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# River basin planning: working together

Consultation response for the South East River Basin District

Reference number/code GESO0907BNDZ-E-E

**Environment Agency** River basin planning: working together  
Consultation response for the South East River Basin District

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# 1 Introduction

The Water Framework Directive<sup>1</sup> establishes new and better ways of protecting and improving rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuaries and coastal waters.

River basin planning encourages the active involvement of everyone with an interest in water. We would like you to play a part in the planning process and help us produce a better water environment.

## Overview of River Basin Planning: Working Together

In December 2006 we published [River Basin Planning: Working Together](#)<sup>2</sup> (statement of steps and consultations measures). This document is the first step in developing a River Basin Management Plan for the South East River Basin District. It set out a timetable and programme for developing this Plan. The Environment Agency worked closely with the South East River Basin District Liaison Panel to develop our ideas.

We issued Working Together with the Liaison Panel, to help you understand how and when you can get involved. The document asked for your thoughts on the proposed timetable and programme, and whether you think it will allow us to develop an effective plan that enables your involvement.

This was a public consultation, which ran from 22 December 2006 to 22 June 2007. We welcomed everyone's views. Working Together was particularly aimed at those who are likely to be affected by or have an interest in the process for developing the River Basin Management Plan.

We promoted the consultation to raise awareness of Working Together, and maximise the number of responses. In the South East River Basin District, the Environment Agency:

1. Issued a questionnaire in advance of the consultation to help us populate a database of people interested in the Water Framework Directive in the South East River Basin District;
2. Published a statutory notice of consultation in the Southern Daily Echo for two weeks, from 21 December 2006;
3. Directly notified over 500 people of the launch of the consultation with an email or hard copy of the report, and a copy of a leaflet about Working Together;
4. Sent copies of Working Together to all branch libraries in the river basin district;
5. Produced newsletters which promoted the consultation in December 2006 and June 2007;
6. Ran an electronic consultation along with other river basin districts, as a pilot of the technology for the Environment Agency. This aimed to make it easier for people to respond. Feedback from respondents indicated that most people found the system easy to use<sup>3</sup>;
7. Encouraged other websites to link to our Working Together web pages, to increase the number of visitors;
8. Gave presentations about Working Together to a range of organisations, groups, networks and fora including for example the Sussex and Hampshire Area Environment Groups and the Solent Forum.

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<sup>1</sup> Further information on the Water Framework Directive is available at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfd](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfd)

<sup>2</sup> Full address is: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/waterquality/955573/1458449/1458462/1458464/1803963/?version=1&lanq=e>

<sup>3</sup> Of 67 respondents nationally, 44 people (66%) scored the system a 1 from 1 to 6, where 1 is easy and 5 is difficult. 16 (24%) scored 2, 5 (7%) scored 3, 1 scored 4, 1 scored 5 and 0 scored 6.

## 2 List of respondents

In total we received 21 responses to our South East River Basin Planning: Working Together consultation.

See the table below for a list of organisations that responded.

### **Organisation**

Anonymous

Anonymous

British Association for Shooting & Conservation (BASC)

British Dragonfly Society

Chichester Harbour Conservancy

Country Land & Business Association (CLA)

Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Kent

Isle of Wight Council

Kent Fisheries Consultative

New Publishing

New Romney Town Council

Portsmouth Water

Quarry Products Association

River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board

Shepway District Council

South East Forum for Sustainability

South West Water

Stour Catchment Group

Sussex Area Environment Group & Regional Fisheries Ecology & Recreation Advisory Committee

Wildlife & Countryside Link

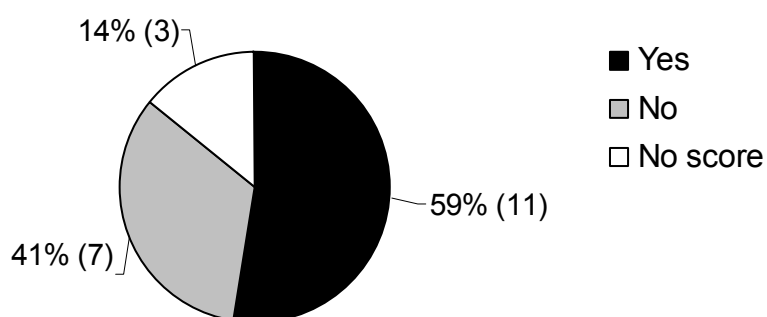
The Woodland Trust

# 3 Summary of responses and action we will take

## Topic: timetable

**Q1: Does the proposed timetable allow the right amount of time for the different stages and tasks? (Please note that the Water Framework Directive sets some river basin planning milestones that cannot be moved).**

### Question 1 responses



### Summary of responses

Most respondents to this question (11 out of 17) felt that the proposed timetable does allow the right amount of time. Three respondents did not indicate either 'yes' or 'no' to this question.

Of those that did not agree, some felt that the timetable does not allow enough time to plan properly, and others that it will not deliver a Plan fast enough. Other comments included one about the process, which was felt to constrain Liaison Panel input and the development of a satisfactory evidence base, and dissatisfaction with the 'split' consultation (encouraging responses early so we could take them into account during development of the next phase of river basin planning).

### Action we will take

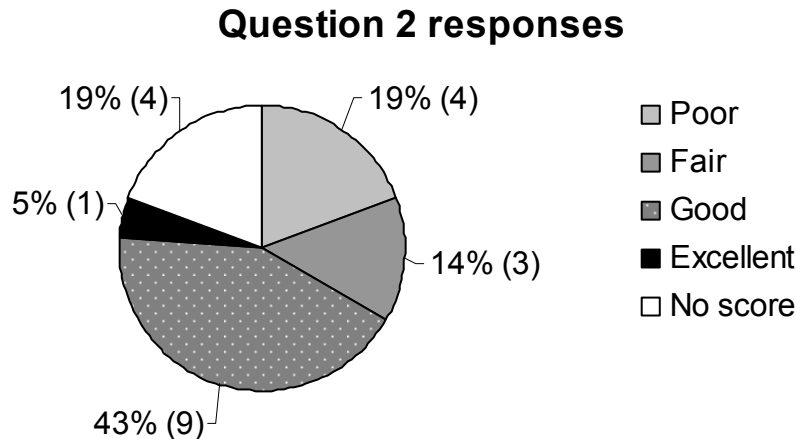
There is a statutory deadline of December 2008 to produce a draft River Basin Management Plan ahead of a final plan by December 2009. We will use existing evidence to produce these documents, whilst accepting that our knowledge will improve over time.

We are working with our Liaison Panels so that they can contribute effectively without feeling overly constrained by the timetable and process. Feedback from South East Panel meetings to date has been very good.

We will not ask for early responses to the Significant Water Management Issues consultation. We will include a glossary of terms and more details about the timetable in future publications where relevant.

## Topic: access to information and consultation

**Q2: To what extent are the access to information and consultation arrangements described here sufficient to meet your needs?**



### Summary of responses

Of the respondents who provided a score for this question, most (10 out of 16) said that the information and consultation arrangements described were sufficient for their needs to either a 'good' (9) or 'excellent' (1) extent. Three felt they were fairly sufficient, and four respondents felt that they were not sufficient ('poor').

Comments were made on the lack of information about active engagement at the local level, such as road shows or consultations with catchments. More detail was requested on engagement generally, such as who it will involve and how it will link with existing groups.

Other comments included frustration with the Environment Agency's website, the size of documents for download, the need for Liaison Panel members to get key messages across to their sectors, the cost of communications, and the need for more detail on how conflict resolution will work within Panels.

### Action we will take

We have considered comments about local engagement carefully and have identified opportunities to involve people in river basin planning at the catchment scale. Further detail on our plans is provided under the [Stakeholder Involvement](#) topic. As part of this, we are working with the Liaison Panel to improve communications with panel sectors through a 'sector communication plan' in autumn 2007.

The Environment Agency will keep electronic documents as small as possible to enable faster downloads and smaller emails. Hard copies are always available on request. We are constantly reviewing our website to ensure that information is up to date and easy to find. We will discuss with the Liaison Panel whether we need to expand our statement on conflict resolution.

## Topic: organisations and plans and strategies relevant to river basin planning

**Q3: Which organisations should be added to the table of public, private and voluntary sector organisations? Please tell us why they should be included.**

### Summary of responses

Several additions were suggested to the list of organisations given in Table 1, as shown below.

Suggested additions to list of organisations	Rationale given by respondents
Anglers	They are concerned about water quality and biodiversity
Forestry Commission	Forestry activities can have significant impact on water environment
Shooting community	They manage a large amount of open water/estuaries for shooting & conservation
All local drainage authorities	Manage and supervise watercourses so will play key role in achieving Water Framework Objectives
Joint Advisory Committees for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	It is unclear whether they are included under 'relevant working groups'
Isle of Wight Estuaries Project	Multi interest group for Isle of Wight estuaries
Newport Rivers	Multi interest group set up to improve environment and condition of rivers at Newport, Isle of Wight
Land management sector	"Land management" should be used instead of "farming interests" as it covers other land uses such as forestry, recreation/amenity, pony paddock owners. These activities can cause sediment in rivers
Wildlife Trusts	Use their water for wildlife networks to link up with delivers on the ground
Association of river trusts	No rationale given
Local community groups	To give local perspectives and variations
Local councils	To give local perspectives and variations
Quarry Products Association	Quarrying interacts with the water environment through abstraction of groundwater, so we would like to be kept up to date

In addition, comments were made that we should weight the organisations to reflect their relative importance, that we should use 'land management' rather than 'farming' to describe the sector, and that we should add an individual Environment Agency staff member to the list of statutory consultees. One respondent asked for more detail about what the terms 'relevant working groups and relevant partnerships' mean and how they will be consulted and involved.

### Action we will take

We have added all the organisations suggested which are not currently on our stakeholder list, to ensure they can be involved in the next consultation phases. Some organisations above were already on our database, which we agree may not have been clear from the Working Together document. Our publication 'Get involved' shows which stakeholders we will be working with, and

how we want to engage them in producing the River Basin Management Plan. A full list of organisations on our database is available on request.

We have treated all responses to this consultation equally, and have not weighted them according to the organisation responding. We will continue to use the term 'farming' to represent a range of sector interests including horticulture, but we will reassess our use of sector terms during the preparation of the draft River Basin Management Plan. These terms will be consistent across England and Wales. Howard Davidson, Regional Director of Environment Agency Southern Region chairs the South East River Basin District Liaison Panel. He represents the views of all our staff.

**Q4: Have we missed any plans and strategies relevant to river basin planning from the list in Appendix 1? Please list them here**

**Summary of responses**

16 out of 21 respondents felt we had not missed any plans or strategies from the list. Four plans or strategies (below) were suggested which were missing from Appendix 1.

<b>Plan or strategy</b>
Nutrient plans in relation to Nitrate Vulnerable Zones
South West Regional Assembly's 'Regional Spatial Strategy' <sup>4</sup>
South West Regional Assembly's Regional Environment Strategy, 'Our Environment, Our Future'
The Wildlife Trust's 'A Living Landscape for the South East'

One respondent requested information on how Catchment Flood Management Plans (CFMPs) and Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS) will be integrated into the River Basin Planning process.

**Action we will take**

We have added the above documents to our list of plans and strategy that we will take into account when preparing the River Basin Management Plan.

Like other planning processes, CFMPs and CAMS operate independently of the River Basin Management Plan, and to different timescales. However, they help form the strategic basis for decisions in the Plan relating to flood risk management and water resources, and will be used to help develop actions. We are working in parallel on the development of Integrated River Basin Catchment Management, to bring related planning processes closer together. For the first cycle of river basin planning we will try to minimise duplication, and eliminate it by the second cycle.

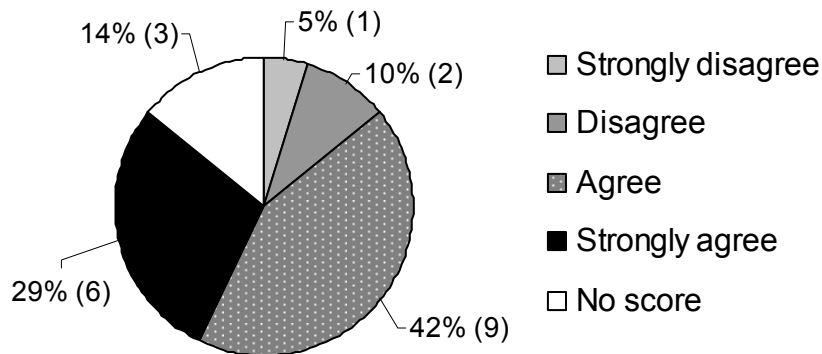
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<sup>4</sup> Parts of the South East River Basin District cross the boundary with the South West government region.

## Topic: stakeholder involvement

**Q5: To what extent do you agree that our preferred option for using organisations and networks is an effective approach to involving people in river basin planning?**

### Question 5 responses



#### Summary of responses

Most respondents (15 out of 17) either 'agree' (9) or 'strongly agree' (6) with our preferred option for using organisations and networks in river basin planning. Our preferred option, Option 3, involves engaging people through a combination of existing Environment Agency and stakeholder led forums. We also suggested setting up 'task and finish' groups and a river basin wide stakeholder forum event.

Several respondents highlighted the need to supplement this approach with local scale opportunities for engagement outside existing groups. They felt that the stakeholder forum alone will be too broad and will not adequately reflect local issues. Further detail on the mechanisms for engagement was requested, and it was specifically requested that anglers could be involved in the process.

Three people did not score their response to this question.

#### Action we will take

We have carefully considered what our approach to engaging people will be in the coming months as a result of this consultation. We have discussed this with the Liaison Panel, and agreed to an engagement strategy which includes the following work areas:

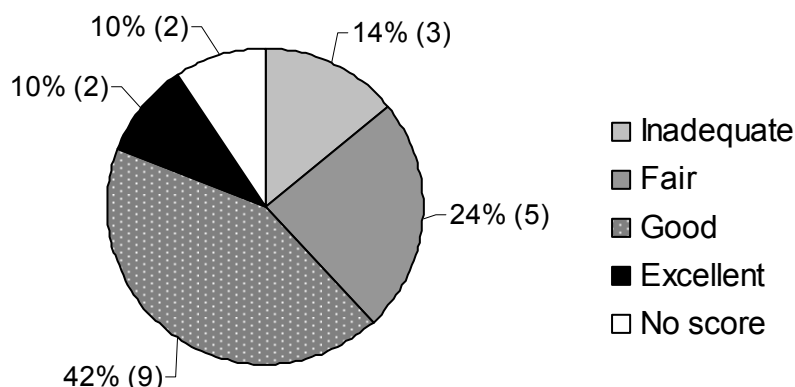
- Working with **existing groups and networks**, to increase knowledge of river basin planning and seek views on significant issues. This will include Area Environment Groups, statutory Committees, CFMP groups and others as appropriate;
- Building awareness among **key sectors** such as Local Authorities and Business and Industry of the role they can play in preparing and delivering the Management Plan. We will prepare sector briefings for the Liaison Panel to use, and hold and encourage specific events such as presentations to Planning Officer Groups;
- Finding local solutions for particular water management issues such as diffuse pollution, to supplement solutions that will be provided nationally by Government. We will set up six **issue work groups** in autumn 2007 which will recommend regional and local solutions, and consider delivery bodies, funding and timescales. These groups are short-term, task focused groups – in line with the 'task and finish' groups suggested in Working Together;
- In winter 2008 we will set up **nine catchment scale workshops** to involve local deliverers in defining what new local action should be included in the draft River Basin Management Plan.

Practical information on our plans for engagement is available in our document 'Get Involved'. This includes details of others ways you can let us know what you think, including an online discussion forum, and our formal consultations.

We want to involve anglers in the process. We have updated our database to include all fishing clubs known to us. Anglers can also get involved or make their views known through their representatives on the River Basin Liaison Panel via the Panel Secretariat. The relevant representatives are Jim Glasspool (Freshwater fisheries and riparian owners) and Tim Dapling (Commercial fisheries) Contact details for our Secretariat are provided at the front of this report.

**Q6: To what extent do you think the participation methods described in Table 4 will achieve adequate stakeholder involvement in river basin planning?**

### Question 6 responses



#### Summary of responses

Most respondents (11 out of 19) said that the participation methods we described will achieve stakeholder involvement in river basin planning to a 'good' (9) or 'excellent' (2) extent. 24% of people felt that the methods will achieve involvement to a 'fair' extent.

Three respondents felt that the methods were inadequate. They wanted more meetings and discussions at the local level (which they felt the stakeholder forum event would not provide), more information on the 'task and finish' groups, and felt that stakeholders will not be able to comment on issues at the moment due to the state of information available. An electronic discussion forum was supported, as long as it was adequately resourced and functioned well. Several people said that identifying the correct stakeholders is key to any method.

#### Action we will take

The responses to this question fit with those from [Question 5](#). Please see what we say about a river basin engagement strategy under 'action we will take' in the section above.

The Environment Agency will pilot electronic discussion forums during the Significant Water Management Issues consultation in the following river basin districts: South East, South West and Dee.

We agree that identifying the correct stakeholders is key, and will analyse this during the preparation of the issue work groups and catchment workshops. We will also endeavour to provide opportunities for others who have not been invited directly, but are interested in attending.

# 4 Next steps

## Developing a draft River Basin Management Plan

We will put this response on our website and tell all the stakeholders on our database that it is available. In addition, we will publish practical information on how people can participate in river basin planning in our document 'Get Involved'.

On 24 July we produced a report called 'River Basin Planning: Summary of Significant Water Management Issues' for consultation. The report is available on our website, and consultation closes on 24 January 2008.

Please give us our views on Significant Issues at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfd](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfd) or by writing to us at the address below. You can also contribute to the online river basin planning discussion forum, which goes live on 24 September 2007 at <http://wfdforum.environment-agency.gov.uk/mb/wfdconsultationtrial>.

We plan to publish the draft River Basin Management Plan by 22 December 2008, for a six month consultation. The final River Basin Management Plan is due to be published on 22 December 2009.

Further information about the Water Framework Directive, river basin planning and the South East River Basin District can be found on our website at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfd](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfd).

## Further information

If you would like further information about river basin planning in the South East River Basin District contact:

- Vicky Horton, River Basin Planning, Environment Agency, Guildbourne House, Chatsworth Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 1LD
- Email – [southeastrbd@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:southeastrbd@environment-agency.gov.uk)
- Telephone – 01903 832032

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