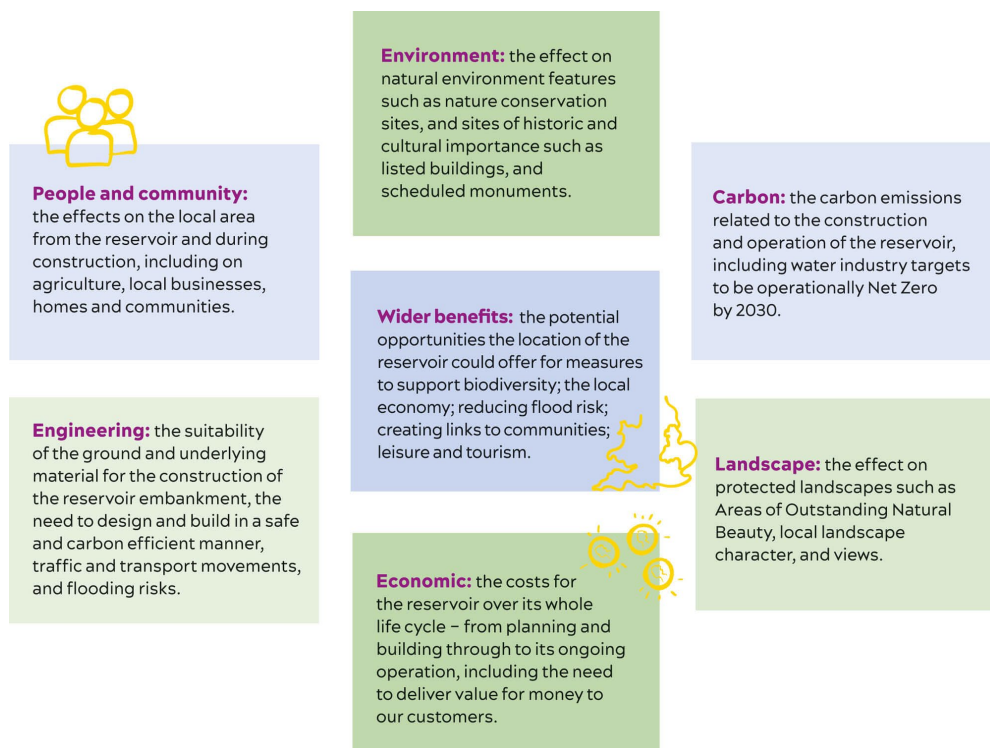
Fens Reservoir

- Upstream infrastructure options remaining to transport water from Great Ouse (Earith) Source to the reservoir
- Emergency drawdown, in the very unlikely event this is required, excess flows would be disposed of via the Sixteen Foot Drain
- Downstream infrastructure options remaining to transport potable water into Cambridge supply at Bluntisham, and Madingley incorporating a pipeline spur to Bluntisham including a service reservoir and one piped option to Madingley.

Lincs Reservoir

- Downstream infrastructure options remaining for treating water and passing into supply at one of three connections points, including a piped option Wilsthorpe to Chesterton. This would include a service reservoir to the east of Elton Furze Golf Club.

3.2 A range of factors have been assessed in considering the project and associated infrastructure as set out below.



3.3 The current non statutory consultation details can be found on the [Fens Reservoir Website](#) and [Lincs Reservoir Website](#). The consultations will

run until from 30 May for 8 weeks. A number of drop-in events, pop-up events and online events will be held .

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 The current non statutory consultation details can be found on the [Fens Reservoir Website](#) and [Lincs Reservoir Website](#). The consultations will run until from 30 May to the 9th August. A number of drop-in events, pop-up events and online events are being held to ensure opportunities for local residents, businesses and Parishes to engage with Anglian Water. Details are available on Anglian Water's website

4.2 The consultation documents will be reviewed by specialist technical officers at the Council and comments provided. Key areas for consideration could include:

- Air quality
- Land contamination
- Vibration effects
- Noise
- Landscape and Visual impacts
- Ecology and Biodiversity
- Cultural Heritage
- Health Impacts including walking/cycling opportunities
- Climate change

5. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

5.1 Comments are to be submitted by the 9th August 2024. Given the tight turn around, agreement has been sought by the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny (Performance & Growth) to present this directly to Cabinet recognising there will be a further non-statutory consultation in spring/summer 2025.

6. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

6.1 The key impact from not carefully considering these two reservoir and associated infrastructure proposals could be that views of Huntingdonshire communities and businesses are not heard. The level of future growth within the district needs to be considered as part of these proposals to ensure there is sufficient water supply to meet our future needs.

6.2 In the event of tight timescales that do not allow for the formal cycle of meetings delegations are sought now to ensure prompt responses to future consultations.

7. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 Subject to Cabinet approval of the recommendations in this report, the Council response to this second non-statutory consultation will be submitted by the deadline of 9th August 2024.

7.2 Following this non-statutory consultation, Environmental Impact Assessment report and opinion will be undertaken by Anglian Water in consultation with statutory stakeholders. The next statutory consultation is expected in the Spring/summer of next year. Following this the DCO application will be submitted.

8. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

[\(See Corporate Plan\)](#)

8.1 This will help to deliver across a range of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities specifically Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations by:

- Improved housing - 27. Maintain the level of new housing delivery, which meets the needs of Huntingdonshire residents, including the type of home and tenure (open market and social housing).
- Forward-thinking economic growth – 32. Continue to update the Local plan.
- Forward-thinking economic growth - 36. Influence delivery of infrastructure including East West Rail, A428, A141 Strategic Outline Business Case and future Transport Strategies

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None currently for the Council as this is a non-statutory consultation response. Part 6 of the Planning Act 2008 sets out the legal requirements regarding Development Consent Order applications.

10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report. A number of specialist officers across the Council are engaging in this process. As Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) this resource is considered necessary and is programmed and monitored within Planning Services and the wider Council.

10.2 Specialist officer input will increase as the NSIPs progress through the pre-application stage and into the DCO examination. Resource will need to be carefully planned for and balanced against other areas of statutory work including the determination of planning application and progress of the Local Plan.

10.3 There may be future budget implications for resource and or legal support through the formal DCO process.

11. HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 As the Fens and Lincs Reservoir NSIPs progress, specialist officers will consider all appropriate implications for our current and future communities and businesses in responding appropriately and proportionately to the applications.

11.2 Through the consultation process Anglian Water will be strongly encouraged to maximise opportunities for environmental enhancements, to maximise biodiversity net gain and inclusion of active travel which will contribute to environmental and ecology improvements while improving health and wellbeing of residents.

12. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

12.1 Due to the time constraints, outside of the control of the Council, the response for the second non-statutory consultation will not fit within programmed Cabinet cycle. Delegation is recommended to meet the requirements for responses to this and future areas of work for expediency.

13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

None

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Planning Act 2008 Chapter 29 Part 6

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/pdfs/ukpga_20080029_en.pdf

Fens Reservoir project website

<https://www.fensreservoir.co.uk/>

Lincs Reservoir project website

<https://www.lincsreservoir.co.uk/>

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice Notes

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-infrastructure-planning-advice-notes#advice-for-local-authorities>

Advice Note Two: The role of local authorities in the development consent process

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-advice-note-two-the-role-of-local-authorities-in-the-development-consent-process/advice-note-two-the-role-of-local-authorities-in-the-development-consent-process>

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