

LOCAL ENVIRONMENT Focus

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN AND AROUND BURTON-UPON-TRENT,
NUNEATON AND TAMWORTH

ISSUE 1



box has been installed near the river. Each box will be monitored for the next three years to record the occupancy rate by barn owls. Similar projects elsewhere in the country have proved extremely successful.

Phase II of the project is due to start this winter (2002) where the same approach is being taken along the Rivers Anker and Sence. Volunteers from the West Midlands Bird Club will be undertaking the monitoring for both phases of the project.

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For more information, please contact: Ruth Hering in Fisheries, Recreation and Conservation, Environment Agency, Fradley office.



Boost to flood warning

New rainfall and river flow gauges are being added to the existing network in the Burton, Nuneaton and Tamworth area to boost the flood warning service to the public.

After the floods of autumn 2000, work on the service has been continuing to improve flood warnings, advice and information to the public.

There are currently ten flood warning areas within the area of this LEAP. These are:

- TR6 - River Trent, Yoxall to Drakelow
- TR7 - River Trent, Drakelow to Claymills
- TA8 - River Tame, Lea Marston to Drayton Manor
- TA9 - River Anker, Nuneaton to Tamworth
- TA10 - River Tame, Drayton Manor to Hopwas

- TA11 - River Tame, Hopwas to Alrewas
- ME1 - River Mease, Clifton Campville to Harlaston
- SE1 - River Sence, Sheepy Magna to Ratcliffe Culey
- GW1 - Gilwiskaw Brook, Packington to Clifton Campville
- BB1 - Bourne Brook, Hints to Fazeley

According to the Agency's floodplain maps, there are about 20,000 properties at varying levels of risk within these flood warning areas. Additions to the network of river level and rainfall gauges in the catchment means that an improved service can be extended to people, giving time to protect themselves, their family and their property when flooding does occur.

For further information contact: Sam Probert, Flood Defence, Environment Agency, Fradley office.

Community Strategies

A plan to clean up the River Anker is due to take place next year, with the Environment Agency working in partnership with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council on the first example of a community strategy in the area.

The Agency will support the clean-up and has already influenced the project to include changes to the appearance and structure of part of the riverbank to enhance biodiversity.

Community strategies arise from the statutory duty of all local authorities to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas and contribute to sustainable development. The Agency, working at regional and local levels, has responsibilities that may be relevant to a particular strategy, and each local authority creates its own Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to oversee the creation of the resulting action plan. The LSP consists of members of the local community (local business people, the police, community groups etc) and the Agency may be represented on the LSP or within an environmental sub group reporting to the full group.

Such strategies and partnerships give the Agency the chance to ensure that environmental issues are on the agenda as part of wider economic and social activities, as well as helping to deliver the strategy to local people. Staff can work with other bodies to cut down on overlap of effort and concentrate on the public's needs as well as how to benefit the environment across the area.

Agency staff are now involved in LSPs, at environmental sub-group level, in local authorities in the Burton, Nuneaton and Tamworth areas and the Agency is now beginning to forge relationships in which may result in successful partnership projects within this area.

For more information please contact: Maxine Pitt, in the Partnerships Team, Environment Agency, Fradley office.

Protecting the environment as new motorway is built

Playing a key role in protecting the environment along the route of the Birmingham Northern Relief Road (BNRR), the Environment Agency is keen that the new road should use the best drainage possible to avoid water pollution.

The BNRR, or the M6 Toll Road (as it will be officially named), is the biggest infrastructure project being built locally, and it will be highly visible during the three-year construction period.

The Agency, in its role as a key regulator of industry, is working closely with the construction consortium CAMMBA to make sure that the environment is affected as little as possible during construction, by liaising with the companies and checking that their work abides by legislation. Agency staff are also identifying opportunities to improve the environment where possible during the project.

The BNRR will be 27 miles long and will have three lanes in each direction. Its route runs from junction 4 of the M6 to a point between junctions 11 and 12 of the M6. Following the existing road and rail corridor to the east and north of Birmingham, its purpose is to relieve congestion and improve links to Sutton Coldfield, Tamworth, Lichfield, Burntwood, Brownhills and Cannock.

All the necessary land was acquired by the end of 2000. During the winter of 2001 detailed design work and some site work was conducted. Major construction work has now begun. From January 2001 onwards, the Agency has held fortnightly liaison meetings with CAMBBA. At these meetings the Agency's role is to:

- reduce the impact of the BNRR on the environment and look for environmental enhancement where possible
- promote Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) to deal with surface water running off the road
- ensure protection of the water system around Lichfield.

For more information, please contact: Vic Brown in Development Control, Environment Agency, Fradley office.



Construction underway

Bringing barn owls back to the midlands

Special breeding sites for barn owls are being developed by the Environment Agency working in close collaboration with the Hawk and Owl Trust and the West Midlands Bird Club. The sites will help to promote a natural increase in the number of barn owls along several rivers in the area.

Numbers of barn owls have dropped nationally by 50% since the 1930s. More recently, river networks have been identified as an effective way of encouraging the natural spread of barn owls into new areas. Work is now underway to provide suitable breeding sites for this protected species.

Phase I of the project has targeted the Rivers Tame and Mease. Farms along each river have been visited by an expert from the Hawk and Owl Trust, and assessed for their suitability to support barn owls. This involves surveying possible breeding sites, possible dangers to the birds, and areas of rough grassland. This habitat supports small mammals which are the barn owls' principal food source. Where the land is suitable, a barn owls'



Foreword

Working with local people, the Environment Agency is responsible for protecting and enhancing the environment and promoting sustainable development. One way of doing this is through our Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPS), which provide a framework for our progress. We hope that you enjoy the new newsletter approach to the review of our work.

Some good progress has been made over the last year, due to the commitment made by both the Agency staff involved and by our partners. Partnerships will become increasingly important as demands on limited resources continue to increase. New staff have been recruited and there will be more emphasis on environmental improvement in areas of urban regeneration.

I look forward to building on the progress made so far with our partners in the Burton, Nuneaton and Tamworth area in the coming year.

P Burns

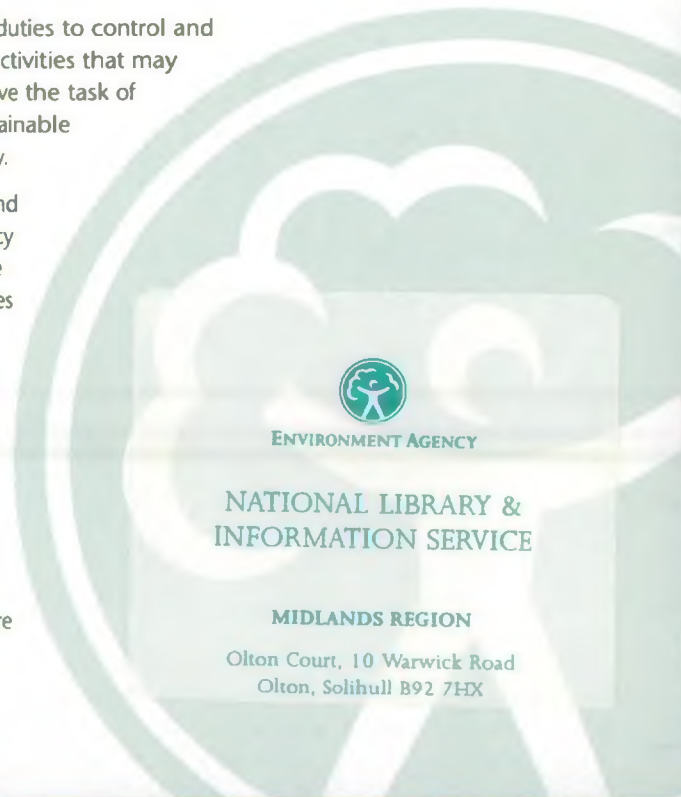
Philip Burns
Upper Trent Area Manager,
Environment Agency

The Environment Agency - who are we?

We are a public body committed to the protection and improvement of the natural environment. Formed in 1996, the Agency brought together the National Rivers Authority, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, Waste Regulation Authorities and a number of smaller units from the Department of the Environment. The Agency's existence means that we can take a more comprehensive approach to the protection and management of the environment.

We have statutory powers and duties to control and monitor the environment and activities that may be harmful to it and we also have the task of working towards achieving sustainable development across the country.

As well as regulating industry and informing the public, the Agency recognises that regulation alone cannot change people's attitudes or behaviour. While we continue with our immediate work - enforcing regulations to protect the environment and health, water management and flood protection and combating environmental crime, we also need to be a trusted partner in achieving sustainable development. We are committed to working with business, public bodies and community organisations to encourage people to change.



What is a LEAP?

A LEAP is a Local Environment Agency Plan. It is the Agency's integrated local management plan process, which is used to identify, assess, prioritise and, hopefully, solve local environmental issues or problems. These issues are related to the Agency's functions, but aim to take account of our local customers and may be tackled in partnership with them. These actions will aim to bring about environmental improvements to give the greatest benefits for the local environment.

Should anyone wish to support the work within the Burton, Nuneaton and Tamworth LEAP area or require a full report with progress made on LEAP actions this year, then please contact: Will Groves, Partnerships Officer, Environment Agency, Fradley office.

About the Burton, Nuneaton and Tamworth LEAP area

The Local Environment Agency Plan covers Burton, Nuneaton and Tamworth, - a diverse area extending to about 960 sq km, where industry and the environment have always affected each other - the environment has suffered from the after-effects of mining, for instance, and the brewing industry has thrived on the water around Burton upon Trent.

The LEAP is based on the catchment of the River Trent in its middle reaches between Alrewas, near Lichfield, and Newton Solney, to the north of Burton upon Trent. Gilwiskaw Brook and Hooborough Brook form significant tributaries to the east draining the South Derbyshire/North Leicestershire coalfields around Swadlincote and Ashby de la Zouch.

Part of the River Tame catchment is included in the LEAP as far south as Kingsbury and so are its main tributaries, the Bourne and Fotherley Brooks, draining from Lichfield, Burntwood, Brownhills, Aldridge and Sutton Coldfield to the west. The River Anker drains the area from Hinckley, Bedworth, Nuneaton and Atherstone to the east and joins the Tame at Tamworth. The River Anker is itself joined by the River Sence and Sence Brook draining as far east as Coalville.

The population in the area has been rising steadily in recent years, particularly in the south around Tamworth, Lichfield, Nuneaton and Hinckley, and partly reflects the numbers moving out of Birmingham. The three main towns are Burton upon Trent in the north, Tamworth in the middle of the area and Nuneaton in the south-east.

Agriculture is the main land use in the LEAP area and has a number of important roles to play in the countryside as well as its essential role of food production. They include management of the hedgerows, trees and ponds which contribute to the character of the countryside; protecting and improving the environment; and providing jobs and businesses to sustain the rural economy.

Employment in the area is a mix of manufacturing, service and extractive industries. Sand and gravel workings occur, or have occurred, at various places along the Tame and Trent. Their management, both during and after extraction, needs particular care. Unlike many other parts of the Midlands, coal mining still goes on in South Derbyshire/Leicestershire, although it remains vulnerable. Such mining is now open-cast, and it has made a significant mark on the landscape, making reclamation and aftercare of large areas of worked land important. The local groundwater at Burton upon Trent has led to it becoming famous as Britain's main brewing centre.

The main roads in the area are the M42, linking Birmingham with the M1 south of Nottingham, passing Tamworth and Ashby de la Zouch, the parallel A38 which links Birmingham with the M1, passing Lichfield and Burton upon Trent and the A5 which passes between Hinckley, Tamworth and Brownhills along the line of the Watling Street Roman Road. The construction of the Birmingham Northern Relief Road to pass through Birmingham's green belt to the north of Sutton Coldfield represents a significant challenge to the protection of the environment, both during construction and because of the development pressures which are bound to follow.

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Alrewas



River Anker



Roads represent a significant challenge



a pollution incident on the River Tame



Burton Upon Trent

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



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Improving rivers for the benefit of all

A major partnership, focussed on improving the area's rivers, has brought together the Environment Agency, local authorities, the mineral industry, voluntary organisations and others to develop a strategy to see the river corridor between Burton upon Trent and Tamworth improved and enhanced.

The aim is to ensure that the area can be used by many more people within the next 20 years and to see the local community benefit from the improvements to the local landscape and the river itself. The partnership, known as the Central Rivers Initiative, started in 1997 and covers a 13-mile stretch of the Trent and Tame river valleys between Burton upon Trent and Tamworth.

The area covered by the scheme includes past, current and future gravel workings that have real potential for improving the environment. For instance, they could be used to provide new wildlife habitats over the next 20 years. This would give, through restoration and management, a boost to biodiversity and a chance to regenerate the landscape and create more recreation facilities for the area.

The partnership has agreed a vision for the 6,000 hectares of the project area. The partnership provides a long-term strategy to find the right balance between landscape improvement, industrial and economic development, the creation of new habitats, the protection of the livelihood of farmers and other people working in the area, and the provision of new recreational opportunities. To take this forward, landowners, developers and regulators need to work together.

The plan also aims to enhance the whole river corridor. New facilities for recreation centred around the rivers could be developed, and access along the rivers, for walking and other informal recreation, could be improved. There are unique opportunities to restore former quarries and re-create valuable semi-natural habitats such as reed beds or wet grasslands and undertake river restoration schemes, unlikely to be achieved through other means. Some open water will be dedicated for habitat creation for wildlife, but opening up other areas to the public, such as along the Trent and Tame Walkways, is also another key theme.

The initiative relies on the co-operation and support of 16 associates to realise the project. A Central Rivers Project Officer has recently been appointed to help put the vision into effect, help to deliver the commitments in the LEAP and promote and develop projects on the ground with landowners, minerals operators and the community (and find funding for the projects). The Central Rivers Forum is a wider body of organisations committed to promoting the vision, providing local information and maintaining a network of individuals and groups who can all assist in meeting the aims and objectives of the initiative.

The initiative aims to:

- regenerate the river corridor and improve its quality
- make the National Memorial Arboretum an important local, regional and national tourist attraction
- provide opportunities for diversification of farming incomes
- consider opportunities for

create a habitat network throughout the project area

- fully use the natural resources of the area to benefit the local community
- prevent the sterilisation of available mineral resources
- identify opportunities to create more jobs in the area and to complement existing or future economic initiatives.

For further information please contact: Tina Cuss, Environment Agency, Fradley office.

“
landowners, developers and regulators need to work together..”



River Trent at Burton



Swans on the River Trent





sports facilities according to demand

- increase informal recreational use
- increase habitat provision in the area (eg of wetlands, reed beds and appropriate woodlands), to meet habitat and species targets, and to



Bank work on the River Tame

Rail modernisation

As the West Coast Main Line Modernisation Project begins to gather speed, the Environment Agency is beginning to play its part.

The Environment Agency is acting as a key consultee within the project as part of its role in enhancing and protecting the environment and the Upper Trent area has been chosen to co-ordinate the Agency's national response to the project, as much of the line runs through the area. There will be a single point of contact liaising closely with staff from areas along the route from London to Carlisle and a close working relationship will be established with Railtrack so that issues can be addressed as effectively as possible.

The Burton, Nuneaton and Tamworth LEAP area will see a major modernisation of the route, as Railtrack will be widening the rail corridor between Tamworth and Lichfield to accommodate two extra tracks. This is required as part of Railtrack's commitment to reduce journey times between London, the North West and Scotland. The widening scheme requires the widening of culverts along the route and a bridge widening scheme which crosses the River Tame in its lower reaches near to the village of Comberford, northwest of Tamworth. The Agency has been working with Railtrack and its contractors to minimise the environmental impact at this site.

For further information contact: Will Groves in the Partnerships Team, Environment Agency, Fradley office.



Project will bring major modernisation



Tackling Coventry and Nuneaton's problems together

Hoping to get involved in the regeneration of areas of Coventry and Nuneaton, the Agency will be able to help improve the quality of life for residents and make sure that the environment features in improvement plans.

The Coventry & Nuneaton Regeneration Zone is a partnership of public, private, voluntary and community agencies which have come together to tackle problems of poverty, deprivation and physical dereliction in the two towns.

The zone covers much of the northern section of Coventry and areas of Nuneaton and Bedworth. About 200,000 people live in the area, 50,000 of these within Nuneaton and Bedworth's administrative boundary.

The zone partnership has identified a number of key priorities and initial actions. Physical regeneration programmes will include projects in Camp Hill and environmental improvements in Nuneaton and Bedworth town centres. Development of local businesses will include improvements to the Bayton Road Industrial Estate in Nuneaton and Bedworth.

The Environment Agency is keen to get involved with the project, as it would like to ensure that environmental issues are central to the economic and social regeneration of the area. For example, the partnership could help to make local businesses more profitable by promoting the efficient use of resources, such as water and energy. Attracting environmental technology businesses to the zone would also have environmental, as well as social and economic, benefits.

John Mills from the Environment Agency has already met with the zone co-ordinator, Howard Anderson, to discuss how environmental considerations can be incorporated into the work of the zone partnership. This will be followed up by further input into the 10-year action plan for the zone, ensuring an ongoing commitment from the Agency to help improve the quality of life in this area.

For further information contact: John Mills, Partnership Team Leader, Environment Agency, Tewkesbury office.



We would be delighted to receive your feedback. If you have views on any of the articles in this newsletter or on the new style of this review of our work, please contact:

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