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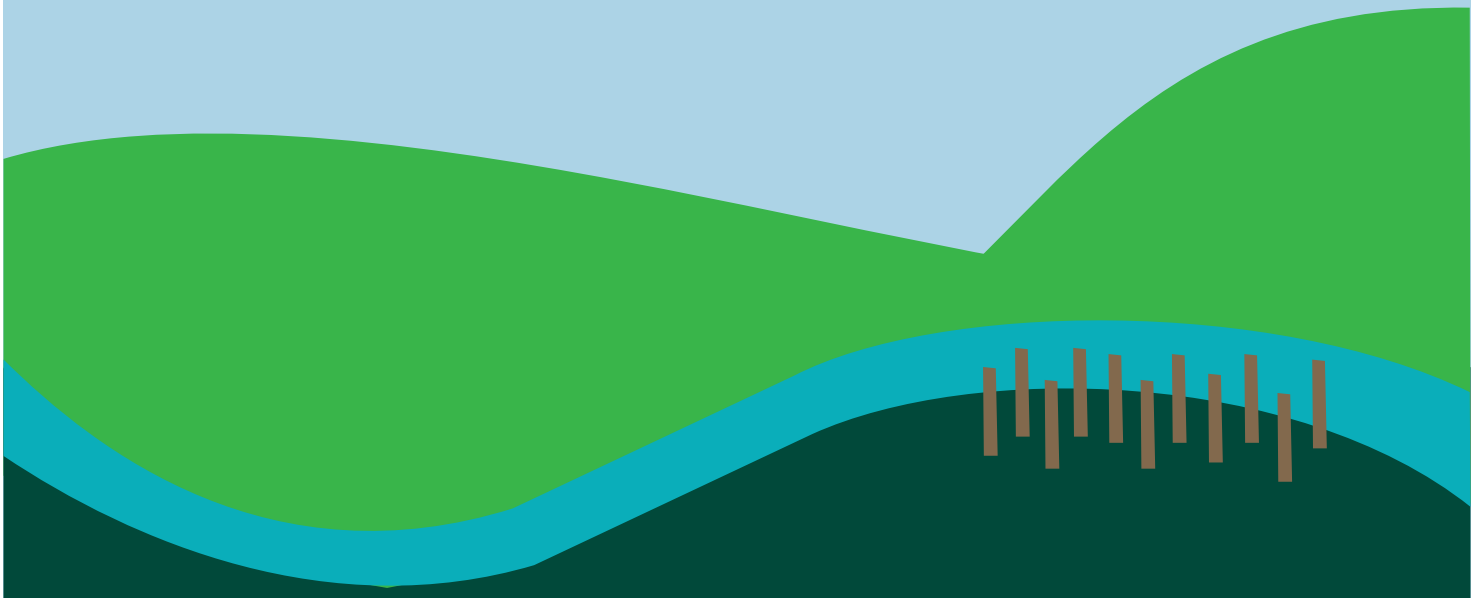
FLOOD RELATED BENEFITS OF THE WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE



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The Water Framework Directive (WFD) is a European Union directive which came into force in the UK in December 2003. It established a legal framework for the protection, improvement and sustainable use of the water environment, including rivers, streams, brooks, lakes, estuaries canals and groundwater.

Objectives of the WFD include:

- To achieve 'good' status for all water bodies by 2015 (extended deadline to 2027)
- Preventing deterioration in the status of water bodies
- Reducing pollution from priority polluting substances (such as Lead, Cadmium, Mercury and Benzene)
- Preventing and/or limiting pollution input into groundwater
- Conserving aquatic ecosystems, habitats and species
- Mitigating the effects of floods and droughts on water bodies
- Promoting sustainable use of water as a natural resource
- Balancing abstraction of water and replenishing levels.

How will objectives be met?

The Environment Agency has developed plans that detail the actions needed within each of the 11 River Basin Districts in England and Wales.

A wide range of organisations, including Water Companies and Local Authorities, need to take action to ensure the objectives are met.

The overall aim is for both the 'water bodies' and 'protected areas' within each River Basin District to achieve 'good' status by 2015 (extended deadline to 2027).

How are water bodies assessed?

They are given a score according to:

- Ecological status - measured on a scale of high; good; moderate; poor; and bad
- Chemical status - measured as 'good' or 'fail'.

These scores are then combined and the lowest scoring element determines a water body's overall status.

Why is the WFD needed?

There are many pressures that can lead to the status of a water body being assessed as less than 'good'. These include:

- Point source pollution (such as a power station)
- Diffuse source pollution (run-off from agricultural land or spillages)
- Over-abstraction (removal/diversion) of water
- Invasive non-native species (such as Mink)

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- Flooding
- Physical changes such as weirs and culverts.

Pressures on the water environment are likely to increase further because of population growth, development needs and climate change. Everyone needs to work together to improve the situation.

Why is this important for local communities and the economy?

A high quality water environment provides a good habitat for plants, animals and also benefits local people by improving their 'quality of life'. They provide:

- Wildlife, ecosystems and habitats
- Watercourses, floodplains and green spaces
- Recreation
- Health benefits
- Attractive places to work and live.

Water resources and a high quality water environment also help economic development, by providing water for:

- Development of commercial and private properties (water supply infrastructure)
- Economic benefits for tourism, food production, industry, transport, agriculture
- Abstraction for drinking
- Resilience to climate change.

Who can help?

Organisations, individuals and companies all have important roles to play in helping to repair the damage we have done to water ecosystems and ensuring that they can continue to thrive.

The range of actions set out in the River Basin Management Plans include:

- Use water more efficiently
- Raise awareness – any waste entering a drain may go directly to the nearest stream, river, lake, canal, beach or bathing water - causing pollution and killing wildlife
- Be knowledgeable about your local area, watercourses and flood risk
- Reduce pollution and keep watercourses clean.

Landowners can contact the Environment Agency to discuss actions on main rivers such as:

- Removal or re-adjustment of disused structures such as weirs, sluices or walls
- Restoring old meanders
- Protection of eroded banks
- Decreasing run-off from fields
- Modifying farming practices to prevent water pollution.

Debris in Watercourses

Large blockages in a watercourse can often lead to flooding but, in many cases, small amounts of 'woody debris' can be of benefit to wildlife and should be retained (as long as this does not increase flood risk and does not affect the flow of water).

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Further Information & Contacts

For more information on the Water Framework Directive
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/

Further information on water quality policy is available from GOV.UK here:
https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-water-quality

Information on Natural England
http://www.naturalengland.org.uk

Oxfordshire County Council - Flood and Water Management:
http://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/

River Basin Management Plans:
https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/river-basin-management-plans-2015#thames-river-basin-district-rbmp-2015

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