

# NRA RECREATION STRATEGY



NRA

*National Rivers Authority*

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This document is one of a series, the others in the series are:

NRA Water Quality Strategy  
NRA Water Resources Strategy  
NRA Flood Defence Strategy  
NRA Fisheries Strategy  
NRA Conservation Strategy  
NRA Navigation Strategy  
NRA R&D Strategy

Other publications are available from the NRA. These include the following:

NRA Annual Report and Accounts  
Policy and Practice for the Protection of Groundwater  
Water Quality Series  
Low Flows and Water Resources  
Annual R&D Review  
Conservation & Fisheries Technical Handbooks

Publication catalogues are available from all the NRA Offices.

The addresses and telephone numbers for all NRA offices are listed on the inside back cover of this document.

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# NRA RECREATION STRATEGY

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# MISSION AND AIMS

## The NRA's mission is:

- “We will protect and improve the water environment by the effective management of water resources and by substantial reductions in pollution. We will aim to provide effective defence for people and property against flooding from rivers and the sea. In discharging our duties we will operate openly and balance the interests of all who benefit from and use rivers, groundwaters, estuaries, and coastal waters. We will be businesslike, efficient and caring towards our employees”.
- Provide adequate arrangements for flood forecasting and warning.
- Maintain, improve and develop fisheries.
- *Develop the amenity and recreational potential of inland and coastal waters and associated lands.*
- Conserve and enhance wildlife, landscape, and archaeological features associated with inland and coastal waters of England and Wales.

## Our aims are to:

- Achieve a continuing overall improvement in the quality of rivers, estuaries, and coastal waters, through the control of pollution.
- Manage water resources to achieve the right balance between the needs of the environment and those of the abstractors.
- Provide effective defence for people and property against flooding from rivers and the sea.
- Improve and maintain inland waters and their facilities for use by the public where the NRA is the navigation authority.
- Ensure that dischargers pay the costs of the consequences of their discharges, and, as far as possible, to recover the costs of water environment improvements from those who benefit.
- Improve public understanding of the water environment and the NRA's work.
- Improve efficiency in the exercise of the NRA's functions and to provide challenge and opportunity for employees and show concern for their welfare.



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# FOREWORD

This document sets out the National Rivers Authority's strategy for recreation. It forms part of a series of published documents, covering all the NRA's main functions.

The documents are intended to make the NRA's approach to the integrated management of the water environment plain to all interested parties, whether their interest is private or professional. This is in recognition of the stake that individuals have in the environment, both as taxpayers and water users.

The strategies have been developed as internal drafts over a period of time with much constructive input from a wide range of interest groups, including those represented on our Regional Committees. This consultation demonstrates our commitment to working in response to and influencing public opinion.

The strategies have already served to direct the NRA's policy development over the last two years. Their publication at this point reinforces the essential inter-relationships between the NRA's individual functions, as

preparations for the Environment Agency continue. When considered together they present a strong case for the continuing integration of all NRA functions. This argument becomes still more convincing when applied to the management of water, land and air proposed for the new Agency.

The overriding aim directing the NRA's work is the protection and improvement of the water environment. We are determined to make a real and positive difference to the rivers, estuaries and underground and coastal waters of England and Wales. This resolve will be strengthened by the inclusion of the NRA's integrated approach into what promises to be among the most effective forces for environmental good in Europe.



Ed Gallagher  
Chief Executive

# AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO THE ENVIRONMENT

## Vision and Reality

When we think of the water environment, most of us would conjure up a vision of an unspoilt river in its natural state, meandering across open countryside, its banks rich with flora and fauna, its waters teeming with aquatic life.

In fact, very little of our water environment remains unaffected by human activity. Alterations to rivers probably started with forest clearances about 3000 BC. The subsequent development of water-milling, navigation and drainage and irrigation systems caused major and lasting changes to habitat, vegetation and to the shape of rivers.

In the latter part of the 19th Century and the early part of the 20th Century pollution, excessive abstraction and land use change all combined to degrade the recreation and amenity potential of rivers, estuaries and coastal strips.

## Sustainability - a Balancing Act

However, during the last 50 years, improvements have been achieved in the quality of the water environment. At the same time an explosion in leisure demand for watersports and outdoor recreation has occurred. The challenge for the NRA as "Guardian of the Water Environment" is to continue to make progress into the next century, protecting and improving our rivers, estuaries and coastal waters in a sustainable and cost-effective way.

We make increasing - and sometimes conflicting - demands of our natural environment. These demands, working in concert with natural phenomena, can result in serious environmental problems. Water quantity, already reduced by abstraction, is further reduced by drought. Water quality, affected by low river flows, is at greater risk from pollution by the public, industry and agriculture. Polluted water puts aquatic life and abstraction for public supply at risk.

Similarly complex interactions exist between river flow and flooding, channel morphology and navigation, and water quality and watersports. These demands and their interactions make the protection and improvement of the water environment, the NRA's core business, an increasingly delicate balancing act. The use of economic cost-benefit analysis, amongst others, offers a rational approach to the balancing process.

## The Answer - an Integrated Approach

The NRA believes that the best way of arriving at sustainable solutions is to take an integrated approach to river management. This treats a river, together with the land, tributaries and underground water connected with it, as a discrete unit or catchment.

This approach is not new - the NRA and its predecessors have laid the foundations for it over a period of time - but the means of achieving it *is* new.

This new approach is called *catchment management planning*. Under this system, the major uses within a catchment - such as abstraction and discharge needs, recreation and navigation use, areas of special conservation interest or in need of flood protection - are investigated and a *catchment management plan* is devised in consultation with interested bodies and the public. These plans present catchment issues, address conflicting uses and identify actions needed by the NRA and others to ensure that use-related environmental objectives are met.

In this way, management decisions take individual catchment needs into account, balancing these with the national objective to protect and improve the water environment. This allows us to operate as a flexible national organisation, making real improvements at local level that meet the community's needs. This is a clear demonstration of our commitment to the principles of the Citizen's Charter.

### Targeting the Resource

Increased awareness of these local needs puts the emphasis on the real world outcome of our work - the NRA has to be seen to be using money from taxpayers, industry and others in a cost-effective way, to make a tangible difference to the quality of our water environment. The NRA's system of integrated catchment management will achieve this by targeting resources to areas where they are most needed.

The NRA's drive for efficiency and increased value for money will bring added benefits. Our review of activities to see whether there is further scope for market testing - the process of exposing in-house functions to competition from the private sector - forms an integral part of this efficiency drive.

### Towards an Integrated Agency

This move towards closer integration of all our functions will be a cornerstone in our preparations for the Environment Agency. The new Agency's responsibilities will embrace air, land and water and will incorporate functions currently performed by NRA, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution and Local Waste Regulatory Authorities.

The Agency promises to be one of the most effective powers for environmental improvement in Europe and as strong a regulator as any in the world. These preparations will ensure a firm foundation for safeguarding the environment of England and Wales for future generations.

IN THE LAST 50 YEARS,  
AN EXPLOSION IN LEISURE DEMAND  
FOR WATERSPORTS AND OUTDOOR  
RECREATION HAS OCCURRED.



# THE ENVIRONMENT - A FINITE RESOURCE UNDER PRESSURE

## Use of our Environment

The uses we make of our environment include:

- water abstraction for public and private water supply, industry, agriculture and navigation;
- effluent discharge from sewage treatment works, industrial processes and farms;
- development needs for housing, industrial parks and new infrastructure;
- waste disposal ranging from land-fill of domestic waste to the disposal of sewage/agricultural sludge;
- emissions to air from industrial processes and vehicle exhausts;
- mineral extraction from coal and other mineral and quarry workings;
- recreation in the form of walking, bathing, boating, fishing and a whole range of other outdoor activities;
- commercial harvesting of fish and shellfish.

These uses are legitimate and necessary for the continuance of our way of life. Sometimes they are of positive benefit as in the case of a properly treated discharge helping to supplement low river flows. However, the

evidence of the pressures caused by our needs is clear:

- excessive abstraction, affecting watersports and the aesthetic value of rivers;
- pollution which may cause fish kills, restrict or degrade participation in watersports;
- land-use change which can restrict recreational potential;
- increase in leisure demand which requires strategic planning and management to ensure sustainable use;
- conservation, the need to identify and protect sensitive areas.

Table 1 illustrates the use of our environment in general terms and highlights some uses of particular relevance to recreation.

The need to balance uses against environmental pressures will require the quantification and valuation of a range of policies, projects and courses of action. Economic analysis will help reveal the most efficient use of the increasingly scarce resources within an overall strategy for sustainable use.

**Table 1 - Use of our Environment**

<b>GENERAL</b>	
● Total Abstraction Licences in Force	48,000
● Total Water Abstracted*	59,200 Megalitres/day*
● Water put into Public Supply	18,000 Megalitres/day
● Number of Farming Units	186,000
● Total Discharge Consents in Force	110,000
<b>KEY RECREATION STATISTICS</b>	
● Estimated number of people participating in watersports	6,800,000/year
● Estimated number of canoeists	800,000/year
● Estimated Number of Recreational Walkers	20,000,000/year
● Approximate Number of Angling Licences Sold	1,000,000/year

### Notes:

\* This figure, when compared with recent publications, is higher due to re-definition of the calculation.

\* Megalitre = 1 million litres

## Present status of Recreation in the Water Environment

### Reason for Optimism

Despite the pressures on the environment, there is a reason for optimism. The nation's countryside supports a wealth of active and passive recreation, in which the attraction of water features significantly. Improvements in water quality and access to water areas during the last fifty years have increased the range of sites available for watersports and water related activity. This new provision has been most significant in urbanised areas where rivers, which were formerly blighted by industry and then abandoned are once again becoming the focus of attention for amenity and recreational use. Additionally, greater access to, and use of, gravel workings and reservoirs has increased recreational opportunities.

The water environment forms an important component of many leisure pursuits. Current participation data confirm walking as being the most popular outdoor pursuit, with around 19% of the population participating regularly. In an NRA survey water was mentioned as a feature in 1 in 3 of all trips which included walking as the main activity. It is estimated that more than 6 million people participate in sailing, boating or canoeing and 7.6 million in bathing each year.

Landscape value and the range and diversity of flora and fauna have become particularly important to the enjoyment and worth of the recreational experience.

### No Room for Complacency

Forecasts indicate that, as people obtain more and more leisure time, participation in watersports and outdoor leisure pursuits will increase. This presents a number of challenges for the future management and promotion of recreation. Existing resources will have to be safeguarded and be managed more effectively to ensure their optimum recreational value is realised whilst not conflicting with other uses.

Opportunities for the access to, and the use of, presently unused areas of water will need to be considered and new sites will need to be identified as part of land-use changes and development initiatives, such as reclamation of wet mineral workings and dockland regeneration programmes.

The legitimacy of recreation activities will need to be recognised, particularly motorised watersports such as waterskiing, and jet-skiing. Appropriate and strategic provision for these activities will be required.

The NRA has an important role to play, often in partnership with others, in developing policies, management techniques and in the provision of facilities which will achieve a sustainable and integrated approach to the use of waters and associated land for recreation.

THE WATER ENVIRONMENT FORMS  
AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT  
OF MANY LEISURE PURSUITS.

# LEGISLATIVE, FINANCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

## Legislative Framework

The NRA's ability to act to maintain and, where necessary, improve the water environment is dictated by European Community (EC) and UK legislation.

### At National Level

The NRA was formed as a result of the Water Act 1989. Those aspects of the 1989 Water Act which concerned the NRA were later consolidated into the Water Resources Act 1991.

Section 16 of the Act imposes upon the Authority a number of environmental duties which include:

- to exercise any power so as to further the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. This implies a positive obligation towards conservation;
- to take into account the effect any proposals relating to the Authority's functions would have on the beauty and amenity of, and access to, any rural or urban area so affected;
- to exercise the rights which the Authority has to use water, or land associated with that water, in such a way that such water or land is made available for recreational purposes.

Section 2 of the Act imposes a general duty to promote:

- the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of inland and coastal waters and of land associated with such waters;
- the use of such waters and land for recreational purposes.

Practical guidance in respect of the NRA's recreational duties is given in a Code of Practice on Conservation, Access and Recreation approved by the Minister under Section 18 of the Water Resources Act 1991.

## Legislation in Practice

The legislation imposes duties on the NRA that it must carry out. Other provisions take the form of powers that the NRA uses to fulfil its duties and meet its aims. This combination of duties and powers determines the broad allocation of effort and resource.

Table 2 provides an outline of the duties and powers which the NRA has in respect of Recreation.

## Financial Framework

The NRA is funded largely by a combination of Government grant-in-aid (GIA) and self-generated income from NRA charging schemes.

Recreation is funded partly by income from recreational use of NRA sites, partly by other NRA functions and partly by grant-in-aid.

The recreation policy is to recover from users, where possible, the costs of providing facilities. This is mainly in the form of rent, for use of NRA landholdings. Funds are also derived from other NRA functions where action is taken for the benefit of recreation to achieve the objectives of those functions. Income in the form of financial assistance for some recreational schemes also results from collaboration with other private and public sector bodies.

## Institutional Framework

### The NRA and Government

The NRA is a non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department of the Environment (DoE). It also has important policy links with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) and the Welsh Office (WO).

### The Other Players

In addition to the NRA, there are many other bodies and organisations which have a role to play in improving the water environment. The NRA can influence their activities by its actions and vice versa. Effective liaison with the following organisations is key to the success of the NRA's strategy.

**Table 2 - Duties and Powers**

**Recreational Duties Relating to all Functions of the NRA**

The NRA has a duty to take account of recreation in the performance of all its functions. Specifically:

- the preservation and maintenance of access for the public to places of natural beauty and to buildings, sites and other objects of archaeological, architectural or historic interest;
- to ensure that water and land under the NRA's control is made available for recreational purposes, and that in doing so the needs of persons who are chronically sick or disabled are taken into account.

**Duty to Promote Recreation**

The NRA will generally promote the use of inland and coastal waters, and land associated with them for the purpose of recreation to the extent that it deems desirable.

**Code of Practice on Conservation, Access and Recreation**

This code of practice issued by the Secretary of State gives practical guidance to the NRA and promotes desirable practices with respect to the NRA's environmental and recreational duties.

The Code requires the NRA:

- to have full and up to date information on conservation and recreation whilst fulfilling its duties;
- to seek advice from regional advisory committees;
- to prepare catchment and management plans particularly for NRA owned sites;
- to consult and liaise with other appropriate organisations and individuals;
- to recognise the social importance of sport and recreation;
- to incorporate where possible recreation facilities into programmes resulting from the requirements of the other NRA functions.

**Powers to Raise Charges**

The NRA is able to fix and recover charges for recreational services and facilities provided in the course of carrying out its functions.

**Powers to Make Byelaws**

The NRA is able to make byelaws to regulate or prohibit boating and recreational activity on land and waters that it owns or manages and also on inland water where a right of navigation exists but where there is no controlling authority.

- **Commission for the European Communities(CEC):** sees environmental legislation as being of primary importance. Much recent UK environmental law has been determined by EC Directives. The NRA is taking a more active role in influencing the science that lies behind EC legislation in its early stages.
- **Department of the Environment and Welsh Office:** as sponsors, the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Wales have ultimate responsibility for national policy on recreation.
- **Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food:** also a sponsoring Department with an important role in relation to flood defence, fisheries, agricultural pollution and marine sludge disposal and dredging.
- **The Sports Council and The Sports Council for Wales:** these organisations have responsibilities and aims which are relevant to the recreation duties of the NRA. Relationships with these organisations are particularly important if the NRA is to base its decisions on a sound assessment of trends and needs. The NRA will work with these organisations to develop coordinated strategies for the promotion of recreation.

- **Countryside Commission:** aims to improve and extend opportunities for the public to enjoy the countryside. In doing so it re-emphasises the link between the conservation of an attractive countryside and its enjoyment by the public.
- **Central Council for Physical Recreation:** represents the collective interests of the governing bodies for sport.
- **The NRA's Statutory Regional Committees:** these committees have many representatives from interest groups among their members and act as sounding boards for the NRA's policies with the public.
- **Local Authorities:** liaison with planning and recreation departments - and National Park Authorities - will ensure that a co-ordinated approach is taken to the strategic management and development of recreation. Local Authorities are important partners in implementing many of the recommendations of Catchment Management Plans. They are also responsible for investigating the health aspects of water contact sports.
- **Governing Bodies of Sport and other representative Recreation Groups:** including British Canoe Union, Royal Yachting Association, British Water Skiing Federation, Ramblers Association, National Federation of

Anglers etc. Liaison with these groups enables the NRA to understand the need of the 'participant' - the views and comments of these organisations will be considered by the NRA in formulating and implementing policies.

- **The Media:** can readily influence public opinion. Their interest in news - good and bad - must be focused to ensure that the NRA's point of view and policies are placed before the general public in an objective and clearly understood manner.
- **Pressure Groups:** many national groups - Friends of the Earth, Tidy Britain Group, Greenpeace, Council for the Protection of Rural England, Angling Co-operative Association - as well as local ones, influence public opinion on environmental matters and help produce the climate in which the NRA operates.
- **The Public:** millions of people enjoy using, and have a great interest in, the water environment.

All of the above interested parties have a stake in the water environment. The NRA's strategy for recreation is set out in the following pages. Its successful implementation will require co-operative action from some, support from others, but - most importantly - the commitment of all if we are to maintain and improve standards.

# NRA STRATEGY FOR RECREATION

## The NRA and Recreation

The NRA owns and manages over 1000 recreation and amenity sites across England and Wales. They range from the Thames Barrier Visitor Centre and national White Water Canoeing Centre, Afon Treweryn, to numerous facilities for angling, sailing, boating, walking, cycling, horse riding and other pursuits. The NRA also controls various informal recreation facilities including footpaths, car parks and picnic areas.

- There are considerable opportunities for the NRA to promote the recreational use of water and waterside land in the course of its operational, regulatory and advisory duties. The recreation function will advise other functions within the NRA, to safeguard and enhance the amenity value and recreation potential of the water-related environment.

## The Broad Strategy

The NRA's principal aim in relation to recreation is to:

- develop the amenity and recreational potential of inland and coastal waters and associated lands.

Specific objectives are:

- to maintain, develop and improve recreational use of NRA sites;
- to take account of recreation in proposals relating to any NRA function;
- to promote the use of water and associated land for recreation purposes.

In all of its work the recreation function will follow the Code of Practice on Conservation, Access and Recreation.

To achieve this requires an efficient balancing of costs and benefits within an integrated system of catchment management, taking the needs of all users and all functions into account.

## Assessing and Monitoring

### Supply and Demand

The NRA recognises that planning and management decisions must be based on a sound and strategic understanding of the supply and demand for water-related recreation, and the impact of those activities upon the environment. The development of such knowledge will influence the targeting and use of resources within the NRA, specifically:

- the recreational use of NRA sites;
- the type of new or improved facilities that are identified within NRA capital work programmes;
- the catchment management planning process;
- the prioritisation of activities that the NRA will promote;
- the identification of sites of national and regional significance for water based recreation.

The NRA will:

- work closely with other organisations to pool resources and data to advance this area of expertise;
- undertake periodic site reviews to achieve optimal use of recreational sites under NRA control and ensure site plans reflect local and regional demand;
- further develop a database of NRA sites to conform to guidance provided by the Code of Practice on Conservation, Access and Recreation;
- review NRA sites not currently used for recreation, to identify those with potential and develop plans for realising such potential, taking into account all constraints and strength of demand;

- when developing catchment management plans consider opportunities to promote the amenity and recreation potential of the catchment. This will require the development of robust survey techniques that will provide the appropriate level of information about existing and potential recreational use for inclusion within the plan;
- liaise with organisations, such as the Sports Council, Local Authorities and Governing Bodies for Sport that may be able to provide the relevant data, or combine resources to obtain information about the recreational potential of a catchment.
- the establishment of Joint Management Committees to allow users of a site to have an input to the way in which the site is managed and provide a forum for consultation.

### Byelaws

The use of byelaws can assist in the general management of water recreation. These have been made in the past for particular sites and areas of water now in the ownership of the NRA. The use of byelaws can also be a valuable aid to management in respect of waters and associated land not owned by the NRA but where the NRA has other relevant responsibilities e.g. those of a navigation authority.

The NRA will:

- review the Authority's current use of byelaws for regulating or managing recreation;
- only consider the use of byelaws after other site management techniques have been exhausted;
- consult widely with relevant organisations when promoting byelaws.

## Operations

### Management of NRA Recreation sites

The Authority will review the extent of its involvement with recreation, the number and types of facilities it controls, and the existing variety of management and promotional arrangements to assess both whether these are appropriate to a national body and consistent across England and Wales.

The NRA will:

- select management options appropriate to the recreational use of its sites to optimise potential and achieve an appropriate quality of service.

Options may include:

- direct management where sites are open to the public for informal recreation (e.g. walking, picnics etc.), or where it is appropriate for the NRA to retain direct control and ensure appropriate standards are maintained;
- involving voluntary groups and contractors to manage sites to NRA specifications where more formal activities are pursued, in order to encourage community interest and keep costs to a minimum;
- creating canoe slalom facilities when constructing by-pass channels or weirs;
- creating facilities for anglers and walkers when constructing new channels or works alongside existing channels;

### Promote and provide for recreational use in the course of other NRA activities

The operational duties and activities of the NRA can impinge on the recreational uses of water and associated land and create opportunities for incorporating facilities for new or improved recreational use. These activities will include flood defence works, water resource schemes, water quality and flow-monitoring stations, and schemes undertaken for fisheries, conservation or navigation reasons. For example opportunities may arise for:

- creating canoe slalom facilities when constructing by-pass channels or weirs;
- creating facilities for anglers and walkers when constructing new channels or works alongside existing channels;

- providing mooring facilities for boats;
- providing open spaces in urban areas which can be used by the public for informal recreation.

The NRA will:

- safeguard existing recreational uses and, where practicable, incorporate recreational facilities into schemes being designed and implemented for other reasons, such as flood defence, coastal protection, water resources etc;
- take account of recreational use when setting statutory water quality objectives and minimum acceptable flows, and when determining planning applications and applications for effluent discharge or abstraction;
- take water quality and depth/flow into account when deciding to what extent recreational use should be promoted;
- maximise public access to flood embankments in NRA ownership (e.g. walking and horse-riding), subject to appropriate consultation and consideration of constraints;
- make particular efforts to incorporate recreational facilities, such as footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths, when modifying or constructing embankments alongside rivers and coastlines;
- account for the need for adequate access points on embankments.

#### Finance

As a general policy, the NRA will seek to recover costs from users where they are clearly identifiable and where it is practicable to do so. The inability to recover costs will not prevent the NRA from providing facilities and allowing sites to be used, provided the costs can be justified in terms of benefit to be derived.

The NRA will:

- derive income from NRA sites from permits, licences, leases etc., which are

issued or granted in order to allow recreational use;

- allocate funds for developing the recreation potential of sites in its ownership but will look to other organisations for cooperation where appropriate;
- welcome collaborative exercises with both the public and private sector in order to achieve the best recreational use of a particular site.

#### Collaboration

##### Promote the use of water and associated land for recreational purposes

There are a number of organisations with responsibilities and aims which are relevant to the recreation duties of the NRA. They include the Sports Councils, Countryside Commission, National Parks Authorities, Governing Bodies of Sport, and local authorities. Wherever possible opportunities to promote recreation in partnership with other organisations will be sought. Relationships with these organisations are particularly important if the NRA is to base its decisions on a sound assessment of trends and need. The NRA will not be in a position itself to make such assessments but will need to have access to them in order to make the most cost-effective use of resources allocated to meeting its recreation duties.

The NRA will maintain and develop its relationship with Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation which bring many of the relevant organisations together.

The NRA will:

- seek to be represented on such councils;
- assist in the production of appropriate recreation strategies;
- take account of development plans produced by governing bodies, as a guide to demand and how this might best be satisfied;



- take the lead in producing recreation plans for particular rivers;
- produce information on the availability of facilities;
- provide practical and advisory assistance as appropriate;
- encourage safe recreational use;
- support aesthetic improvements to riverside areas;
- assist in maximising harmony between users;
- influence local authorities to safeguard recreational uses of water and water-side land and to ensure the recreational potential of river corridors is fully realised when development takes place or land use changes;
- respond along these lines when consulted on planning applications or given the chance to make an input to local plans;
- promote model policies in local plans to achieve these objectives;
- actively support local recreation panels, user groups etc., which are established to consider matters relating to the detailed recreational use of particular rivers, water areas etc. The NRA will look to these as a means of resolving problems, minimising conflict between users and for information dissemination and general exchange of views;
- maintain a dialogue with other providers of water and waterside recreation, such as water companies, gravel companies, navigation authorities and the commercial sector.

# RESOURCES AND TIMETABLE FOR ACHIEVEMENT

## A Flexible Resource

The achievement of our strategy is dependent on a flexible, yet specialised resource. The NRA's recreation staff provide expert advice to all NRA functions, particularly with respect to:

- capital works;
- development control;
- Catchment Management Plans.

The NRA will make all staff aware of the Recreation Strategy, as an integral part of ensuring that NRA resources are directed towards its achievement.

## Efficient Use - Better Value for Money

The cost of deploying this resource is some £2 million per year; of this £1 million is on facility management and £1 million on liaison/promotion activities. NRA charges, on the recreational use of sites, account for 20% of this. The remaining 80% is paid by GIA.

## The Timetable for Achievement

The broad timing of the NRA's major initiatives to maintain and improve recreation are given in the chart below. Their implementation is supported by business plans. These management documents detail the components of each initiative, their relative priority, outputs, timing and resourcing. Short to medium-term milestones in the achievement of the overall strategy are set out in the NRA's annual Corporate Plan and reported on in the NRA's Annual Report and Accounts. Achievement of these initiatives is in many cases dependent on action by others to the same timescale, as documented in catchment management plans at local level.

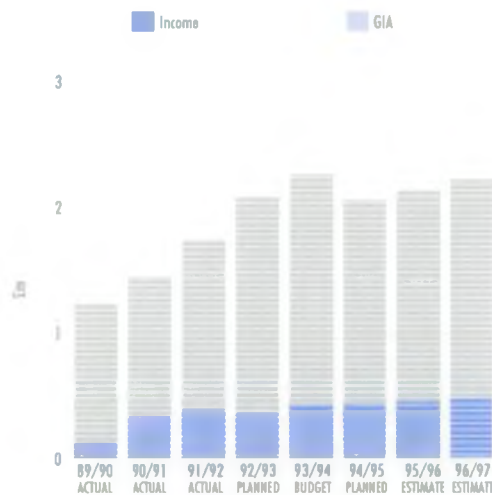
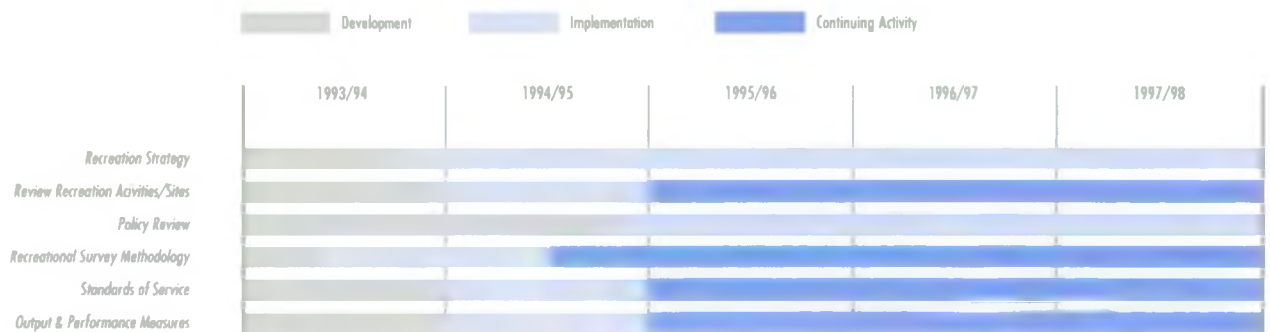


Figure 1 - Funding of Expenditure.



## RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Research and development (R&D) makes an essential contribution to the NRA's work. It provides new knowledge and techniques which allow us to fulfil our duties better.

The development of policies and techniques will be underpinned by a comprehensive research and development programme.

The R&D programme will include : survey and monitoring techniques; design and construction criteria for facilities; site and facility management; and information on the impact of recreation on wildlife.

Examples of projects include:

- Water-related Recreation - participation trends and issues;
- Impact of recreation on wildlife;
- Socio-economic review of angling.

THE STRATEGY WILL ENSURE THAT  
FUTURE RECREATIONAL DEMAND AND  
PRESSURE ON THE WATER ENVIRONMENT  
CAN BE RECONCILED WITHIN A  
FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABLE USE.

# FUTURE SCENARIOS

The one certain prediction that can be made is that the water environment will be subject to a great many changes in the future. Some are within the NRA's sphere of influence, many others are not.

## Uncertain Future

Participation in recreational activities is increasing. Growth is most likely in the more casual forms of participation, particularly where this is related to holiday activity and to the hiring, rather than the owning, of craft and equipment. While informal recreation requires no specialised equipment, water sports are highly specialised in their requirements. It is estimated that two thirds of participants do not own major items of equipment.

Water sports generally have enjoyed a steady growth in popularity although some activities are now virtually stable. This situation appears likely to hold true in the coming years. However, participation trends in water sports are acknowledged as being supply led. Changes in the quantity, quality and diversity of facilities available will raise or lower demand locally.

Other key factors which are likely to affect participation in water-related recreation activities include:

- demographic changes;
- standard of living and affluence;
- leisure time;
- lifestyle changes;
- environmental awareness;
- congestion and saturation;
- development issues and planning policies.

Future developments will put increasing pressure on local authorities, commercial operators, water companies, landowners and other relevant agencies, such as the NRA, to provide more publicly available, cheaper facilities for casual users. Overall demand for launching, mooring and storage facilities for craft of all types will increase. There are general needs for more recreational water space, inland sites for intrusive sports, and zoning arrangements of large sites to ensure effective multiple use.

## Impact of NRA Recreation Strategy

The NRA's recreation strategy will form a part of the Authority's integrated approach to management of the water environment. In this way future recreational demand and pressure on the water environment can be reconciled within a framework of sustainable use.

## The Environment Agency

The future of the environment in England and Wales will be influenced by the success of the proposed new Environment Agency. Areas of particular importance include:

- ensuring that recreation interests are sufficiently represented in the new Agency's duties and powers;
- the relationship between Government and the new Agency. Public confidence in independent enforcement of standards will only be retained by an "arm's length" relationship. The fair attribution of NRA costs to recreation beneficiaries is also important here - to ensure that public funds are spent where they should be, namely on work carried out on behalf of the Government and the nation.

# MEASURING OUR SUCCESS

The success of the work of the NRA and, in due course, of the Environment Agency, will be most clearly shown by real improvements in environmental quality.

There are a number of indicators that the NRA will use to measure outputs, how well it is meeting its recreation responsibilities and to make comparisons between years and regions.

Progress will be measured against the following key indicators:

- availability of public access to NRA landholdings;
- number of NRA sites suitable for recreation;

- usage of NRA sites;
- proportion of collaboration on recreation projects;
- proportion of NRA capital works screened for recreation opportunities;
- measures of public satisfaction.

These and other measures will be monitored and published regularly, as an important part of our remit to report to Government and the public on the state of the environment.

The NRA will also develop other key indicators to measure success and will produce Standards of Service which will be directly relevant to the recreation customer.

## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

CEC      Commision for the  
            European Communités

DOE      Department of the Environment

EC        European Community

GIA      Grant-In-Aid

MAFF     Ministry of Agriculture,  
            Fisheries and Food

NRA      National Rivers Authority

R&D      Research and Development

WO        Welsh Office

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NRA

*National Rivers Authority*