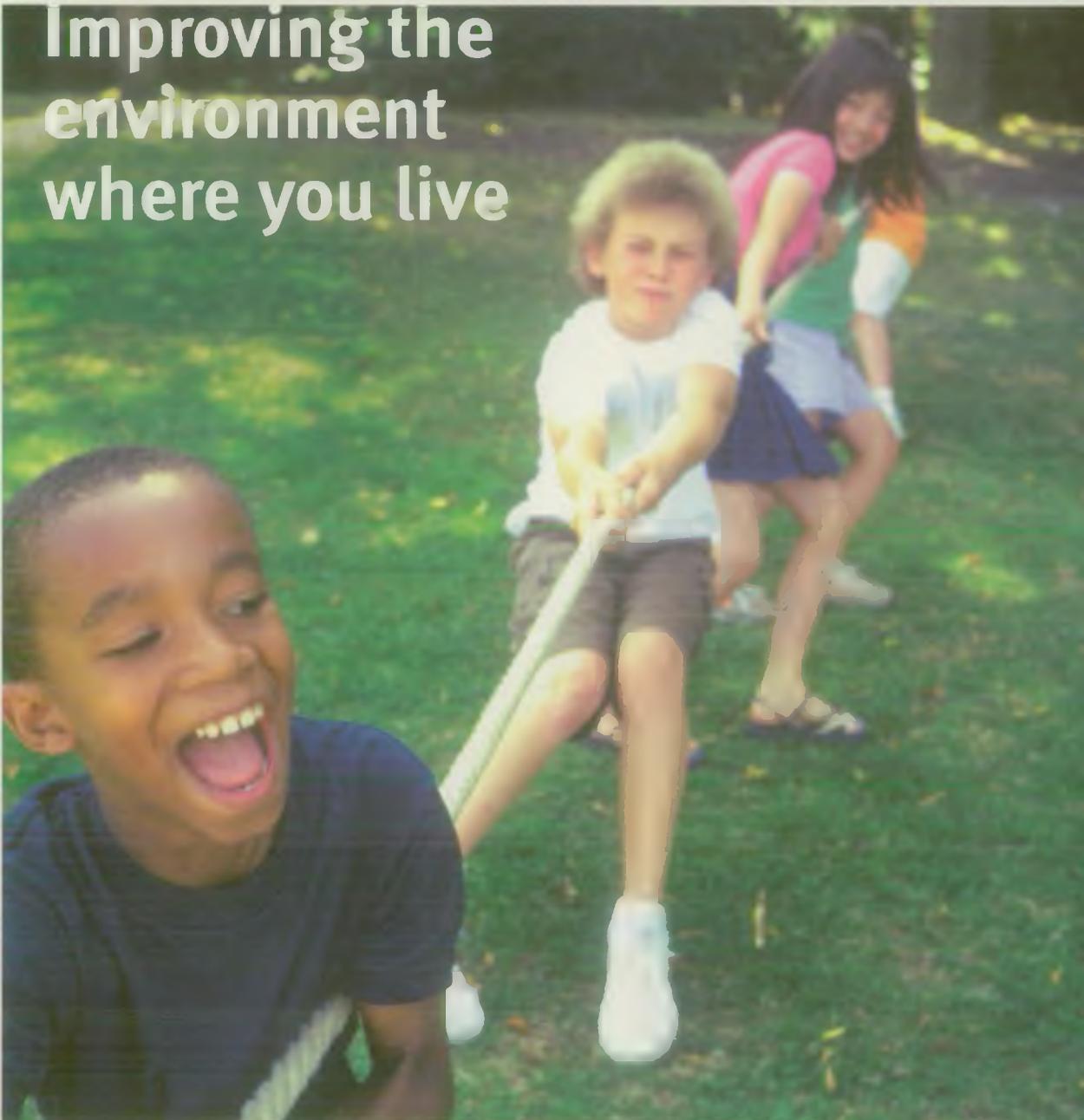




Environment  
Agency

Creating a better Thames  
Our five year plan 2006-2011

# Improving the environment where you live



We are the Environment Agency. It's our job to look after your environment and make it a better place – for you, and for future generations.

Your environment is the air you breathe, the water you drink and the ground you walk on. Working with business, Government and society as a whole, we are making your environment cleaner and healthier.

The Environment Agency. Out there, making your environment a better place.

## Foreword



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Runcie".

**Robert Runcie**  
Regional Director  
Thames Region

The Environment Agency is the leading public body in protecting and improving the environment. In the Thames Region, we face some of the biggest environmental issues in the country, such as water supply, flood risk, and water quality. We are already seeing the effects of climate change, and the South East is set to see unprecedented levels of growth over the next 10 years.

To be clear and focused on what we need to do, we have set ourselves priority areas to tackle. We will direct all our efforts to securing the sustainable management of the region's water quality and resources, waste management, flood defences, and its major construction and development projects. The Environment Agency wants to be the respected voice of authority for protecting and improving the environment for London and the South East.

By meeting these challenges, we can realise the opportunity we have to create a better Thames Region for people to live, work and visit – and where wildlife can prosper too. We will achieve this by putting the environment first and by working with partners, businesses and communities. We will play a lead role in the planning and decision-making in the Capital and to champion sustainable development in London and the South East.

This provides us with an opportunity to make a real difference to the quality of people's lives, but it also complements our national corporate strategy to improve how we manage the environment throughout the country. We welcome the opportunity to play our part in creating a better Thames Region for everyone.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



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# Authoritative advisor to ensure growth in London and the South East is sustainable

It's our job to make sure that all development is built in the right place and in the right way to ensure a balance between growth and demand on the environment.

We are living beyond the environment's limits in London and the South East. The pressure from housing development, economic growth and climate change is growing. More people are using more water, but we have limited capacity. Substantial investment is needed to make sure we have the environmental infrastructure put in place to handle this growth in London and the South East, particularly the Thames Gateway.

These changes offer an opportunity to improve our environment. It's our job to make sure that in working with local planners all development is built in the right place and in the right way to ensure the right balance between growth and demand on the environment.

## Our commitment will be to:

- promote the sustainable use, reuse and recycling of resources, water and energy efficiency;
- improve the environmental infrastructure to support existing and new houses;
- work with planners and developers to build sustainable new houses and create green space;
- promote the links between a good quality environment and people's health, social well being and the economy;
- ensure that climate change is at the heart of everything we do, so we can limit its impact.

## We will know we've succeeded when:

- our policies for the environment are integral to those of our partners;
- people and businesses use less energy and water, and produce less waste;
- we can see that an improved environment is making a real difference to people's lives and health.



# As a legacy for London to ensure that the Olympics delivers an improved environment for London in 2012

We have a great opportunity to revitalise a deprived area and create a better place for the local community, visitors, as well as habitat for wildlife to flourish.

The London Olympics in 2012 will create a showcase of the Lower Lea for the world. This is a huge opportunity to revitalise a deprived area and create a better place for the local community and visitors.

We want to see this happen through a high quality environment and green spaces focused on the river network that allows people and wildlife to flourish.

We will make sure we take every opportunity to improve the environment as we work with local and regional organisations in bringing the games to the area.

## **Our commitment will be to:**

- influence the planning and design of the Olympic Park to improve the natural environment of the Lower Lee Valley;
- ensure there is a strategic flood risk assessment to manage and reduce flood risk for the games;
- encourage Olympic site waste management plans;
- advise on improving contaminated land for the site development;
- provide information and advice to promote the sustainable use of resources during the games;
- champion the environment so that the games provide a legacy for future generations;
- ensure that business relocation schemes are regulated and suitable sites found.

## **We will know we've succeeded when:**

- water quality in the Lower Lee waterways is improved;
- a new habitat for wildlife is running through the Olympic Park to the River Thames;
- flood risk is reduced by providing natural flood storage within the Olympic Park;
- public access to the waterways and river-based recreation is increased.



# Work in partnership to ensure London manages its own waste

We will work with our partners to encourage people to use resources more efficiently and reduce the amount of waste they produce.

London produces approximately 19 million tonnes of waste every year. It currently sends approximately 70 per cent of its municipal waste to landfill sites. The growth of housing and development in the area will mean that by 2020, London will need up to 330 new waste management facilities to manage its waste.

We will work with our partners to encourage people to use resources more efficiently and reduce the amount of waste they produce.

## Our commitment will be to:

- work with small businesses, which produce much of London's commercial waste;
- work with planning authorities to make sure that there is enough land, in the right place, to develop sites for handling and treating waste;
- work with the Mayor to produce and implement his waste strategies;
- introduce site waste plans for the construction industry;
- work with local authorities and other partners to tackle flytipping.

## We will know we've succeeded when:

- all businesses produce less waste;
- an integrated waste management system is in operation across London;
- there is a reduction in flytipping;
- less waste is produced by the construction industry.



# Ensure solutions to water quality issues in the Thames are implemented

We will produce a Thames River Basin Management Plan that will aim to meet the environmental targets set by the European Water Framework Directive by 2015.

Good quality water is essential for people, business and wildlife. Nearly 60 per cent of the available water in the Thames Region is abstracted, mostly for public use. The rest we share with the environment to fill our rivers, lakes and wetlands. Good quality water is essential to support healthy fisheries, other animals and plants, and for recreation and navigation. It is also fundamental to the sustainable development, health and quality of life in London and the South East.

Water quality has improved steadily over the last 40 years, but it is now under pressure from the growing population, land use and climate change. Many of the traditional approaches to regulation cannot resolve these issues. Working within the European Water Framework Directive, we now need to manage the water environment as a whole.

**Our commitment will be to:**

- tackle the discharge of more than 50 million tonnes of untreated sewage to the River Thames through London;
- make sure that there are enough sewers and sewage treatment sites to support the levels of growth proposed in London and the South East;
- ensure that investment is made in new infrastructure and new ways of dealing with waste water;
- deal with pollution from rural and urban areas.

**We will know we've succeeded when:**

- an agreed improvement programme to reduce untreated sewage discharges to the River Thames is in place;
- regional and local spatial strategies contain policies linking housing growth to providing an adequate sewer and sewage treatment infrastructure;
- housing development includes sustainable drainage where possible;
- the number of category one and two pollution incidents from dairy farms has been reduced by 50 per cent by 2009.



# Having enough water for people, wildlife and the environment

**Taps off:** by balancing the needs of people and wildlife we can ensure people have enough water, and our environment can continue to thrive.

Water is scarce and we need to manage and use it with care. More than 12 million people live the South East and it is one of the driest regions in the country with only 690mm of rain every year. On average each person uses 156 litres of water every day compared with the national average of 150 litres. We now use up to 10 per cent more water than we did ten years ago. Leakage of drinking water in the region is over 918 megalitres per day – over 805 megalitres per day in London alone.

Thames Water does not currently have enough water to supply Londoners in a dry year. The shortfall is equivalent to the demand of about 1.2 million people. Therefore, we must balance the needs of people and wildlife. We also need to act where too much water is already being taken out of the environment.

The challenge we face is set to grow even more as we face pressures from more houses being built, people and businesses using more water and the effects of climate change.

## **Our commitment will be to:**

- ensure people have a secure water supply;
- work with the water companies and others to help people save water;
- deal with water company leakage;
- make sure that future development and water supplies are resilient to climate change;
- work with water companies to assess the needs and options for new water supply resources for London and the South East;
- ensure that housing development policies encourage people to use water efficiently.

## **We will know we've succeeded when:**

- water companies manage demand and develop resources for the environment to thrive and meet peoples needs;
- people value water as a precious resource and use it wisely;
- Environment Agency drought plans are in place by 2007 and we have worked with the water companies on their statutory drought plans;
- new homes reduce the amount of water they use to below 120 litres per head per day, matching Europe's best, and we see more existing homes fitted with water-efficient devices;
- leakage in London is reduced to Ofwat-agreed targets.



# Reduce the administrative burden of environmental regulation for businesses

By the year 2011, 80 per cent of our customers within the region believe that we offer a valuable service to the greater community.

We all have a responsibility to protect the environment. We expect companies to behave responsibly without constant supervision. The business world, in turn, expects us to be a more efficient regulator, reducing red tape and keeping compliance costs down. Following the principles of 'modern regulation', we aim to find the right balance. Focusing our efforts where the risks are greatest we can reward good performers and be tough on those who do not meet acceptable standards.

**Our commitment will be to:**

- reduce the administrative burden of environmental regulation by 25 per cent by 2010;
- give simply explained, targeted advice to businesses;
- identify modern solutions to environmental regulation.

**We will know we've succeeded when:**

- there is an increase in customer satisfaction;
- we have maximised our contribution to the development and implementation of sector plans (i.e. cement, nuclear, dairy, chemical);
- key performance indicators promote efficiency and adherence to good practice standards.



# Reducing flood risk in the region

We will improve flood forecasting and warning systems to enable communities to prepare and respond in the event of flooding.

Flooding is a real threat to people and property in the region. Currently 1.25 million people, over 400,000 properties, 16 hospitals, 30 railway stations, 68 underground stations and eight power stations are all at risk.

We want people and businesses to sleep easier thanks to our work to reduce flood risk. We know we will need to take new approaches to managing flood risk as climate change increases the dangers we face.

## Our commitment will be to:

- offer more flood warning services to those at risk;
- improve our flood warning system to reduce the impact of flooding;
- divert more flooding into natural flood plain areas;
- maintain and improve urban flood defences;
- implement the Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS25) to control development in the flood plain.

## We will know we've succeeded when:

- the public is more aware of their risk and can prepare and respond;
- inappropriate development in the flood plain stops;
- current and future flood risks have been lowered on a river basin scale for the Thames, Lee and London rivers;
- existing urban flood defences last longer.



# Ensure emergency planning in the region adequately protects people and the environment

We will protect our communities and the environment and reduce the impact of incidents to them.

It is our job to plan for incidents and crisis, which affect people and the environment.

We work with the emergency services, local authorities and volunteers to prevent or reduce the impact of incidents or the effects of severe weather on communities and the environment.

**Our commitment will be to:**

- liaise, work and train with our professional partners and non-governmental organisations to develop a multi-agency approach to responding to incidents and severe weather to protect people, their property and the environment;
- learn lessons from incidents and crisis and to incorporate them into our procedures, plans and training to improve our capability to prevent and respond to emergencies;
- audit, test and exercise our capabilities and resilience to ensure that we can respond to incidents and crisis to protect people, their property and the environment.

**We will know we've succeeded when:**

- the plans for incidents and crisis are in place, and if used, are seen to work well;
- there is seamless interaction between the Environment Agency and partners in preventing and responding to incidents and crisis;
- we are recognised as the authoritative body that demonstrates best practice in emergency management and response.



# Work in partnership to develop sustainable agriculture and rural communities

By undertaking farming initiatives, we can improve farm practices and reduce pollution from agriculture.

A substantial part of our region is rural in nature and a sustainable agricultural industry is vital to maintaining a high class environment and vibrant rural economy. Agricultural activities can and do impact on water, land and air. Of particular concern is the run-off from farmland of chemicals into our rivers and ground water. We need to address this in meeting the Water Framework Directive requirements.

The agricultural industry is changing as the Common Agricultural Policy reforms take hold and government initiatives such as Catchment Sensitive Farming and Cross Compliance are implemented.

## Our commitment will be to:

- undertake farming initiatives in priority catchments aimed at improving farm practices and reducing pollution from agriculture;
- work with farmers to ensure they meet the new agricultural waste laws;
- promote the Entry Level or Organic Entry Level schemes for farmers and land managers who manage all or part of their land organically;
- encourage farmers to apply their land management skills to benefit the environment;
- undertake integrated farm visits to cut the regulatory burden on farmers.

## We will know we've succeeded when:

- agricultural waste is recovered and recycled at the same rate as other industrial and commercial waste;
- at least 85 per cent of our visits to farms are integrated by 2009;
- 20 per cent of farms have environmental management systems in place;
- at least 50 per cent of farms are invested in the Environmental Stewardship or Entry Level Schemes to undertake resource protection management options by 2011;
- there is a 50 per cent reduction in pollution incidents from dairy farms by 2009.



# Improve and promote access to the environment for all sectors of society

Through regeneration projects, we can encourage more people from diverse backgrounds to actively participate in shaping the environment in which they live.

Everyone has the right to live in and enjoy a clean and healthy environment. There are 1600 accelerated deaths recorded per year attributed to poor air quality in London and the South East. By creating more attractive and diverse environments, we can reduce the burdens on society such as crime, health care, disabilities, and unemployment.

A healthy environment makes a real difference to people's quality of life, and it also brings significant economic benefits from tourism, angling, boating, development opportunities and more.

## Our commitment will be to:

- ensure healthy growth in the use of the River Thames for communities, wildlife, leisure and business;
- ensure accessibility and information for all waterways users;
- enhance and maintain the river infrastructure and services for all users;
- understand and tackle the links between a poor environment and poor health by working closely with the Health Protection Agency and others;
- work with local authorities and others to improve local communities, particularly those from diverse backgrounds, to deal with environmental inequalities;
- encourage more people from diverse backgrounds to enjoy and care about their environment;
- promote participation in recreation for all sectors of society.

## We will know we've succeeded when:

- we see an improved environment is making a real difference to people's lives and health, particularly in the most deprived areas;
- more people have access to and are using their local environment;
- environmental impact assessment is built into Capital projects;
- the economic benefits of a healthy environment are understood and recognised by the increase in outdoor activities.

**Would you like to find out more about us, or about your environment?**

**Then call us on**

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**email**

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**or visit our website**

**www.environment-agency.gov.uk**

**incident hotline 0800 80 70 60** (24hrs)

**floodline 0845 988 1188**



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