

I WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME YOU TO THE SUMMER ISSUE

of the WFD Information Centre Newsletter that comes out following the end of the consultation period for the River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) in most European Member States including the UK.

This issue is focusing on what happens next – finalising the RBMPs and putting them into action during the first WFD implementation cycle until 2015. We are very fortunate to have the key article written by Geoff Bateman, Head of River Basin Management at the Environment Agency.

In view of the importance of the main topic we have decided to extend this issue from the usual four pages to eight.

In addition to the key article, on pages 6 and 7, you will find useful information on some current and new projects that should help to achieve the WFD goals and recent and future conferences related to river basin planning and WFD implementation. On page 8, Neil Tytler, WFDIC Manager, reports on our recent activities.

For further relevant information on stakeholder participation and other aspects of WFD implementation in the UK and Europe please visit 'Latest News' on our website:

www.euwfd.com/html/news.html

If you would like further information about any of the items in this Newsletter then please contact us (see details on the last page).

The Editor

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Just some of the features in this issue – and more . . . □

TRANSLATING PLANS INTO ACTION FOR THE WATER ENVIRONMENT

Geoff Bateman OBE
FCIWEM CSci BSc (hons)

Head of River Basin Management, Environment Agency – England and Wales.



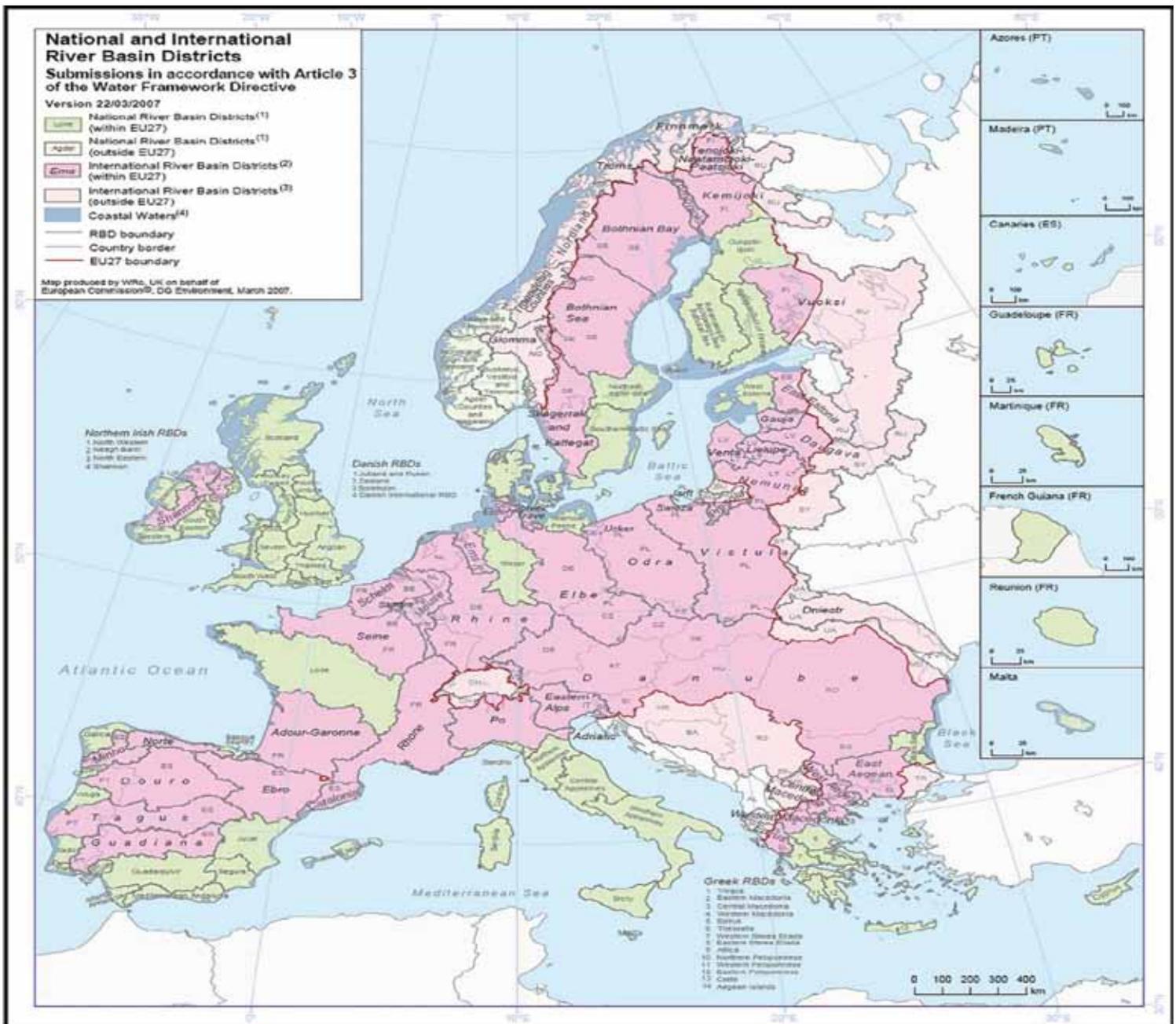
PLANS FOR THE FUTURE:

This year will see the biggest step forward towards the integrated management of water in a generation with the finalisation of the River Basin Management Plans across Europe.

When Ministers sign off the first plans on 22 December 2009 it will seal a contract with people and the water environment that set the targets for water bodies and the shape of water management for the first cycle of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) implementation that ends 2015. In England and Wales, under the guidance of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), the Environment Agency is the competent authority for producing the plans. But the plans are the result of many inputs and much advice, including that from National and Regional Liaison

Panels. Such inputs and advice will continue for the next 18 years and will play an important part in the preparation of RBMPs for the second and third WFD implementation cycles.

Europe has a strong influence over the current environmental policy agenda and the past few decades have seen significant improvements, however it remains to be seen whether the current institutions will stand the tests now placed upon them as part of the wider European picture.



The National and International River Basin Districts across Europe.

One thing is for certain if water managers and regulators do not involve and engage the wider peoples of Europe, the ambitions of the Directive will not be realised. The WFD is as much about people and delivering social and economic benefits as it is about wildlife and environmental benefits. It's about creating an environment that everyone can take pride in and enjoy to the full. It's about sparking economic regeneration in deprived areas and making rivers, canals, lakes, estuaries, our coasts and groundwater cleaner for everyone to use and enjoy.

The Directive brings a long-term vision to environmental policy making. This isn't about quick fixes but a systematic approach to improving the water environment. It's as much about creating a better environment for future generations as it is about making more immediate improvements and building on the successes of the past.

WHAT DO THE PLANS DO?

The River Basin Management Plans set the appropriate ecological quality for rivers, lakes, groundwater, transitional and coastal

waters, together with the means of achieving the standards required. They are the vehicle for delivering the statutory framework of the WFD.

The aim of the WFD is to achieve Good Ecological Status (or Good Ecological Potential for artificial and heavily modified water bodies) in all inland and coastal waters by 2015 and, where this is not possible, by 2027. This is an ambition for all parts of government and society as a whole.

All of the actions taken in managing the water environment will be designed to achieve Good Ecological Status or Good Ecological Potential whilst ensuring no deterioration, life in all waters, achievement of protected area status and improvement of the worst waters.

SO HOW ARE WE DOING?

In England and Wales there is a strong track record of achievement by the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and

Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), the Environment Agency, its predecessor bodies and the water industry. Aided and abetted by the environmental NGO's and many others interested in the water environment.

Our water environment has been transformed beyond all recognition over the past few decades. Rivers once devoid of life now teem with fish. Bathing waters are the cleanest on record. Improvements in water quality have been a catalyst for the rebirth of many of our industrial towns and cities. River quality has improved constantly year by year over the past 18 years.

Significant investment by the water industry funded by water services charge payers has played a significant part in this. Since privatisation water companies have invested £70 billion in water and sewerage infrastructure in England and Wales. The number of water pollution incidents has fallen by more than 90 per cent in the past 15 years, and the amount of water lost to leakage has been cut by 30 per cent in the past decade.

Under the WFD, the way water quality is measured is changing. For the past 20 years water managers have focused mainly on river quality, monitoring through a relatively narrow set of six chemical and biological measures contributing to a general quality assessment (GQA). Whereas three-quarters of England's rivers were classed as good under the old rules, four out of five are falling short of good ecological status under the new standards. The WFD raises the bar because it applies to all surface and ground waters and it requires competent authorities to monitor 37 different elements. This means we are going to get a more sophisticated and meaningful picture of the ecological status of all our water bodies – in other words, how well suited they really are to supporting a wide variety of insect, plant and animal life.

There will be better data, which will mean we are better equipped to identify the worst environmental problems and take action where it is most needed. Early results indicate that only 20% of water bodies were in good status in England and Wales. This does not mean waters have got worse, but that the tests for the health of water have got tougher. We want the very best for all waters, so the task of achievement has suddenly got harder.

The old GQA assessments enabled us to tackle some of the most straightforward pollution problems, such as discharges from sewage treatment works or other industry. The new quality criteria will help us to get to grips with more complex and challenging problems such as diffuse pollution from farming and urban areas

But huge challenges remain. Parts of urban rivers are still in poor condition, and the way our land is managed has given rise to a host of pervasive and complex pollution issues. Wildlife of many kinds continues to suffer. Rivers, lakes and coastal waters are coming under increasing pressure from a changing climate and a growing population. These pressures are likely to make it more costly to maintain, for example, the quality of our water supply and sewerage systems into the future.

Water managers and regulators must make sure there is enough water to meet the needs of industry, agriculture and wider society into the future. That means that unsustainable practices such as damaging abstractions must be stopped and proper planning for future water resource management, taking into account pressures such as population growth and climate change, must be addressed.

So What Do We Do Now?

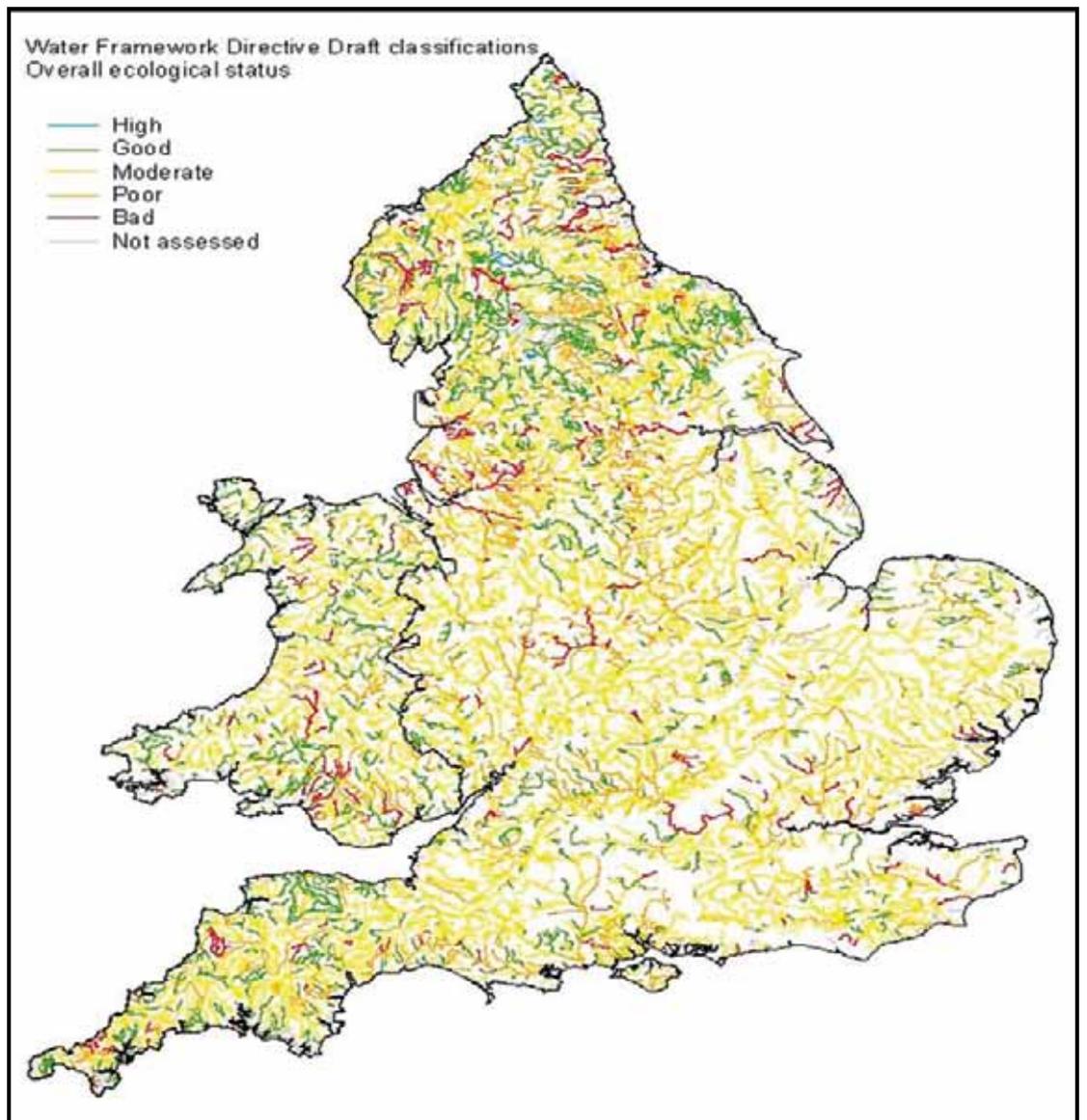
Statutory Agencies have achieved much, but a significant shift in future achievements is needed to meet the higher WFD standards. This cannot be done by the statutory agencies alone or even by those with the traditional interests in water.

The control of hazardous and point source pollutants is being tackled and whilst there is still much more work needed a new more complex problem has been revealed. The extent of diffuse



pollution from a multiplicity of sources will be a much harder nut to crack.

Public participation can improve decision-making by ensuring that decisions are soundly based on shared knowledge, experiences and scientific evidence, that decisions are influenced by the views and experience of those affected by them, that innovative and creative options are considered, and that new arrangements are acceptable to the public. For example monitoring tells us that there will need to be a particular focus on improving fish stocks and fish passage and on reducing water pollution from agriculture. People tell us they want more access to water for recreation and amenity uses.



Another priority area is restoring the natural condition of our rivers. This means removing physical structures that no longer have any purpose, and restoring catchments to a more natural state.

We believe that the revised legislation that is currently being drawn up related to water protection zones in England and Wales will be helpful in delivering our WFD vision. Defra has recently completed a consultation on amendments to the existing water protection zone legislation. The best way to deliver environmental improvements is through a combination of advice and voluntary action, but where voluntary initiatives fail then regulatory action will be necessary to deliver the requirements of the Directive.

Water protection zones, together with current regulatory tools and guidance, will also be valuable for tackling sustainable urban drainage and point source and diffuse industrial pollution. The Environment Agency is already investigating how sites for water protection zones will be selected and what evidence will be required for their use. The aim is to start identifying possible sites as soon as possible and to work with land managers, local authorities and governments to use the legislation effectively, targeting those activities that are causing pollution.



WHERE ARE THE TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES NEEDED TO ACHIEVE GOOD STATUS?

In the first cycle plans the tools of the water manager are substantially those that have been developed over recent years and the agent of improvement is predominantly the water industry and water service charge payers. But whilst there is still work to be completed by the water industry under predecessor directives which underpin WFD, in future the contributions from other deliverers will feature more prominently.

Farmers and land managers recognise the impacts of direct discharges and are becoming aware of the scale of diffuse pollution from pesticides and nutrients. With the prospect of source controls, for example, the sustainable use of pesticides, will pose new challenges. At first sight it would seem sensible to exclude pesticides to remove the threat to drinking waters and wildlife, but the use of certain pesticides is necessary to control non-native species and thereby achieve high status in some water

bodies. So the solution might not be as straightforward as first thought.

The requirement to reduce phosphorus in sewage discharges would result in higher energy inputs which would conflict with the need to reduce carbon in support of efforts to mitigate climate change. We need to make effective use of the current tools and develop new ones as quickly as possible.

THE TOOLS

The proposals contained in each River Basin Management plan are as specific and certain as they can be at this stage. The WFD must be delivered in a fair and balanced way, which means taking account of business and household needs as well as environmental issues. The debate will continue about what is desirable and what is deliverable. But it is becoming increasingly clear who will be delivering and what sectors will be impacted by the plans.

At present the water companies are finalising their investment plans with Ofwat and they are likely to include innovative approaches to reducing energy costs and improving raw water quality, in addition to the continued investment in treatment of water and sewage and infra-structure improvements. Perhaps entering into partnerships with land managers, regulators and NGOs and taking a catchment management approach to water supply and treatment. An extension of drinking water protected areas and safeguard zones is anticipated, but their imposition will need sensitive handling. In partnership with local authorities misconnections will need to be addressed and the new floods and water bill might at last bring significant progress with sustainable urban drainage.

▲ *Kick net sampling for invertebrates to test the health of the water body (© EA).*

▼ *Fish pass in weir to enable fish passage for spawning upstream to improve the health of fish stocks (©EA).*





Farmers and land managers, already successfully tackling point source pollution, will need to address fundamental changes to source inputs to address diffuse pollution controls. In addition to Nitrate Vulnerable zones and England catchment sensitive farming delivery initiative will be the use of water protection zones where voluntary measures do not achieve the required water standards.

The Environment Agency has a role in ensuring its provision of flood defences does not cause water bodies to deteriorate and where possible add value for biodiversity.

▲ *Fencing to exclude stock from river banks and provide a buffer from soil and nutrient run off (©EA).*

▼ *People tell us they want more access to water for recreation and amenity uses.*

Natural England and the Countryside Council for Wales have responsibilities in relation to favourable status for protected areas.

Rivers Trusts and environmental NGO's have huge potential for delivering local action on the ground and providing the frameworks that will make it easier to form local partnerships for action. The ability to connect with local people to deliver local actions will be crucial and the challenge will be to deliver the required standards on a catchment scale by joining up initiatives in support of the River Basin Management Plans.

Whatever the approaches taken they need to be grounded in sound science and supported by proper evidence. It will take time to correctly identify water quality problems for every water body, but once the required data have been collected and analysed and meaningful objectives set for each water body the remedial measures must be delivered. The scale of what needs to be done, particularly against a background of increasing costs, the impact of climate change, rising population and the 'credit crunch', is formidable.

'At last we can stop planning and start acting on the ground to improve the water environment!'

a colleague was heard to say recently. But of course good plans lead to effective and efficient action on the ground and much has been and is already being achieved. The six month consultation on the plans has ended and many people and organisations will need to translate the strategic plans into local actions on the ground. I for one cannot wait to get started.



Projects helping to achieve WFD goals

NEW FUNDING FOR A RANGE OF WFD RELATED PROJECTS

ON 29 JUNE 2009 ENVIRONMENT MINISTER HUW IRRANCA-DAVIES ANNOUNCED THAT AN EXTRA £10 MILLION IS BEING INVESTED OVER THE NEXT YEAR in improving the quality of water around the country, which will in turn help our native wildlife, flora and fauna to flourish. The projects will also create or sustain up to 130 'green' jobs over the next year. Defra will work with the Environment Agency on a range of projects aimed at:

- Restoring wildlife habitats in rivers
- Restoring and protecting wetlands
- Researching where river pollution comes from to help target future action
- Improving river routes to help fish migrate
- Removing invasive non-native species from some sites
- Tracing pollution from urban sources such as chemical waste and taking action against polluters
- Helping rivers and lakes to adapt to the effects of climate change, such as protecting them from pollution from higher rainfall.

Website:

(<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2009/090629a.htm>)



THE LONDON RIVERS ACTION PLAN (LRAP)

A TOOL TO HELP RESTORE RIVERS FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

The main aim of the LRAP is to provide a forum for identifying stretches of river that can be brought back to life. Nearly 100 projects have been identified with numerous large scale projects on the Lee, Wandle, Ravensbourne, Crane and Roding catchments. The plan's aims are to:

- support the delivery of the Thames River Basin Management Plan under the WFD
- contribute to sustainable regeneration through the implementation of the Blue Ribbon policies
- contribute to the implementation of the Mayor's access to nature aspirations
- support one of the London Plan's biodiversity targets to restore 15km of river by 2015
- support the delivery of the Environment Agency's Thames Catchment Flood Management Plan.

Aspirations of the LRAP includes improving flood management using more natural processes; reducing the likely negative impacts of climate change; reconnecting people to the natural environment through urban regeneration; gaining better access for recreation; and improved well-being and enhancing habitats for wildlife. Detailed information on restoration sites and opportunities is held on the associated LRAP website where opportunities and activities will be geographically referenced and periodically updated.

Website:

(<http://www.therrc.co.uk/lrap.php>)

OUR RIVERS ON THE EDGE PROJECT

WWF'S RIVERS ON THE EDGE PROJECT IS ABOUT SAVING UK RIVERS ON THE EDGE OF RUIN.

It aims to help UK homes, schools and businesses cut water use, saving millions of litres of water for our rivers. Rivers on the Edge will focus first on three of the UK's iconic 'chalk streams' – the Kennet, the Itchen and the Upper Lee that also happen to be among the most heavily abstracted rivers in the UK.

Website:

(http://www.wwf.org.uk/what_we_do/safeguarding_the_natural_world/rivers_and_lakes/wwf_s_freshwater_projects_around_the_world/uk_rivers/)

OUR RIVERS – STANDING UP FOR OUR RIVERS CAMPAIGN

ON 28 APRIL 2009 WWF, RSPB, ANGLING TRUST AND THE ASSOCIATION OF RIVER TRUSTS (ART) LAUNCHED THE CAMPAIGN OUR RIVERS.

The campaign is funded through the global HSBC Climate Partnership. Via a new website people can submit their views, campaign locally, and win support.

Website:

(<http://www.ourrivers.org.uk>)

LIFE+ CALL FOR PROPOSALS

THE THIRD LIFE+ CALL FOR PROPOSALS was published on 15 May 2009, with up to €250 million available for co-financing of projects under three headings: nature and biodiversity; environment policy and governance; and information and communication.

Website:

(<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/lifeplus.htm>)



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WFD Conferences



2ND EUROPEAN WATER CONFERENCE

ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT

Brussels, 2-3 April 2009

'*Your water, your life—Plunge into the debate!*' was the motto of this well-attended conference. Mr Stavros Dimas, European Commissioner for Environment (see photo on the left) presented an introduction on the importance of the WFD RBMPs. A Background Document for the conference was prepared by consultants and gives a first informal overview of the draft RBMPs. It addresses the public participation process, the ambition of draft plans, use of exemptions and key issues such as agriculture and hydromorphology. Presentations were given by a wide range of sectors, including EU and national regulators, competent authorities, representatives from industry and NGOs. Mr. Peter Gammeltoft, Head of the DG Env. Unit Protection of Water and the Marine Environment (see photo below left) gave a talk on 'Climate Change adaptation—a challenged water future'. Chris Ryder, Defra's Deputy Water Director and Ralph Underhill, RSPB, represented the UK (see photo bottom left).



The Background Document, all presentations and video recording of each session can be accessed from the conference's website:

(<http://www.ewc2009.eu/>)

WATER UK WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

LONDON, 4 JUNE 2009.

The conference was an opportunity to hear the Government's and European Commission's thinking on the WFD at the important point in the draft RBMPs consultation. Pamela Taylor, Water UK Chief Executive, proposed that water stakeholders take three steps to improve current plans by involving more business sectors and other groups.

The speech by Pamela Taylor is available on the Water UK website: (<http://www.water.org.uk/home/about/water-uk-team/chief-executive-speeches/wfd-conference>)

FUTURE CONFERENCE:

THE WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE—EMERGING WATER MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

Lille, France, 29 –30 September 2009

This joint CIWEM/EWA/ASTEE conference will explore emerging policy and technical challenges linked to the WFD that have arisen in the past few years. The topics will include water scarcity and droughts, decision-making for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and impacts of flooding and risk management.

Website:

(http://www.ciwem.org/events/lille_wfd_conference.asp)



News from the Information Centre

AN UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE INFORMATION CENTRE

We are proud that the use of the website, www.euwfd.com, continues to grow steadily with well over 17,000 users logging on during May. Educational establishments remain the highest individually identifiable group of users in sixth place of all users. Awareness of our work is still spreading with a delegation from the South Korean Water Resources Corporation (KOWACO) visiting the Centre in July and our third delegation from China, the Henan Province Water Conservation Department, planning to visit us in either August or September. Both want to understand more about the Water Framework Directive and its implementation in the UK. We are finding that many countries are looking at the WFD and examining how they can adopt much of the Directive's integrated water management approach for application in their own countries.



WFDIC were invited to give a presentation at The Polypipe CPD SUDS Seminar in Loughborough on 14 May 2009 and I gave a presentation on 'The global implications of the EU Water Framework Directive' at the International Conference on Human Ecology in Manchester (29 June—3 July 2009). We have also attended the 2nd European Water Conference (see page 7) and we continue to attend the Defra's Stakeholders' Forum (see on the right).

We are in the process of examining how we can further develop and expand the work of the Centre and a number of initiatives are being assessed that we will report on in a future Newsletter. We would welcome any comments and suggestions you may have on how to improve our Newsletter, Latest News, Events Diary or our website and if there is other information you would like us to include. You can easily contact us via our website www.euwfd.com.

Neil Tytler, Manager WFDIC

Defra's WATER STAKEHOLDERS' FORUM FOR ENGLAND

THE LAST MEETING WAS HELD ON 8 JUNE 2009. These consultation meetings continue to be very popular with more than 40 participants attending from a wide range of sectors.

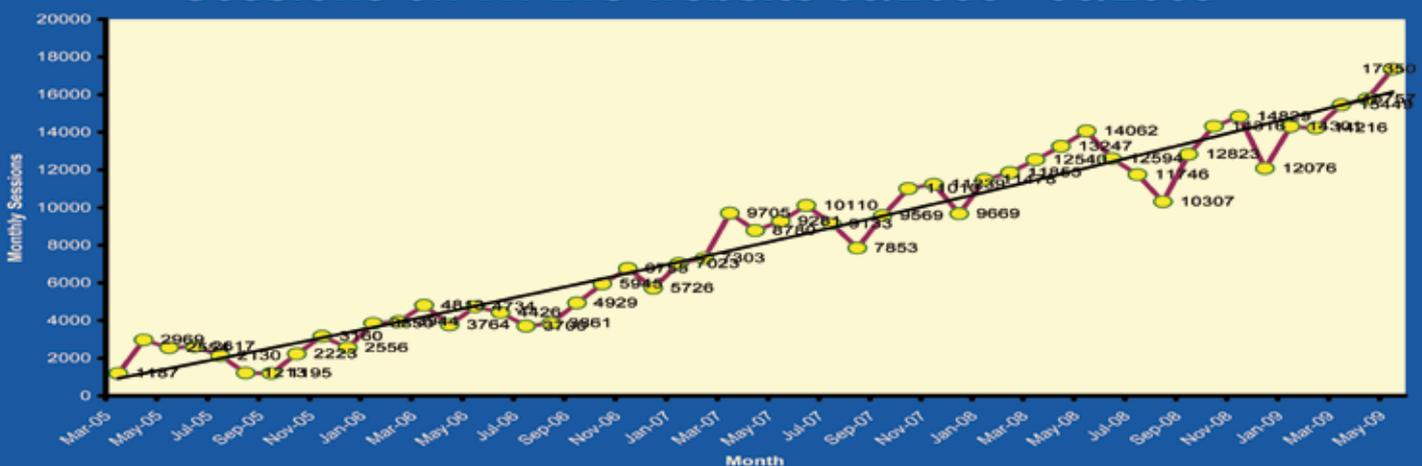
- Defra provided updates on current issues concerning water availability and quality, such as the Floods and Water Bill consultation, transposing the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, WFD Daughter Directives, SUDS, Nitrate Directive, Environmental Permitting Programme (EPP2).
- The Environment Agency presented an update on the draft River Basin Management Plans consultation and the issues emerging from it. Draft proposals for the final RBMP take account of the consultation feedback, comparison with dRBMPs from other administrations and further review of the requirements of the WFD and Ministerial Guidance.
- WPZs, Water Protection Zones concept, are areas designated by Defra and the Welsh Assembly to control activities that can cause water pollution. The new Regulations will regulate pollution from agriculture more strongly by extending the use of the WPZs and works notices (WNs). They are expected to be published in October 2009, along with statutory guidance. At the moment, the only WPZ is the River Dee catchment in Wales.

The Agenda, Minutes of the Meeting, presentations and other documents from the meeting are available on our website:

Website:

(http://www.euwfd.com/html/england_and_the_wfd.html)

Sessions on WFDIC website 03/2005 - 05/2009



FWR continues to cover most costs of the WFDIC activities and is supported by contributions from the organisations highlighted below:



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Foundation for Water Research

Allen House, The Listons, Liston Road, Marlow, Bucks SL7 1FD.

T : +44 (0) 1628 891589

F : +44 (0) 1628 472711

E : office@fwr.org.uk

W : www.fwr.org

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