



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Welland & Nene Area Environment Group - Second Annual Report April 98 - March 99

## Introduction



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During the period the AEG focused very much on advising the Northern Area Manager and his team on all aspects of the Agency's business. Identification of issues within LEAPs and debate on compilation, implementation and progress of action plans has assisted the Northern Area greatly. A good balance to protect and enhance the local environment has been struck, leading towards a more sustainable environment.

LEAP production has been in line with the National timetable and in accordance with standards and procedures laid down.

AEG link members with other Agency Area and Regional Committees/groups have played an important role in communicating key issues and areas of environmental concern, helping a wider understanding and appreciation by all members.

Links with Local Authorities and other key customer groups has been particularly good.

A resume of each LEAP follows, along with tables detailing the main topics covered at meetings, membership and members' attendance at meetings.

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## Welland LEAP

Notable progress is as follows.

- ◆ Steady progress is being achieved regarding the groundwater contamination issue at Helpston. Our long-term remediation plan has commenced and a major drilling contract started on the contaminated land sites. Boreholes have been drilled to allow vital information to be gathered regarding the composition of leachate and groundwater which in turn will enable us to design a treatment plant capable of delivering the long term remediation project.
- ◆ We have undertaken a project in partnership with English Nature and the local Wildlife Trust to survey the spread of alien crayfish in the Gwash. In addition we have (in partnership) removed c.1500 alien crayfish from the River and stocked it with eels (a natural predator of the crayfish).
- ◆ Authorisation has been granted for Castle Cement (Ketton) to begin a 6 month trial to burn packaging waste and other plastic waste. There had been public concern regarding this process but we undertook public consultation in line with the "Extended Consultative Procedures" for potentially contentious applications - to take into account the views of the local community.
- ◆ Following the high flows experienced in the River Welland, the siltation, previously identified as an issue in the Plan, has been naturally removed from the channel, now removing the need for this as an issue.
- ◆ Habitat enhancement work has been completed along a number of lengths of the Welland and its tributaries. These have been augmented by the stocking of 500 barbel and 500 chubb. In the lower reaches scrapes have been created near Guthram and on the Glen - these are already attracting wading birds and marshland plant species.

## Nene LEAP

The Lower Nene and Upper Nene CMPs were combined and reviewed at the end of 1998 in the form of Draft Nene LEAP and Environment Overview. The LEAP itself was published following the consultation period in June 1999. Continued progress has been made with respect to the issues and actions identified in the CMPs which will be carried forward to the new LEAP for the Nene.

Notable progress over the last 12 months included:-

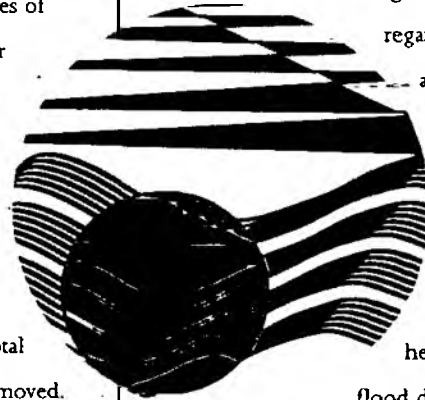
- ◆ Habitat restoration along the River Ise at Tailby Meadows (Desborough) and further downstream at Burton Latimer, including work to create berms, riffles and pools, kingfisher cliffs and wetland areas. Together these have enhanced the river habitat to benefit invertebrates, fish species and birds including waders and kingfishers.
- ◆ The restoration work aimed at improving the habitat for the otter along the River Nene has been justified by a recent survey which indicate a growing population of otters in the catchment. Unfortunately, this survey which also surveyed the water vole population, indicated they have suffered recently. This is believed to be as a consequence of the Easter 1998 flood event.
- ◆ The Easter 1998 flood event has raised many questions regarding how we fulfil our duties and emphasised some of the issues identified in the CMPs. As a consequence of that event, we have placed a great deal of effort into improving our flood warning capabilities, revised our flood warning thresholds and accelerated the program to improve the telemetry infrastructure. In addition to this, work on flood defences through Northampton has been carried out and proposals for a major improvement scheme are being rigorously pursued.

- ◆ Significant progress has been achieved in our attempts to build partnerships with other organisations associated with our objectives to manage water levels, fund the replacement of ageing navigation structures and improve the recreational and conservation value of the Nene Valley - in an integrated way. The launch of the Nene Waterways Partnership Initiative in November identified a wide range of opportunities that we hope will take us forward with these objectives. Feedback from the launch is currently being addressed and an action plan will be produced later in the year.
- ◆ We have worked in partnership with Peterborough City Council to clear up a fly-tipped spot at Fengate, Peterborough. This included the removal of 800 tonnes of waste along with improvements in site security. Other similar clean-ups have taken place across the catchment, including Towcester Road, Northampton.
- ◆ A long running water quality problem at Thrapston was resolved following a joint investigation between ourselves and Anglian Water which identified a poorly maintained oil interceptor as the main problem. In total over 2 tonnes of contaminated silt and debris were removed. Further remediation work will follow.

## Wash LEAP

The Wash LEAP Action Plan was published in March 1998 and the first Annual Review has been carried out. The Wash LEAP is unusual in that, unlike other LEAP areas, which cover fluvial river catchments, the Wash is an estuary plan. Progress with regard to the key issues is as follows.

- ◆ Survey work concerning the siltation of those rivers which outfall into the Wash indicate that there will be no need to raise the training walls for the Great Ouse and Welland. This is of great relief to conservation interests who were concerned of the potential impacts on the flora and fauna of the Wash.
- ◆ A significant decision has been reached regarding the methodology of providing appropriate flood defence standards for tidal defences at Freiston. A strategy has been agreed which will involve the re-alignment of the defence line inland of the existing line involving an area of 60 hectares. The scheme will raise the flood defence standards, and also yield conservation benefits by ultimately creating a similar area of saltmarsh.
- ◆ A group has been set up by a sub-group of the Wash Estuary Strategy Group to produce a Biodiversity Action Plan for the Wash.
- ◆ Water quality surveys have confirmed that the sources of elevated levels of coliforms impacting on Heacham River are from a number of septic tanks and foul drains. This is a factor influencing the bathing water quality at Heacham. Improvement works to resolve these discharges have been introduced.



# REVIEW OF ACTIVITY – WELLAND AND NENE AREA ENVIRONMENT GROUP

Meetings 1998/99

	MAY 22 1998	SEPT 25 1998	FEB 5 1999	MAY 21 1999
<b>TOPICS DISCUSSED</b>				
Area Manager's Report	x	x	x	x
Nene LEAP		x	x	x
Wash Estuary Management Plan	x			
Wash LEAP		x	x	
Wash Annual Review				x
"A Price Worth Paying"		x	x	
Waste Minimisation Programme in Northampton	x			
Flag Fen Improvements	x			
Endocrine Disruptor	x			
Agency Boundaries	x			
Easter Floods	x			
Local Planning Seminar				x
Structure Plan				x
AEGs And Way Forward				x
Transport White Paper		x	x	
Annual Field Visits				x
Plan Progress			x	
Air Quality Strategy				x
Local Agency Plans		x		
Induction of New AEG Members		x	x	
Nene Waterways Partnership Initiative	x		x	x
Agency Priorities & Objectives	x			
Representatives Reports	x	x	x	x
Castle Cement Application	x			
Nene Local Environment Agency Plan	x			
Customer Services Managers Report	x	x	x	x