

ALVINGHAM WINS RESERVOIR FIGHT

FARMERS HAVE WON A BATTLE TO PREVENT THE NORTH-EAST LINCOLNSHIRE WATER BOARD BUILDING A HUGE RESERVOIR ON 258 ACRES OF RICH AGRICULTURAL LAND NEAR ALVINGHAM, IT WAS ANNOUNCED THIS AFTERNOON.

The Environment Minister, Mr. Geoffrey Rippon, has turned down the application by the Water board to build the reservoir, which was intended to augment water supplies for the Humber Bank industries.

Mr. Rippon's decision follows a public inquiry in Louth nine months ago when the board's plans were strongly opposed by the the National Farmers' Union.

In announcing his decision today, Mr. Rippon said he was satisfied water supplies could be obtained through the Trent-Witham-Ancholme scheme for industrial users and, as a result, agreed with the farmers that the building of the reservoir would lead to an "unacceptable" loss of farming land and a amenity value in the Alvingham area.

The decision was received with jubilation in Louth this afternoon.

A spokesman for the Louth branch of the NFU, which led the fight against the reservoir, said: "We argued from the start that there were adequate alternative supplies to South Humberside and that these should be properly utilised before further valuable agricultural land was taken for a reservoir."

He added: "It is extremely gratifying that the case put by the NFU has been accepted by the Secretary of State and that the determined opposition of the farmers affected and of the inhabitants of Alvingham has proved successful."

Louth MP Mr. Jeffrey Archer, who supported the farmers, said: "I am delighted the Minister has listened to the views of the local people and that his judgment is the same as theirs. I know everyone in the area will pleased with this decision."

A spokesman for the Water Board commented: "As far as I can see at this time, there will be sufficient supplies of water from the Trent-Witham-Ancholme scheme for industrial users in this area to make it unnecessary for any further reservoirs in this part of Lincolnshire."

CHAMPAGNE PARTY

Mrs. Grace Bett, whose husband has a 50-acre smallholding in the village, is planning a champagne party tonight to mark the village's victory.

Mrs. Bett led the fight in Alvingham itself and she said this afternoon: "The news is absolutely wonderful, it's marvellous."

The Water Board's plan would have swallowed up all but nine acres of the

Betts' smallholding and would have effectively put them out of business.

When she first heard of the board's proposals, Mrs. Bett organised petitions which went to everyone from the Minister of Agriculture to Prince Charles, who was then at Cranwell.

"No one knows the feeling I had this morning when the Vicar telephoned me with the news. When George and I first came here 25 years ago, this house was falling to pieces and the garden was an absolute wilderness. We have worked like hell to get what we have and I was sure we were not going to lose it without a fight."

Mrs. Bett said that after tonight's party a dinner would be held for those who had organised the opposition in the village and a thanksgiving service would take place at the village church on Sunday, September 23, to give the whole village the opportunity to express their gratitude for the Minister's decision.