

cleaner coasts, healthier seas

Working for a better marine environment

Our Marine Strategy progress report May 2007

We are the Environment Agency. It's our job to look after your environment and make it a **better place** – for you, and for future generations.

Your environment is the air you breathe, the water you drink and the ground you walk on. Working with business, Government and society as a whole, we are making your environment cleaner and healthier.

The Environment Agency. Out there, making your environment a better place.

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introduction

We all want cleaner coasts and healthier seas around England and Wales. We aim to contribute to achieving this through our Marine Strategy by:

- promoting sustainable development;
- integrating management between land and sea;
- regulating our coastline efficiently;
- ensuring we all value our coastal and marine environments.

The Marine Strategy enables us to prioritise and structure our work to achieve the goals identified as part of 'Creating a better place', our corporate strategy for 2006-2011. 'Creating a better place' sets out how we are going to achieve our environmental vision and tells us what we will be doing and how we will work.

This report highlights our progress since we published the Marine Strategy in November 2005 and our future priorities.

Our role

We play an important role in the management of the coasts and estuaries of England and Wales. Our responsibilities include:

- managing flood risk;
- regulating pollution to maintain good water quality;
- implementing key European legislation to safeguard the marine environment, such as the Water Framework Directive (WFD);
- monitoring the state of our coastal waters;
- regulating sea fisheries in more than half of our estuaries;
- managing migratory stocks of salmon, sea trout and eels in territorial waters;
- protecting and enhancing species and habitats;
- promoting recreation at our coasts.

Promoting sustainable development – to get results for people, business and wildlife



What we've done so far:

Marine Bill – We support the Government's commitment to the Marine Bill. We provided expert advice on coastal management to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and responded in full to its public consultation in 2006 on options for a Marine Bill. We were pleased to see that the White Paper, published in March 2007, contained links to the Water Framework Directive and the Shoreline Management Plans. We will continue to work with Government to influence the final Bill to get the best outcomes for the marine environment.

Coastal freight – In our response to Government's Ports Policy Review, we suggested greater use of coastal shipment of freight to reduce road haulage emissions and the strategic placement of ports to balance environmental and economic needs.

Marine renewable energy – With the target from Government to make 10% renewable energy by 2010 rising to 20% by 2020, marine renewable energy is of vital importance and we will continue to support ways of generating energy that minimise greenhouse gas emissions. However we believe UK Government should take a strategic overview in its development to ensure the mitigation of climate change is balanced against other environmental obligations. We advised Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government on the implications for the environment and designated habitats of the proposed barrage in the Severn estuary.

Adapting to the threat of climate change – In our Flood Risk Management role we aim to balance adaptation to climate change with making the most of appropriate regeneration opportunities. For example, at three sites along Barking Creek in London we worked on a

scheme to reduce the risk of flooding and to create 1.1 hectares of mudflat (a UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitat) along with other environmental and amenity enhancements. The scheme also laid the foundations for future regeneration work, including the Barking Riverside Development.

Case Study – Coastal management

Our Alkborough Flats managed realignment scheme in Lincolnshire was opened in September 2006. The scheme created 440 hectares of new inter-tidal habitat providing a haven for wildfowl and wading birds. It also reduced flood risk for some 300,000 people living around the Humber Estuary and exceeded the Government target of 100 hectares saltmarsh of BAP Habitat created.

Next year we will progress:

Marine Bill – We will continue to work with Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government to help them develop the Marine Bill.

Innovative Flood Risk Management – We will produce technical information as part of the National Developers' Guidance for designing new tidal defences that are sensitive to climate change and the environment, and promote the use of soft defences. This will include information on wetlands and saltmarshes. They provide space for floodwater and prevent flooding from occurring elsewhere, and benefit wildlife by providing greater habitat. In coastal and estuary areas, saltmarshes also help break the power of incoming tides – a saltmarsh can reduce the impact of a wave by up to 95%.

Integrating management between land and sea



What we've done so far:

Water Framework Directive (WFD) – We are improving our understanding of important marine pressures and their impacts on ecological and chemical status and are preparing tools to tell us if a water body will achieve good environmental status. This has allowed us to begin the WFD monitoring programmes for estuarine and coastal waters. And we are working closely with key partners on the Regional Liaison Panels.

European Maritime Policy and Marine Strategy Directive – We have responded to consultations on the development of European maritime legislation and policy, ensuring, in particular, that it dovetails with the Water Framework Directive to create a seamless management system for the whole water environment. We will continue to work with Government to influence its development and to achieve an integrated approach.

Marine planning – We worked closely with other members of the Wales Coastal and Maritime Partnership to provide advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the practical aspects of planning in the marine environment. This will ensure that Welsh Assembly Government decisions are informed by the best available information for the benefit of the Welsh marine environment.


The Improving Coastal and Recreational Waters (ICREW) Project – We managed this European project in the UK. It addressed some fundamental water quality problems. For example, a programme of over 1200 visits to farms in North West England reviewed farming practices and identified where improvements could be made on local water quality. It provided guidance to farmers on preventing diffuse pollution.

Case study – using new technology in flood risk management

We have installed CCTV cameras at Chiswell, Portland and West Bay, Bridport, on the Dorset coast to help monitor storm tides and improve our flood warning service to around 700 homes. This is part of the Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme, a partnership project where we're working together with 31 maritime authorities.

Next year we will progress:

Shoreline management planning – Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) are the most important planning mechanism for developing sustainable flood and erosion risk management policies around the coastline of England and Wales. The latest guidance for operating authorities was launched in March 2006 after being tested on three trial plans. We will work with coastal authorities to prepare 26 plans by 2010 for the second generation of SMP.



Efficiently regulating our coasts and seas

What we've done so far:

Bathing waters – In 2006, 81% of bathing waters in England and Wales were clean enough to meet European standards – an increase of 49% from 1990. Almost all bathing waters (99%) met minimum standards. Improvements in bathing water quality are largely due to investment by water companies and we have been working with them to improve the quality of their sewage discharges. Tackling diffuse agricultural and urban sources will provide further improvement. During the year we published a leaflet so that the general public are aware of the quality of our bathing beaches.

Responding to pollution emergencies – We have met the provisions of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 on behalf of the Secretary of State. We have contributed to several stakeholder collaborations, including the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's revision of the National Contingency Plan and Defra's UK Coastal and Marine Resources Atlas Project. This work helps to ensure that all marine pollution emergencies are handled in an efficient and professional way.

Waste regulation and pollution prevention – We minimised the risk of pollution damaging our coastal zone. We assessed the pollution potential of land-based waste management activities and ensured measures were in place to tackle them. We also regulated ship-breaking activities to prevent wastes from escaping into the marine environment.

Fisheries enforcement – We have been working with the Sea Fisheries Committees (SFCs) and the Marine and Fisheries Agency (MFA) to ensure our fisheries are regulated and enforced efficiently. Our fisheries officers, working with neighbouring SFC officers, detect illegal fishing in estuaries and coastal waters, bring offenders to court and help to deter similar behaviour. We have patrolled jointly with the SFCs on 53 occasions and the MFA on 23 occasions.

Case study – Napoli incident

The container ship, MSC Napoli, grounded on the East Devon coast. We responded to minimise the environmental impact by ensuring heavy fuel oil and containers were removed safely and as quickly as possible. We advised the clean-up contractors on waste removal, storage and disposal, and established an ecological monitoring programme to monitor the incident's immediate effects.

Next year we will progress:

Water Industry Sector Plan – Our sector plans highlight environmental performance and pinpoint key areas for improvement. We will implement the Water Industry Sector Plan, which has been produced as a joint venture with the water industry, to ensure we maintain and improve environmental quality.



Making sure we all value our coastal and marine environment

What we've done so far:

Sharing information – We are working closely with Defra on the UK Marine Monitoring and Assessment Strategy. It provides the evidence to demonstrate that the Governments' vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas is being achieved.

Coastal recreation – We promote water-related recreation at the coast. In Wales we have identified current provision, possible demand and the best place to locate new activities on rivers and by the coast. We have also started two pilot strategic planning projects in our South West and Anglian Regions.

Fisheries – We have contributed to the development of Recreational Sea Angling and Shellfish Strategies for England and to the Wales Fisheries Strategy, to try to ensure a healthy fish resource, available to all.

Case Study – Understanding the coastal environment

We are one of 10 partners collaborating on an EU-funded project to assess and promote the value of coastal marshlands for wildlife and fisheries around the North Sea. The ComCoast project (COMBined functions in COASTal defence zones) is examining new types of flood management schemes that benefits the wider coastal community and environment while offering economically sound options. The ComCoast Project will highlight the benefits of saltmarsh and intertidal areas for commercial and recreational fisheries species

such as sea bass, mullet and herring as well as other ecologically important fish. We have also installed a CCTV camera at Wallasea Island near Burnham-on-Crouch. This camera will provide monitoring information on saltmarsh growth, bird utilisation and the engineering works on the site.

Next year we will progress:

Bathing waters – The revised Bathing Waters Directive will introduce better health protection for bathing waters and increase public communication on health and the environment. We will develop and implement the new legislation and provide information to users via the Internet and other means. Until the revised bathing waters Directive is introduced, we will continue working towards the current targets of 99% for Mandatory standards and 85% for Guideline.

Radioactivity in food – We will continue to work with the Food Standards Agency and other relevant agencies to produce the annual Radioactivity in Food and the Environment Report. Plans for the report include improved data interpretation and the production of summaries to provide more user-friendly and assessable information. The aim of these reports is to highlight the outcomes of our radiation monitoring programmes and work we are doing to reduce radioactive discharges into the marine environment.

If you would like to know more, visit our Internet site (www.environment-agency.gov.uk/marine) or contact the marine policy team at: marine@environment-agency.gov.uk.

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or about your environment?**

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