

5. FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

The Catchment Management Plan aims to protect and enhance the unique Kennet catchment environment whilst balancing the needs of the catchment users. Key actions to be undertaken over the next five years include:

- *Support of the designation of a site of special scientific interest within this catchment;*



- *Sustain and improve the Brown Trout population through increasing spawning sites and implementing a fish introduction and control policy;*
- *Support the Countryside Stewardship Scheme to restore ecologically rich habitats along the river corridor.*

6. CHANGES IN CATCHMENT STATUS

This widely embracing issue deals with the numerous changes which have taken place over the last few decades in the Kennet catchment.

These include demand on water resources and land use. Together with other organisations, the NRA must work during the lifetime of this plan to:

- *Assess the need and potential for new water resources developments in the catchment to complement existing ones in response to structure plan proposals which indicate water demand increases in Newbury and Reading especially;*
- *Investigate the effects of mineral extraction and pit infilling;*
- *Continue the routine activities of its Catchment Planning Section such as responding effectively to planning applications and development proposals, ensuring that habitat enhancement opportunities are achieved wherever practicable*

7. COMMUNICATIONS

The entire catchment management planning process has enhanced the level of communication between the NRA and interested parties in the Kennet.

The NRA are committed to continuing this. The achievement of actions stated in the plan will be monitored and the NRA aims to circulate regular bulletins to update key participants of progress. It is also proposed that an annual Kennet catchment forum be organised between the interested parties.

8. KENNET AND AVON CANAL

The future success of the canal depends on its development as a self-financing recreational resource whilst retaining its value it as an important ecological asset. The issues likely to be addressed over the next five years include:

- *An evaluation of the water needs for navigation and investigation into optimising water usage to alleviate supply problems;*
- *Boat traffic and dredging impacts require sensitive management. Opportunities to enhance habitats will be encouraged by British Waterways.*



RIVER KENNET CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Final Report

CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The integrated management of river catchments is at the heart of the NRA's work. Catchment Management Plans (CMP) provide a means of setting priorities for the NRA and others to ameliorate 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. However, it should be realised that the actions stated in the Final Plan are aspirations. All the participating organisations have limited resources and powers and some actions may not be executed within the allotted timescale. The River

'Understanding how rivers, lakes and groundwaters behave is fundamental to our job. However, we must also consider the way the uses of the water and the activities potentially harmful to it, interact and are managed. Abstracting water, disposing of effluent, participating in water-based recreation and road construction are some examples.'

Kennet will be one of the first CMPs to be produced in Thames Region. However, because of this the River Kennet's needs will not take priority over the needs of other catchments in West area.

Should you have any comments or queries or require a copy of the complete River Kennet Catchment Management Plan Final Report (at £10 per copy) please contact;

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ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



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APRIL 1994
SUMMARY LEAFLET



RIVER KENNET CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

This leaflet summarises the current status and uses of the catchment and outlines cross-functional plans to address the issues highlighted during the consultation stage. The following is the shared "Vision" of those with an interest in the catchment:

The River Kennet is a river of good water quality supporting excellent fisheries and a public water supply from Fobney in the lower catchment. The still waters of the lower Kennet valley are a valuable recreational and ecological resource which, combined with the Kennet and Avon Canal, provide angling, bird watching, walking, nature conservation and picnic facilities. In the upper reaches of the catchment, groundwater is abstracted and provides a source of supply for, amongst others, Swindon, Marlborough and Ogbourne St. George.



Development pressure will continue to be a perceived threat and conflicts between the Canals users will need to be addressed and an acceptable balance achieved.

The management of flood risk too is a key objective and NRA activities in the catchment should reduce the risk of flooding in urban and semi-urban areas.

To achieve a sustainable policy of conservation of water resources and environmental enhancement, the NRA will work in partnership with Local Authorities and other key participants. The Final Plan will provide an important focus for this partnership.

Our aim is not only to maintain the existing values of the water environment of the Kennet but also to provide improvements to flood defences and degraded habitats, to create open green spaces, and to improve public access (where appropriate). The NRA will work to ensure the Kennet and its tributaries are well-managed watercourses of natural appearance forming attractive green corridors connecting the countryside with urban areas.

CATCHMENT ISSUES AND ACTIONS

The following gives examples of some of the issues and the actions proposed to alleviate them. In addition, the NRA will continue to give high priority to 'routine' activities to safeguard the catchment's existing values.



1. WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

The main challenge is to maintain the existing good water quality and improve where appropriate through continued data collection and pollution control. Actions to be undertaken in the next five years include:

- Implementation of NRA Groundwater Protection Policy and initiation of specific projects;
- Pollution prevention campaigns and sewage treatment works discharge consent reviews;
- Formation of a comprehensive database on the use and storage of chemicals.



2. WEST BERKSHIRE GROUNDWATER SCHEME

The scheme is owned and operated by the NRA and involves groundwater being abstracted to supplement low river flows during critical periods eg droughts. It was originally envisaged as a strategic water resource scheme, but in conjunction with Thames Water Utilities Ltd, its use is being re-assessed within a local and environmental context too.

An operating agreement then needs to be agreed between the two organisations.

3. UPPER KENNET RIVER LEVELS

Following public concern over river levels in this area, the NRA set up a series of multi-disciplinary studies to investigate this issue. Key actions for the following five years include:

- Execution of river corridor surveys, geomorphological and landscape assessment (with local authorities);
- Aquatic Plant (Weed) survey - results will indicate if improved management will assist in maintaining levels in the upper catchment;
- Use of habitat simulation computer models to set a prescribed flow limit above which the Axford abstraction will be permitted. This flow limit aims to protect environmental needs (pertinent only if Thames Water reapply for a licence to abstract water at Axford).

4. NEWBURY AND THATCHAM

Development, on or near the floodplain, over the last 30 years has potentially increased the flood risk to people and property. Key actions which will be undertaken over the next five years include:

- Surveys of control structures eg weirs, sluices;
- Computer modelling of the floodplain to ascertain if the NRA standards of flood defence are being achieved. This requires the continued and effective monitoring of levels, flow etc;
- The results of the modelling will aid the management of the complex control structures found in this area;
- The NRA are particularly concerned that river crossings (as designed) of the proposed A34 Newbury Bypass may increase flood risk and threaten ecology. The NRA will continue to oppose current designs and press for mitigating schemes.