The Fight for Fresh Water

Data centres in the UK are guzzling tons of our fresh drinking water daily, which is causing some serious concerns for their local water supplies and the environment. These industrial centres need a lot of fresh water for cooling, and many water suppliers can't even keep track of how much they are using. This is a big concern, especially with the UK's water shortages expected by 2050, due to global warming. Data centre fresh water consumption is therefore a real threat to our water supplies. Rainwater accounts for a very small percentage of a Data Centre's overall water consumption. While some data centres utilize rainwater harvesting systems, it's typically a minor contribution compared to other water sources. Alternative water sources, including rainwater, collectively, contribute **less than 5%** to a data centre's total fresh water supply, that's according to DGTI Infra. Most of the water, **95%** in point of fact, used by data centres comes from local or regional water companies.

They also generate millions of litres of water waste as they have to continuously flush their pipe systems to the sewers to clear scale and sediment build up. So, the concerns are:

• **Huge water usage:** UK data centres are using nearly **10 billion litres of drinking water** every year, that's over 3.5 million tonnes and probably still an underestimate! The truly shocking thing is that around half of the water companies in Britain are unable to say how much water they supply to these industrial units – because they don't know themselves.

• **Elsham Data Centre concerns:** The planned biggest Data Centre in the UK is at Elsham, Scunthorpe, in Lincolnshire and it is currently facing pushback from Anglian Water. They are worried about the high risks of sewage flooding in the area, breaking environmental laws, and for them not being able to supply enough fresh water for cooling.

• **Water supply issues:** Anglian Water can only supply 20,000 litres per day for non-domestic customers, but hyperscale data centres need **between 4-19 million litres per day. That means one hyperscale data centre uses as much water as 9500 ordinary businesses every day**. That's a huge mismatch! There is also a concern that ultimately there will be a deterioration in fresh drinking water quality.

• **Need for transparency and regulations:** As mentioned most of the UK's water companies can't even say how much water these Industrial Units are using, so this is making it hard to manage future consumption. This is crucial as the government plans to promote more hyperscale data centres to assist the economy but yet droughts in the UK are becoming more common.

• **Foxglove** (a not-for-profit organisation is currently fighting tech companies) wrote an article in July 2025 stating that they, Foxglove, have worked with The Times newspaper to expose the scale of the critical knowledge gap facing the UK over the gigantic use of our drinking water by these industrial units. They have warned it could cause a risk of floods of sewage into the local area.

Here in Westwells and Neston we have no idea how much fresh water the current **Five** Ark data centres are guzzling on the Hawthorn and the old Spring Quarry site and very soon a sixth data centre will be built on the old Stephens Plastics site. Then if Ark were allowed to build a SEVENTH one here in Westwells, on the Donkey Field, we would be even more exposed to the same risks and worries over water and flood risks.

• If all of Ark's data centres here in Hawthorn were considered as one they would be the equivalent of two hyperscale size data centres. One of the largest complexes in the UK. That's without even considering the Donkey Field massive planning proposal.

• We are all now in a battle of fresh water – and we're losing it to these Industrial Units. Until we're able to get an accurate picture of how much of our drinking water is going to be devoured by these Industrial units, we can't know that we will have enough for everyone to drink in future. Areas of Britain have already had droughts this year. The Government's own figures show that by 2050, we are looking at a **shortfall** of 5 billion litres per day from what we'll have in our taps vs what we need. And as any expert will tell you, 2050 is "tomorrow" in water supply terms. Our future is what is at stake letting Ark build yet another data centre on the Donkey Field.

If you haven't objected already, please do. Go directly onto the Wiltshire Council planning web page and look up **PL/2024/05527** Land South of Westwells Road, Neston SN13 9GB. Click on COMMENTS and then:

scroll down and follow the instructions. It doesn't take long.

Alternatively, you can comment by letter to Adam Madge. Principle Planning Officer. Wiltshire Council. Bythesea Road. Trowbridge. BA148JN

You may also wish to object to the **BESS** planning application at Brockleaze. As if the storage batteries should ignite the fire brigade states that they will need 1,900 l/m of water for at least 120 mins just to try and extinguish it.

Neston Westwells Action Group (NWAG)