

NORTHUMBRIA
REGION
PLAN SUMMARY

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NRA

National Rivers Authority

Guardians of
the Water Environment

Introduction

Established on 1st September 1989, the National Rivers Authority (NRA) came into being as a result of the 1989 Water Act and was created as a public body whose main task it is to protect and improve the water environment in England and Wales and provide protection against flooding from rivers and the sea. The first full year of independent operation was completed on 31st March 1991.

Head Office functions of the Authority are split between London and Bristol, but its operational activities devolve on ten Regions based on the former Water Authority areas.

This document, one of a set of ten, seeks to explain a little of Northumbria Region NRA's background and shows how the Authority's national aims as set out in its 1991/92 *Corporate Plan* will be translated into Regional action.

Mission Statement

The National Rivers Authority will protect and improve the water environment. This will be achieved through effective management of water resources and by substantial reductions in pollution. The Authority aims to provide effective defence for people and property against flooding from rivers and the sea. In discharging its duties it will operate openly and balance the interests of all who benefit from and use rivers, ground waters, estuaries and coastal waters. The Authority will be businesslike, efficient and caring towards its employees.

Aims:

- to achieve a continuing improvement in the quality of rivers, estuaries and coastal waters, through the control of water pollution;
- to assess, manage, plan and conserve water resources and to maintain and improve the quality of water for all those who use it;
- to provide effective defence for people and property against flooding from rivers and the sea;
- to provide adequate arrangements for flood forecasting and warning;
- to maintain, improve and develop fisheries;
- to develop the amenity and recreation potential of waters and lands under NRA control;
- to conserve and enhance wildlife, landscape and archaeological features associated with water under NRA control;
- to improve and maintain inland waterways and their facilities for use by the public where the NRA is the navigation authority;
- to ensure that dischargers pay the cost of the consequences of their discharges and, as far as possible, to recover the cost of water environment improvements from those who benefit;
- to improve public understanding of the water environment and the NRA's work;
- to improve efficiency in the exercise of the NRA's functions and to provide challenge and opportunity for employees and show concern for their welfare.

Regional Organisation

Each Region of the NRA is managed by a Regional General Manager who reports to the Operations Director and whose management team has responsibility for managing the main functions and support services in the Region. Northumbria Region employs a total of some 220 people.

There are three statutory Committees per Region through which the NRA achieves a wide base of consultation. These are a Regional Flood Defence Committee (through which the NRA discharges its flood defence and land drainage duties), a Regional Rivers Advisory Committee and a Regional Fisheries Advisory Committee (these two committees being composed of members from a wide range of relevant backgrounds who advise the NRA on river basin management and fisheries policy respectively).

In addition, each Region has a Regional Advisory Board, on which the RGM and the three statutory Committee Chairmen sit. This is chaired by the NRA Board Member with responsibility for that Region.

Regional General Manager
Douglas Rainbow
Regional Board Member
Wyndham Rogers-Coltman
Regional Flood Defence Committee Chairman
Edward Wrangham

Regional Rivers Advisory Committee Chairman
John Brown-Swinburne
Regional Fisheries Advisory Committee Chairman
Peter Tennant

Activities Requiring NRA Consent

Certain activities require NRA consent. The list is too long to include here, but the following are examples:

- abstract or impound water;
- make a discharge to any river, lake or tidal water or onto land for a soakaway, or to specific underground waters;
- clean or desludge a dam, weir or sluice;
- culvert any watercourse;
- interfere with land drainage by building or modifying any structures within or adjacent to a main river;
- build or plant within eight metres of a main river;
- introduce or transfer fish into any water or use a net or trap to catch fish;
- use a rod and line to catch fish;
- use a boat on a waterway controlled by the NRA;
- interfere with a sea defence.

Public Register Access

Public access to data for the Region is available at the Regional Headquarters. It helps us to deal with requests more efficiently if details of information requirements are given in advance and if an appointment to visit is made.

Where to contact us: Regional Headquarters

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Ely, Cambs CB6 3NP
Cheques should be made payable to 'National Rivers Authority'.

Foreword

By many relevant measures Northumbria is not the smallest Region of the NRA, yet it inherited by far the smallest staff resources. This reflected the low level of activity across a range of important responsibilities. The *Corporate Plan* for 1990/91 was based on a significant recruitment programme to raise these levels of activity in key areas.

Achievement of the planned recruitment levels was inhibited by mid-year uncertainties as to confirmation of grant-in-aid for 1991/92 and in the event the programme was about 80% met. This, of course, also affected performance towards other manpower-related targets.

Having said that, some other areas of unforecast workload have to be handled (ie a 60% increase in pollution incident reporting, continuing input into water resource charging scheme litigation and increasing input into the Tees Barrage and Crossing Bill – now Act). Nevertheless, the key achievements listed demonstrate continued progress and staff morale and motivation remains good.

Not unnaturally, our Plan for 1991/92 continues the programme of staff resource development with pollution control again being the priority area. In expanding staff numbers we will continue to seek optimum staff effectiveness and performance efficiency in all areas.

One key challenge envisaged is that of the presentation of river quality data in a much clearer and understandable way and generally improve appreciation of water quality matters. Progress on reduction of polluting inputs is continuing and consequent improvement in estuary water quality will benefit the migratory fisheries. This in turn will help to demonstrate the progress being made.

The Committee structure has worked well throughout the year and each Committee has met on four occasions. Two river fisheries improvement associations have been set up in the year and it is planned to establish two more, on the Tyne and Coquet in 1991/92.

The Yarm Flood Defence Scheme has started after a wide programme of public consultation and work will continue through the year and into 1992/93 to ensure completion before the Tees Barrage. Input to the design of the Barrage and the development of the operational control programme will progress through the year and NRA will also be acting as Harbour Master to police and monitor the Tees upstream of the Barrage location.

The NRA's position as effective "Guardians of the Water Environment" has now been established, but sustained effort will be needed to maintain that position and ensure continuing evidence of improvement of the water environment.

We will seek to set challenging targets and press for their achievement in pursuit of this objective.

Douglas Rainbow
Regional General Manager

Key Achievements 1990/91

- Effective response to reported pollution incidents (60% greater than previous year) in terms of reaction time and enforcement actions together with favourable media coverage.
- Production of programme to determine deemed consents for pre-1960 discharges to tidal waters.
- Automatic quality monitoring station requirements defined in the Tees estuary.
- Charging database developed for direct discharges on target for introduction of scheme.
- Full approval obtained for design and construction of the Yarm Flood Defence Scheme after extensive public consultation.
- Establishment of four new depots for regional disposition of staff and in-house labour force.
- 636,000 salmon and sea trout parr produced at Salmon Hatchery, including 200,000 sea trout eyed-ova.
- Amendments to the Tees Barrage and Crossing Bill (now Act) necessary to protect the interests of the NRA were achieved.

Pollution Control:

- increase monitoring of inland water and effluents to levels in line with national policy;
- draw up and discuss with WSPLC and private dischargers a prioritised programme for full positive determinations of their 500 deemed consents for tidal waters discharges;
- enhance effort devoted to setting RQOs and compliance assessment;
- progressive introduction of automatic water quality monitoring equipment;
- draw up a programme for the development of catchment plans.

Water Resources:

- revitalisation of regional hydrometric network, with input to station surveys, structural repairs and calibration to improve accuracy of measurement;
- determine with appropriate consultation the operating rules and procedures for the integrated use of the Region's resources.

Flood Defence:

- maintain satisfactory progress on the Yarm Flood Defence Scheme to ensure completion before the Tees Barrage becomes operative;
- complete survey of tidal (estuary) defences and formulate policy for maintaining/raising defences in accordance with anticipated greenhouse effect;
- to agree operating rules and procedures for the Tees Barrage.

Fisheries:

- conduct 300 fish surveys;
- produce 1,000,000 salmon and sea trout parr;
- installation of fish counters to increase knowledge of existing fish stocks;
- establish further Fisheries Improvement Associations on the Tyne and Coquet.

Conservation, Recreation and Navigation:

- survey 500km of main river for conservation purposes;
- establish a database of water-based recreation and amenity facilities;
- develop role of Harbourmaster on upstream Tees;
- introduce new bye-laws as necessary under TBCA.

Support Services:

- establish means of accommodating increased numbers of staff in the context of a new headquarters and laboratory complex;
- implement computerised systems for purchasing, personnel information, library and laboratory data handling;
- increase capacity to handle pollution prosecutions;
- ensure recruitment and training are sufficient to avoid staff or skills shortages;
- implement charging for discharges scheme;
- develop management information and reporting systems.



Northumbria Region

Northumbria Region is bounded by the River Tweed to the north, the Cheviots and Pennines to the west and the North Yorkshire Moors to the south.

The general drainage is from the high ground of the Pennines and Cheviots in the west towards the east coast.

Major conurbations are situated on or near the coast. The Region is heavily industrialised and features the site of Europe's largest petrochemical complex on Teesside, which is also one of the UK's three largest ports, and Europe's largest industrial estate at Team Valley in Gateshead.

Agriculture is based upon cereals on the coastal plains and sheep in the upland areas. Major rivers are suited to salmonids and the Tyne provides excellent salmon angling. The salmon drift net catch in the Region accounts for more than half the England and Wales total.

Some Key Statistics

- Area: 9,324sqkm
- Population: 2.6m
- Length of main river: 1,485km
- Length of estuary: 150km
- Length of coastline: 193km
- Flood defence works maintained: 910km
- Average annual rainfall: 880mm
- Number of abstraction licences: 379
- Volume of authorised water abstraction: 14,047Ml/d
- Number of consented discharges: 4,462
- Number of EC bathing waters: 32