

# MAINTAINING WATERCOURSES



*fact file*



**NRA**

*National Rivers Authority  
North West Region*

The main function of a river is to carry rainfall from the land to the sea.

Anything that interferes with this process can lead to the risk of flooding. Work to maintain the free flow of rivers is carried out by the NRA.

The authority has powers to carry out work on waters designated as "main river" and which are defined on a map approved by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

It is important to note that these powers are permissive rather than mandatory i.e. the NRA may use its discretion as to the extent and the location of any work required.

### **The NRA does not actually own main rivers**

The purpose of maintaining rivers is to keep the channel clear for the flow of water. The NRA carries out this work in a number of ways:

#### **Control of vegetation**

Weed growth on the bed of a river can slow the flow of the water and can trap silt which rapidly builds up to restrict the size of the river channel. Work is carried out to control this.

While the growth of grass is encouraged on the banks of rivers for the element of flood protection it can give, its length is kept in check. Cutting the grass regularly promotes healthy root growth and enables banks to be checked for signs of erosion.

#### **Debris removal**

Debris, especially in large quantities, can reduce the capacity of a river and lead to flooding. The problem is greatest in urban areas where everything from supermarket trolleys to cars are dumped in rivers.



### **Removal of silt deposits**

This is necessary to maintain the channel size and is usually carried out by machine, except in the case of small deposits.

Wherever possible, routine maintenance works are planned to take place outside the normal breeding season for water or river bank wildlife. The flowering and seed-setting periods of wild plants and their importance to butterflies and insects are also considered.

In considering the various conservation and environmental implications, the NRA also consults a range of conservation bodies to help identify how wildlife and the landscape can be improved by the work.

For further information, please contact the NRA's Public Relations Department on 0925 53999.



**NRA** 

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