A Catchment Approach for PR14 – A Joint Statement from the Drinking Water Inspectorate, Environment Agency and Natural England

Background

The Drinking Water Inspectorate, Environment Agency and Natural England recognise the potential benefits of catchment-based approaches to land and water management. The Periodic Review 2014 (PR14) provides opportunities for water companies, wider stakeholders and regulators to realise and deliver benefits for the environment and wider communities. Our aims and priorities for catchment-based approaches in PR14 are outlined here.

Introduction

Delivering water quality and resource improvements through catchment management need an integrated and holistic approach to be successful. Catchment schemes have the potential to deliver water quality and resource improvements whilst providing a range of additional benefits for communities, the environment and economy.

The Environment Agency, Drinking Water Inspectorate and Natural England envisage that this document will be relevant for a wide number of stakeholders involved in catchment schemes, but will be most useful for water companies developing catchment schemes for Periodic Review 2014. It aligns with the government's direction on catchment management as outlined in *Water for Life* and *The Natural Choice*, which is further defined in Defra's *Statement of Obligations*. This remains a live document which may be updated as required subject to further guidance from Government ministers.

The Welsh Government has indicated it will not produce a Statement of Obligations and we are seeking separate guidance from them.

Further details on the benefits of catchment schemes, the organisations contributing to this statement, and a glossary of terms can be found at the end of this paper.

Our joint approach focuses on the integrated management of land and water to meet public health, environmental, economic and social demands at a catchment scale.

Our key priorities

Environmental standards and drinking water obligations are met:

- The water environment and drinking water supplies comply with all legal standards and requirements.
- Water bodies are prevented from deteriorating and move towards good ecological status or potential.
- The environment improves so that protected areas and habitats move towards compliance. For example, Bathing Water and Shellfish Water quality improves, the need for treatment reduces in water abstracted from Drinking Water Protected Areas; and biodiversity is conserved in Natura 2000 sites, at Sites of Special Scientific Interest and in the wider environment.

Our ambitions

Catchment solutions deliver the priorities listed above and provide a wide range of ecosystem services:

- Novel and innovative catchment-based solutions that are sustainable and resilient to climate change become common place
- Joint funding and partnership opportunities are maximised
- Environmental improvements are secured that support and benefit communities
- Water companies continue to adopt a risk-based approach to managing the availability and quality of drinking water supplies that is evidence-based, and makes provision for managing emergencies and mitigating risks to consumers.
- Connectivity and resilience in public water supply and sewerage provision improve so that the impacts on the environment and people are minimised.

Benefits of collaborative approaches

Opportunities to improve the environment and communities are realised so that:

- Natural resources, biodiversity and landscapes are restored or enhanced
- Access and recreation improve so that communities can continue to enjoy, benefit from and engage with their local environment.
- Existing relationships are enhanced and new partnerships grow
- Everyone’s understanding of what is required in catchments to meet environmental and drinking water objectives improves
- Over time, the cost and environmental impact of treating drinking water should reduce.

How we can help?

- We can provide information and advice on drinking water quality requirements, environmental issues and objectives.
- Through our advice, we can support investigations and schemes that will bring cost effective solutions to environmental problems and wider catchment benefits.
- We can utilise land management schemes such as Environmental Stewardship or Catchment Sensitive Farming to work in a targeted collaborative way with other initiatives from water companies and partners.

What are the benefits of catchment schemes?

Catchment schemes can provide cost effective alternatives to additional drinking water treatment and may provide wider benefits such as:

- Improved water resource management
- reduced energy consumption and reduced waste streams
- reduced traffic movements associated with the treatment and waste
- reduced carbon dioxide emissions or improved carbon capture
- flood risk mitigation
- improved ecology, biodiversity and landscapes

Further information on identifying and assessing the benefits of catchment schemes, case studies, and the wider context of water management can be found in the following reports:

- UKWIR *Quantifying the Benefits of Water Quality Catchment Management Initiatives*, UKWIR report Ref. No. 12/WR/26/10
- Ofwat report *From catchment to customer* ISBN 978-1-908116-12-3
- CIWEM reports *Integrated Water Management* & *supporting case studies*, and *Catchment Management*

Who are we & what do we do?

It's the Environment Agency's job to create a better place for people and wildlife. We reduce the risks to people and properties from flooding; make sure there is enough water for people and wildlife; protect and improve air, land and water quality and apply the environmental standards within which industry can operate Our principal aims are to protect and improve the environment, and to promote sustainable development. Find out more via the website: http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) is the regulator of drinking water quality in England and Wales. It is responsible for checking that the water companies in England and Wales supply safe drinking water that is acceptable to consumers and meets the standards set down in law. To find out more about the DWI and the organisation's strategic objectives, visit the website: http://dwi.defra.gov.uk

Natural England's purpose is to protect and improve England's natural environment and encourage people to enjoy and get involved in their surroundings. We work for people, places and nature to conserve and enhance biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas. We conserve and enhance the natural environment for its intrinsic value, the well-being and enjoyment of people, and the economic prosperity it brings. We promote access and recreation and contribute to the sustainable management of our natural resources. Find out more on via the website: http://www.naturalengland.org.uk

Explanation of terms

Bathing Waters are defined in the European Union Bathing Waters Directive. A Bathing Water is where bathing occurs and/or is promoted. The current directive (76/160/EEC) is being revised to improve water quality and a newer version (2006/7/EC) will come into force in 2015. Under the revised directive, the current classifications of 'Guideline' and 'Mandatory' will cease and Bathing Waters will be classified as either 'Excellent', 'Good', 'Sufficient' or 'Poor'. A classification of 'Sufficient' is equivalent to the old 'Guideline' classification, which was the top standard. More information on Bathing waters can be found here.

Drinking Water Protected Areas are defined in Article 7 of the European Union Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). A Drinking Water Protected Area is a river, canal, lake or groundwater that provides potable water for more than 50 people, or provides more than ten thousand litres of potable water per day. Where pollution means water has to be treated to make it safe to drink, we want to reduce that pollution and improve the water quality so it doesn't need to be treated as much. Robust systems are and will remain in place to make sure water is safe to drink at your tap. More information on Drinking Water Protected Areas can be found here.

Natura 2000 sites are those sites designated under the EC Birds Directive and Habitats Directive. Known as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for Birds, and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for habitats, they are of European importance. The sites in the UK form part of a larger European network called 'Natura 2000'. The designation and management of SPAs and SACs in England are set out in The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Note that 'Ramsar' Sites are wetlands of international importance, designated under the Ramsar Convention. Government extends the same protection at a policy level to Ramsar sites, as that afforded to Natura 2000 sites. More information on these designations can be found here

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) represent the UK's very best wildlife and geological sites. SSSI's are legally protected in England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. More than 70% of these sites (by area) are also designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites recognising their international importance for nature conservation. More information on SSSI's can be found here

Favourable condition (in broad terms) is based on assessment of a habitat or species condition, from a nature conservation perspective. Habitats or species are judged to be in 'favourable condition' when they are being adequately conserved and are meeting their 'conservation objectives'.

Shellfish Waters are defined under the European Union Shellfish Waters Directive (2006/113/EEC). A Shellfish Water protects shellfish populations and maintains the high quality of shellfish in our waters. The directive sets the standard for water quality in estuaries and other areas where shellfish grow and reproduce. This directive will become part of the Water Framework Directive in 2013. More information on Shellfish Waters can be found here

Waterbodies are canals, lakes, rivers, streams, groundwater, coastal waters or estuaries which have been established for the European Union Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). These bodies of water are monitored for water quality and quantity, and are classified for as having ‘High’, ‘Good’, ‘Moderate’, ‘Poor’ or ‘Bad’ Status. We want waterbodies to have ‘Good’ status so the wildlife can improve within them. More information on the identifying waterbodies can be found here and more information on the Water Framework Directive can be found here.

Wholesomeness of water is defined by Regulation 4 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 and the Welsh equivalent. It applies to water supplied for domestic purposes, which includes drinking, washing, cooking and preparation of food. Water supplied for such purposes is deemed to be wholesome if it complies with all the standards listed in the Regulations, and, it does not contain any other substance or organism not listed in the Regulations at a concentration or level that would constitute a danger to human health.