

EA MIDLANDS

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Taking
steps
towards
a better
environment
in the
Midlands

Partnership in environment protection



ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY

The Environment Agency's main aim is 'to protect and improve our environment, and to help to achieve sustainable development'. But we can't do this on our own. We need to set up partnerships and agreements in the community so that we can all work together.

Our predecessors were the National Rivers Authority, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, Waste Regulation Authorities and some parts of the Department of the Environment. They all engaged in a variety of activities, with different organisations, to benefit the environment. We will continue this work.

This booklet shows just some of the positive partnerships set up 'to protect and improve our environment', partnerships that have been of real practical benefit to local communities and the environment at large. It also shows how our 'Partnership in Environment Protection' can be taken forward.

These collaborative ventures can work in lots of different situations, for all kinds of projects, large and small. They are vital if we are to find sustainable solutions to the many environmental problems concerning all of us.

Our work at the Agency has eight main functions: Flood Defence, Water Resources, Pollution Control, Waste Regulation, Fisheries, Navigation, Recreation and Conservation. The breadth of these statutory functions, across the Midlands Region, at regional level and in the four areas - Upper and Lower Severn, and Upper and Lower Trent - give us scope for 'value added' schemes. For example, a flood defence scheme in Gainsborough was incorporated into a riverside development and provided a walkway for local residents.

Some of the projects featured here have been recently completed or are ongoing. Some are planned to start soon. But all of them provide the opportunity for ownership and participation by the community. They also illustrate the opportunities for an innovative and flexible approach to our environmental problems.

This booklet will serve as a record of projects in our region. We hope that it will also help us to promote an even more positive and proactive approach to working partnerships, as we seek to protect our environment.

*Cover photograph:
Stepping stones
created within the
Kingfisher Project -
part of a regeneration
programme at
Witton.*

*Left: Through
partnership rare black
poplars are being
protected in the
Upper Severn Area*

hip



Regional Schemes

...giving people from business, local government and other government agencies the chance to get together to discuss the problems we all face in tackling environmental issues.



collabo



Top: National Sea Life Centre containing a permanent river system working model

Above: Fire Service special pollution control equipment

Left: Clinical waste

ration

*West Midlands Regional Forum
for Sustainable Development*

The Forum, launched 13 June 1996, aims to highlight the major environmental concerns in our region, develop solutions and, by co-ordinating action, improve our environment.

The inaugural day's meeting gave people from business, local government and other government agencies the chance to get together to discuss the problems we all face in tackling environmental issues. It also gave them the opportunity to consider how they could benefit from working together.

Participants included:

- Local authorities - Sandwell, Hereford and Worcester, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Coventry, Warwickshire, Dudley and Shropshire;
- Voluntary organisations - Urban Wildlife Trust, Tidy Britain Group and World Wide Fund for Nature;
- The Government Office of the West Midlands.

The Environment Agency has staff representatives on the working groups set up on the day to take forward the main aims of the Forum.

*Pollution training for
the region's Fire Services*

The quicker the response to a pollution incident the better. The Fire Service is usually the first emergency service to arrive - and we worked with them to find out how best we could support their efforts in pollution control.

We now give the Fire Service special pollution control equipment. Each set costs £20,000 and we have equipped nine Fire Services so far. It is hard to quantify the environmental benefit of this collaboration, but we are monitoring the cost and the benefits. Even at this early stage, it is clear that it is money well spent.

Clinical waste

Managing clinical waste safely calls for a high level of awareness. We have been working with Health Service Trusts and the NHS Executive West Midlands Office to promote best practice. The Midlands Region has also produced two information booklets on clinical waste.

National Sea Life Centre

We gave £50,000 towards the Centre, opened in Birmingham. We have a permanent exhibition there: a working model of a river system with water flowing down from its source, through a small town.

There is a reservoir, showing how it supplies a local community for domestic and industrial use, as well as how it is managed, especially when the water is at a low or high level.

The model also shows how water is used to generate power through a hydro-electric station and how it is used as a coolant in industrial processes.

We collaborated with Birmingham City Council, Vardon Enterprises and the water companies in this venture.

benefits



Upper Severn Area

Air quality monitoring

The Agency has offered a site and services for the Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council's Air Quality Monitoring Station at the area office in Shrewsbury.

The Environment Act 1995 provided a framework for the most radical system of air quality management since the Clean Air Acts of the 1950s and 1960s.

It imposed new duties on local authorities to assess air quality and to prepare plans for improvement where air quality was poor.

The Act also provided for the preparation and publication of a strategy to manage and improve air quality in the United Kingdom. National standards will be set and targets defined for those pollutants causing most concern.

Air quality in the West Midlands has improved dramatically in recent years. However, pollution from vehicles is still a major problem, particularly for town centres and motorways at peak traffic times under certain meteorological conditions.

We supported the project with manpower and a grant of £7,500. The monitoring station will provide information about local air quality.

Rare native black poplars



Black poplars - Populus nigra betulifolia

The Environment Agency, together with Shropshire County Council and two local charities, the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Bees and Trees, has been working on a pioneering scheme to protect our native black poplars.

This magnificent tree is extremely rare. There are only about 3,000 in the UK, 150 of them female. Those in the Upper Severn Area have now been surveyed and DNA-tested. The results show that, as suspected, their genetic diversity is very limited. The 150 samples confirmed that they are 95 per cent identical.

Guidelines for conservation, propagation and planting are being drawn up with the help of specialists in the field. Young trees will be available for use in the winter of 1997.

We contributed £30,000, Shropshire County Council £10,000.

The Red Tape Guide

A guide to the regulatory departments of Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council and Shropshire County Council has been produced. One of the regulators featured is the Waste Regulation Authority, formerly part of Shropshire County Council and now part of the Agency.

Aimed mainly at small businesses, the guide provides contacts for each regulator, a summary of the relevant legislation, and an indication of each regulator's standards of service.

support

It was produced by the Shrewsbury Business Partnership, which is supported by Shropshire County Council, Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council and representatives of the local business community.

Water Alert

The drought of the last few years has shown just how important it is to conserve our precious water resources. We need to promote as many ways as possible of saving water. Everyone needs to use water wisely.

Particularly important is a programme to get water companies to invest in works which will help reduce the amount of water taken out of the ground in areas needing flow restoration. This is especially the case where watercourses are depleted or groundwater needs protection or in places which support conservation sites.

We are working with water companies, landowners and irrigators to restore and protect streamflows, pools and wildlife basins.



Lower Severn Area

Water management in Gloucestershire

Rivers and groundwater provide drinking water for more than a million people in Gloucestershire. This project aims to make people more alive to the need to manage the water supply and prevent the low flows in the Severn Estuary, which put stress on salmon migrating into the river.

Gloucestershire County Council, Summerfield Trust, three District Councils, Global Action Plan (a voluntary organisation) and the Agency, which gave £6,000 for promotion material, worked together to get the message across.

We expect this initiative to result in more fish, reduced impact of drought and improved use of water generally.

Environmental best practice in Stratford

This multi-pronged approach to businesses in Stratford covers:

- energy efficiency and management;
- waste reduction, disposal and recycling;
- cleaning up sites;
- risk management and legal awareness; and
- business opportunity and protection.

Because of its wide-ranging approach, this project gave a lot of different organisations the chance to work together in new ways. One of the main results was a waste register, including recyclers, for local businesses and the public.



Upper Trent Area

Kingfisher Project

Known as the Kingfisher Project, a regeneration programme for the River Cole and some of its tributaries has been carried out. It included:

- Yardley Brook - an old concrete channel was removed to form a 200 metre long natural watercourse, providing a better wildlife habitat and improving the appearance of the brook;
- Babbs Mill Lake - a small pool was created, improving the habitat and acting as a silt and pollution trap for water flowing towards the lake.
- Stone Canoe Course - an old canoe slalom course has been restored. This involved cleaning up the river, planting trees and providing an amenity centre for sports people and the public.
- Old River Dove - an oxbow lake, designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), was de-silted in order to maintain its importance as a conservation area.
- Witton - a massive tree-planting and landscaping programme, undertaken with Groundwork Trust and local landowners, has won much appreciation from the local community.
- Trees on the Trent - three riverside tree-planting programmes have resulted in a better amenity and wildlife habitat.



*Old River Dove
oxbow lake*

*Progress in the
landscaping and
stepping stones
construction at
Witton*



improvements

Leomansley Brook
Low Flow Alleviation

...a regeneration programme has been carried out for the River Cole and some of its tributaries

We have been working with South Staffordshire Water plc (SSWC) who have now agreed to decommission their original water resource scheme for Lichfield. Instead, there will be integrated use of surface water and development of new boreholes in less sensitive areas.

This will restore a better balance of abstraction from the Lichfield Sherwood Sandstones aquifer and a sustainable improvement in flows into Leomansley Brook.

Even though the brook's catchment area is only small (2.6 sq km), it runs through Beacon Park and provides the only inflow to Minster and Stowe pools, which have major amenity value in the centre of Lichfield.

In appraising this project, we evaluated alternative water supply options to find out where we could best reduce abstraction for optimum environmental benefit. SSWC commissioned a hydrogeological model and five scenarios were explored, enabling us to consider the effects of different abstraction regimes in the three Lichfield sources and the impact on the river/aquifer exchanges.

Lichfield pools



landscaping



Lower Trent Area

Wake Up

Nottingham Trent University, the Department of the Environment and Nottingham County Council (Waste Regulation) began a detailed study in 1995 of materials being dumped by the construction industry on landfill sites.

By quantifying materials in construction site skips, we can find out where materials are being treated as disposable waste without first identifying their potential for re-use or recycling.

The County Council gave £2,500 worth of staff time as a gift in kind to the Wake Up project.

A database/register of usable 'waste' products and of construction industry leaders are expected additional benefits.

Sustainable development in Leicestershire

A series of projects encouraging people to be more environmentally aware - and behave accordingly - have been initiated. They include:

- self-build housing;
- return and refill systems - and a directory of helpful shops;
- domestic waste reduction - for example, cutting down garden waste through wormeries, composting and shredding tree bark to control weeds; and
- power generation by wind turbine development.

People actively participated in the project, which was organised by Leicestershire County Council (Waste Regulation) and Global Action Plan.

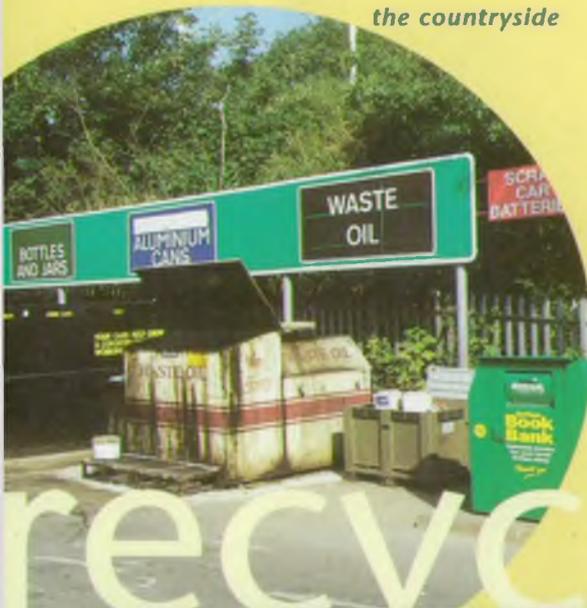
Waste recycling bank

Corridors to the countryside

We gave £4,800, a quarter of the cost, to employ a Project Officer to produce strategies for the Rivers Leem, Trent and part of Fairham Brook. We also gave £10,000 to help produce leaflets, signposts, finials, exhibition boards, banners, waymarkers and a slide package.

Nottingham City Council, Gedling Borough and Ashfield District Councils, Nottingham Wildlife Trust, the Countryside Commission and the Agency worked together in 1996/97 to produce this package and promote awareness of the proper use of river corridors.

We will continue to support this project.



recycling

*Gainsborough
Regeneration*

New flood defences and townscape enhancement of the river frontage have been completed. This is part of a larger regeneration scheme due to be completed before the millennium. The walkway feature provided the basis for a lot of collaboration between local town interests and ourselves.

A company called Gainsborough Regeneration Limited was set up to represent local industry and local authority interests - and has obtained £3.6m from the Government Office for the East Midlands towards the regeneration of the town.

In December 1996, we completed the first part of a £20m scheme to replace ageing flood defences in the town as part of this regeneration programme. The scheme involved the replacement of 800 metres of defence, incorporating a special feature of a six-metre-wide walkway along the protected river frontage.

*The Gainsborough
flood defence walkway*

A series of projects encouraging people to be more environmentally aware - and behave accordingly - have been initiated.



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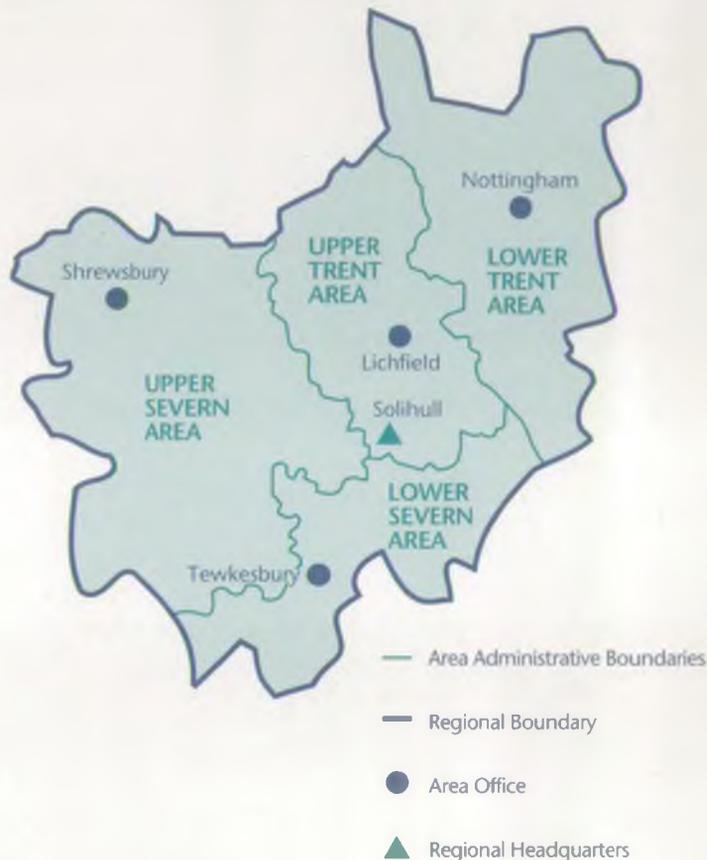
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For general enquiries please call your local Environment Agency office. If you are unsure who to contact, or which is your local office, please call our general enquiry line.

**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

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>

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