

NORTH WEST
REGION
PLAN SUMMARY

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NRA

National Rivers Authority

Guardians of
the Water Environment

Introduction

Established on 1st September 1989, the National Rivers Authority (NRA) came into being as a result of the 1989 Water Act and was created as a public body whose main task it is to protect and improve the water environment in England and Wales and provide protection against flooding from rivers and the sea. The first full year of independent operation was completed on 31st March 1991.

Head Office functions of the Authority are split between London and Bristol, but its operational activities devolve on ten Regions based on the former Water Authority areas.

This document, one of a set of ten, seeks to explain a little of North West Region NRA's background and shows how the Authority's national aims as set out in its 1991/92 *Corporate Plan* will be translated into Regional action.

Mission Statement

The National Rivers Authority will protect and improve the water environment. This will be achieved through effective management of water resources and by substantial reductions in pollution. The Authority aims to provide effective defence for people and property against flooding from rivers and the sea. In discharging its duties it will operate openly and balance the interests of all who benefit from and use rivers, ground waters, estuaries and coastal waters. The Authority will be businesslike, efficient and caring towards its employees.

Aims:

- to achieve a continuing improvement in the quality of rivers, estuaries and coastal waters, through the control of water pollution;
- to assess, manage, plan and conserve water resources and to maintain and improve the quality of water for all those who use it;
- to provide effective defence for people and property against flooding from rivers and the sea;
- to provide adequate arrangements for flood forecasting and warning;
- to maintain, improve and develop fisheries;
- to develop the amenity and recreation potential of waters and lands under NRA control;
- to conserve and enhance wildlife, landscape and archaeological features associated with water under NRA control;
- to improve and maintain inland waterways and their facilities for use by the public where the NRA is the navigation authority;
- to ensure that dischargers pay the cost of the consequences of their discharges and, as far as possible, to recover the cost of water environment improvements from those who benefit;
- to improve public understanding of the water environment and the NRA's work;
- to improve efficiency in the exercise of the NRA's functions and to provide challenge and opportunity for employees and show concern for their welfare.

Regional Organisation

Each Region of the NRA is managed by a Regional General Manager who reports to the Operations Director and whose management team has responsibility for managing the main functions and support services in the Region. North West Region employs a total of some 890 people.

There are three statutory Committees per Region through which the NRA achieves a wide base of consultation. These are a Regional Flood Defence Committee (through which the NRA discharges its flood defence and land drainage duties), a Regional Rivers Advisory Committee and a Regional Fisheries Advisory Committee (these two committees being composed of members from a wide range of relevant backgrounds who advise the NRA on river basin management and fisheries policy respectively).

In addition, each Region has a Regional Advisory Board, on which the RGM and the three statutory Committee Chairmen sit. This is chaired by the NRA Board Member with responsibility for that Region.

Regional General Manager
Dr Chris Harpley
Regional Board Member
Julian Taylor
Regional Flood Defence Committee Chairman
Bill Wannop

Regional Rivers Advisory Committee Chairman
Ron Weston
Regional Fisheries Advisory Committee Chairman
Tom Barnes

Activities Requiring NRA Consent

Certain activities require NRA consent. The list is too long to include here, but the following are examples:

- abstract or impound water;
- make a discharge to any river, lake or tidal water or onto land for a soakaway, or to specific underground waters;
- clean or desludge a dam, weir or sluice;
- culvert any watercourse;
- interfere with land drainage by building or modifying any structures within or adjacent to a main river;
- build or plant within eight metres of a main river;
- introduce or transfer fish into any water or use a net or trap to catch fish;
- use a rod and line to catch fish;
- use a boat on a waterway controlled by the NRA;
- interfere with a sea defence.

Public Register Access

Public Registers are available for inspection. Please contact our Regional Headquarters for details.

Where to contact us: Regional Headquarters

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Cheques should be made payable to 'National Rivers Authority'.

Foreword

The first year of operations has brought with it a number of problems and incidents. In particular, it has brought home to us the high standard of the emergency response the public expects, with regard to flood warning and pollution control. In the North West we have severe pollution problems, having the greatest concentration of Class 3 and 4 rivers in the country and the dirtiest beaches. This poor water quality is reflected in the number of pollution incident investigations and prosecutions undertaken. We are therefore reviewing our sampling regime, as a matter of priority, to ensure that the acute problems are adequately monitored and addressed.

The severe coastal events of last winter and the recent coastal flood defence survey have generally reassured us about tidal flooding in the North West. We have extended our flood warning system to cover the Mersey Estuary and are tackling fluvial flooding risks which we have identified in some of our older industrial areas – especially in Greater Manchester.

Early discussions with the Water plc on use of water resources, and slightly more rainfall than experienced in the southern part of the country, enabled us to avoid the worst of the drought in the North West.

We have achieved a great deal under the spotlight of public scrutiny through our energetic and willing employees who have continued to show their enthusiasm to achieve the organisation's objectives.

Dr Chris Harpley
Regional General Manager

Key Achievements 1990/91

Most importantly in 1990/91, we succeeded in becoming established as a separate, an independent and an effective organisation. Our successes have included the following:

Water Resources:

- reviewing the drought of 1989 and achieving co-operation from North West Water plc;
- upgrading data capture equipment and compiling data on low river flows;
- evaluating WIS, a computer archiving system for water information.

Environmental Quality:

- establishing new monitoring, survey and sampling programmes;
- improving and developing laboratory services;
- revising and implementing procedures for enforcement of illegal and non-compliant discharges;
- co-ordinating and auditing the large regional input to EC requirements.

Flood Defence:

- achieving a 28% increase in the capital programme;
- improving development control and enforcement;
- expanding and enhancing the tidal surge forecasting service.

Fisheries:

- establishing a team of fisheries scientists;
- increasing our fish rearing capacity;
- constructing new fish passes.

Recreation and Conservation:

- developing liaison with outside bodies;
- a new Regional conservation section has raised the profile of conservation both internally and externally;
- advice on conservation interests has now been brought into the regulatory consultative processes.

Support Services:

- setting up our new Regional Headquarters;
- establishing new Regional services for legal, information systems and public relations;
- contributing to the introduction of the new accounting system and discharge charging.

Water Resources:

- development will continue with Regional water resources plans;
- increased capability will be provided by strengthening area operations to improve licence enforcement;
- strategies for over-abstracted catchments, commencing with the River Lowther in Cumbria;
- methodology and systems to analyse and produce low flow statistics will be developed.

Environmental Quality:

- laboratory services will continue to be improved ;
- new monitoring, compliance and inspection programmes will be implemented and the discharge charging scheme will be introduced;
- the 1990 River Water Quality Survey will be assessed and water quality objectives developed;
- estuarine and coastal studies will be enhanced and extended;
- new regulations eg. the Control of Pollution (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) will be enforced.

Flood Defence:

- an effective business planning and performance monitoring framework will be developed;
- the national system for prioritising flood defence problems will be utilised;
- we will work to achieve an increase in capital investment via MAFF grant;
- flood warning and emergency procedures will be reviewed, the flood warning system extended and a 24-hour communication centre established;
- development control, regulation and enforcement will continue to be improved.

Fisheries:

- procedures will be set up for collecting rates in respect of fisheries;
- fish populations will be monitored and addressed in line with the national stock assessment policy;
- fish populations will be established in rivers as they are upgraded;
- a methodology will be assessed for estimating fish taken illegally and anti-poaching activities improved;
- trapping and hatchery facilities will be improved and developed and further fish counters installed.

Recreation and Conservation:

- collaborative projects will be identified and management plans will be drawn up for NRA sites;
- recreational needs will be integrated into Water Quality Objectives and Water Quality Standards;
- recreational strategies will be considered for waters liable to blue-green algal blooms;
- cross functional charges for conservation work will be agreed and implemented;
- staff training in conservation will be emphasised;
- effective conservation input into planning consultations will be made;
- a rolling catchment corridor survey of 600km a year will be commenced.

Support Services:

- a new central office will be built;
- progress with the migration of IS services from North West Water plc will be maintained;
- corporate planning and monitoring procedures will be updated and a trial of integrated catchment planning will be carried out on the River Douglas;
- we will initiate legal proceedings within three months of the offence;
- liaison with local authorities in development control activities will be improved;
- we will introduce new procedures for recruitment and the development of existing staff;
- we will manage the introduction and operation of the discharge charging scheme;
- we will contribute to the development of integrated accounting.



Some Key Statistics

- Area: 14,445sqkm
- Population: 6.8m
- Length of main river: 5,947km
- Length of estuary: 193km
- Length of coastline: 432km
- Flood defence works maintained: 4,430km
- Average annual rainfall: 1,110mm
- Number of abstraction licences: 3,563
- Volume of authorised water abstraction: 14,755Ml/d
- Number of consented discharges: 9,330
- Number of EC bathing waters: 33
- Area of flood plain: 940sqkm
- Sewage treatment works: 378
- Length of salmonid classified fishery: 2,813km

North West Region

The North West Region is bounded in the north by the Scottish border, in the east by the Pennines, by mid-Cheshire in the south and by the Irish Sea in the west.

The major centres of population and industry are in the Merseyside and Greater Manchester conurbations within the Mersey Basin. These areas, industrialised since the 19th century, have a legacy of pollution and inadequate infrastructure. Around 20% of the Region's river length is in the poor/bad category, accounting for about 30% of the total for England and Wales.

Further north, the counties of Lancashire and Cumbria include areas of outstanding natural beauty, such as the Lake District National Park and the Bowland Fells.

The Region has some of the most fertile land in the country in the coastal plains behind Formby, Southport and Blackpool and in the Central Cheshire plain. The land in these areas often lies below high tide level so that pumped drainage and sea defences are necessary.