





## ...rivers are clean and safe for people and wildlife

River Douglas and two main tributaries; the River Yarrow and River Lostock. It includes the towns of Leyland and Chorley in the northern area and Wigan, Skelmersdale, Appley Bridge, Shevington, Standish and Burscough in the southern area.

The flood plains surrounding the River Douglas is land of exceptional quality and drainage has helped farming to flourish. To protect this farmland and the towns that grew around it, some stretches of the river have been straightened as part of flood defence works. Unfortunately this combination of drainage and flood defence has harmed wildlife.

**The River Douglas starts on Rivington Moor and finishes at the point where it meets the River Ribble, just west of Preston. However, the course of the river has been changed over time. This is partly due to sections of the riverbank being straightened by works to create flood defences to protect property and farmlands. We are now keen to see flood defence improvements to the riverbanks that are of benefit for wildlife and people. In particular we would like to improve the River Yarrow at Chorley, the River Douglas around Parbold Village and the River Lostock.**

People can appreciate their rivers for recreational uses if there is good access to them. The current state of poor access to the rivers in the Douglas area needs to be resolved. This makes it difficult for people to enjoy activities such as walking and canoeing. Access improvements at Lostock Country Park and at Leyland on the River

Lostock have been made enabling people to enjoy these rivers. A significant area where people can enjoy wildlife and take part in other activities such as sailing is at Wigan Flashes. We take an active part in improving the quality of the attractions at this complex of small lakes. We would also like people to improve their own environment and we offer support through the Green Partnership Awards. This offers advice and money for small environmental improvements.

The rivers within the Douglas area can be assets for people to enjoy fishing.

To achieve the aim of making it easier for fish to swim upstream we have identified those areas where barriers exist.

These barriers can be removed or improved. The full design for the River Yarrow at Croston Weir is now complete and the scheme will be implemented when money becomes available.

### Key successes

- Footpaths improvements at Lostock Country Park.
- Footpath improvements at Leyland on the River Lostock.
- Green Partnerships have supported six projects including improvements at Eccleston St. Marys School and Manor City Gardening Club.
- Number of fish stocked:  
Chub: 24,500. Roach: 26,500.  
Dace: 16,000.

### Key future actions

- Carry out a survey and produce a management plan for Water Voles.
- Identify and prioritise those stretches of river to be repaired for wildlife and recreational use.
- Improving Croston Weir to allow fish to swim upstream of the River Yarrow.



# Reducing the risks...

...from floods and droughts

We work closely with local councils to advise on lowering the risks of flooding. However, when flooding does occur we now operate a four-code flood warning system for public benefit. This involves the emergency services and local councils to make sure we work effectively together to provide an excellent service. The four-code warning system includes:



This is a general early alert to all properties at risk of flooding.



Designated flood warning areas receive a direct warning by an automated telephone system.



Should the situation deteriorate a severe flood warning is issued.



An 'All Clear' is issued when the threat of flooding has passed.

The new system involves the emergency services and local councils to make sure

we work effectively together to provide an excellent service.

There are two Designated Flood Warning Areas: At Croston 358 properties are warned directly of the risk of the River Yarrow flooding. We are currently reviewing the properties in Wigan that will receive a direct flood warning from the River Douglas.

It is essential that we have easy access to riverbanks to remove the build-up of rubbish as this can cause local flooding. We have identified six areas around the River Douglas that need improved access for this purpose.

We are also concerned about the impact of the development of new buildings and roads as they can increase the problems caused by flooding. We have been working with local councils to help reduce the impact of floods on people and property by new developments. A good example is the flood storage tank that was built as part of the new Asda store at Robin Park in Wigan.

## Key successes

- Introduction of new four-code flood warning system.
- 358 properties in Croston receive direct flood warnings.
- Organising annual meetings and exercises with all support and emergency services so as each organisation's role and responsibility is clear in a flood event.

## Key future actions

- Implement development control policy to prevent new flood risks from being created.
- Identify new access locations, and agree with landowner, to carry out maintenance to riverbanks to prevent flooding.
- Improve rainfall and river monitoring equipment.

# Preventing... ...pollution in urban areas

**We feel it is always better to prevent pollution problems rather than cure them. We are always willing to provide advice to householders, businesses and farms to look after their environment. However, we will take a firm and fair approach to those who disregard the law and will prosecute offenders.**

To prevent pollution it is important to use the sewers correctly. One of the most common problems, in the built up areas around the River Douglas, is due to people connecting appliances such as washing machines to the clean water down pipes rather than the sewer.

This means contaminated water goes directly into streams rather than to the Wastewater Treatment Works. A similar problem is due to people washing chemicals or oils into drains rather than disposing of them correctly.

Householders do not only cause this problem, businesses can be culprits too. Significant examples are the Industrial Estates at Bradley Hall, Kirkless and Moss Side. Wrong connections on these industrial estates mean that effluents from industrial processes and contaminated water will enter the nearby rivers.

A particular problem in the Douglas area is pollution incidents caused by the construction industry. This is because of the high number of building sites in the area and that builders are not taking steps to prevent pollution.

Within the Wigan area we have identified 16 Metal Recycling Sites that are causing environmental problems, including fly tipping. As a regulator we aim to make sure that these sites comply with the law.

## **Key successes**

- We have identified 95% of Metal Recycling Sites within the Douglas area requiring to be regulated by licensing or to be registered as exempt from licensing.
- Agreement with Transco (part of British Gas) whereby contracts awarded by Transco to other companies for pipeline construction will specify environmental measures.

## **Key future actions**

- Identify and correct any drainage problems and contamination at Industrial Estates.



# Dealing with...

## ...pollution from the past

As well as dealing with current pollution problems we are keen to work with local authorities to clean up land that has suffered pollution from past usage. A good example of this partnership work is being carried out at the Royal Ordnance Site in Euxton, near Chorley. We have been providing advice and promoting the installation of water collection systems, techniques to reduce waste and constructing reed beds and ponds for drainage systems.

All of these will produce benefits that will last for years.

Our concern about pollution caused by past activities also includes the impact of abandoned coal mines. The abandoned mines at Summersales, Pemberton, Aspull Sough and Welch Whittle all cause problems. This is because water runs through the old mines collecting metals that then pollute local rivers and streams.

### Key successes

- Continue monitoring known minewater problems.
- Improve Syd Brook by resolving problems at Welch Whittle Site.

### Key future actions

- Supporting the work of Chorley Borough Council on the regeneration of various sites in the Chorley area to produce environmental and recreational benefits.



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## The Environment Agency

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**Free 24 hour emergency hotline 0800 80 70 60**  
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**We feel that these improvements within the Douglas area will benefit people and wildlife today and for future generations.**

*We would like to thank the Central Area Environment Group for their support in the production of this document.*

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# Preventing... ...pollution in rural areas

**Wastewater Treatment Works and the sewerage network have the biggest everyday impact on river water quality. Whilst improvements have been made to the sewerage network and water quality has improved more needs to be done. There are still around 50 combined sewer overflows working below an acceptable standard. Further improvements need to be made by North West Water Ltd over the next five years. This includes the need for improved treatment at Skelmersdale and Wigan Wastewater Treatment Works to see a reduction in copper entering the River Douglas.**

Rivers in the countryside nearby to farms can also suffer from pollution incidents. These are caused by run-offs of pesticides used by farmers in their everyday work. To help prevent this we have given advice to farmers on the handling and storage of pesticides. In particular pollution from pesticides is occurring at Carr Brook, Longton Brook, Buckhow Brook, Culbeck Brook and Calico Brook.

Too many nutrients from fertilisers entering a river can lead to excessive

amounts of weed and algae. These look unattractive and take oxygen out of the water. This can harm fish. To improve this situation nutrient removal will take place at Leyland and Chorley Wastewater Treatment Works over the next few years. This will benefit both the River Lostock and River Yarrow.

Another problem in the countryside, where there is no connection to the public sewer, is caused by the use of septic tanks. These can cause public health problems as they discharge into the River Douglas and its tributaries. There are a lot of areas where septic tanks are used and we are discussing with North West Water Ltd how best to resolve this problem.

## Key future actions

- Carry out farm surveys and pollution control campaigns to identify sources of farm pollution.
- Continue to resolve wrong connections to the sewerage system by householders.
- Improve Leyland Wastewater Treatment Works.

# Improving bathing water quality

North West Water Ltd has completed major improvements to the sewerage network and Wastewater Treatment Works but there are still failures to meet European Standards for bathing waters along the surrounding coast. The main contributors in the Douglas area are the Wastewater Treatment Works at Wigan, Skelmersdale and Hesketh Bank.

## Key successes

- The two combined sewer overflows on Barby Brook culvert have now been abandoned.
- The installation of phosphorus removal plant at Horwich Wastewater Treatment Works in 1998.
- Installation of further treatment at Hesketh Bank Wastewater Treatment Works to reduce bacteriological input to the Ribble Estuary. This will help to improve bathing water quality.

## Key future actions

- Improved treatment at Skelmersdale Wastewater Treatment Works to reduce concentrations of copper.
- Improve bathing water quality by the installation of further treatment at Skelmersdale and Wigan Wastewater Treatment Works.

