



Blueprint for Water

WATER PEOPLE NATURE

WATER MATTERS

www.blueprintforwater.org.uk

OUR VISION

Water matters: it is integral to our lives for drinking, health and recreation, as well as critical to the lives of all plants and animals. All waters and wetlands, from our ponds and rivers to our seas, should be alive with the splashing, buzzing and croaking of flourishing wildlife. By working together and managing our water more sensitively, we can ensure a future full of wildlife-rich places that everyone can explore and enjoy.

INTRODUCTION

A healthy natural environment is not only important for nature; our society, economy and our individual wellbeing depend upon it. Rivers, lakes, wetlands and ponds are a critical part of our nation's infrastructure and they require investment so that their benefits can be realised and their future protected.

In the last century we lost 90% of our freshwater habitats and globally, over the last thirty years, our freshwater species have declined by 76%. Despite such losses, less than 1% of the UK's entire river length, and only a small proportion of wetlands are formally protected.

We welcome the Government's commitment to a 25 year plan to restore biodiversity, something that cannot be achieved without taking action to protect and restore rivers and other wetlands. We also recognise that Government doesn't hold all the answers. All our organisations and members are already helping to make a difference and are keen to do more. However, there are some things only Government and its agencies can do.

A number of existing Government policies and initiatives currently help protect our aquatic environments and species, and these need continued support and resourcing. But there is still a long way to go. We need to address the current failings to ensure nature's recovery and to future-proof the water environment for climate change and an expanding population. This must start now; 2015 is a key year for Government to show commitment to protecting and restoring the nation's waters by setting out bold and ambitious River Basin Management Plans.

We have taken this opportunity to set out actions that need to be taken in the next five years to ensure everyone plays their part in halting and reversing the loss of aquatic wildlife and to make sure polluters pay. We must act now to give our waters a future. The Blueprint is calling on the Government and industry in England to ensure that by 2021 we:

- Use water wisely
- Stop pollution in our waters
- Manage floods for people and wildlife
- Create, protect and restore places for wildlife
- Join up water management



ON AVERAGE, A PERSON IN
ENGLAND USES 140 LITRES
OF WATER A DAY



USE WATER WISELY

Climate change modelling predicts more extreme weather patterns in the future, including increased likelihood of drought. On average, a person in England uses 140 litres of water a day. Yet metered customers in some parts of the country use just 106, saving money and 12,400 litres of precious water a year.

We must learn to value water and use it wisely to prevent damage to the environment.

Actions needed

- By 2016, Ofwat to make their duty to promote resilience operational by issuing guidance that challenges the industry to:
 - Assist customers to increase uptake of water efficiency measures and water metering to reduce per capita consumption.
 - Identify, and develop in partnership, habitat creation that builds resilience against drought into the natural environment
 - Publish environmental impacts of company abstraction under a range of credible drought and water demand scenarios.
 - Reduce leakage in line with the best performance.
- By 2019, Government to revise water resource legislation ensuring universal metering by 2025, and Water Resources Management Plans reflect the environmental value of water and encourage catchment management approaches to meet water demand.
- By 2020, water companies to adopt Resilience Outcome Measures that include measures of demand management and sustainable water resource use.
- By 2021, Defra and the Environment Agency to amend all unsustainable abstraction licenses and legislate for a new reformed abstraction regime, which ensures environmental protection.

STOP POLLUTION IN OUR WATERS

In the UK it costs £1.2 billion every year to remove pollutants from water so that it is safe to drink. Pollution continues to be the biggest problem facing the freshwater environment.

Actions needed

- By 2018, all waste water service providers to set out long-term, regularly reviewed, plans ensuring sewer and treatment capacity is sufficient to address pollution incidents and flooding within the context of increasing urbanisation and climate change.
- By 2018, register all small domestic discharges (septic tanks and package treatment plans), and those responsible for their operation obliged to submit annual servicing records.
- By 2016, in order to tackle diffuse water pollution, there needs to be a significant increase in inspection rates to ensure that regulation is properly enforced and incentives, that support best practice land management for nature and targeted regulatory action such as Water Protection Zones are deployed in areas of greatest sensitivity.
- By 2018, to update Best Available Technology standards for phosphorus removal to encourage greater removal, recovery and recycling from discharges.
- By 2018, monitoring is put in place for all emerging pollutants of concern, including pesticides, pharmaceuticals and personal care products, at a spatial and temporal scale that provides a comprehensive assessment of risk to the environment.
- By 2018, to remove microplastics and endocrine disrupting chemicals from all personal care products and, where possible, remove or substitute these from pharmaceuticals.



POLLUTION CONTINUES TO BE
THE BIGGEST PROBLEM FACING
THE FRESHWATER ENVIRONMENT



Blueprint for Water

WE MANAGE
525,000 ha

OF LAND, OVER 45%
OF WHICH IS WITHIN
DESIGNATED
PROTECTED AREAS

THE LAND
WE MANAGE
PRODUCES
**MILLIONS OF
POUNDS** OF
BENEFITS FOR
THE PUBLIC



WE HAVE
CREATED OVER

1,000ha

OF MANAGED
REALIGNMENT

WE BUILD EFFECTIVE
SYSTEMS TO

REDUCE FLOODING

AND CREATE
RENEWABLE ENERGY

WE ADVISE OVER

10,000

LANDOWNERS
EVERY YEAR



MANAGE FLOODS FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

In England and Wales, 42% of rivers no longer have natural floodplains that act as sponges and help hold up floodwaters. Over 7,800 homes and nearly 3,000 commercial properties were flooded in 2012 alone, and on average England suffers £1 billion of flood damage each year.

To protect communities and our environment against floods and drought, flood management must work with natural processes rather than against them.

Actions needed

- By 2016, Government and its agencies to make best use of natural flood defence processes via:
 - A series of pilot projects in large catchments to trial the benefits of natural flood management approaches at this scale.
 - Evaluation of nature-based approaches by all flood risk management authorities, with such approaches adopted wherever feasible.
 - Clear articulation of how targets to realign 10% of the coastline will be achieved.
- Government acts to reduce downstream flooding, protect nature and social benefits by ensuring that:
 - Rivers are not diverted or altered without expert oversight from a statutory agency.
 - Planning policy prevents inappropriate development on floodplains where it would put people at risk or require new defences.
 - By 2016, all new developments use best practice Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).
 - By 2017, a plan is agreed for a national SuDS retrofitting programme to be in place and funded by 2020.



ON AVERAGE ENGLAND
SUFFERS £1 BILLION OF
FLOOD DAMAGE EACH YEAR



CREATE, PROTECT AND RESTORE PLACES FOR WILDLIFE

Since records began, 26% of freshwater species have become extinct in England and many other species are now largely restricted to nature reserves. We need to take urgent steps to maintain and rebuild the health of our aquatic ecosystems.

Actions needed

- Government to enable its agencies to deliver Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for all water-dependent Protected Areas as an immediate and high priority. This includes implementing measures to provide adequate protection from pressures outside site boundaries.
- Government to support its agencies to give high priority to ensuring all water-dependent species and habitats of conservation concern reach FCS (or equivalent) by providing an adequate level of resources for full implementation of Biodiversity 2020.
- By 2020, a new national plan for wetland creation (both large and small) which will benefit wildlife and people while reducing pollution and flood risk, is established, funded and implemented.
- Government to ensure the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation is fully implemented by 2017 and aligned with UK plant and animal health regulations. By 2020, fully implement the recommendations made in the GB Non-Native Species Strategy review.
- By 2020, Government to set out increased investment plans for the monitoring of water ecosystems (including all those unprotected waterbodies) and aquatic biodiversity, to support decision-making and build our knowledge base.
- Money to be raised for catchment restoration by ensuring:
 - The cost of environmental permits reflects the value of ecosystem services provided.
 - Polluters pay the true cost of damage or a fixed proportion of profits, whichever is the greatest.



JOIN UP WATER MANAGEMENT

Only 21% of surface water bodies in England in 2014 are classified as achieving good ecological status as defined by the Water Framework Directive.

Land and water needs to be managed in an integrated and coordinated way from source to sea, with water as a top priority. Actions or policies in one area must not compromise those in another.

Actions needed

- Second Cycle River Basin Management Plans must:
 - Meet the UK's responsibilities under the Water Framework Directive.
 - Deliver the full range of ecological and economic benefits that a healthy water environment can provide.
 - Ensure sectors responsible for damaging the water environment make a fair contribution to its restoration.
- Government to put the Catchment Based Approach at the heart of river basin planning and flood risk management, to ensure that local communities have a strong voice and play a key role in decision-making and delivery.
- By 2016, Government to establish a sub-Cabinet Ministerial working group to ensure cross-cutting water/marine/environmental policies and objectives are integrated, and relevant funding streams and multiple benefits are optimised.
- By 2016, Government to undertake a review of how its departments and agencies are delivering their duties under Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act and the Water Framework Directive.
- By 2017, Government to ensure the maximum amount of Common Agricultural Policy money is spent on schemes that support farmers to protect and enhance wildlife, water and other public goods.



FRESHWATER AND WETLAND
HABITATS OCCUPY JUST 3% OF THE
UK'S LAND SURFACE BUT SUPPORT
ABOUT 10% OF OUR SPECIES



The Blueprint for Water is a coalition of 16 leading environmental and fishery NGOs representing some 6 million people and a part of a bigger joint forum called Wildlife and Countryside Link. The coalition first came together in 2006 to call on the Government to restore the UK's rivers, lakes and wetlands by the 2015 Water Framework Directive deadline.

The Blueprint for Water members



Wildlife and
Countryside



Blueprint for Water is a campaign of
Wildlife and Countryside Link

We would like to thank all of the partners and stakeholders who provided comment and advice during the development of our new Blueprint for Water 2015.

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