

DRAFT

Implementation strategy for the Thames River Basin Management Plan – briefing note for the DEFRA WFD Stakeholder Group meeting Feb 2010

1. Background

1.1 In December 2009 the Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) signed off the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) to implement the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in the Thames river basin district (RBD). The RBMP contains actions estimated to raise the number of assessed water bodies that meet the WFD target of 'Good ecological status' (GES) from 23% to 25% by 2015 (the first round of planning for the WFD). However, there is a strong ambition within the EA and stakeholder organisations to improve on this estimated 2% increase.

1.2 A stakeholder Liaison Panel (LP) including TRRT, advised the Environment Agency (EA) on the production of the Thames RBMP. The LP met in January 2010 and agreed to continue working with the EA to help implement the RBMP and improve on the estimated 2% increase in GES if possible. The LP members will therefore be co-deliverers of the plan with the EA. The LP at its January meeting agreed a timetable for action to help deliver the actions in the RBMP up to 2015. This briefing sets out TRRT views on that timetable and the strategy needed to achieve it.

2 Timetable for action

2.1 At its meeting in January, the LP agreed to the timetable and stages contained in Table 1. In the third column of Table 1 are suggestions from TRRT as to how the stages should be taken forward. The other rivers trusts in Thames region need to be consulted about these suggestions, so they should be regarded as proposals for discussion at this stage.

Table 1

Thames RBMP Implementation Strategy		
Date	Stages agreed by the LP	TRRT suggestion
End Feb 2010	EA Prioritisation of water bodies complete	Also prioritise 10 catchments for action
End March	Actions review completed by EA	Match actions to catchments
End March	First draft of Sector Implementation Plans	The five river trusts in Thames will try to meet this deadline
From April	EA Team Action Plans	Match EA Team Action Plans to catchments
From May	How to meet the WFD requirement for 'No deterioration in water bodies' is reviewed by the EA	The LP be involved in the definition of 'No deterioration'
June	Targets agreed	Targets should include 10 priority catchments
Dec 2010	Annual progress report	
Dec 2012	All actions in place for the first round of the RBMP up to 2015	Actions could be in place sooner in priority catchments

3. Prioritising actions

3.1 The Liaison Panel does not have the resources, data or mechanisms in place to implement all of the actions in the RBMP in the first round. Therefore a process of prioritisation and targeting of effort is required. For the EA Thames Region, this will take place through their 'prioritisation of water bodies' exercise and the development of 'Team Action Plans' for their staff.

3.2 For the co-delivery organisations on the Liaison Panel the prioritisation and targeting of effort will be done through a Sector Implementation Plan (SIP) for each one. TRRT and other LP members have reservations about the sectoral implementation approach. But we understand that sectors such as local government and industry need to clearly know what the WFD requires of them and how they will contribute to it. However, the LP agreed that the SIPs should be integrated as far as possible to maximise the potential gains from partnership working.

3.3 Although the rivers trusts have not until now been recognised as a sector in the composition of the Thames Liaison Panel, there are five members of the national Association of Rivers Trusts (ART) in the Thames river basin district. As they could all potentially contribute to WFD delivery, arguably they should be recognised as a sector and a SIP should be developed for them. TRRT will aim to co-ordinate a SIP for the five members of ART in the region set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2

ART member	WFD Contact
Action for the River Kennet	Charlotte Hitchmough
Thames Explorer Trust	[?]
Thames Rivers Restoration Trust	Rob Oates, Director
Thames 21	[?]
Wandle Trust	Bella Davies

4 Prioritising catchments

4.1 The many actions in the Thames RBMP fall into several different categories. There are actions which are national, regional and local. There are actions for water bodies, sectors and sites. To understand how all of all these actions will impact on any particular river, and to assess the improvements that they are making to that river, a catchment scale view is required. The catchment is also the scale that is understood by most stakeholders and identified with by the public.

4.2 The literature on implementing integrated river basin management, including the WFD Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) 'Guidance on River Basin Planning', recommends that RBMPs be supplemented by local level plans for delivery. The view of the NGO sector and many others is that catchment level plans are a requirement for fully engaging stakeholders in delivery and maximising their contribution. The EA Thames Region draft WFD Fisheries Sector Engagement Strategy takes this approach.

4.3 There is currently no process for prioritising catchments for WFD delivery. But we set out in Table 3 below a suggested list of criteria for the Thames LP to use in scoring potential catchments.

Table 3: suggested criteria for scoring priority catchments

No.	Criteria	Score
1	Contains priority water bodies (from EA assessment) including those with protected areas (SACs, SPAs etc)	1
2	Majority of water bodies at less than good status	1
3	One or more water bodies at Bad status	1
4	Opportunity to raise water bodies by at least one class	1
5	Existing or potential catchment level action group	1
6	Existing or potential resources from co-deliverers	1
7	Good available data or technical studies	1
8	High level of confidence in the causes of failure	1
9	Action can be started in financial year 2010/11	1
10	Action can be completed by 2015	1
Total points		10

4.4 The number of priority catchments that should be aimed for in the first round of the RBMP is yet to be decided, and depends on the capacity of the EA and co-delivery organisation. Table 4 sets out potential scores for some example catchments. The LP would need to do a full assessment and scoring of all potential priority catchments; the River Restoration Centre (RRC) could perhaps be contracted to help with this.

Table 4: Potential priority catchments for Thames river basin district

No.	Catchment	Score	Comments
1	Ray	[9]	
2	Kennet	[9]	
3	Lea	[8]	
4	Mayes Brook	[8]	
5	Wandle	[8]	
6	Ravensbourne	[7]	
7	Wey	[9]	
8			
9			
10			

5 Catchment Restoration Plans

5.1 The timetable, actions and other details of the implementation strategy for each priority catchment could be set out in a 'Catchment Restoration Plan'. Such catchment level plans are being developed in the Kennet, Ray and Wandle catchments, with the potential for their rapid development in the Lea and Wey among others.

5.2 An example of those approaches is the River Ray WFD Catchment Project. During Phase 1 of its work, the project assessed whether the actions in the draft Thames RBMP were likely to achieve 'Good ecological status' in the Ray catchment. The project set out to identify any gaps in the RBMP actions, and to develop possible scenarios for filling them, including practical activities on the ground such as demonstration sites. The report of Phase 1 of the project should be available by the end of February.

5.3 Following their assessment of the actions in the draft RBMP, using the helpful Water Body Summary Sheets produced by the EA, the steering group identified 'Additional Priority Actions' for each water body in the catchment.

5.4 From all the 'Additional Priority Actions', the following seven have been identified as priorities to be included in a Catchment Restoration Plan, as they address key issues:

1. Identify so far as is possible the causes of the invertebrate failures in water bodies in the catchment;
2. Identify areas for habitat improvements, especially for fish;
3. Obtain more data on potential non-agricultural sources of pesticide pollution e.g. railways, public open spaces and golf courses;
4. Increase water quality monitoring especially on 'Water Body RAYWB12 - River Ray upstream A41 to Cherwell including Otmoor';
5. Obtain more data on fish, macrophytes and phytoplankton (diatoms), especially in water bodies RAYWB 8, RAYWB 10 &12;
6. More modelling of outputs from sewage treatment works e.g. phosphate and source apportionment comparisons with agriculture, especially in water body RAYWB 11;
7. Site investigations at sewage treatment works and the waste disposal site in the area (Water body RAYWB 7).

5.5 The project steering group has identified the following likely components of a Ray Catchment Restoration Plan, to be produced in draft for wider consultation by the middle of 2010:-

- A long-term Vision for the catchment
- The relation to other plans such as Catchment Flood Management Plan, Fisheries Action Plan, LA plans, Thames Water plans etc
- Summary of the actions in the Thames RBMP relevant to the Ray
- Additional Priority Actions recommended for the Ray catchment
- Site based demonstration projects to show cost effective means of tackling causes of WB failures and avoiding penalties
- Integrated catchment science, including an Ecosystem Approach assessment of all the benefits from the plan
- Integrated catchment regulation, including Water Protection Zones
- Proposals for improved monitoring, including by volunteers
- Links to the 'Ray Valley Landscape Project' of RSPB and BBOWT
- A consultation strategy, including public participation events to involve stakeholders in the development of the Vision and the restoration plan.

5.6 The benefits of such a Catchment Restoration Plan include presenting in one document all the information needed to:

- Inform stakeholders and co-deliverers and gain their support
- Help EA staff plan and take forward their actions
- Provide a reference framework for Sector Implementation Plans
- Encourage the formation of partnerships for action
- Plan disproportionate costs analysis of actions proposed
- Make the case for better targeting of existing resources and the raising of additional resources
- Involve academic departments and scientists within the EA and outside in further research and development required
- Plan a monitoring strategy for actions proposed
- Communicate the WFD and its benefits

TRRT, January, 2010