

# catchment management plan



## **LOWER NENE** annual review september 1996



**ENVIRONMENT  
AGENCY**

## FOREWORD

The Environment Agency was formed on April 1996 and inherits the many and varied functional responsibilities of the National Rivers Authority, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, the Waste Regulatory Authorities, and some technical units of the Department of the Environment. The Agency's principal aim is to protect and enhance the environment as a whole, in order to play its part in attaining the objective of sustainable development and to take a much wider view of environmental regulation and management than was possible for its predecessors.

This document details the progress made against those issues identified in the Lower Nene Catchment Management Plan, the Action Plan for which was published by the National Rivers Authority in June 1994.

The purpose of this Review is to ensure target actions identified in the Action Plan are achieved and that the Plan still addresses all significant issues in the catchment in an appropriate manner. This report summarises progress made over the past 12 months.

### Feedback

*If you have any thoughts or observations concerning this Annual Review please forward your comments to:*

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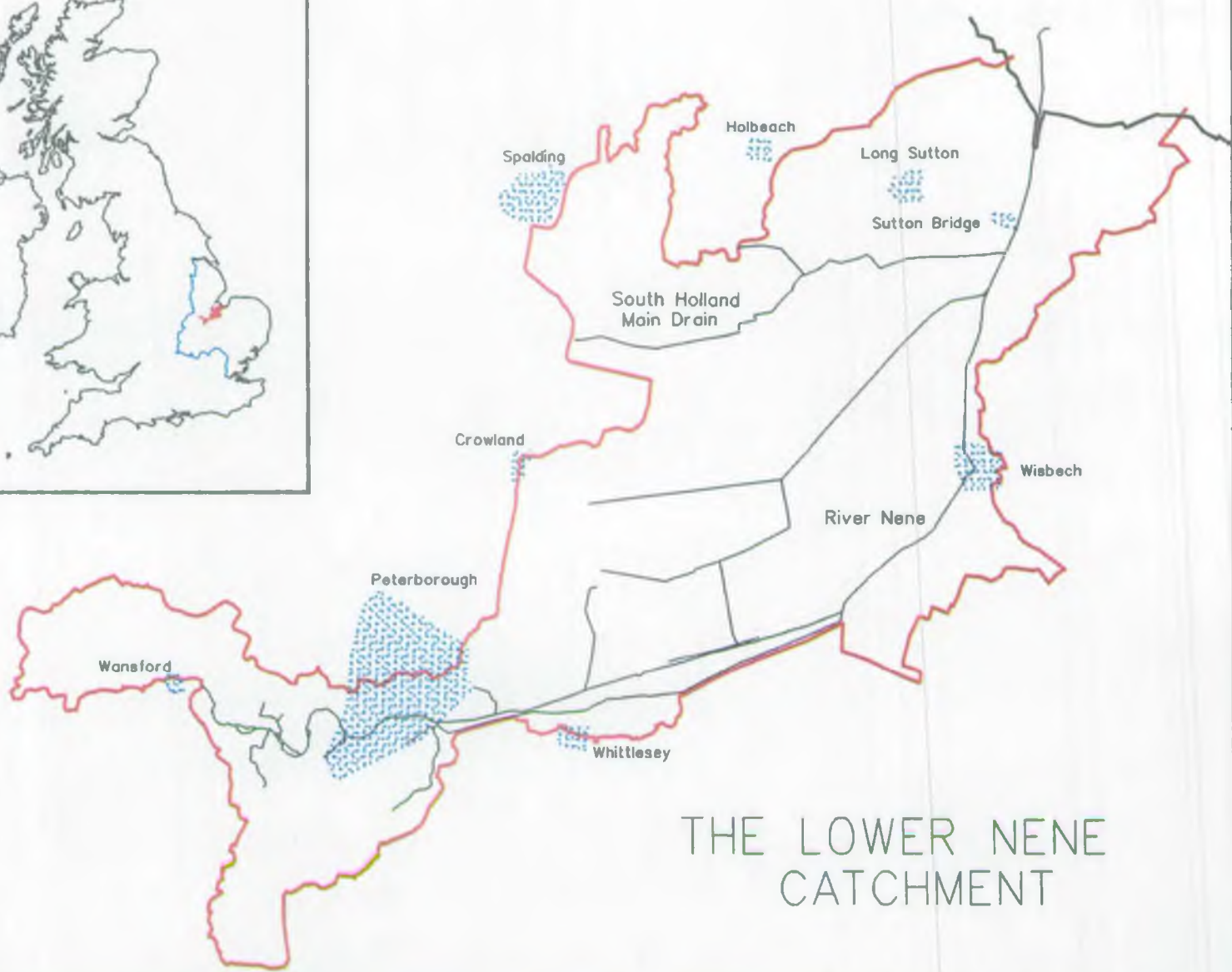
*Other Documentation available*

*Consultation Report - October 1993*

*Final Plan - June 1994*

*Annual Review - 1995*

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY  
ANGLIAN REGION



THE LOWER NENE  
CATCHMENT



EA-Anglian LEADS

## VISION

The Lower Nene Catchment is home to some 250,000 people who depend on the water environment in many ways. It is principally a lowland area, 688 km<sup>2</sup> of which is at or below sea level. Without artificial coastal defences much of the area would be marshland inundated by the sea. The catchment's fertile alluvial and fen deposits, which are of significant importance to the local and national economy, depend heavily upon the waters of the Nene for irrigation and upon its fluvial defences and the land drainage it provides.

The key issue in this plan is to ensure that current and future abstractive demands for water and "in-river" ecological needs can be reliably met.

Others are to:

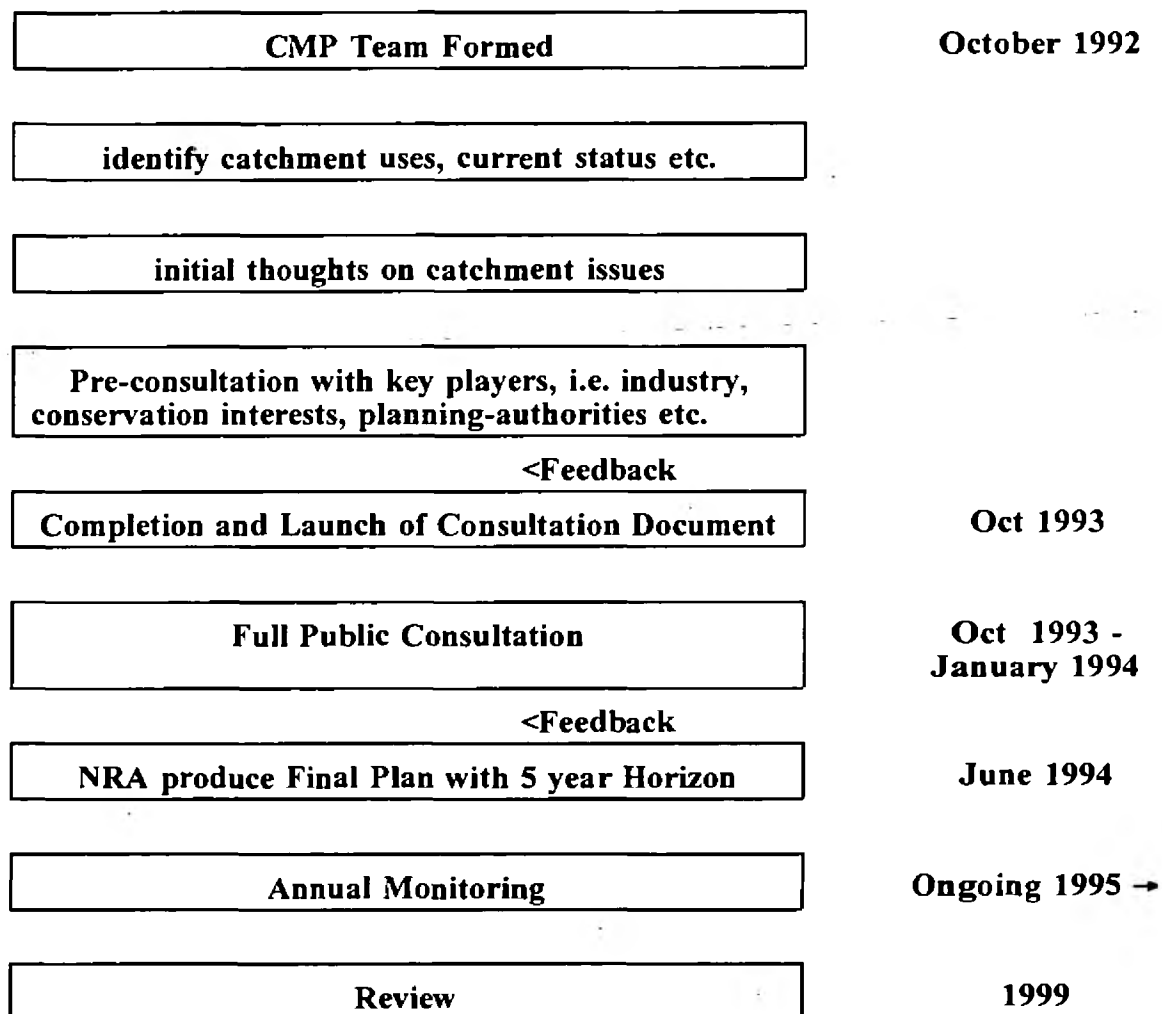
- To reduce nutrient enrichment of the river by phosphate removal from the large effluents discharging in the Upper Nene catchment.
- To improve the quality of the tidal River Nene to meet estuary Class B standards by improving the five major discharges to the tidal section.
- To improve water quality in the Counter Drain (north) by improving the quality of Flag Fen Sewage Treatment Works effluent.
- To undertake a multifunctional feasibility study to consider relocation of the tidal sluice to resolve long-term siltation problems in the tidal Nene, provide an additional freshwater resource, freshwater fishery and an improved amenity value for the river. The study will also consider the question of extending the commercial navigation (completed Oct 1996) .
- To provide a fish pass at Dog-in-a-Doublet Sluice to allow the free passage of migratory fish (completed 1994) .
- To utilise every opportunity to increase the habitat diversity in the river corridor downstream of Peterborough through both our routine maintenance and/or capital programme and others actions.
- To investigate and promote the recreational use of the catchment including the provision of additional navigation facilities.

Establishing strong Environment Agency involvement and links with local communities and their representatives is necessary to ensure that local views are respected and future development decisions reflect their vision for the catchment. We will therefore

- Work with all relevant parties to further the concept of sustainable development and influence the planning process using existing legislation.

## INTRODUCTION

Catchment Management Planning is a means of establishing a sound planning base for development of the water environment. The process itself and timetable are shown below.



The Environment Agency is continuing to develop this planning approach to fully achieve its aims. However with the increased scope and responsibilities of the Agency extending to embrace matters relating to air and waste, future plans will change and will become known as Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs).

The timetable to produce LEAPs (inclusive of air and water issues) has not been finalised. In the mean time the Agency will report on progress made on the issues identified in the Lower Nene by means of the Annual Review

## ASSESSMENT OF THE CATCHMENT AND MAJOR CHANGES SINCE PUBLICATION OF THE FIRST ANNUAL REVIEW

Since publication of the last Annual Review (September 1995), there have been a number of changes in the status of Local Authority Development Plans. Progress has also been made on non-statutory plans covering the catchment, such as the State of the Environment Report. The main changes relate to the following:

- Lincolnshire County Council published the Lincolnshire Structure Plan Consultation Draft in May 1996. The Environment Agency have prepared a response to this Plan and will be involved in discussions with the County to ensure that the Agency's interests are taken into account during subsequent stages of the Structure Plan process;
- Lincolnshire County Council have published the Lincolnshire State of the Environment Report (SOER) and have launched the Lincolnshire Environment Forum. The aim of the Forum is to 'review and secure action on key environmental issues, and to do so in line with Local Agenda 21 principles'. The Environment Agency are active members of this Forum;
- Cambridgeshire County Council adopted their County Structure Plan, in December 1995;
- Huntingdonshire District Council adopted their Local Plan, in January 1996;
- South Holland District Council published the Draft Deposit Local Plan in September 1995.

The current status of Development Plans within the catchment is summarised in the table below:

### CURRENT STATUS OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN THE CATCHMENT

PLANNING AUTHORITY	PLAN TITLE	STATUS
Cambridgeshire C.C	Structure Plan	Adopted, December 1995
Lincolnshire C.C	Structure Plan	Consultation Draft, May 1996
Northamptonshire C.C	Structure Plan	Replacement Consultation Draft due Autumn 1996
East Northants D.C	Local Plan	Adoption due 1996/1997
Fenland D.C	Local Plan	Adopted 1993
Huntingdonshire D.C	Local Plan	Adopted 1996
Peterborough City C.	Local Plan	Adoption due 1996
South Holland D.C	Local Plan	Deposit Draft, September 1995. Inquiry due in 1996

## SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Issue 1: **Current and future water demands cannot be met to target standards of reliability.**

The action programme for this issue involved improving operational practices developed during the 1988 - 1992 drought, to better allocate water from the Lower Nene. Issue 2 takes the approach further in seeking to identify and evaluate these abstractions to develop more robust operational protocol. Issue 20 concerning location of the tidal limit also influences resource management. New operational protocols are now in place, early indications are that they have been highly successful.

Issue 2: **Lack of effective regulatory control over water abstraction from the Lower Nene.**

Issue one also relates to water resource management and affects this issue. During the last 12 months the Environment Agency has consulted with local users on the operation and water resource management of the Lower Nene. A review of our operation and allocation of water during the summer of 1995 has also been completed. Additionally, a large number of temporary irrigation licences in the Middle Level system have been varied to include a condition that relates abstraction to river flow in the Nene and water level in the Middle Level. All of this work provided considerable value and the basis for drawing up an operation manual for future allocation of water from the Lower Nene. A system has been developed to allocate water which estimates demand and available resources on a weekly basis. This is then communicated to key abstractors who have agreed to amend their operational practices in accordance with the demand assessment. First indications are that the scheme is highly successful, it is hoped to further improve this system in future years.

Local interests in water are kept informed of project progress and water management through regular meetings of the Nene Washes Management Strategy chaired by English Nature.

Issue 4: **Failure of River Quality Objective**

Dissolved oxygen sags and elevated Biochemical Oxygen Demand levels which originally caused failure of the River Quality Objective have not occurred recently. Consequently the Lower Nene is now compliant with its River Quality Objective. This is likely to be largely the result of improved sewage, effluent quality. A combination of factors influence eutrophication e.g. nutrient enrichment, flow and temperature. The River Nene is used extensively for sewage disposal and public water supply. A team of Environment Agency, English Nature and Anglian Water Services officers are working on developing a Blue Green Algae action plan (occurrence of blue green algae is also linked to eutrophication) which will consider how best to manage these factors for the River Nene. Eutrophication is a major issue for the River Nene and therefore the issue will be continued titled " The River Nene is eutrophic".

Issue 5: **Water Quality in the tidal Nene**

Major effluent improvement programmes have been completed by dischargers to the tidal Nene. Effluent quality has improved substantially and new consents have been issued to ensure performance is maintained. Improvement of Flag Fen Sewage Treatment Works effluent, scheduled for completion by 1999, should ensure that the tidal Nene improves sufficiently to comply with its quality objectives.

Issue 10: **Inadequate sewage and sewage facilities**

This issue identified a need for legislative change to enable residents in rural locations served by inadequate sewage systems to require improvements. Legislation has now been provided via section 101A of the Water Industry Act, Environment Agency we are discussing a number of pilot schemes with Anglian Water Services and District Councils.

Issue 17 **Habitat diversity downstream of Peterborough is low**

A one hectare scrape has been constructed at West Walton downstream of Wisbech, and two others at Rings End. These will provide important habitat for birds such as Snipe. Trees and Willow Stakes have been provided to Castor Parish Council for planting along the River Nene.

**ISSUES RESOLVED**

Issue 11 **Safe access to Alwalton Lock**

Work to improve access has been undertaken in association with lock refurbishment.

Issue 13 **Sewage disposal points for boats are inadequate**

This catchment now contains two sanitary stations (Stibbington & Peterborough embankment). These are adequate to meet its needs.

Issue 16 **"Free passage" of migratory fish is prevented by Dog in a Doublet sluice.**

This issue has been resolved by construction of a fish pass.

Issue 19: **Liaison with Local Authorities.**

The Environment Agency and Local Authorities have a number of responsibilities in common e.g. regulation of air quality, contaminated land and promoting sustainable development. By working together on these matters they could be dealt with in a more efficient manner bringing benefit to the environment and cost savings. It is hoped that a strong link will be formed between Local Authorities and the Environment Agency in order that wider issues e.g. Agenda 21 programmes, millennium projects and Environment



Agency Plans will identify common visions for our common assets.

Improving liaison is now regarded as part of our core business and therefore is no longer considered an issue for the catchment. Further reports will therefore be on an exception only basis.

Issue 20a: **Relocation of the tidal limit.**

The study is now complete and a report on its findings is currently being produced. The study assessed the benefits to the environment and river users of potential relocation sites. Preliminary indications are that relocation of the tidal limit would not produce sufficient benefit to the Environment Agency function to justify the expenditure involved. However, the Environment Agency would review the findings of this report if new development proposals alter the basis on which these decisions have been taken.

## NEW ISSUES

Issue 23: The presence of Tecnazene and Chlorpropham in sediments in the River Nene is of concern.

### **Background**

Agency monitoring for Tecnazene and Chlorpropham indicate they are present in high concentrations in the sediment of the River Nene. This problem may extend outwards into the Wash. These chemicals are commonly used as an anti sprouting agent in the storage of potatoes and for other purposes.

Unusually poor invertebrate populations are found in the sediment of the Nene downstream of discharge points known to contain these substances, which may be attributable to the presence of these substances.

Issue 24: Restoration of land to low level Agriculture use is having an adverse impact on groundwater level and water use.

### **Background**

There is currently concern over restoration standards, particularly of sand and gravel workings to low level agricultural land.

Restoration of redundant mineral workings to agricultural use sometimes takes place, without importation of fill material. In some cases this creates the need for permanent land drainage pumping to prevent the restored area from flooding. Long term dewatering such as this can reduce groundwater levels in the surrounding area, reducing the availability of water for irrigation.

Restoration to low level agriculture at locations which then require permanent dewatering do not accord with the principles of sustainable development.

Restoration to low level agriculture is a general concern for the Agency and within this catchment of particular concern at a proposed site at Thorney.

The Agency will liaise closely with relevant Planning Authorities on this matter and will seek the inclusion of planning restrictions in Development Plans where appropriate.

LOWER NENE CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORT - SEPTEMBER '96

ISSUES	RESPONSIBILITY	ESTIMATED COST	ACTION PERIOD 94/5 95/6 96/7 97/8 98-	DETAILS	PROGRESS TO DATE	ISSUE LEADER
1. Current and future water demands cannot be met to target standards of reliability, ie:	EA/Abstractors	Nil	* * *	Short to medium term - seek agreement with water users to ensure interim controls during dry periods (based upon agreements/actions during 1988-1992 drought.	Completed. New operational protocols will be monitored. Further reports will be produced on an exception only basis.	DW
(i) from the River Nene for spray irrigation, industry and navigation purposes.	EA/Abstractors			Farmers (or consortiums) to develop farm reservoirs for storage of winter water; to improve reliability of water available for summer use.	On going policy to persuade abstractors to make best use of surplus water during winter periods and reduce the impact of restrictions on their business.	
(ii) from IDB areas for spray irrigation.	EA/Abstractors		* * * * *	A multi disciplinary project team to be set up to review current policy, and determine a medium to long term water allocation strategy for the Lower Nene. Consideration to be given to scenarios with and without effluent diversions.	Preliminary findings and recommendations have been acted upon. A large number of temporary licences in the middle level system have been varied to include a condition that relates to flow in the River Nene. Management of available water resources have greatly improved and longer term actions are yet to be determined.	
(iii) in winter and summer to meet internationally important conservation purposes on the Nene Washes.	EA/Abstractors			Diversion of treated effluent to the non-tidal Nene could provide a source of water to meet the shortfall in resources in a dry summer. Options for increasing water availability will be investigated (see also Issue 20)	Action will be reviewed after the output from issue 20 is fully evaluated.  A draft water level management plan has been produced and circulated for comment. Feedback received was positive with only a few minor amendments being required, the final plan will be available in December 1996.	

- = Feasibility Study/Appraisal Period
- = Work on Site



ISSUES	RESPONSIBILITY	ESTIMATED COST	ACTION PERIOD 94/5 95/6 96/7 97/8 98-	DETAILS	PROGRESS TO DATE	ISSUE LEADER
<p>4. River Nene fails to meet its River Quality Objectives as a consequence of nutrient enrichment.</p> <p>River Nene is Eutrophic. (New issue title)</p>	EA/AWS		* * * * *	<p>The River Nene is designated as Sensitive under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive. This requires AWS to provide nutrient removal at Great Billing, Broadholme, Whilton and Corby Sewage Treatment Works by 1998. In the interim, ferric dosing to remove phosphate is currently being undertaken at Great Billing, Broadholme and Corby STW on an experimental basis. The impact of this work is being monitored by the EA.</p>	<p>This is likely to be a long term project as change arising from Phosphate dosing will be slow.</p> <p>The River Nene currently complies with its River Quality Objective the underlying eutrophication issue is still of great concern and therefore in future reports this issue will relate to management of eutrophication.</p> <p>An action plan is being developed by EA, AWS and English Nature which will consider how best to manage eutrophication in the Nene.</p>	CQO
<p>5. Water quality in the tidal Nene fails to meet its objectives.</p>	EA / AWS / Industrialists	£10-20 million	* * * * *	<p>The five significant discharges to the tidal Nene must be improved. The two industrialists ( Mc Cains and H L Foods) are to complete effluent treatment plants during the financial year 94/95 at an estimated cost of 3-4 million/ The effluent from West Walton STW (Wisbech) has been improved and is currently satisfactory.</p>	<p>Consent issued for McCains and HL Foods.</p> <p>Improvements to the Flag Fen Sewage Works on course for completion by 1999. Wisbech now compliant producing good quality effluent. Environment Agency influenced AWS prioritisation of expenditure so as to ensure these schemes having greater environmental benefit proceed in advance of less environmental effect. Therefore expenditure at Long Sutton has been deferred to fall in line with UWWT Directive requirements.</p>	
<p>6. Water quality in the Counter Drain (North) fails to meet amenity standard.</p>	EA/AWS		* * * * *	<p>Improve the quality of the effluent discharge from Flag Fen STW.</p>	<p>This objective will be met simultaneously with Issue 5 above when the improvements to Flag Fen STW are completed in 1999.</p>	CQO
<p>7. Surface water sites discharging to the Padholme Drain require control in order that they do not compromise a sustained recovery in water quality.</p>	EA/AWS/ Industrialists	£60K	* * * * *	<p>EA to liaise with dischargers to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• oil interception on industrial premises.</li> <li>• better control of discharges to surface water sewers under the ownership of AWS.</li> </ul> <p>EA will monitor progress.</p>	<p>Intensive pollution prevention have been carried out. The operators of Eye Quarry landfill site have been persuaded to undertake improvement works.</p> <p>Perkins Engineering have undertaken and completed contaminated land reclamation scheme in Peterborough.</p> <p>Investigations are continuing at other former landfill sites. The government's recently issued "framework for contaminated land" provides useful guidance on how these sites should be dealt with in the future.</p>	CQO

• = Feasibility Study/Appraisal Period

\* = Work on Site

ISSUES	RESPONSIBILITY	ESTIMATED COST	ACTION PERIOD 94/5 95/6 96/7 97/8 98-	DETAILS	PROGRESS TO DATE	ISSUE LEADER
8. Salinity in the South Holland Main Drain adversely affects fishery and spray irrigation uses.	South Holland IDB /EA	To be evaluated	• • • • •  • • • • •  • • • • •	To minimise the saline intrusion via the tidal sluice.  To further evaluate the degree to which natural saline water ingress occurs from "salt pans" in tributary catchments.  The EA to continue water quality monitoring.	A bubble curtain has now been trialled. However to determine the effectiveness of this device, residual salinity must first be removed. Winter run off 96/97 may accomplish this, monitoring will be continued until the system is satisfactory.  The EA is to seek partnership funding for a collaborative improvement programme.  On going	CQO
9. Pollution is caused by overflows of existing sewerage systems.	AWS	To be evaluated	Action prior to year 2000.	Provide improved sewerage to prevent sewage and detritus entering the River Nene at the Peterborough Embankment. This has been identified in the 2nd Asset Management Plan for the Water Industry.	These improvements completed, however there are other sites which are now being addressed by an AWS/ EA working party.	CQO
10. Pollution caused by inadequate sewage and sewage treatment facilities in rural areas causes failure of amenity standards.	AWS/District Councils/Private Developers	Dependant on requisitions	• • • • •	Unless a change to the legislation is forthcoming the only practical option is for the District Council or the owners to requisition for first time rural sewerage schemes.	Section 101A of the Water Industry Act ( enacted by Schedule 22, Environment Act 1995), places new responsibilities on local water companies to provide adequate sewage infrastructure. This will provide a way forward, discussions with AWS and District Councils are ongoing.	CQO
11. Facilities for safe access and egress to locks are inadequate.	EA	£10K	•	Improve existing/provide new landing stages at Alwalton Lock.	ISSUE RESOLVED: work completed in association with lock refurbishment.	IF
12. Navigation overnight facilities are inadequate.	EA	£10K	• • •	Provide additional sites through joint ventures with others.	No Progress to date.	
13. Sewage disposal points for boats are inadequate.	EA/ Local Authority/ Landowners/Boat Owners/Others	30K circa	•	Provide additional sites through joint ventures with others.	A collaborative project with Stibbington Boat Yard has resulted in the navigation facilities, (pump out chemical toilet disposal, water point and public toilets), being upgraded. This catchment now contains 2 sanitary stations, (Stibbington & Peterborough Embankment) and therefore the issue is resolved.	IF
14. Restricted access to disadvantaged persons due to physically demanding lock operation.	EA	£30K	• •	Power guillotine gates experiencing high usage.	Data from automatic monitoring of lock usage is being collected and will in future be used to target lock automation projects.	IF

• = Feasibility Study/Appraisal Period

• = Work on Site

ISSUES	RESPONSIBILITY	ESTIMATED COST	ACTION PERIOD 94/5 95/6 96/7 97/8 98-	DETAILS	PROGRESS TO DATE	ISSUE LEADER
15. The presence of zander in the Nene is potentially damaging to coarse fish population.	EA	Nil	. .	Monitor zander populations during survey programmes.	Surveys of the fish population sites on the Lower Nene were completed in June 1995. A winter fish survey of Ferry Meadows was completed during the winter of 1995/96 - only 2 zander were caught. Report to follow.	CR
16. Free passage of migratory fish is prevented by Dog-in-a-Doublet Sluice.	EA	£48K	.	Construct a fish and eel pass around the sluice.	ISSUE RESOLVED. A fish pass has been constructed at the Dog-In-A-Doublet Sluice. Extensive monitoring of fish using the pass is being undertaken and a report will be produced in the winter of 1996.	CR
17. Habitat diversity downstream of Peterborough is low.	EA	#	. . . . .	Undertake habitat enhancement without the loss of channel capacity downstream of Peterborough via flood defence capital and maintenance work.	Close liaison between Conservation and Flood Defence function ensures that all opportunities are taken to enhance the conservation value of water courses. A 1 hectare scrape has been constructed at West Walton downstream of Wisbech, and two others at Rings End. These will provide important habitat for birds such as Snipe. Trees and Willow Stakes were provided by the NRA to Castor Parish Council for planting along the River Nene.	MT
18. Recreational use of the catchment may be under utilised.	EA/ Local Authorities/ Others	£5K	. . .	Undertake study.	Collaborative project with the Northamptonshire Wildlife trust have been initiated.	CR
19. Changes in land use impact on the water environment.	EA/Planning Authorities/ Developers		. . . . .	Planning Authorities will be encouraged to incorporate EA planning guidelines into their structure and development plans.	In line with the Agency's objective to work more closely with the local planning authorities, a series of formal liaison meetings are proposed to commence in November of this year. Stronger liaison on proposals which affect the River Nene and promote sustainable development is particularly important. As actions outlined in this issue constitute part of the Agency's routine business, we do not intend to report further on this issue.	

ISSUES	RESPONSIBILITY	ESTIMATED COST	ACTION PERIOD 94/5 95/6 96/7 97/8 98-	DETAILS	PROGRESS TO DATE	
<p>20.a) For a strategic and holistic approach to the management of the Lower Nene and its associated environment, a better understanding of the wide-ranging implications of relocating the River Nene's tidal limit ( Dog-in-a-Doublet Sluice) is required.</p>	EA/Planning Authorities/ Conservation Interests	£60K	.	To commission a study to consider the implications of moving the tidal limit.	Study complete, preliminary findings indicate that there is insufficient benefit to the Environment Agency to justify relocation of the tidal limit from Dog in a Double Sluice. However the Environment Agency would be prepared to participate as a partner in any future development proposals. <b>ISSUE RESOLVED</b>	IDR
<p>b) Long term siltation in the Tidal Nene Estuary.</p>	EA	£15K	.	To commission a study to produce a strategy for dealing with siltation of the Nene in association with other rivers discharging to the Wash. This study to take account of other ongoing initiatives.	The strategy is now complete subject to EA endorsement, it will be used in the future as a reference work when considering maintenance and capital programmes.  The WROS (Wash River Outfall Studies) are now largely complete. The studies seek to determine more efficient river operation.	PC
<p>21. Recreational uses of the "de-restricted mile" have the potential to conflict. Users have expressed their concern.</p>			.	Encourage liaison between various users to minimise conflicts.	No progress to date	CR

• = Feasibility Study/Appraisal Period

• = Work on Site

# = Dependent on flood defence capital and maintenance expenditure



ISSUES	RESPONSIBILITY	ESTIMATED COST	ACTION PERIOD 94/5 95/6 96/7 97/8 98-	DETAILS	PROGRESS TO DATE	ISSUE LEADER
22 The present management of coastal defences around the Wash has produced inconsistencies in flood defence standards due to the lack of a long term holistic strategy.	EA/LFDCs	£60K	. . . . .	EA to produce a Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) for the Wash Estuary in conjunction with consultees	Draft SMP consultation report completed April. Feedback Currently being collated final version should be due in December.	PC
23 The presence of Tecnazene & Chlorpropham in sediments in the River Nene is of concern.	EA/ Industrialists/AWS	To be assessed	. . . . .	EA to assess quantities and effects. EA to liaise with Industrialists with a view to reviewing consent conditions.	Input recognised by NRA/EA River Nene tidal surveys. Data collated from Agency surveys has been presented to the Toxic and P Substances Centre to assist in the development of Environmental Quality Standards for these substances which may then be incorporated into discharge Consents.	CQO
24 Restoration of land to low level agriculture is having an adverse impact on groundwater levels and water use.	EA/LA/Developers		. . . . .	EA will seek the inclusion of a "Plan Policy" which will address this issue in Structure and Local Plans, at the time of their review.  EA will liaise with LA's to discourage development which results in the poor use of water.  EA will contact operators of sites causing groundwater "draw down" and seek adoption of appropriate mitigation measures.	New Issue  New Issue	DF  DW

• = Feasibility Study/Appraisal Period  
 • = Work on Site

## MANAGEMENT AND CONTACTS:

The Environment Agency delivers a service to its customers, with the emphasis on authority and accountability at the most local level possible. It aims to be cost-effective and efficient and to offer the best service and value for money.

Head Office is responsible for overall policy and relationships with national bodies including Government.

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**ENVIRONMENT AGENCY  
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