

SOUTH WEST
REGION
PLAN SUMMARY

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NRA

National Rivers Authority

Guardians of
the Water Environment

SOUTH WEST REGION

Introduction

Established on 1st September 1989, the National Rivers Authority (NRA) came into being as a result of the 1989 Water Act and was created as a public body whose main task it is to protect and improve the water environment in England and Wales and provide protection against flooding from rivers and the sea. The first full year of independent operation was completed on 31st March 1991.

Head Office functions of the Authority are split between London and Bristol, but its operational activities devolve on ten Regions based on the former Water Authority areas.

This document, one of a set of ten, seeks to explain a little of South West Region NRA's background and shows how the Authority's national aims as set out in its 1991/92 *Corporate Plan* will be translated into Regional action.

Mission Statement

The National Rivers Authority will protect and improve the water environment. This will be achieved through effective management of water resources and by substantial reductions in pollution. The Authority aims to provide effective defence for people and property against flooding from rivers and the sea. In discharging its duties it will operate openly and balance the interests of all who benefit from and use rivers, ground waters, estuaries and coastal waters. The Authority will be businesslike, efficient and caring towards its employees.

Aims:

- to achieve a continuing improvement in the quality of rivers, estuaries and coastal waters, through the control of water pollution;
- to assess, manage, plan and conserve water resources and to maintain and improve the quality of water for all those who use it;
- to provide effective defence for people and property against flooding from rivers and the sea;
- to provide adequate arrangements for flood forecasting and warning;
- to maintain, improve and develop fisheries;
- to develop the amenity and recreation potential of waters and lands under NRA control;
- to conserve and enhance wildlife, landscape and archaeological features associated with water under NRA control;
- to improve and maintain inland waterways and their facilities for use by the public where the NRA is the navigation authority;
- to ensure that dischargers pay the cost of the consequences of their discharges and, as far as possible, to recover the cost of water environment improvements from those who benefit;
- to improve public understanding of the water environment and the NRA's work;
- to improve efficiency in the exercise of the NRA's functions and to provide challenge and opportunity for employees and show concern for their welfare.

Regional Organisation

Each Region of the NRA is managed by a Regional General Manager who reports to the Operations Director and whose management team has responsibility for managing the main functions and support services in the Region. South West Region employs some 480 people.

There are three statutory Committees per Region through which the NRA achieves a wide base of consultation. These are a Regional Flood Defence Committee (through which the NRA discharges its flood defence and land drainage duties), a Regional Rivers Advisory Committee and a Regional Fisheries Advisory Committee (these two committees being composed of members from a wide range of relevant backgrounds who advise the NRA on river basin management and fisheries policy respectively).

In addition, each Region has a Regional Advisory Board, on which the RGM and the three statutory Committee Chairmen sit. This is chaired by an NRA Board Member with responsibility for that Region.

Regional General Manager
Gordon Bielby
Regional Board Member
Dennis Mitchell
Regional Flood Defence Committee Chairman
Gerald Manning

Regional Rivers Advisory Committee Chairman
Peter Edwards
Regional Fisheries Advisory Committee Chairman
Anne Voss-Bark

Activities Requiring NRA Consent

Certain activities require the NRA's consent. The list is too long to include here, but the following are examples:

- abstract or impound water;
- make a discharge to any river, lake or tidal water or onto land for a soakaway, or to specific underground waters;
- clean or desludge a dam, weir or sluice;
- culvert any watercourse;
- interfere with land drainage by building or modifying any structures within or adjacent to a main river;
- build or plant within eight metres of a main river;
- introduce or transfer fish into any waters or use a net or trap to catch fish;
- use a rod and line to catch fish;
- use a boat on a waterway controlled by the NRA;
- interfere with a sea defence.

Public Register Access

Enquiries regarding registration under the Control of Pollution Act should be made to the Regional Headquarters.

Where to contact us: Regional Headquarters

Manley House
Kestrel Way
Exeter
Devon EX2 7LQ
Tel: (0392) 444000
Fax: (0392) 444238
24-hour telephone number: (0800) 378500

Copies of the full Corporate Plan are available @ £12 per copy from:
Advertising Services
Unit 13
Lancaster Way Business Park
Ely, Cambs CB6 3NP
Cheques should be made payable to 'National Rivers Authority'.

Foreword

Since the submission of our first Plan we have developed our capability to deal effectively with the challenges of guarding the water environment. We have raised awareness of the NRA's existence and of its mission. We believe also that we have achieved a good measure of public sympathy and support for our efforts across the whole span of our activities.

Our new Plan sets us a range of priorities and targets, the pursuit and attainment of which will significantly improve the efficient and effective delivery of NRA services in this Region.

Gordon Bielby
Regional General Manager

Key Achievements 1990/91

Water Resources:

- drafted a Regional Water Resources Strategy Report;
- completed a review of over-abstraction and identified 100 sites for consideration.

Water Quality:

- pollution Hot-Line set up at Regional Communications Centre;
- dealt effectively with nearly 3,000 pollution incidents, including a major marine oil spill;
- taken more than 80 prosecutions for pollution offences;
- produced catchment management plans for the River Torridge and its estuary and action plans for many rivers;
- validated 11,000 discharge consents on a new register and responded to approximately 100 new applications per month within the target timescale;
- reviewed monitoring programmes and completed the 1990 Water Quality Survey;
- improved Water Quality data presentation.

Flood Defence:

- Regional Communications Centre fully operational;
- completion of the River Kenwyn FAS in Truro following the disastrous floods of 1988;
- official opening on 27th September 1990 of the £3m Barnstaple Tidal Defence Scheme.

Fisheries:

- reduced illegal fishing by enforcement patrols and by introducing new bye-laws.

Conservation:

- enhanced conservation at Amble Marshes.

Support Services:

- ensured that phase one of all office accommodation moves and refurbishment were carried out;
- high rate of successful prosecutions;
- legal training and advice given to regional staff dealing with enforcement activity;
- gained extensive positive media coverage of NRA activities;
- launched pollution/poaching Hot-Line (1,200 pollution reports received in first three months);
- preparation for charging for discharges;
- implementation of Regional Environmental Modelling facilities;
- commenced audit of training needs;
- continued to recruit to meet establishment;
- prepared financial returns and accounts;
- reviewed and developed financial and management information systems;
- introduced discharge consent application charges;
- participated in national initiatives (charging for discharges, Abstraction Licence National Scheme).

Regional Priorities 1991/92

Our key priority is to continue the improvements which we have planned in the first year. Where strategies have been developed we shall begin to implement them, and where consultation with other organisations is required we shall establish the necessary links. We shall introduce the charging for discharges scheme and in this way help to reduce our dependence on Government funding. Each function will have its own targets and these are illustrated below.

Water Resources:

- develop Regional strategy document;
- improve response to licence applications;
- establish water resources planning forum;
- progress schemes to ameliorate low flows;
- implement Groundwater Protection Policy.

Water Quality:

- develop Regional strategy document;
- introduce charging for discharges scheme;
- implement new consenting policy and begin review of deemed consents;
- complete 1990/91 survey and consult on water quality objectives;
- carry out EC Directive requirements;
- introduce new monitoring programmes for effluents and controlled waters;
- establish a Regional Laboratory Service.

Flood Defence:

- maintain the "main" river system including existing flood defences and construct those new or improved flood defences included within the capital works programme;
- advise planning authorities and other agencies of the land drainage/flood defence aspects of their development proposals;
- operate a flood warning service – an integral part of which is to bring a new radar station in Devon into operation for the winter 1991/92.

Fisheries:

- develop Regional strategy document;
- review licence and other charging schemes;
- harmonise stock assessment techniques and extend programme of restoration and rehabilitation of fish stocks;
- increase action to control illegal fishing.

Recreation and Conservation:

- continue implementations of Water Act Code of Practice;
- produce strategy for Regional sites;
- improve cost recovery from the recreation service;
- establish database for regulatory purposes;
- promote conservation schemes.

Support Services:

- submit new fishery bye-laws to MAFF for confirmation;
- implement Laboratory Information Management Systems;
- trial new Accounting System;
- prepare a training plan for each Department;
- introduce Discharge Consent Charge in accordance with the national timetable.



South West Region

NRA South West covers the counties of Cornwall and Devon and parts of Dorset and Somerset.

The resident population is approximately 1,470,000 but during the summer months this figure is boosted by a considerable influx of holiday visitors. In the peak week the number of visitors is about 500,000 creating a significant additional requirement for water supply and disposal.

The Region has been recognised as a major growth area. Important basic industries include agriculture, fishing and mineral extraction. Tourism attracts about 6m visitors annually with a significant effect on the local economy.

The rivers, estuaries and coastal waters are important in maintaining and encouraging the tourist industry and considerable emphasis is placed on the quality of water and the effect of effluent discharges. 133 of the UK's EC bathing waters are situated in the area, nearly twice as many as in any other NRA Region.

The natural water quality reflects the varied geology of the Region. Many of the rivers are metalliferous, carrying a variety of minerals, and this requires sampling for a wide range of determinands.

Intensive farming in the area brings particular pollution problems which have been significantly improved by a campaign of farm visits to advise on prevention measures.

Recreational fishing has considerable importance in the Region with visiting anglers contributing to the local economy.

Coastal commercial fishing is also significant, with six of the nation's top 20 commercial fishing ports being found in the Region.

Some Key Statistics

- Area: 10,884sqkm
- Population (resident): 1.5m
- Population (peak): 2m
- Length of main river: 1,370km
- Length of estuary: 256km
- Length of coastline: 700km
- Flood defence works maintained: 1,377km
- Number houses protected: 10,000
- Average annual rainfall: 1,194mm
- Number of abstraction licences: 7,047
- Volume of authorised water abstraction: 3,550Ml/d
- Number of consented discharges: 9,625
- Number of EC bathing waters: 133
- Pollution incidents reported: 2,796