

EA - MIDLANDS Box 7

What's happening in the Midlands region

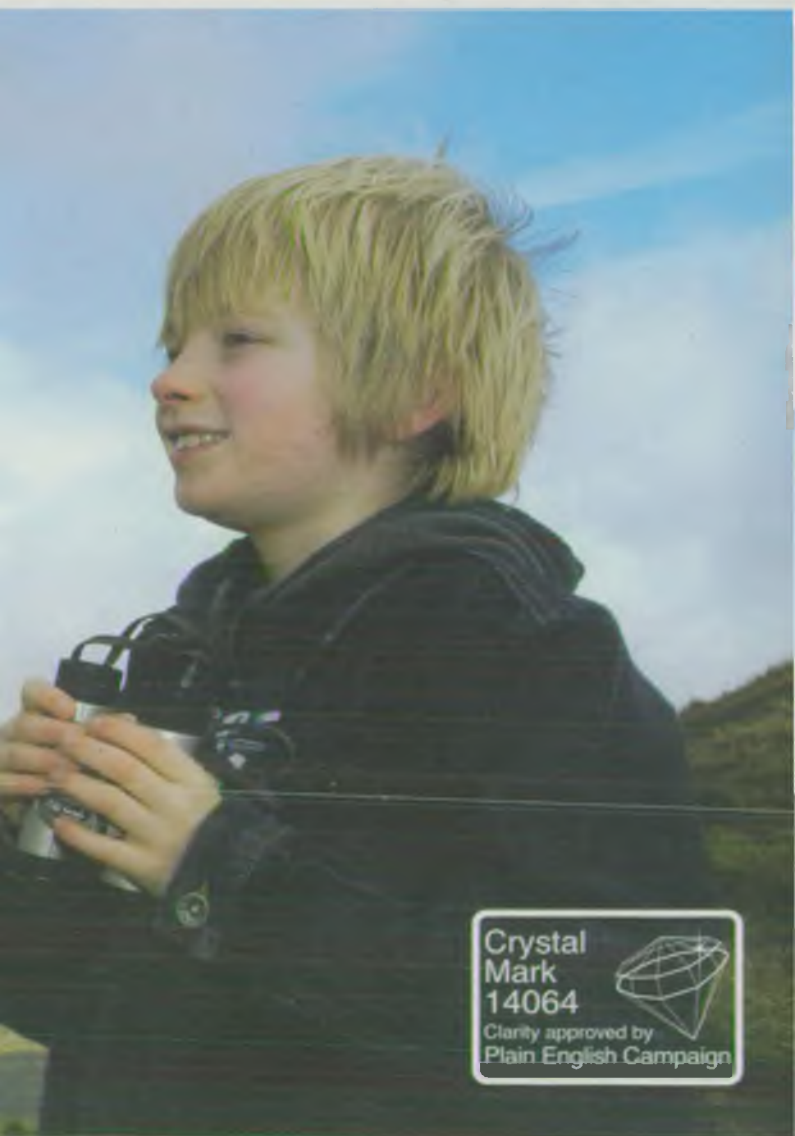
Looking at our environment

taking
a
closer
look





Environment
Agency



Crystal
Mark
14064



Clarity approved by
Plain English Campaign

Nottingham canal



A region of stark contrasts

Carers of the environment in the Midlands

Eight million people live in the Midlands. It contains some of the most densely populated and ethnically varied areas in the UK, such as Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Derby, Leicester, Coventry and Nottingham. On the other hand, 70 per cent of land in the Midlands is agricultural, from the plains of Worcestershire to the wild uplands of the Peak District. The region also has two major rivers - the Severn (the longest river in Britain) and the Trent.

However, the Midlands' long and proud tradition in industry and agriculture left behind its mark of environmental damage. We work with many partners to help redevelop and rejuvenate some of the most damaged areas.

The good news is that:

- air quality is improving, as the number of all major industrial pollutants and greenhouse gases that are in our air are steadily falling;
- in the last 10 years, our water quality has got better as many of the major water companies are putting more funding into improving the quality of our water;
- the quality of our rivers is improving greatly, making it possible for salmon to return to the River Trent;

- protected species such as the otter, white crayfish and water vole are beginning to thrive;
- land spoiled by past industry is being restored;
- businesses and organisations are considering our environment when they make plans;
- many of our ideas, such as flood defence schemes, encourage people and organisations to think more about our local environment (this leads to new efforts to try to help improve our region, as seen in areas such as Gainsborough, Bewdley, Lydney and Kidderminster);
- over 166,000 properties in the region are protected by flood defences of at least a '1-in-100 year' standard (see note below).

Note: Floods are categorised by their size and how often they can be expected to happen. A 1-in-5 year flood is one that has a 20 per cent chance of happening in any year - this is a relatively minor flood. A 1-in-100 year flood has a 1 per cent chance of happening in any year - the damage it can cause can be enormous.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



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Packington landfill





Waste

Midlands issues

More recycling, less waste

In the Midlands, over 126,000 fly-tipping incidents were reported by local authorities between April 2005 and March 2006.

Every five minutes, someone dumps rubbish illegally in the Midlands. 58 per cent of these incidents are from household waste. This costs £17,000 a day to clean up.

The amount of household waste we produce is still increasing year on year. We could reverse this trend by doubling our efforts to recycle - every household could recycle 60 per cent of its waste.

As well as recycling, there are other solutions to tackling waste pollution. The Government is planning to reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfill.

And we will:

- work with local authorities to try to stop incidents of waste crime from happening, helping urban regeneration;
- regulate and work with those involved in recycling waste to develop new ways of working;
- provide information and advice for regional and local waste plans;
- encourage a range of recycling schemes.

*Maize growers' day,
Oaklands Farm,
Walton upon Trent,
28 February 2006*





Midlands issues

Encouraging better farming practices

In our region 75 per cent of the land in our region is used for agriculture. Agriculture has an important influence on the rural environment. It needs to be profitable, and it is also needed to support high-quality land management, which supports other sectors, particularly tourism and recreation.

Poor farming practice leads to environmental problems. For example, water can be polluted by slurry, sheep dip, soil or fertilisers. In 2000, agricultural sources were to blame for over a quarter of serious pollution incidents.

Environmentally responsible farming practices reduce costs, attract grants and help us to achieve wider conservation and targets.

We are trying to show farmers around the region that they can actually save money by introducing best farming practices and Environmental Management Systems for Farms, by working closely with farming and voluntary organisations to show farming communities the advantages of working in more environmentally friendly ways.

Agriculture

*Demountable
barriers at Bewdley*







Water

Midlands issues

Water and preventing flooding

The Midlands has 6,600 kilometres of rivers which provide water for drinking and irrigation, supporting recreation and a wide range of fisheries and wildlife.

The population of our region is expected to grow by about half a million before 2025, creating extra demand for drinking water. We are continually developing plans to manage our current supplies of water, preparing us for increased demand and the possibility of drought.

Our flood warning service warns people in 63,000 properties about expected floods and encourages them to protect themselves from flooding. We are developing new flood risk management plans, mixing traditional and alternative approaches to tackle the problem of flooding.

Since 1998, there have been three major floods in the region; in autumn 2000, 1,874 properties were flooded – the worst flooding in 50 years. Our flood warning service warns people in 63,000 properties about expected floods and encourages them to protect themselves from flooding.

We are developing new flood risk management plans, mixing traditional and alternative approaches to tackle the problem of flooding. New schemes, using demountable defences, have recently been completed at Bewdley and Shrewsbury. At Melton Mowbray, a green dam; made out of willow and hazel, offers a natural environmentally friendly solution compared to using concrete. For smaller communities, temporary defences have been tested along parts of the Severn Valley, at places such as Upton upon Severn and Ironbridge, among others. These new ways of tackling flooding in the Midlands are being used for the first time in Britain.

*Winter storage reservoir,
Sleaford*





Clim



ate change

Midlands issues

Climate change, changing you

In the last century, average temperatures in the region increased by 0.5°C. There is a possibility of a further increase of up to 3°C by the end of the century. This suggests that over the next 20 to 30 years, the Midlands will have wetter winters and drier summers.

Rainfall in the Midlands in December has increased by 30 per cent since the 1930s. Rainfall in July has decreased by 30 per cent over the same period.

Our climate is already changing and we all need to consider the risks in any long-term decision that we make. We advise regional organisations on the likely effects of climate change, also advising people on the ways that everyone can help to slow down and reduce the effects of climate change.

**Would you like to find out more about us,
or about your environment?**

Then call us on

08708 506 506 (Mon-Fri 8-6)

email

enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

or visit our website

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

incident hotline 0800 80 70 60 (24hrs)

floodline 0845 988 1188



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