

EA-South West/007

Box

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## An Introduction to South West Region



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SOUTH WEST REGION

The Environment Agency South West Region covers Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire and most of Wiltshire.

The environment is of central importance to the south west. The coastline and the rich and varied landscape dominate the region. There are hundreds of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Environmentally Sensitive Areas, and around 40 percent of the country's designated heritage coastline.

The Environment Agency has a wide range of duties and powers relating to different aspects of environmental management. It is required and guided by Government to use these duties and powers in order to help achieve the objective of sustainable development. The Brundtland Commission defined sustainable development as '...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

The Environment Agency is committed to taking action, in partnership with others, to protect and improve the special environment of the south west.

### *The Agency's principal and immediate environmental concerns relate to:*

- \* addressing the causes and effects of climate change
- \* regulating major industries effectively
- \* improving air quality
- \* managing waste
- \* managing water resources
- \* delivering integrated river-basin management
- \* conserving the land
- \* managing freshwater fisheries
- \* enhancing biodiversity

## Enhancing biodiversity

Many species are present in the south west at the northern, western or southern edge of their ranges, resulting in unique communities. Biodiversity underpins the local economy, particularly tourism, recreation and fishing. The Agency works to conserve and enhance biodiversity, and also has special responsibilities for chalk river habitats



and some water related species, such as otter, water vole, white clawed crayfish and southern damselfly.

## Addressing the causes and effects of climate change

Climate change would have significant effect in the south west, reducing summer rainfall and increasing winter rainfall and wind speeds.

The Agency takes action to help reduce human contribution to climate change and ensure that the Government's greenhouse gas emission reduction targets are met.

With more than 940 kilometres of coastline facing the Atlantic Ocean and the English Channel, flood protection is vital to the region. There are also many rivers which tend to be short and steep, making them prone to flash flooding.

The Agency investigates and builds new flood defence schemes, taking account of possible sea level rise due to global warming. It operates a flood warning system across the south west and warnings are delivered to people at risk so that they can take action to protect themselves and their properties.

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**AREA MANAGER CORNWALL**

*Geoff Boyd*

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Σ 14-1-99

**Heads the Cornwall team  
responsible for the whole range  
of activities under Agency control**



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**AREA MANAGER DEVON**

*Geoff Bateman*

✓ 4-2-99  
AMT

**Heads the Devon team  
responsible for the whole range  
of activities under Agency control**



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**AREA MANAGER NORTH WESSEX**

*Tony Owen*

**Heads the North Wessex team  
responsible for the whole range  
of activities under Agency control**



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**AREA MANAGER SOUTH WESSEX**

*Howard Davidson*

1-3-99  
AMT.

**Heads the South Wessex team  
responsible for the whole range  
of activities under Agency control**



## Regulating major industries effectively

Although the south west is not heavily industrialised the Agency does regulate some complex processes, in particular the chemical processes concentrated at Avonmouth near Bristol, and the region's nuclear sites.

Other regulated industries and processes include paper, incinerators, chemical, pharmaceutical, power stations, car breakers, scrapyards, metal plating companies and landfill sites. Regular spot checks are carried out on all these premises.

We regulate more than 50 sites which are authorised to dispose of radioactive materials such as hospitals, universities and the nuclear power stations at Hinkley Point, Somerset and Winfrith, Dorset. There are also approximately 400 premises which are registered to hold and use radioactive materials.



## Managing water resources

The south west can be susceptible to drought, although the region does have a relatively abundant rainfall under average conditions. Population and consequent water demand in the south west increase considerably in the summer tourist season. Increased housing needs will add further pressure on water availability.

Rainfall distribution can vary greatly, ranging from less than 800mm/year in the Somerset lowlands and Vale of Pewsey, to more than 2000 mm/year on Dartmoor.



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**REGIONAL LEGAL AND CORPORATE SERVICES MANAGER**

*David Horwood*

- \* Business efficiency
- \* Committee services
- \* Communications
- \* Emergencies and security
- \* Estates
- \* Facilities and Services
- \* Internal environmental policy
- \* Legal services
- \* Public Relations
- \* Transport



✓ cascade 4-2-99

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**REGIONAL FINANCE MANAGER**

*Nick Gupta*

- \* Management and financial accounting
- \* Procurement
- \* Business planning
- \* Payroll and payments
- \* Financial controls
- \* Insurance
- \* Income billing and collection



✓ cascade meeting 25.

To ensure close contact is kept with local communities the South West Region is split into four areas – each with its own Area Manager, who sits on the Regional Management team, and staff. Teams work out in the field using local knowledge and contacts to maximum effect.

The areas are Cornwall (based at Bodmin), Devon (Exminster), North Wessex (Bridgwater) and South Wessex (Blandford). Telephone your local area office – or the Agency's general enquiry line **0645 333111** – for a leaflet on the role of each of the Area teams.

## REGIONAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

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### REGIONAL GENERAL MANAGER

*Katharine Bryan*

Heads the regional team responsible for the whole range of activities under Environment Agency control

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### REGIONAL WATER MANAGER

*Bill Grigg*

- \* Flood defence
- \* Flood warning
- \* Engineering
- \* Water resources
- \* Fisheries
- \* Recreation
- \* Conservation

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3/3/99



### REGIONAL POLLUTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL MANAGER

*Martin Booth* ✓ cascade

1-2-99

- \* Waste regulation
- \* Integrated pollution control
- \* Water quality
- \* Rural land use
- \* Strategic planning



### REGIONAL PERSONNEL MANAGER

*Paul Jones*

✓ cascade  
5-2-99

- \* Health and safety
- \* Training and development
- \* Employee relations
- \* Internal communication



More than half – 59 percent – of the region’s public water supply comes from rivers and reservoirs, 29 percent from ground water sources and the remainder is imported from neighbouring regions.

The Agency monitors river flows, ground water levels, rainfall and climate to manage this precious resource. Staff regulate water abstraction by issuing licences, balancing the need to protect the environment and the public with the demands of industry.



### Delivering integrated river-basin management

River basins are managed at a local level through Local Environment Agency Plans. These plans include delivering continued improvements in overall water quality and effective flood defence.

The Agency sets strict limits known as discharge consents, for anyone wanting to discharge waste water to the environment, including outputs from sewage treatment works. The Agency also aims to influence water company investment through negotiations over their spending plans to improve discharges.

The conflicting and competing pressures on our river systems provide a significant challenge in the south west.

Rural land use, industry, demand for our water resources, the local economic value of fisheries and tourism, all impact on the region’s aquatic habitats. We consider all of these factors in our work when advising local authorities on implications of development in the region.



With such an extensive coastline the region has 181 designated bathing waters – nearly half the national total. Along the coastline the Agency aims to prevent pollution from land-based sources up to three miles out to sea and in tidal waters. Samples are taken from the bathing beaches to monitor whether seawater complies with EC standards, and teams work to protect rivers, estuaries, watercourses and the sea from pollution.

### Managing freshwater fisheries

Some of the country's top fisheries are in the south west, but these are under intense pressure. Migratory salmonid populations in Devon and Cornwall, the unique salmon populations of the Hampshire Avon, and stocks of elvers in Somerset are already threatened or in decline.

It is the job of the Agency to maintain, improve and develop these vital fisheries.



Fish stocks are regulated by a number of methods including the issue of rod and net licences, net limitation orders and the control by byelaw of fishing methods and season. Anyone who goes freshwater fishing must have an Agency rod licence. Fish stocks are regularly monitored and maintained in various ways including the installation of fish passes, the removal of obstructions and the improvement of fish habitats, including spawning gravels.

### Managing waste

Many companies in the south west already recognise that waste minimisation is vital to their profitability. The Agency has a key role in encouraging more companies to focus on waste reduction, recovery and recycling.

We issue licences for the safe handling, storage, treatment, transport and disposal of waste. The aim is to ensure there is no harm to the public, or pollution to the environment. Firms transporting waste require

## SOME IMPORTANT SOUTH WEST REGION STATISTICS

Area (sq. km) .....	20,310
Population (millions) .....	4
Number of water quality discharge consents in force .....	11,260
Number of integrated pollution control authorisations .....	84
Number of radioactive substances authorisations.....	106
Number of nuclear sites .....	8
Number of radioactive substances registrations .....	398
Percentage of waste produced in England and Wales ....	10
Number of waste management site licences .....	793
Average annual rainfall (mm/year) .....	1,014
Number of water resources abstraction and impoundment licences in force .....	11,137
Length of fluvial flood defences maintained (km).....	2,229
Length of coastline (km) .....	965
Length of tidal and sea defences maintained (km).....	428
Number of EC designated bathing waters.....	181
Number of Agency landholdings with potential for recreational use.....	45
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (sq. km).....	1,431

registration. Moving hazardous wastes within the UK and to or from abroad involves a system of notification and authorisation.

Inspections are made of landfill sites, to ensure that they are safe during their lifetime and remain so when they have closed.

### Conserving the land

Problems of soil erosion, nitrate and pesticide use and shifts in land management practice are significant issues in the south west. Abandoned mines – for example the tin mines of Cornwall – and contaminated land represent a legacy of former use that needs to be addressed. The Agency works closely with others, in particular local authorities, to ensure the most effective environmental protection is achieved.

### Improving air quality

Air pollution is not a significant problem in the south west. Poor air quality is mainly a problem of urban and industrial areas and the main issue in the south west is ozone, which arises from chemical reactions in the atmosphere caused by sunlight. Vehicle emissions can cause some concern, particularly in the summer months, when there is more road traffic in the south west.

Much of the Agency's work is in collaboration with local interest groups and industry. Educating others of environmental issues, particularly the young, is a crucial role.

### Emergencies

The public, in an emergency, can get in touch with the Agency 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

A call on the free hotline – **0800 80 70 60** – will go through to the regional communications centre for action.

Environmental incidents, such as water pollution, dumping of hazardous waste, illegal fishing activities, and risks to wildlife, should be reported immediately.

# SOUTH WEST REGION ADDRESSES

## REGIONAL OFFICE

Environment Agency  
South West Region  
Manley House  
Kestrel Way  
Exeter EX2 7LQ  
Tel: 01392 444 000  
Fax: 01392 444 238

## CORNWALL AREA OFFICE

Environment Agency  
Sir John Moore House  
Victoria Square  
Bodmin PL31 1EB  
Tel: 01208 78301  
Fax: 01208 78321

## NORTH WRESSEX

Environment Agency  
Riverside House  
Bridgwater TA8 4PQ  
Tel: 01278 457 313  
Fax: 01278 452 811

## SOUTH WESSEX

AREA OFFICE  
Environment Agency  
Rivers House  
Sunrise Business Park  
Higher Shaftesbury Road  
Blandford DT11 8ST  
Tel: 01258 456 080  
Fax: 01258 455 998

## DEVON AREA OFFICE

Environment Agency  
Exminster House  
Miller Way, Exminster  
Devon EX6 8AS  
Tel: 01392 444 000  
Fax: 01392 442 109



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

## NATIONAL LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICE

### SOUTH WEST REGION

Manley House, Kestrel Way,  
Exeter EX2 7LQ

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY  
GENERAL ENQUIRY LINE

0645 333 111

EA-South West 100-7 ✓

for reporting all environmental incidents  
relating to air, land and water

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



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