

Environment Agency  
Iceni House  
Cobham Rd  
Ipswich  
Suffolk  
IP3 9JD



29<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Dear Sir

**Ref: AW Alston licence renewals**

As a family we own and farm [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**We are very concerned that the refusal to renew Andrew Alston's irrigation licences will have knock on effects to our business due to the fact that [REDACTED] has said he cannot grow potatoes on our farm without the ability to irrigate the potatoes. We will lose the potato rental income.**

Sharp Street marsh is in good condition with the one-way sluice working well to keep the marsh in good condition. It has historically been cut for reed and the quality of the reed is excellent. However the new sluice in Snipe marsh ditch stops all water accessing Snipe marsh from the river despite the structure being installed for flood defence reasons. The Broads Authority ([REDACTED]) now says that there is no reason why the sluice cannot be opened, except during flood events, but their management is to insist it remains closed. I am then told that Snipe Marsh has the possibility of being affected by a lowering of groundwater affecting the surface of the marsh and the S24 plants present. Snipe marsh has a number of sluices in it to maintain water at a set level which is about 1m below the natural water level in the ponds at Grove farm and there are sluices or control structures off my land which control ditch levels from Snipe marsh to the new BESL sluice and into How Hill reserve. Foot drains have been cut into Snipe marsh that keep water levels in the middle of the marsh at optimal levels for the S24 plants. Water on the other side of How Hill and Crome's Broad leaves the site via the Toad Hole sluice and on to Ludham Bridge where it is pumped up into the river. If the BESL sluice were to be opened, except during flooding, I cannot believe there would be a water level problem in the summer. In fact a better flow of water from the river would be beneficial.

My fishing pond, known as Catfield Lake, is fed from beneath and receives no water from ditches. The water level in this pond is always above ditch level and any surplus flows via a pipe into the adjacent ditch. I have never had a water level problem in this pond. Water also enters Snipe marsh from Sharman's wood. The largest amount of water enters Snipe marsh from Andrew Alston's ditch and from the ponds at Grove farm. These ditches run all year and provide a flow through Snipe marsh towards Crome's Broad and How Hill.

I do not think that groundwater is getting onto the surface of Snipe marsh or getting into the surrounding ditches. If it were we would see Ochre stains on the surface and in the ditches. We would see a small flow of water flowing from the centre of the marshes, along the foot drains, to the ditches. None of this is observed.

The Broads Authority cleaned and deepened the ditches on Snipe marsh in the winter of 2011-12 with the aim of drying the marsh surface to enable it to be grazed by their ponies. This is when the new foot drains were dug. In the last three weeks the Broads Authority has been on Snipe marsh to dig an additional foot drain to let water off the centre of the Eastern marsh and to remove an invasive species.

About 10 years ago the Broads Authority cleared Snipe marsh of trees and have grazed the marsh with ponies ever since.

With the Snipe marsh sluiced to control water levels, water flowing through the site all year, water levels maintained at just below marsh level but high enough for water to access marshes via foot drains and kept well below natural levels all year round it is difficult to see how abstraction is having any effect on Snipe marsh. By far the biggest effect is the fact that the BESL sluice near the river is closed all the time and does not allow any water into the system. The Broads Authority, in the summer time use pumps to top up the How Hill area which seems a strange practice when all they have to do is open the sluice and let water in from the river. If the Broads Authority found the S24 plants in the Spring of 2014, why did they continue to graze the marsh with ponies? Surely these ponies will eat the plants.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]