



COMMITTED TO THE ENVIRONMENT

*A report from the committees of the Environment
Agency's Southern Region for the year 2000/01*



**ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY**

THE REGION

The Southern Region of the Environment Agency covers Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

THE REGION AT A GLANCE			
Area (sq.km)	10,980	Average annual rainfall (mm/yr)	780
Population (millions)	5	Number of Water Resources abstraction and impoundment licences in force	5,723
Number of Local Authorities	44	Length of fluvial flood defences maintained (km)	3,169
Number of LEAP area	13	Length of coastline (km)	1,297
Number of Water Quality discharge consents in force	7,440	Length of tidal and sea defences maintained (km)	2,307
Number of Integrated Pollution Control authorisations	121	Number of EC designated Bathing Waters	79
Number of Radioactive Substances authorisations	63	Number of Agency landholdings with potential for recreational use	40
Number of nuclear sites	2	Length of navigable rivers (km)	31
Number of Radioactive Substances registrations	383	Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) (sq.km)	1,100
Percentage of waste produced in England and Wales	8		
Number of Waste Management site licences	613		

THE COMMITTEES

Three regional committees help the Agency in its work. The committees meet four times a year and the public are welcome to attend.



REGIONAL FLOOD DEFENCE COMMITTEE (RFDC)

The RFDC is responsible for recommending the amount of money which local authorities contribute to flood defence works. It also advises on the programme of flood defence maintenance and improvement works, the necessary funding, obtaining Ministerial approval and providing and operating flood warning systems.

The RFDC Chairman is appointed by Government. Other members of the RFDC are appointed by councils, Government & the Agency.



REGIONAL FISHERIES ECOLOGY AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RFERAC)

RFERAC advises the agency about:

- the performance of the Agency with regard to fisheries, ecology, recreation and navigation
- issues of concern in relation to fisheries, ecology, recreation and navigation
- the implications of national policy proposals for fisheries, ecology, recreation and navigation

The RFERAC Chairman is appointed by Government. Other members of RFERAC are appointed under statutory membership schemes designed to achieve representation from a wide range of the Agency's stakeholders in fisheries, ecology, recreation and navigation.



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION ADVISORY COMMITTEES (REPAC)

REPAC advises the Agency about:

- the operational performance of its functions
- issues of concern within the region
- the implications for the region of national policy proposals

The REPAC Chairman is appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment. Other members of REPAC are appointed under a statutory membership scheme designed to achieve representation from a wide range of the Agency's stakeholders.

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INTRODUCTION

During the year, Committees are called upon to give views on a variety of topics, generally raised as consultation papers by government departments. Last year, the three regional chairmen took the decision to combine the views of each Committee into one, consolidated response. This was in the belief that it gave more weight to the views being put forward and, because the majority of the consultation documents are of equal interest to all committees, they were able to offer the government, the Agency and other parties one single view from the Southern Region. This worked extremely well last year and the Chairmen agreed to continue for the foreseeable future.

2000/1

During this year the committees have deliberated on three important issues:

- 1. The Environment Agency's Southern Region Business Plan.** Among a number of issues, Members concluded that the Agency should ensure that it was properly funded for all statutory duties it was required to undertake. They also advised the Agency that it should continue its close connections with South East England Development Agency **SEEDA** and South East England Regional Assembly **SEERA**.
- 2. Finance, Management and Policy Review (FMPR).** Government reviews thoroughly each of its agencies every five years and 2001 sees the first such review for the Environment Agency. Members recommended to the Review Team that the Agency should be a powerful and authoritative voice on what needs to be done to protect and enhance the environment in England and Wales.

To do this they again stressed that it needs to be appropriately funded in relation careful statement of the job to be done. Members believed that the Agency had made progress in many areas during its first five years and that there should be no major change in its structure, responsibilities or regional boundaries.

However there was a need to build on early achievement. In the next five years it would be especially important to improve communication with stakeholders and harness the talent of Board members more effectively.

Members summarised their view of the role of the Agency over the next five years as environmental protection through effective and increasingly efficient regulation and enlightened influence based upon sound science, perceptive analysis of peoples values and sensitivity to local circumstances.

- 3. European Water Framework Directive - First Consultation paper.** This Directive is the culmination of a number of Directives concerning the water environment. It seeks to rationalise all current Directives and provide, as the name suggests, a framework within which the relevant Authorities will operate. We agreed that the Environment Agency should be the 'Competent Authority' for the implementation of this Directive but, again, stressed the need for the competent body to be properly funded for the task. Although we accepted the current division of England and Wales into River basins, we were concerned that the Medway in Kent was regarded as part of the Thames Basin. Whilst this looked legally correct due to the previously agreed definition of an estuary, we urged the Agency to continue with it's present management of the Medway by the Kent Area of the Southern Region. Members also noted the potential for conflict where the revised river basin boundaries appeared to create cross border water transfers. This is something that traditionally had been avoided. The second consultation paper is due to be issued later in 2001.

INTRODUCTION

by Bill Cutting (Chairman)

This year has been dominated by the extraordinary rainfall, so intense as to be calculated to occur only once in 200 years, and the resultant floods that happened in the autumn and the winter.

Even as I write this report in May, there are still families who have been unable to move back into their homes and some, who have been flooded by water coming out of the ground as opposed to coming out of rivers and streams, who may well be unable to return home for some while yet.

This heavy rainfall started in September, right across the Southern Region. This saturated the ground so that when the even heavier rains of October and November arrived, the water could not adequately soak away and rapidly flowed across the land into the rivers and streams.

Water levels in the chalk were, and remain, so high that springs not seen in many people's lifetime are now flowing strongly and are causing difficulties in many areas. River flows rose rapidly and in many places overflowed their banks, flooding towns and villages.

Fortunately the Committees had previously agreed to invest heavily in improving the flood warning system, in particular to redefine the levels of flood warning to make them more understandable. The new system went 'live' in the beginning of October and committees are certain that their successful introduction ensured that a reasonable warning enabled furniture and effects to be moved before the flood arrived. Lives may have been saved.



Severity of the Events

The Flood Defence Committees have reviewed the preliminary findings of the studies into the recent floods and have commissioned a number of detailed studies. However, as reported last year, we cannot provide defences to withstand all eventualities and we do have to remind ourselves of the severity of the rainfall and the quite extraordinary flows on the rivers.

For example, on the night of 11th October 2000, the area around Uckfield had 125mm of rain, as much as would usually fall in a month. The River Medway at East Farleigh, near Maidstone Kent, normally flows at a rate of 35 Cubic meters per second in the month of October. On the 23rd October the flow was recorded as 270 cubic metres per second and at the same time, the Leigh Barrier upstream on the same river was impounding at a rate of 150 cubic metres per second, giving a true flow of around 12 times normal. Climate Change may make such extreme flows more likely in the future.

Damage occurred across the Southern Region and the sustained heavy rain caused some properties to be flooded more than once. In some areas of West Sussex and Hampshire, the water level in the chalk overflowed and the water continues to flow through properties and across roads, many months after the rainfall occurred.

Committee Members and a number of Government Ministers, including the Prime Minister, visited the flooded areas and commiserated with those who had their lives



Fig 1

and businesses seriously interrupted by these events. Committee members, many of whom live in flooded areas, also attended meetings and visited the sites in order to fully appreciate the extent and ferocity of the flooding.

Congratulations

We congratulate the Environment Agency, Local Authorities, Police and the Emergency Services for their tremendous efforts to help those affected by the floods. This incident showed to Committee Members the distinct advantage of integrated management of the water cycle by the environment Agency.

The floods made huge demands on manpower and the Agency and the staff are to be congratulated on their ability to transfer staff from other disciplines and other Regions to assist the Flood Defence, Flood Warning and Direct Service members of staff.



Fig 2

The Cost

Committees were faced with a bill well in excess of £2 million for the assistance given during the floods and the costs of repairing the damage to defences. We are pleased that the Minister was able to fund the majority of these costs and thus keep their impact on the Council Tax to a minimum.

We must look forward and seek long-term solutions to prevent as much of this happening in the future as we can. We do not believe that a 'quick fix' solution is the way forward. Rivers behave in a complex way. In some areas groundwater flooding may be an intractable problem.



Fig 3

The Minister for the Countryside, Elliot Morley, announced that the Government was funding strategic reviews of all rivers with the objective of providing a long-term plan for flood defence. Members strongly support this approach and have encouraged the Environment Agency to commence work on them as soon as possible. We have also agreed to look at the possibility of undertaking 'stand alone' flood defence works in areas badly hit by the flooding.

Members have said, however, that we must take care not to simply pass the flood problem on from one community to another. Committees have agreed to seek approval to works in advance of the full review, where it can be shown that it is technically and economically feasible to improve them in a sustainable way without adversely affecting other areas.

Events such as these reinforce our determination to produce strategic, long-term plans for the provision of the necessary flood defences for our Region. Whilst the recent flooding shows how devastating rivers can be, we must not forget that the majority of people in our Region live by the sea and we must continue to maintain sea defences to the correct standard.

We do, however, encourage everyone to find out whether or not they live in an area at risk of flooding, no matter how slight and, if they could be at risk, to take advantage of the advice and warnings given by the Agency. Your Local Council has been given the latest maps and they are available for everyone. If you have access, they are also on the Agency's Website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk



Public Private Partnership

We were pleased that the Agency completed the negotiations for the Public Private Partnership (PPP) Contract for the maintenance of the flood defences in Pevensey Bay, East Sussex. Those living in the area will know that discussions have been going on for many years but the historic financing methods have been unable to provide sufficient funding to enable works to go ahead, even though a breach in the wall would cause flooding as far inland as Hailsham.

The Committees encouraged the Agency to use the PPP route of funding and we were pleased to receive a very positive report on the successful completion of the first year of the contract, the first of its type used in flood defence. The residents of Pevensey Bay and beyond can be reassured that the committee has put in place a flood defence maintenance system for the next 25 years.



Fig 4

Performance of Flood Defences

In view of the extreme weather, we were also pleased to see how well recently completed flood defences performed. The new dam above Milford on Sea, Hampshire, successfully protected the village, although some repairs to it will be required. In Storrington, West Sussex, the new culvert beneath the High Street operated for over a week, taking excess flows from the South Downs and passing them safely through the village.

The emergency plan for Chichester was put into action as water levels in the River Lavant began to rise. West Sussex County Council placed pumps and pipes in position to divert water away from the city. This was successfully accomplished and there was no river flooding, even though the

peak flow exceeded the maximum in 1994. The Committee used its emergency powers to construct a bypass channel to the east of the city. West Sussex County Council and the Environment Agency worked closely together to obtain agreement from landowners for the water to flood parts of their land and the Committee thanks them for their co-operation. These works will form part of the permanent flood relief scheme for Chichester, which is scheduled for completion for winter 2002.

Climate Change

Flood Defence Committees have continued their drive to produce strategic plans for the coastline. We are aiming to meet two principal objectives - to identify the long term and medium term flood defence needs for the Region and to programme them to ensure that adequate funding is available.

During the year we received a report on the potential effects of climate change on rainfall, sea levels and storminess and concluded that, as a precaution, we should take these possible effects into consideration when reviewing the need for flood defences. Working with our partners, County Councils, Unitary and District Councils and other Agencies, we have produced 8 strategy plans and submitted them for approval to the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF). Work remains to be completed on 14 plans and some, such as the very complex Thames Estuary Plan, remain to be started.

Environmental Benefits

During the year the Committee has supported the delivery of environmental benefits. At a strategic level the Committee has enhanced the environmental component of a number of papers, such as the High Level Targets and the Regional Strategy. On an operational level, the Committee has asked for the environmental costs and benefits of all schemes to be identified and reported.

The Local flood Defence Committees have been encouraged to consider an annual conservation report as a means to identify and examine the contribution that flood defence works make to environmental enhancement.

Investment

The Committee noted the results of a MAFF report on the apparent gap between the flood defence investment required to avoid flood damage to the value of assets protected in England and Wales and the current investment plans. We believe the review of the present defences and the production of strategy plans is the way forward to establishing the correct level of investment to protect these valuable assets.



Fig 5

Policy

Committees have responded to Parliamentary Inquiries into flood defence and to the Finance and Policy Review of the Environment Agency (the latter reported elsewhere). All Committees recognise the complex bureaucracy of flood defence and agree that something should be done to make the whole system simpler and more understandable. We have advised Government and the Agency that we should no longer have three or four different organisations responsible for different parts of rivers and coastline. This will take some time to achieve and, in the meanwhile, we have recommended an increase in public awareness campaigns to advise the public on how to contact the right people when required.



Fig 6

We have completed and accepted a new Policy Statement for Flood Defence. This is an important new initiative and is in line with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food High Level Target Number 1, To clarify responsibilities and approaches to flooding by all Operating Authorities. Copies of this document are available from your local environment Agency Office. It explains the areas of responsibility for the Flood Defence committees and it is a useful document to enable us to make an assessment of the resources needed for the Agency to carry out the tasks we assign to them.

CONCLUSION

This has been a very difficult year for flood defence. Agency staff from all functions have pulled together to man the Emergency Room at Guildbourne House, Worthing, sometimes around the clock. We have been advised that climate change is with us and that the weather will change. Perhaps we were fortunate that we had no severe storms at sea.

What is becoming more apparent is the need to review the way in which flood defence is funded. Despite providing more funding than ever before, County and Unitary Authorities are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the call for funding by the Agency.

Committees are convinced of the importance of local democracy and the involvement of locally elected members. We have, therefore, advised the Government that funds should be raised in a way that does not affect other Council services. We anticipate a Government response later this year.



THE COMMITTEE by Nick Giles (Chairman)

The Regional Fisheries, Ecology and Recreation Advisory Committee (RFERAC) is comprised of 21 members chosen for their breadth and depth of knowledge of aquatic conservation, ecology, navigation, recreation and fisheries. A good geographical spread of representation across Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Sussex and Kent is combined with individuals who are willing to see other people's point of view and to give independent advice to the Agency on its national and regional policies. Committee members also form a critical link between the Agency and 'grass roots' opinion at local level. This helps to encourage an open two-way dialogue between the Agency and its many stakeholders in the community. This year, more members of the public attended our meetings - you are most welcome to come along if you wish. Dates of meetings are available from the Regional Office, Guildbourne House, Chatsworth Road, Worthing.



Introduction

The past year has been a busy one for the Southern Region's RFERAC, as the following list of key topics discussed shows. The list is more or less chronological and mixed, rather than separated by functional area, to try to emphasise the variety and integrated nature of the various subjects. Staff from many functions, including fisheries, conservation, recreation and navigation also had two additional burdens during the year - helping with the tremendous effort which the Agency made to assist the public during the floods and having to cope with the many restrictions which foot and mouth disease imposed upon country life. Both of these challenges were met with great initiative and skill by Agency staff.

underlined the Agency's successful multi-functional role on the river, combining navigation, flood defence, water resources, angling and other recreational management. Under-funding of the Agency's Navigation function was noted as a concern of the Committee. The severe winter floods of 2000 subsequently brought home the vital importance of good flood defence management on this major Kent river.

The Past Year

- *Wildlife Trusts Otters & Rivers Project - an update on results of this joint Agency/Hampshire Wildlife Trust project which aims to improve river and wetland habitats for otters, water voles and other wetland wildlife was warmly received and discussed.*
- *Medway Navigation - in July the RFERAC meeting was followed by an enjoyable and informative boat trip up the Medway. This*
- *underlined the Agency's successful multi-functional role on the river, combining navigation, flood defence, water resources, angling and other recreational management. Under-funding of the Agency's Navigation function was noted as a concern of the Committee. The severe winter floods of 2000 subsequently brought home the vital importance of good flood defence management on this major Kent river.*
- *Catchment Abstraction Management Plans (CAMs) - this major initiative was welcomed wholeheartedly by the Committee. Truly sustainable water resourcing for Southern region into the 21st Century will be based on local integrated river catchment abstraction management. The programme is to be implemented across England and Wales.*
- *Government Salmon & Freshwater Fisheries Review Group - the Report of the group was debated at a special RFERAC Sub-group meeting. The long list of recommendations in the report was generally welcomed and specific advice was given on many topics including the wisdom of restoring Local Fishery Advisory Committees (LFACs). In the latter case the Committee recommended continuing with existing fishery consultative links.*
- *The Agency's Environmental Strategy - considerable debate ensued over whether the*

ION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RFERAC)

Agency's commendable 'Vision' was likely to be achievable via this Strategy. Useful suggestions were made for possible inclusion in an amended version. 'Frameworks for Change' - a document underpinning the Agency 'Vision' was also debated with many constructive proposals for improvement made.

- **EU Water Framework Directive** - the Committee started to become familiar with this very important ecologically-based Directive. UK inland and coastal water management initiatives will increasingly be required to pay close attention to the successful maintenance of biological quality in groundwaters, lakes, rivers and at sea. A greater emphasis on environmental quality measured via ecological criteria was welcomed.
- **Eel fishing licences and byelaws & The Eel Strategy** - The Agency put forward a comprehensive suite of byelaw and licence duty proposals designed to improve eel fishery management in England and Wales. European stocks of eel are in decline and this conservation initiative was seen as vital by the Committee.
- **Fisheries Monitoring Review** - this important review, managed at Head Office, Bristol is designed to review routine fisheries survey and special investigation projects, producing a nationally consistent and cost-effective work programme. The Committee made some useful suggestions for consideration by regional Agency fisheries officers.



Fig 7



Fig 8

- **Fisheries Resource Allocation Project** - this national project aims to provide a rational needs-based model for the allocation of money between Agency regions. The project is challenging, requiring sound data on both current activity levels and prospective needs. The Committee welcomed this initiative as it will ultimately enable the Agency to direct funding to where needs are greatest, rather than by historical precedent. Fisheries activities have also been prioritised as part of this project.
- **Rod licence duties** - the annual round of proposed licence duty increases was robustly debated. It was agreed that anglers may be willing to pay more to fish if they could see benefits accruing locally from Agency projects. Increased 'PR' for Agency achievements would help in this respect.
- **Navigation charges** - here the debate revolved around the serious under-funding via government grant-in-aid of the maintenance schedules for structures (locks) on Agency-managed navigations. Boaters, alone, could not be expected to foot this bill.
- **Fisheries Action Plans (FAPs)** - this initiative (a Fisheries Review Group recommendation) was welcomed. FAPs seek to gain local agreement on a catchment basis for the whole gamut of fisheries management and associated conservation and recreational activities. Local ownership of these plans should help the smooth-running of river fisheries, conservation and recreation plans for years to come. FAPs will be joint Agency and FAP committee documents.



- *Waterways for Tomorrow* - DETR's view of the potential for waterway regeneration in England and Wales was given a good airing. The Committee was concerned that environmental considerations appeared to be given only superficial consideration. The Chairman submitted a response to government on the paper on the Committees behalf.
- 17th Annual Meeting of NASCO (North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation) - the Committee was pleased to see Agency involvement with this group but dismayed at the conservation plight of this important fish species. Salmon stocks are in decline throughout the range of the species. Hampshire rivers are a shining example of angler restraint with virtually all salmon caught released back to the river or donated to the stocking programme.
- *Salmon management in southern region* - the Committee listened with great interest to a review of chalk stream habitat and hatchery stocking projects carried out on the rivers Test and Itchen. The Agency was congratulated on its wide range of successful collaborative projects with the Test & Itchen Association, Hampshire Salmon Trust, MAFF and others. Chalk stream salmon stocks are at critically low levels but much is being done to safeguard their future. This work is doubly welcome given the very modest funding made available by government. The issue of land use change and increased siltation of river spawning gravels was highlighted as a pernicious threat to wild salmon and trout stocks.



Fig 9

- *Fisheries, Recreation & Conservation 'Forward Looks'* - each quarterly meeting the Committee is updated on up and coming projects plus feedback from previous work. This is appreciated as it allows communication of successes and failures, aspirations and strategic views.
- *Recreation Plan 2000-2005* - this plan co-ordinates partnership projects, funding initiatives and Agency priorities for Recreation in the region. Past projects included work on the River Medway, Sussex Ouse, Isle of Wight, Camber Sands, River Yar, Rye Harbour, Chichester Theatre and with Sustrans. This level of activity was considered good in light of the very modest funding available to the recreation function.



Fig 10



Fig 11

- *Harmonised Navigation Registration & Licensing Scheme* - recommendations for this simplifying procedure between the various navigation authorities were debated by boaters and concerns expressed over the potential for increased costs.
- *Introductions of non-native fish* - Agency policy on permissions for the introduction of fish to the wild were updated in response to the MAFF Import of Live Fish (ILFA) which had taken effect from November 1st 1998. The attempt at tightening up on fish imports and the stocking of fish from continental sources was welcomed in recognition of the very real risks to UK fisheries from the introductions of parasites and diseases.
- *Financial Management and Policy Review (FMPR)* - this DETR cyclical examination of Agency performance was regarded as of great importance and dealt with primarily by a 3-committee sub-group. RFERAC contributed views on the roles and responsibilities of the Agency, the value of integrated policies, the Agency as a navigation authority, management structures, communication with the general public and the vital need for adequate funding to allow the Agency to deliver its duties.
- *Agriculture and the Environment* - this paper reviews Agency involvement in the many ways in which modern agriculture impacts on aquatic systems. The Committee welcomed the paper and urged better co-ordination of MAFF and Agency initiatives to improve river and wetland habitats and to encourage sustainable farming systems.
- *Corporate Plan & Charges* - here the Committee was given an opportunity to contribute views and ideas on the developing 2001/02 Corporate Plan. This is a good example of the Agency providing an advance view to Committee of policy documents to encourage participation in their development. The Corporate Plan forms the basis of the Agency's bid to government for funding in the next round - a critically important document.
- *National Trout Strategy* - the Committee considered a draft Strategy for trout, grayling and charr and debated at length the many ramifications of the proposed policy. An early view of this document was welcomed.

CONCLUSION

RFERAC meetings have full agendas and stimulate debate, hopefully generating more light than heat! Members have the opportunity to contribute to shaping Agency policy whilst the Agency has a platform to seek advice and explain its objectives for future work. All in all I believe that the committee structure works well and is time well spent. Please remember that committee places come up regularly (advertisements are placed in the local Press) and RFERAC meetings are open to the public - why not get involved and help to maintain the Agency's close links with local communities?



INTRODUCTION

by Tom Crossett (Chairman)

It has been a year of progress for the REPAC during which we have concentrated on our three statutory duties of advising the Agency about the operational performance of its functions; issues of concern within the Region; and the implications of National policy proposals.

Also, we have followed the guiding principles that we adopted in our first report, namely:

- evidence based policies and programmes
- integration and partnership
- outcome orientated (smart) regulation

We are therefore very pleased to record that there has been better communication in both directions between us and our Sponsors this year, and the Agency has done much to improve both our understanding of the diversity and magnitude of the challenges which it faces and the ways in which it is responding to those challenges.

For our part, we have tried to give more strategic advice on how the Agency should champion the Regional environment, and we have made increasing use of joint REPAC/RFDC/RFERAC sub-committees to consider National papers and proposals. In each case, our responses and advice have reflected what our members believe to be necessary to secure growth of a more sustainable Regional economy and to provide a better quality of life for all.

We have however been keenly aware of the diversions that the winter floods and the recent foot and mouth disease outbreak have caused to the Agency, and we have been sympathetic to the Agency's need to concentrate on these issues rather than to research topics and provide us with status reports on all the various items of our interest and concern.



Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs)

In view of our earlier concerns about shortage of resources for LEAPs, we very much welcome the publication of area annual reviews of LEAPs. The one that we have seen indicates that the process is working well and that our earlier concerns about shortage of resources for that process may have been misplaced.

The review gives an honest appraisal of successes and failures in both Agency programmes and the development of partnerships to protect the environment. We remain convinced that LEAPs are important in targeting the Agency's resources in an integrated approach to environmental protection and enhancement. That said, progress of action under LEAPs has been slow in some instances and we strongly recommend that

adequate resources should continue to be allocated.

We further welcome the Regional Director's commitment to review the success of LEAPs locally and to establish how they should be developed to ensure that they dovetail with the emerging Local Authority Community Strategies.

The State of the Environment Report

We gave strong support to the joint Thames and Southern Region State of the Environment Report which was published in June 2000. The Report provides an excellent "baseline" for the environmental dimension of Regional initiatives in sustainable development. Also, it should make it much easier to assess the environmental

implications of policy decisions which create pressures on the environment in the Region or measures to mitigate such pressures.

It should however be a living document, and the REPAC look forward to receiving an annual progress report which shows what has and has not been achieved, as well as details of any new problems.



Fig 12

Communications with Constituencies

The Agency needs to build community support for the actions that it is taking to protect the environment and to refine its approach in the light of external views. We recognise that the communication task that this entails is difficult and resource intensive, but the benefits of success are enormous. The aim should be to secure adequate understanding of the most important issues rather than to try to secure complete coverage and risk failure in critical areas. Despite some significant PR successes, particularly associated with the winter floods, we believe that the Agency is still failing to select and target messages to its public audience. The National website is still inflexible, and the Agency is failing to exploit e-communication at Regional level. Other Regional aspects of the website leave much to be desired, especially in relation to publicity concerning statutory committee meetings and the development of the pollution inventory, and we look forward to seeing early improvements.



Fig 13

Vision Statement and Framework for Change

During the year we had the opportunity to comment on the two drafts of the Agency's National Vision Statement, as well as the first drafts of the associated Frameworks for Change documents. Our three committee sub-group was disappointed by the early drafts. However we have been pleased to see that the final version of the Vision Statement and the second drafts of the Frameworks for Change documents have been amended to reflect many of our concerns. Such changes make our inputs worthwhile.

The Agency and Agriculture

We considered an assessment that the Agency has made of the impact of agriculture on the environment. The Agency is well placed to put the environmental impact of agriculture in perspective and to strengthen the science base for action to reduce it. It is therefore the appropriate body to regulate aspects of farming which impact on the environment and it just as important to develop "smart" regulation in this context as in other areas. The Agency should





Fig 14

have a strong voice in the future of the countryside debate that is likely to follow the foot and mouth disease epidemic.

The Agency will be most effective if it works in partnership with others and shows sensitivity to current economic circumstances in farming and the changing roles of farmers. We support the Agency's intention to stimulate wider debate of its role in agriculture with a view to improving the cost effectiveness of production by ensuring that the environment is at the heart of business thinking. We believe however that in initiating a wide debate the Agency should show greater initial sensitivity to the positions of potential partners. That said farming should not be exempt from the polluter pays principle but its application should be phased having regard to real world economics. We look forward to early and rapid progress.

Waste Management

More efficient use of materials is one of the greatest challenges of sustainable development, within which waste minimisation, recycling and recovery and safe disposal of unavoidable residues all have major parts to play.

The Agency has three broad roles in these processes;

- *"policing" the waste industry by licensing its activities and enforcing licence conditions.*
- *giving strategic advice to Local Authorities on all aspects of their role in implementing the National Waste Strategy.*
- *research.*

Since April 2000 all licensed waste sites have been assigned operator pollution risk assessment (OPRA) scores that reflect both the environmental risk of the site and the standards of operation. There are early indications that concentration of Agency resources on sites with high scores produces dramatic improvements. We welcome this progress towards "smarter" regulation and look forward to further progress guided by careful analysis of early experience.

There have also been significant developments in the Agency's capacity to advise local authorities strategically notably;

- *Initial clarification of the Agency's policy on the appropriateness of energy from waste incinerators. Whilst this is helpful we believe that more needs to be done. Specifically the link between the Agency and local authorities needs to be developed to ensure that all available evidence was used when defining BPEO for local waste management strategies. The Agency also should clarify its role in public health and build public confidence in its effectiveness as an environmental regulator of controversial processes.*



Fig 15

- *Completion of a Regional strategic waste management assessment. This will provide a secure foundation for development of an evidence based Regional Waste Strategy and would assist development of waste local plans in the context of Landfill Directive compliance and a more sustainable economy.*

Despite this progress much remains to be done and it will be very important for the Agency to contribute to public information on waste issues.

Contaminated Land

Contaminated land regulations appear to have been introduced without major problems in the Region. Good working relations had been established with Local Authorities and that the future workload is likely to be sustainable. However, to date only a small proportion of sites have been dealt with. The situation should therefore be kept under careful review in close collaboration with local authorities and having regard to the overall benefits to be gained from appropriate remediation.



Fig 16

Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC)

We welcomed the regulatory package that Government introduced in July 2000 to implement IPPC in the UK. The new regime has great potential for cost effective environmental gain, but to realise this potential the Agency will have to work closely with regulated industries and other stakeholders without compromising the robustness of its stance as a regulator.

We have been encouraged by the success of trials of the draft IPPC regime for the paper industry at a major plant in the Region. The constructive approach that appears to have been adopted by all parties provides a valuable pointer to the way ahead. That said many challenges remain on the road to effective and beneficial implementation of IPPC notably;

- *clarification of the extent of Environmental Impact Assessment required.*
- *further simplification of paperwork.*
- *streamlining processes for authorisation of process variations.*
- *rationalisation of requirements and procedures for collection of data, especially on energy use but also for other purposes.*
- *transparency of regulation to the public and other stakeholders.*



Fig 18



Fig 17

Regional Water Resources Strategy (RWRS)

The RWRS which was published in March 2001 reviews prospects for the availability of and demand for water in our region over the next 25 years, as influenced by climate change, regional development and likely changes in lifestyle, business and other factors. It represents the culmination of research and negotiation that we have supported strongly over many years and we welcome a successful outcome. The RWRS underlines the scarcity of additional sustainable water resources for development in our Region. This means that our continued well-being is more dependent than elsewhere in the UK upon improving our efficiency of water use. Licence alterations, demand management, leak control, metering and other measures all have a part to play and the Agency will have to improve still further its partnerships with the water companies, business local authorities and the community if water shortage is not to stifle development or depress quality of life in our region.

Managing Water Abstraction

Following wide consultation and earlier discussion in our Committee the Agency published its policies for managing water abstraction in April 2001. We welcome the further development of a system which will relate abstraction more closely to the risk of environmental damage and which will be both more transparent and as fair as possible to community and business interests. The new system will play a major part in implementing the RWRS and we shall consider its effectiveness in due course.

Finally, we intend to review the implications of climate change on the environment of the Region, as well as to champion any early changes that need to be made in order to accommodate what seems to be an inevitable process.

The year 2000 - 2001 has been a busy and successful one for the REPAC and its members, and we look forward to another year of close co-operation with the Agency with the joint objective of improving the state of the Region's environment for the benefit of all. Our role is to give the Agency advice, and we shall pursue that role studiously.

Issues for the Future

For the next year, we hope to be able to continue with our involvement with the Region's business plan, including ongoing knowledge of its successes or otherwise, and we will certainly be using our successful three committee sub-group procedure to discuss our views on National papers and proposals.

We shall continue to try to ensure that there are the closest possible links between the Agency's Regional and Area Offices and the County, Unitary and Borough/District Councils in the Region.



Fig 19



Fig 20

FIGURES

FLOOD & RFDC

- Fig 1..... Sussex Area Manager, Peter Midgley tells Prime Minister about work carried out to save Chichester from flooding
- Fig 2..... Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott visits the Agency's Kent area control room at the height of the Autumn floods
- Fig 3..... The Kent village of Yalding hit by devastating floods
- Fig 4..... Government Minister Elliot Morley (centre) with Agency staff at the launch of the Public Private Partnership contract at Pevensey
- Fig 5..... Agency contractors working around the clock at Chichester to create a new emergency flood relief channel
- Fig 6..... Sussex Area Manager, Peter Midgley with East Sussex school children launching the Agency's new flood codes

RFERAC

- Fig 7..... Agency fisheries staff in Kent search the river Darent for a giant catfish
- Fig 8..... Agency fisheries staff in Sussex carry out a fish rescue
- Fig 9..... Conservation staff in Kent installing barn owl boxes
- Fig 10..... A newly hatched barn owl
- Fig 11..... An Agency poaching patrol in Hampshire

REPAC

- Fig 12..... Checking the security of waste stored on the farm
- Fig 13..... An Agency promise tree focuses on a sustainable environment for future generations
- Fig 14..... The River Medway at Allington
- Fig 15..... Fly tipping in Kent
- Fig 16..... An illegal waste dump in Sussex
- Fig 17..... Booming the river during a pollution exercise in Sussex
- Fig 18..... Groundwater contamination after an oil spill in Kent
- Fig 19..... A hazardous tyre fire poses a threat to the environment in Hampshire
- Fig 20..... The Fawley oil refinery in Hampshire

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