

NORTH EAST



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



Regional review
and forward look

Introduction

This regional review illustrates what we have achieved in North East Region in 1998/1999, what we do routinely to improve the local environment and what our future priorities are (summarised in the Regional General Manager's foreword). By publishing this document we aim to inform a wide audience, including local authorities, industry, secondary schools, libraries, MPs and Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), about our role in the environment as a regulator, operator and adviser so that they can interact with us more easily.

The Environment Agency is one of the largest and most powerful environmental protection agencies in Europe. Our primary aim is to protect and improve the environment throughout England and Wales and to contribute to sustainable development through the integrated management of air, land and water. We were established by the 1995 Environment Act and became fully operational on 1 April 1996. Each of our regions will be making its contribution to addressing the major environmental issues that affect England and Wales. Our national priorities for 1999/2000 are to:

- *deliver a more effective flood forecasting, warning and emergency response service;*
- *ensure that the water companies commit over £6bn to protect and improve the quality of our rivers, bathing waters and wetlands;*
- *take action to reduce over-abstraction at six priority Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs);*
- *restore healthy fish populations to 150km of selected rivers;*
- *ensure that all Integrated Pollution Control (IPC) sites have a current risk assessment in order to set regulatory priorities;*
- *make public the quantities of chemicals released to air, land and water from IPC regulated processes;*
- *introduce Integrated Pollution Prevention Control (IPPC) successfully with all support systems in place, and secure agreement with local authorities on our respective roles;*
- *complete the national waste survey of 20,000 industrial and commercial sites to enable the development of local and national waste strategies;*
- *ensure that the Agency operates effectively across the year 2000 ("Millennium bug") divide, and reinforce the need for industry to have in place contingency plans to protect the environment;*
- *complete all Local Environment Agency Plan consultation reports.*

Regional review and forward look

Map legend

ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

1. St Bede's landfill near Chester-le-Street will install gas recovery systems.



REGULATING MAJOR INDUSTRIES

2. BP Ltd., Easington near Withernsea, aiming to reduce benzene emissions by 99 per cent before the end of this year.



IMPROVING AIR QUALITY

3. We will complete computer modelling to predict the effects on air quality of the Aire and Trent Valley power stations (providing 40 per cent of the UK's electricity) and industry on Teeside.



MANAGING WASTE

4. A £1 million collaborative project to improve the environmental performance of companies in Newcastle.



MANAGING OUR WATER RESOURCES

5. Fitting ultrasonic equipment to measure the depth of water flows at Skip Bridge on the River Nidd. Adequate flows will enable fish to pass through.



DELIVERING INTEGRATED RIVER-BASIN MANAGEMENT

6. Complete the Berwick to Newcastle cycle route along the Northumberland coast as part of the Wansbeck Estuary environmental improvement project.



CONSERVING THE LAND

7. A programme of visits to farmers in East Yorkshire to advise on pollution prevention, especially from nitrates in fertiliser entering water.



FLOOD DEFENCE

8. Work will start on the £8.93 million Wakefield Flood Alleviation Scheme on the River Calder. The scheme is linked to the multi-million pound Wakefield Waterfront Regeneration Project.



The Environment Agency takes a strategic and integrated view of managing and improving the environment across England and Wales. In carrying out our work we aim to be open and business-like in all that we do.

The themes identified in the Agency's Environmental Strategy have been drawn together in an illustration which, along with its components, appears throughout this document.

ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE



REGULATING MAJOR INDUSTRIES



IMPROVING AIR QUALITY



MANAGING WASTE



MANAGING OUR WATER RESOURCES



DELIVERING INTEGRATED RIVER-BASIN MANAGEMENT



CONSERVING THE LAND



FLOOD DEFENCE



MANAGING FRESHWATER FISHERIES



ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



Clovercoat

Printed on Clovercoat, the Environment Agency's own recycled, totally chlorine free paper. Clovercoat is made from 100% post consumer waste - including the Agency's own waste paper - supplied to the mill through a paper recycling merchant.

The making of this paper meets all of the Agency's stringent environmental standards.



MANAGING FRESHWATER FISHERIES

9. Developing sites at Chapman's Pond, York, and East Park Lake, Hull, as part of the Urban Fisheries Project.



ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY

10. In partnership with others, improve wildlife habitats by creating wetland areas and planting trees, and increase recreational access as part of the Gaunless Valley Initiative.



Key

-  Area Administrative Boundaries
-  Region Boundary
-  Area Office
-  Regional Office



ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY

ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE



The Agency's main influence on climate change is through regulating greenhouse gas emissions from major industries. Last year at one site alone (Dupont on Teesside) greenhouse gas emissions were reduced by the equivalent of three million tonnes of carbon dioxide. We also encouraged the installation of methane control and energy recovery systems at 8 landfill sites. Gas produced at Biffa's Howley Park landfill site is turned into energy to fire brick kilns on a neighbouring property.

The Agency sets an example by trying to reduce its own energy and fossil fuel consumption. Our new offices, constructed last year in Leeds and Rotherham, were designed with energy conservation as a priority.

REGULATING MAJOR INDUSTRIES



The Agency aims to make sure that the environment is not harmed by the industries it regulates. In the region, industry is concentrated mainly in the metropolitan areas and on the Tyne, Tees and Humber estuaries.

Last year we made 1,277 inspections of industrial processes, 13,326 of discharges into water, 26,515 of waste management sites and 524 of premises storing, using or disposing of radioactive materials. We reviewed 94 process authorisations, took 40,060 water and effluent samples, and responded to over 3,500 pollution incidents.

Enforcement action is taken where necessary to prevent pollution and ensure compliance with regulations. Last year, 89 prosecutions resulted in fines of £113,900 and a custodial sentence of 21 months.

We worked closely with National Power following problems with pollution prevention equipment at Drax Power Station. We encouraged public consultation as there were considerable local concerns. The pollution prevention equipment is now back in operation and a programme of testing is in place.



IMPROVING AIR QUALITY



The Agency's main impact on air quality is by regulating emissions from major industrial processes. Details of the processes we regulate are available on our public registers and Internet site. This now includes the Pollution Inventory, with information on pollutants from the largest industrial processes in the country.



We have provided information on emissions to local authorities to assist them in developing Air Quality Management Plans. Two key zones have been identified, the Teesside industrial complex and the Aire and Trent power stations.

Air pollution from transport is the responsibility of local authorities. However, we are reducing emissions from our own vehicles by cutting mileage to meetings through video-conferencing and encouraging the use of public transport.

MANAGING WASTE



Waste requires careful management and to do this we need to know what is produced and where it goes. Last year the Agency carried out a National Waste Survey and 1,710 businesses were visited in the region. The results will provide information on waste produced by industry and commerce and will help develop a National Waste Strategy for England and Wales. We also used the survey as an opportunity to advise businesses on waste minimisation, which is now recognised by many companies as vital to their profitability.

Illegal tipping of waste, or "fly-tipping", is a widespread problem which makes the environment unattractive and, in some cases, can lead to land and water pollution and harm to people. Agency enforcement staff carry out investigations, and where necessary surveillance, to identify and prosecute offenders. Last year a man was fined the maximum £20,000 by the courts for illegally disposing of waste.



Improving the recreational use of rivers and the coast is an important aspect of many of our partnership projects and the 56 coastal bathing waters in the region are monitored throughout the summer for cleanliness. Last year footpaths were repaired, footbridges and stepping stones replaced and visitor centres developed in phase 2 of the Yorkshire Dales Millennium project.



CONSERVING THE LAND



Land is a limited resource and the way it is managed is a key influence on the shape of the future environment. The Agency tries to influence town and country planning to prevent development in the wrong places. Last year we worked closely with local authorities and existing planning conferences to provide environmental input into regional planning guidance.

Contaminated land can result in water pollution and health risks. The Agency aims to prevent further contamination and promotes suitable remediation to bring land back into beneficial use. For example, work is under way to investigate soil and groundwater contamination at a former tar distillery in Mirfield, West Yorkshire.



In the region we have developed training courses and booklets on rural land use to help Agency Officers to provide advice on the way good land management can prevent damage to soil, water, plants and wildlife.

FLOOD DEFENCE



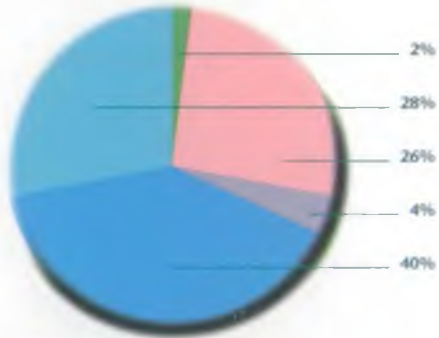
The Agency provides more than 3,490 km of flood defences in the region. Recent major flooding in many parts of the country led to a national report on our flood warning and emergency response service. The Agency has produced action plans to address the issues raised in the report which will be implemented by April 2000. A major flood warning exercise will be held to test the new arrangements.

North East key statistics

Area (sq.km)	22,490
Population (millions)	8
Number of local authorities	48
Number of LEAP areas	12
Number of Water Quality discharge consents in force	12,445
Number of Integrated Pollution Control authorisations	510
Number of Radioactive Substances authorisations	120
Number of nuclear sites	2
Number of Radioactive Substances registrations	805
Percentage of waste produced in England and Wales	13
Number of Waste Management site licences	1,388
Average annual rainfall (mm/year)	876
Number of Water Resources abstraction and impoundment licences in force	4,702
Length of fluvial flood defences maintained (km)	5,006
Length of coastline (km)	343
Length of tidal and sea defences maintained (km)	584
Number of EC designated Bathing Waters	56
Number of Agency landholdings with potential for recreational use	235
Number of navigable rivers (km)	n/a
Number of rod licence sales	143,177
Site of Special Scientific Interest (sq.km)	3,113

TOTAL ANNUAL SPEND (£k IN 1999/2000)

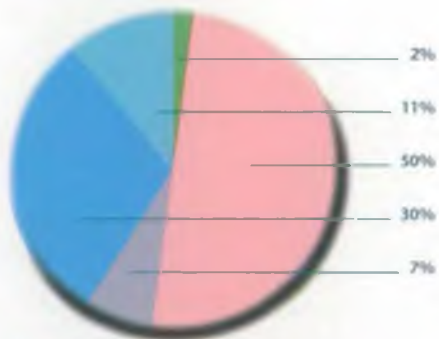
Regional direct and support costs only; excludes all national costs (£64,044)



£1,054	Conservation & Recreation
£16,749	Environmental Protection
£2,612	Fisheries
£25,925	Flood Defence
£17,704	Water Resources

TOTAL STAFFING 1999/2000

(1,066 full time equivalents - includes 176 support staff)



26	Conservation & Recreation
533	Environmental Protection
72	Fisheries
322	Flood Defence
113	Water Resources

MANAGING OUR WATER RESOURCES



The region has relatively abundant rainfall but the distribution varies greatly, from less than 600 mm a year at the coast to more than 1,800 mm on the high Pennines. The Agency is responsible for balancing the needs of all users of this water and the needs of the environment. Last year we issued 168 new abstraction licences and carried out 1,902 inspections of existing authorised abstractions.

We urge water companies to reduce leakage and manage the water demands of their customers. As part of the periodic review of water company charges and expenditure for 2000 to 2005, we ensured that water resources-related environmental improvements were included in the National Environmental Programme.

DELIVERING INTEGRATED RIVER-BASIN MANAGEMENT



Integrated river-basin management is a way of looking at the river and its surrounding land as a whole, including landscape and recreational use. The Agency is involved in partnership projects to improve rivers and their surroundings and advises on improvement works by the water companies. Improvements carried out at the Huddersfield Sewage Treatment Works in West Yorkshire will benefit 44.6 km of river.

A £1.2 million partnership project completed at Bullhouse minewater in South Yorkshire improved the quality of 8 km of the River Don. The Agency is also a partner in a two-year project to remedy pollution from abandoned mine workings on the River Nent near Hexham.

The River Skerne Restoration Project, in which the Agency was a major partner and contractor, won a 1999 Civic Trust Award. These awards are given to outstanding examples of architecture and environmental design.



This year we are holding national Annual General Meetings (AGMs) in England and Wales and nine regional events across England. Our aim in doing so is to demonstrate real commitment to openness and accountability in our work.

Regional reviews are available at each regional event. They aim to provide a link between our Environmental Strategy, the Agency's Corporate Plan and our Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs). This document is structured around the themes of the Environmental Strategy (see the key). It highlights how we have made an effective contribution to sustainable development and how we intend to take forward an integrated and long-term approach to the management of the environment.

A map showing some of the local actions to improve the environment is included on the reverse of this leaflet for cross-reference

with the text. You can also read and download this document, and other publications, from our Internet site at www.environment-agency.gov.uk or obtain copies from our offices. Addresses are listed on the back of this leaflet.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



As a public body we are committed to being open, efficient, accessible and responsive to our customers. The Agency's standards are published in its Customer Charter. We consult regularly with our regional committees and area environment groups to bring our actions and decision-making processes into the open. Through the preparation of 12 Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs) in the region, we involved local organisations, local authorities and communities in general in identifying and prioritising issues of concern.

We are working in partnership with One NorthEast and Yorkshire Forward, the devolved government regions. We aim to produce joint plans in which environmental, economic and social issues are properly integrated. The first draft Regional Sustainability Plan for Yorkshire Forward was launched on 31 March 1999.

The Agency recognises that education at all levels, including in the community and industry, will result in a more informed society that is better able to understand the environment. We provide a wide range of information to all sectors of society and give many talks and presentations.

The Agency has published a leaflet "Green Shoots - our vision for Environmental Education". Displays were held in shopping centres in Gateshead and Hull to encourage people to adopt environmentally friendly behaviour in their everyday lives. This proved very successful and will be extended this year.

Two national flood defence case studies have been developed as educational tools for sixth formers and university students. We will continue to raise environmental awareness and encourage good environmental practice by developing education materials aimed at GNVQ courses in schools and colleges. The Agency also provides educational materials for children in the key stages 1, 2 and 3 of the National Curriculum.

In 2000 the Agency will be holding millennium festivals around the country. One of the three pilots will be held in North East Region's Northumbria Area from 5-11 July 1999. There will be a week-long programme of environmental improvements in the community, including planting and litter removal, and it will culminate in a carnival. "Metro FM", a local radio station, is promoting the campaign.

Work continues to ensure that the Agency's systems are prepared for the new millennium. Replacement of our Regional Telemetry System is under way to assist with flood forecasting and issuing warnings. It will be completed by September 1999. We have also reinforced the need for industry to have in place contingency plans to protect the environment. Failure of their specialist equipment could cause pollution incidents.

Last year the Agency constructed £12 million of flood defences. Lock gates were replaced at King George and Alexandra Docks to protect 2,000 hectares of developed land in East Hull. A further section of the £1.3 million River Spen Flood Alleviation Scheme and work at the Portrack Outfall, Lustrum Beck, Stockton, were completed to protect against tidal flooding.



MANAGING FRESHWATER FISHERIES



The region has a wide variety of coarse and game fish in rivers and lakes. It is the Agency's responsibility to protect and improve these fisheries. To achieve this we are improving river habitats and reintroducing fish wherever conditions are suitable.

We are also increasing angling opportunities in towns and cities through our partnership urban fisheries projects. Projects were completed last year at Woodhall Lake in Pudsey, West Yorkshire, and Middleton Park Lake in Leeds.

We carried out 38,000 licence checks in the region, resulting in 529 prosecutions and fines of £25,525. This included the region's first successful prosecution for the illegal introduction of fish and prosecutions against three people for illegally fishing for salmon, who had been bailed with a night curfew prior to their hearing.

ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY



Biodiversity refers to the variety of animal and plant life and the habitats in which they are found. The Agency has a lead role in protecting the otter, water vole, native crayfish, freshwater mussels and important chalk stream habitats. We are surveying water vole populations and are partners in the Otter Recovery Project. In a partnership project at Tanfield Lea Marsh Nature Reserve, County Durham, surveys have been carried out to obtain information on key species.

The Agency is reviewing all existing authorisations to establish their effect on priority conservation areas, as required by the Habitats Directive. This year we are concentrating our effort on two sites in the region, Lower Derwent and Thorne & Hatfield Moors.

Regional General Manager's foreword

We all have an investment in the environment, and future improvements to air, land and water in the North East Region need to be a shared goal. Sustainable environmental protection and management depends upon successful partnerships and effective teamwork.

The Agency recognises this need for collaboration and strives to build partnerships with those who share our objectives. We do this by consulting widely on our work - especially when we are developing new policies and ways of implementing them. Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs) provide communities with a local agenda for environmental improvement.

Our regional committees and area environment groups are also a valuable source of input into the Agency's work.

To deliver the commitments made, the Agency also needs adequate funding - both from the Government and charge payers.

The Agency believes that its proposals to develop Operator and Pollution Risk Appraisal (OPRA) for inspections will mean our resources are better targeted at higher risk processes, those more likely to pollute the environment.

The regulatory regime under which we operate is complex and undergoing significant change. One of the major changes is the introduction of Integrated Pollution Prevention Control (IPPC). This updates UK legislation and brings it into line with European legislation and also introduces new issues such as noise and energy.

The Agency recognises the need for development and change to meet the challenges that lie ahead in the new millennium. Here in the North East Region we are confident that we are ready to face those challenges.

If you would like any further information or would like to make any general or specific comments on our priorities and future plans, please contact Sue Longstone, Strategic Planning Manager on 0113 244 0191 or e-mail sue.longstone@environment-agency.gov.uk

Roger Hyde, Regional General Manager

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