John Lawson – CV



Born: 1947

Education: Marlborough College
Pembroke College, Cambridge University

Qualifications: MA (Cantab), Mechanical Sciences
Fellow, Royal Academy of Engineering
Fellow, Institution of Civil Engineers
Fellow, Chartered Institution of Water & Environmental Management (CIWEM)

Profession

Civil engineer with over 50 years' experience in water infrastructure development, worldwide. Specialist in water resources and the environment. Chairman of the Institution of Civil Engineers' water board, 2004 to 2007. Chairman of CIWEM's water resources expert panel, 1998 to 2002.

Water resources and the environment

Member of CaBA chalk stream water resources expert panel (2025-26). Defra-funded report on Abstraction as a % of Recharge, assessing acceptable chalk groundwater abstraction (2021). Member of expert panel for development of national Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy (2021).

Technical adviser to Action for the River Kennet since 2008. Reports for local river preservation groups on re-naturalising chalk stream flows on Rivers Kennet (2012), Nar (2014), Tarrant (2011 and 2025) and Darent (2026).

Member of Lower Test salmon working group to reduce chalk stream over-abstraction (2016). Expert witness for Fish Legal at public inquiry into Test and Itchen abstraction licence changes (2018).

Since 2010, adviser to the Group Against Reservoir Development on plans for a new reservoir near Abingdon and other new water resources in South East England. Drafting responses to numerous consultations on WRMPs. Expert witness at the 2010 public inquiry, into Thames Water's plans.

Adviser to the Wye & Usk Foundation and the Welsh Dee Trust on reducing the impacts of abstraction and reservoir operation on salmonid fisheries.

Working for Halcrow, consulting engineers, responsible for numerous water resource planning projects, including:

- project management of the National Rivers Authority's water resource strategy for England & Wales (1992 to 1994).
- various studies to address low flows in six chalk streams in the Thames catchment (1985 to 1987), the Hampshire Avon catchment (including the Wylye), the River Piddle and the River Arun (early 1990s).
- development of operating rules for South West Water's Roadford reservoir to minimise impact on salmonid fisheries (1989 to 1991).

Flood management

2004 to 2007, responsible for all Halcrow's flood management work for the Environment Agency, covering about 30% of EA's total capital programme.

Career Summary

2007 to present	**Water resources adviser to rivers trusts and fisheries interests**
2019-present	Development of 'Chalk Streams First' proposal for re-naturalising flows in chalk streams in Colne and Lea catchments. Expert panel member in development of national Chalk Stream Restoration strategy. Report for Defra on abstraction as a % of recharge and scale of over-abstraction.
2011-present	Working with Action for the River Kennet as 'Catchment Host' for implementation of the WFD catchment plan for the Kennet. Abstraction management advice to rivers trusts and fisheries interests for Rivers Test, Tarrant, Nar, Ivel, Darent and Chilterns chalk streams.
2008 - present	For the Wye & Usk Foundation, water resource modelling to assess the impact of abstraction on salmon migration in the Rivers Wye and Usk, and to agree 'fish friendly' licence changes. Development of an innovative salmon migration model. Member of DCWW/NRW/CRT working groups.
2017 - 2021	For Welsh Dee Trust, review of impacts of river regulation on salmon and assessment of proposals for improvements.
2017 - 2018	For Fish Legal, expert witness for Public Inquiry into Southern Water's abstraction licences for the Lower Test and Itchen, including hydrological analysis of abstraction impacts and impacts on salmon.
2016	For WWF and Southern Water advice to Salmon Working Group on impacts of abstraction from Lower Test on salmon, including salmon catch analysis and migration modelling.
1968 - 2007	**Halcrow Group Limited – multi-disciplinary engineering consultants**
2003 - 2007	**Managing Director for the company's water and utilities business**
	Responsible for strategy and performance of division with £80 million turnover and 1100 professional staff, operating worldwide. Major clients included the Environment Agency, Thames Water, Anglian Water, Yorkshire Water, Mid Kent Water and Scottish Water.
1990 - 2003	**Director, Halcrow Group Ltd (formerly Sir William Halcrow & Partners Ltd)**
2001 - 2003	Development Director, water and utilities – worldwide sales and marketing, including key client management for the EA and Thames Water.
1998 - 2001	Chief executive, Halcrow Water, responsible for 400 staff and £20 million consultancy turnover, worldwide.
1995 - 1997	Managing Director, Europe Region – developing business in the former communist countries of central and eastern Europe.
1990 - 1995	Director, environmental consultancy – responsible for initial establishment and development of the firm's environmental consultancy business.
1968 - 1990	**Practising consulting engineer with Halcrow**
	Projects for water supplies, flood defences, irrigation and hydro-electric power as project manager, construction supervisor and designer in Southern England, Wales (Craig Goch reservoir study 1973 – 1975), South Africa, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Burma and Yemen.
Other interests	Fishing, golf, bridge, cricket watching.