

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

We are keen to receive your views on the issues we have identified and to hear whether there are any other matters affecting the water environment in the catchment which you think the NRA and others should consider.

We will be consulting directly with:

- all relevant County, District and Parish Councils
- statutory organisations and bodies
- representative groups - local interest groups
- others known to have an interest in the catchment.

In addition we will be organising a number of static displays in local libraries and public areas over the period up to January 1993. These will be advertised in relevant local papers.

To comment on the plan please write to:

**BLACKWATER RIVER CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN
CRAIG WOOLHOUSE
NATIONAL RIVERS AUTHORITY THAMES REGION
THE GRANGE
97 CROSSBROOK STREET
WALTHAM CROSS
HERTFORDSHIRE EN8 8HE**

If you wish to discuss the plan, please contact Craig Woolhouse on **0992-645067**.

Comments must be received by Friday 29th January 1993.

Upon completion of the consultation phase we will review the comments received and inform those commenting on the plan how we intend progressing towards producing a final plan. The final plan will contain a strategy for the future management of the catchment and a series of action plans for the NRA and others to implement to achieve the strategy.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of our consultation documentation we are aware it may contain omissions and inaccuracies. Our hope is that through consultation we can rectify shortfalls in our knowledge of the catchment.

BLACKWATER RIVER CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION DRAFT

National Rivers Authority
Information Centre
Head Office
Class No
Accession No ANEK



SUMMARY REPORT
NOVEMBER 1992

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



055612

THE NATIONAL RIVERS AUTHORITY

The National Rivers Authority (NRA) is a major environmental protection agency responsible for safeguarding and improving the water environment. In our role as Guardians of the Water Environment our aim is to safeguard the total river environment, not just the many rivers, streams and lakes in the the area but also the quality and quantity of underground water. NRA Thames Region is one of ten regional units whose activities include:

- **WATER RESOURCES** the planning of resources to meet the needs of the Region; licensing companies and individuals to abstract water
- **POLLUTION CONTROL** maintaining and improving water quality; granting consents for discharges to the water environment
- **FLOOD DEFENCE** the general supervision of flood defences; the carrying out of works on main rivers
- **FISHERIES** the maintenance, improvement and development of fisheries
- **CONSERVATION** furthering the conservation of the water environment and protecting its amenity
- **RECREATION** promotion of water based recreation

CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLANS

The integrated management of river catchments is at the heart of our work. Our catchment management plans provide a means for setting priorities for the NRA and others to solve environmental problems and to conserve and enhance the water environment - both now and in the future.

The plans will by their very nature involve us in close contact with local communities and statutory organisations who share our concern and interest in the water environment.

To help initiate consideration of the issues facing the Blackwater River catchment we have prepared this summary report which describes the NRA, our catchment management planning process, the catchment and the issues facing it, and the consultation process.



CATCHMENT ISSUES

Through our catchment management approach we have identified a number of issues which we would welcome your views on. In evaluating these issues we are keen for you to consider the following questions:

- have we fairly identified the issues and what opinions do you have of them ?
- have we missed any issues ?
- do you have views on the options we propose ?
- have we missed any options ?

BASINGSTOKE CANAL

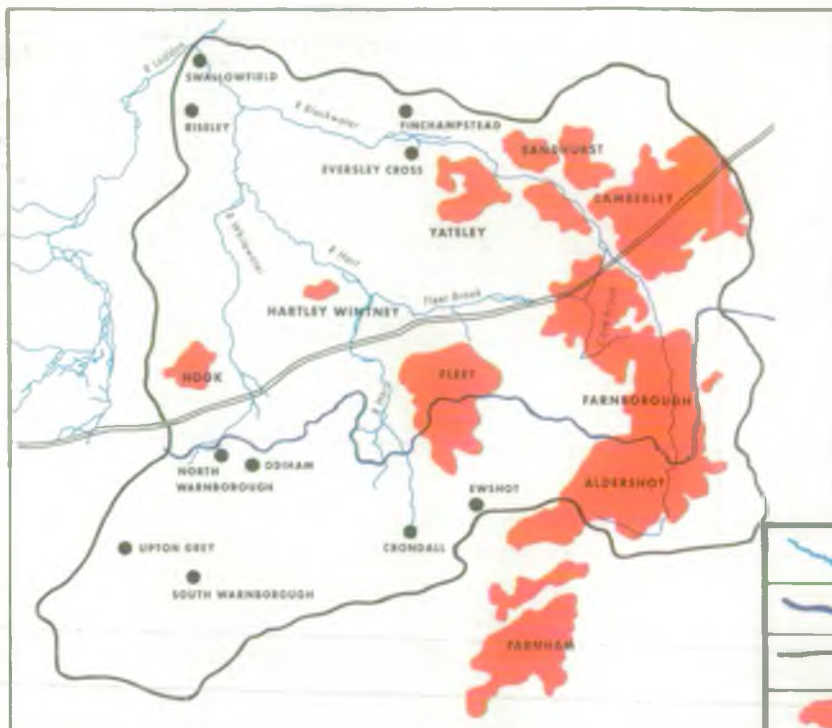
■ The canal is recognised by many naturalists to be of national importance, due in part to its unique water chemistry. Conservation of this feature is in part dependent upon finding appropriate ways of developing the navigation and recreation potential of the canal. Future use of the upper reaches of the canal are limited by water supply problems.

- protect the water chemistry of the canal
- manage the impact of the canal on water resources
- plan for managing potential conflicts between the conservation and navigation interests
- identify sustainable uses of the canal

HABITATS ON THE WHITEWATER AND HART RIVERS

■ Aquatic and bankside habitats on the rivers have been damaged in the past by unsympathetic river management works and sewage work discharges. These impacts have reduced water quality and affected flora and fauna in certain reaches.

- monitor river quality and enforce discharge consents
- develop a programme for conservation and enhancement of habitats
- reintroduce natural features in damaged river sections
- consider establishing heritage area to protect the Whitewater Valley



	WATERCOURSES		VILLAGE
	BASINGSTOKE CANAL	SCALE (APPROX) 0 5km	
	CATCHMENT BOUNDARY		
	URBAN AREA		
	M3 MOTORWAY		

CATCHMENT BACKGROUND

We have defined the boundary of the catchment to include all land which drains surface water runoff to the Blackwater River and its tributaries which include the River Whitewater, River Hart, Fleet Brook and Cove Brook.

On its western side the Whitewater and Hart Rivers drain a largely undeveloped area, whilst on the eastern side the Blackwater River drains a heavily urbanised area comprising the towns of Aldershot, Farnborough, Camberley, Sandhurst and Yateley.

Surveys undertaken by the NRA highlight major variations in river water quality within the catchment. The River Whitewater is of a high quality and supports a natural population of brown trout. In contrast, the Blackwater River is in part of a poor quality although its downstream reaches are of fair quality.

The chalk downland of the south-west of the catchment is an indicator of the water bearing strata underlying the entire catchment. These strata act as both a source of drinking water supplies and of

several springs which feed the Whitewater and Hart Rivers. Although the Blackwater River is also spring fed, sewage effluent is the major component of flow in the river.

River gravels continue to be extracted from the Blackwater valley. This is one of a number of land use changes - including development of the Blackwater Valley road - which the Blackwater Valley Recreation and Management Service and its funding authorities have aimed to positively manage to secure environmental and recreational benefits in the area.

Initially opened in 1794 the Basingstoke Canal has been progressively reopened during the 1980s. The canal supports a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and is considered by many to be of national ecological importance.

Other designated water dependent habitats in the catchment include fens, lakes, bogs and water meadows, making this a particularly diverse and rich area in ecological terms.



LOW FLOWS

- Low flows and river levels in the River Whitewater are of local concern. The cause of these low flows is considered by the NRA to be the drought and not over-abstraction by users of groundwater. Other factors (e.g. changes in river valley land use, mill alterations) have been found to contribute to reduced levels in similar catchments.

- monitor existing situation to assess influence on rivers of all factors affecting low river levels
- review existing abstraction licenses for public water supply and agriculture in the area
- ensure proper management of water resources to achieve a balance between the environment and abstractors

FLEET POND

■ The site was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1951, but over the last twenty years species and habitat diversity have declined, due in part to the influx of sediment from the stream feeding the pond. Previous measures undertaken by the Ministry of Defence to reduce the sediment input have not been successful. The area is also of recreational value (including angling) and consideration needs to be given to the future role of the site.

- manage Gelvert Stream sediment load
- prepare site management plan
- manage fisheries of the pond
- allow continued deterioration of ecological and fisheries value of the site



BLACKWATER VALLEY

The valley has been the subject of intensive development over the last 30 years resulting in degradation of the river environment. Water quality has suffered since investment in sewage treatment has lagged behind development and the natural features of the channel have been disturbed leading to a reduction in the quality of the river's flora and fauna. However, development also offers opportunities for rehabilitation of the river valley. Such opportunities, as well as general remedial works, have been identified by the Blackwater Valley Countryside and Recreation Management Service. Such groups have done much to achieve a consensus on the future direction for the use of the valley. A number of important points remain unresolved, however, including the role that water quality considerations should play in planning the future uses of the valley.

- river downstream of Camberley sewage works fails to meet current river quality standard
 - monitor standards and enforce relevant consents
 - seek to constrain current uses of the river
- excessive number of oil pollution incidents
 - contain pollution and seek prosecutions
 - undertake campaign to identify and educate polluters
- future recreation and amenity aspirations inconsistent with current river quality standards and river corridor features
 - review discharge consents
 - seek to constrain future uses of the river
 - seek to control diffuse pollution sources
 - rehabilitate river channel
 - implement landscape improvements in the river corridor
 - develop comprehensive land and water use management plan for the valley