

## Local government

### What action for water means for you

### South East



#### Action for water

Everyone benefits from clean water, and a healthy water environment.

The end of 2009 marks the beginning of a new journey for the south east's water environment. The Environment Agency will publish the South East River Basin Management Plan, a long term programme of environmental improvements to make the south east a better place.

The environment of the south east is very special, and water quality has improved significantly in recent decades. However, it will take more time, effort and resources to deal with the pressures that still remain – as well as the future challenges of climate change and development.

Everyone can take action for water, to create an environment we are all proud of and can enjoy.



Kingfisher by Lukasz Lukasik

#### What are the challenges?

The south east's large population puts pressure on the environment through discharges from sewage works. Many urban and rural rivers have been modified for flood defence or navigation, often at the expense of ecological quality. Also, the way land is managed has given rise to a host of complex pollution issues in rural as well as urban areas.

There are also concerns over maintaining the water resources available for people and the environment. The south-east is a water scarce region and we must reduce household and non-household consumption. We need to

balance our needs with the resources we have by using less, providing new resources and preparing for the impacts of climate change.

#### The river basin management plan

The South East River Basin Management Plan is a statutory plan, required under the European Water Framework Directive. One of 11 plans in England and Wales It covers the South East River Basin District, which extends from the Thames estuary in the east and almost as far west as Salisbury, and taking in the four county councils of Kent, East and West Sussex and Hampshire.

The plan introduces new ways of measuring the health of our waters based on the Water Framework Directive's tougher environmental standards. It describes the pressures on the whole water environment, it's status and our targets for 2015, and the action required.



The South East River Basin District

A range of actions are set out in the plan. They will require everyone to be involved – water companies, farmers, environmental organisations, local authorities, industry, individuals, communities and others. We need your help.

We are aiming for a 4 per cent improvement in the number of waters at 'good status' by 2015. By 2021, we expect this to increase to 60%. By 2027, we will work to improve this further – and as close to 100% as possible.

## Local government has a major role to play

Local and regional government has a major role in implementing the plan. Local authority roles in relation to planning, waste and minerals, regeneration, housing, highways, transportation, emergency planning, countryside management and other activities have a far reaching influence on the water environment, as well as the activities of other sectors.

By ensuring that their activities take into account these actions and other information in the plan, local authorities can help create environments that their communities can be proud of.

## Actions for local government

Many of the actions identified in the plan form part of this sector's normal work. The Environment Agency and others will work with Local Authorities to ensure that all relevant actions are identified, prioritised, resourced and implemented.

### Example actions

**Promote sustainable water management best practice** through pre-application discussions with developers (Environment Agency and Local Authorities) to ensure it is adopted by builders and developers.

- **Where:** Across the river basin district

Ensure the requirement for **Water Cycle Studies** are set out in spatial planning documents and policies (Environment Agency, Local Authorities) so they are undertaken for all growth areas by 2012 and recommendations included in Local Development Documents.

- **Where:** Across the river basin district, in particular Ashford, Dover and Urban South Hampshire (PUSH)

Ensure **Green Infrastructure Strategies** are in place in all adopted Local Development Documents by 2010 (Environment Agency, Local Authorities) to maximise potential benefits for water resources, water quality, drainage and flood risk management.

- **Where:** Across the river basin district

Ensure that **planning policies and spatial planning documents** take into account the objectives of the South East River Basin Management Plan, including Local Development Documents and Sustainable Community Strategies (Local Authorities).

- **Where:** Across the river basin district

Develop and provide **sustainable water management planning guidance** (Environment Agency), to ensure that the impacts of development on the water environment are fully understood.

- **Where:** Across the river basin district

## Case Study: Working with local authorities

New development, growth and changes to land use can have a major impact on the water environment. This may threaten the achievement of the Water Framework Directive goals.

If new development and redevelopment include well designed surface water handling systems such as balancing ponds, they can help improve water quality by filtering out pollutants before it flows into our rivers. These features can also slow the rate storm waters reach our rivers, reducing the risk of flooding.



Officers from councils in Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Sussex and Kent participated in a series of workshops. The workshops provided an overview of the objectives of the Directive and the work being carried out across the South East River Basin District. They allowed us to share practical suggestions about how to incorporate water management objectives into day to day planning work and spatial planning policy.

These workshops have helped the development of water-related policies in local spatial plans. The work has also made sure that the River Basin Management Plan contains the right actions for the local government sector.

We will be keeping local planning authorities up-to-date with progress on the South East River Basin Plan, and will continue to provide advice on appropriate spatial planning policies and planning applications.

## Contact us

The River Basin Liaison Panel steers this work in the South East River Basin District. You can contact your sector representative via the Environment Agency, or get in touch with us directly as shown below.

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