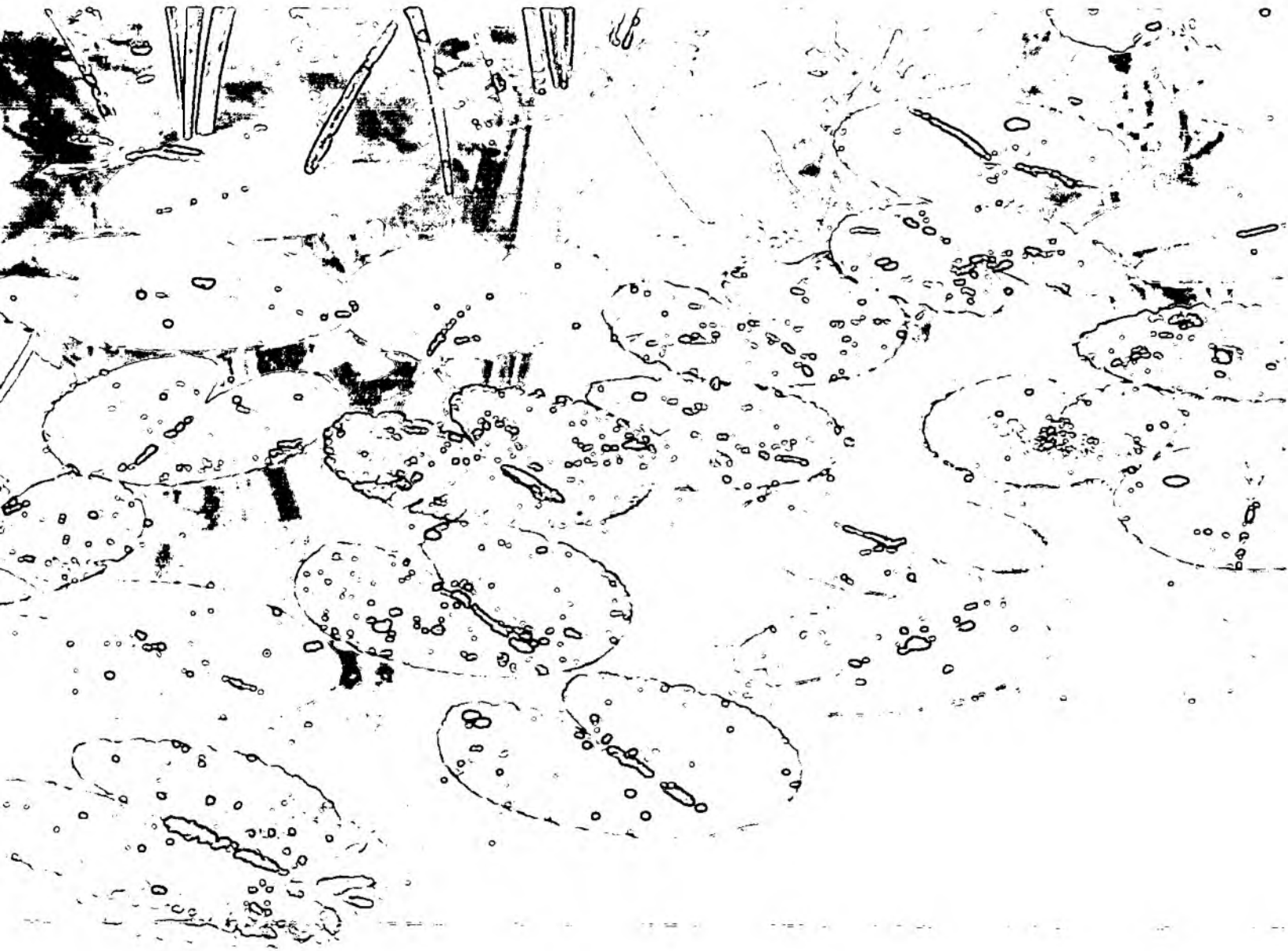


Conservation



Conservation

In the North West

The Environment Agency is the strongest environmental protection agency in Europe. Our role is to protect and improve the environment as a whole by effective regulation, by our own actions and by working with, and influencing, others.

The north west has an important role in protecting some of the country's very best and most treasured resources, as well as improving some of the most highly degraded habitats. In this respect the region is one of striking contrasts. It includes natural areas of international conservation significance such as the Lake District National Park, the Cheshire Meres and Mosses and the region's estuaries, which are important for the bird life they support.

Several of our rivers are considered the best of their type in Britain. The Eden and Derwent / Cocker in Cumbria are hot spots for rare species including otter, crayfish and rare fish, such as all three species of British Lamprey. However, the heavily urbanised Greater Manchester conurbation and the Mersey catchment include some of the country's most degraded and polluted wildlife habitats.

Under the legislation which established the Environment Agency, we have a duty to regard the conservation of landscape, flora and fauna, and the preservation of cultural heritage. The Agency employs teams of Ecologists to ensure that all the activities of the Agency are carried out in an environmentally sympathetic manner, and that where appropriate, ecological interests are maintained and enhanced. The ecologists maintain a close liaison with other voluntary and statutory conservation bodies for consultation and for collaboration in joint projects.

Conservation Information

In order to consider the effects of all work and consents for which we are responsible, it is essential that we maintain databases of all notified sites of conservation and archaeological interest. This includes a range of internationally protected sites (such as Special Areas for Conservation and Special Protection Areas), four Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and one Heritage Coast site at St. Bees Head in Cumbria, three National Parks, over 1,000 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, and around 500 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) including over half of the total length of river SSSI's in England.



Carrying out river life assessment.

The databases are backed up by River Corridor Surveys of main rivers within the Region. These identify habitat features of importance to wildlife, such as reedbeds, wet woodlands, gravel shoals for invertebrates and earth cliffs for nesting Kingfishers.





Surveying river vegetation.

The Agency is now developing a River Habitat Survey which will allow us to assess the conservation value of rivers within a scientific framework.

Recreation and Access

The Agency encourages recreation facilities which optimise a range of different uses, including access for the disabled. We are keen to participate in projects which have conservation and recreation benefits.

Several of our land holdings are accessible for recreation use, whilst being managed to enhance wildlife interest. Sale Water Park (managed by Trafford MBC) provides nature walks and water sports. Public fishing is available at Halton and Skerton on the River Lune, with a valid rod licence and day ticket.

Conservation and Flood Defence

Conservation is an important factor in the planning of flood defence capital programmes. Each proposed scheme undergoes an environmental assessment which involves examining the impact on the environment of the different

options. This process is designed to identify local needs, sensitive environmental issues, and to collate the differing views of the public and environmental bodies.

Through this, we are able to decide on a strategy that is not only effective, but sympathetically meets the needs of the environment, with mitigation and enhancement works planned from the start.

The regular maintenance of rivers for flood defence also has the potential to affect the environment. The flood defence maintenance programmes are scrutinised by our Ecology staff, in liaison with outside bodies, to ensure that activities such as weed cutting, dredging and tree work are undertaken in an environmentally acceptable way. We are also developing Water Level Management Plans for important conservation sites, to balance the needs of drainage and conservation.

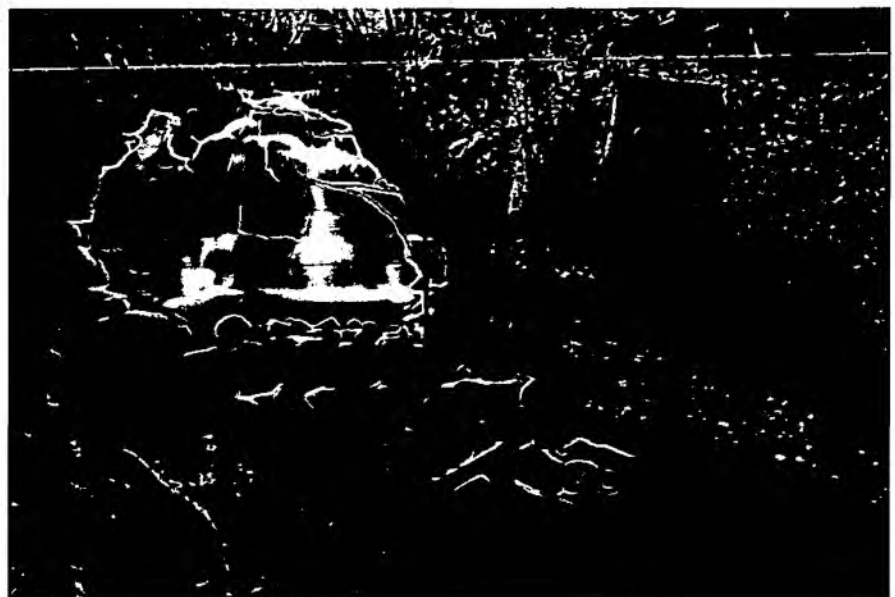
Conservation and Water Resources

The Agency is required to manage water resources, not only to meet the important needs of life in the aquatic

environment, but also the legitimate demands of abstractors of water. In many instances, these demands are in competition and the Agency has the job of striking the right balance between the two. All applications to abstract water, whether from surface waters or groundwater, are screened by Ecology staff to ensure that they are unlikely to have an effect on important conservation sites. In particular, the presence of wetland sites, where the water regime may be critical for the survival of the plants and animals or archaeological features present, will influence decisions.

Conservation and Pollution Prevention

The quality of water is just as important to wildlife. Many of our rarest species (eg. some dragonflies, water plants and fish) are very vulnerable to pollution. Likewise, air quality and the disposal of waste can have a major impact on wildlife. The Agency's work to prevent and control pollution to air, land and water all benefit conservation interests.



Conservation and Planning

The Agency has a statutory duty to take into account the conservation and enhancement of the water environment when commenting on planning application. Ecology staff carefully consider applications, aided by a comprehensive set of standardised responses. An input is also made to local authority development plans.

In order to balance the competing pressures upon the environment, the Agency is undertaking a rolling programme of Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPS).

The process involves the Agency liaising with external bodies and using its statutory powers to produce long-term strategies, for the protection of the local environment. Conservation sections in these plans identify vulnerable sites and species which require sensitive, sustainable management so that we can protect, and, where possible, enhance them for the benefit of future generations.

Promotional Projects

The Agency has close links with many outside bodies concerned with conservation - English Nature, local authorities and voluntary bodies. We are pleased to participate in collaborative projects which promote conservation aims with these and with other land-owners.

Recent projects have included collaboration in the Pond Life Project and in the many River Valley Initiatives helping to bring environmental benefits to urban areas. The Agency is also involved in biodiversity projects to conserve rare species such as fresh water pearl mussel and vendace in Cumbria, and black poplars in Cheshire. Major river restoration projects have been undertaken including the Padgate and Whittle Brooks in Warrington and the River Alt in Merseyside.

The Agency also seeks to promote, inform and play a positive role in increasing public awareness of the need for conservation of the aquatic environment, through publications, media work, attendance at county shows and other high-profile events, and support for educational activities.

How to contact the Environment Agency

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For general enquiries please call your local Environment Agency Office. If you are unsure who to contact or which is your local office please call our general enquiry line.

**ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
GENERAL ENQUIRY LINE**

0645 333 111

The 24 hour emergency hotline number for reporting all environmental incidents relating to air, land and water.

**ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
EMERGENCY HOTLINE**

0800 80 70 60



**Environment Agency
Information Centre
Head Office**

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