

THAMES 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 Thames 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.



Thames Region

The Thames Region is a geographically diverse area of lowland England. The area it covers is bounded by Cirencester in the west, London in the east, Luton in the north, and Crawley in the south. The Region encompasses both the large urban development of Greater London with its high concentration of population, and areas of outstanding natural beauty such as the Cotswolds and Surrey Downs.

The major water course is the Thames, but other significant catchments are the Lee and Roding in the east and the Mole and the Wey in the south. The Region also includes EC-designated bathing beaches at Thorpe Bay, Southend and Shoeburyness.

Some Key Statistics

- Area: 12,900sqkm
- Population: 11.6m
- Length of main river: 5,294km
- Length of estuary: 193km
- Flood defence works maintained: 3,074km
- Average annual rainfall: 754mm
- Number of abstraction licences: 3,105
- Volume of authorised water abstraction: 20,312ML/d
- Number of consented discharges: 4,663
- Number of EC bathing waters: 3

Our aims in 1991/92 are in line with the national emphasis on the enhancement of the pollution control function, together with development of water resources and flood defence programmes appropriate to the most densely populated Region of the NRA. We will continue to maintain our current activity level for other functions and to develop our Support Services.

Water Resources:

- to anticipate a 1991 drought and plan appropriate responses;
- to analyse and define quantified NRA views on Thames Water's intention to build a reservoir in South-West Oxfordshire;
- to implement the charging for discharges scheme;
- to finalise the plans for each of the five Alleviation of Low Flow schemes and initiate construction work.

Water Quality:

- to increase the length of river monitored through extensive chemical and biological sampling programmes;
- to implement the national guidelines on the sampling of effluent and controlled waters;
- to introduce hand-held automatic quality monitoring instruments in accordance with the national programme;
- to carry out a programme of site visits in order to continue a policy of emphasising prevention rather than prosecution;
- to verify all existing significant consents and 80% of septic tanks.

Flood Defence:

- to increase productivity of the in-house work-force through implementation of further stages of the trading centres;
- to gain further benefit from the LoS approach for watercourse maintenance by implementing related prioritisation techniques;
- to reduce days lost through accidents by 20% over the next year;
- to progress with the design phase of the Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Fisheries:

- to implement 1991/92 element of five year fish population survey programme by surveying 400km of river and producing 12 reports;
- to implement a programme of fish passes through the Thames Salmon Trust.

Recreation and Conservation:

- to produce an action plan to implement recommendations of River Thames Recreation Strategy by September 1991;
- to implement a programme of river corridor surveys on 438km of river.

Navigation:

- to implement the 1991/92 element of the Lock Enlargement programme;
- to implement the lock integrity programme and publish the 1991/92 Lock Works and Closures programme by July 1991.

Support Services:

- to implement the Capital Programme planned expenditure for projects managed by Technical Services;
- to begin to reduce the dependence of the Thames Region on the IT services provided by Thames Water Utilities by installing a Regional area network;
- to seek the adoption of Thames Region NRA planning policies within the local and county council strategic plans;
- to make available resources to prosecute 150 cases by 1992/93 and a target of 13% per annum increase in fines levied to 1994/95, training of Environmental Quality on legal matters including an improved model case file;
- to co-ordinate and manage successfully job evaluation programme for NJSC staff and the introduction of a new staff appraisal system;
- to develop policies, processes and outline a vigorous programme for staff training and development.

Foreword

The Thames Region plan for this year has several major characteristics and themes. Progress has been made in quantifying outputs and across the range of functions we are looking to achieve more. We will monitor water quality more, analyse more samples, charge dischargers for the first time and, ultimately, be *the* major influence in bringing about better quality rivers and groundwater. We will produce, and begin implementing, a robust water resources strategy to take us confidently well into the next century. We will begin alleviating the problem of low flow rivers – take action, not talk about it – and we will vigorously police abstractions. We will improve our flood warning capability, make our river maintenance work more effective and continue to promote an ambitious flood defence programme which will make many thousands of people more secure from the threat of flooding.

We will introduce an historic navigation gauge for the Thames, put right a backlog of problems with the integrity of river control structures and enlarge a small number of key locks. We will continue to do justice to our recreation and conservation duties and to improve our fisheries. Finally, we will improve our people, our systems and design capability and, critically, our ability to influence local authorities and developers and their interactions with the water environment.

A further key theme of our plan is that we are seeking to pursue a positive policy of effectiveness, efficiency and economy. Our efforts in this direction have been vigorous and we have definitive plans to improve our purchasing, to increase productivity, to improve the flexibility of our employees, to work with other Regions and to fully support national developments.

With the resources available, we are confident we will succeed in being real and effective "Guardians of the Water Environment" in the Thames Region.

Les Jones
Regional General Manager

Key Achievements 1990/91

All functions have made major advances in the year, although the continuing difficulty in recruitment of staff in certain key disciplines has hampered progress in specific areas. Achievements of note include the following:

Water Resources:

- strategy and programme of initial work to remedy future shortfalls in the Region's water resources;
- major advances in projects for alleviating low flows in the rivers Misbourne, Pang, Ver and Wey and Letcombe Brook.

Water Quality:

- increased biological and chemical monitoring of controlled waters;
- increased numbers of pollution offenders prosecuted and convicted.

Flood Defence:

- submission of the planning application for the Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme;
- preliminary work to effect the full introduction of the trading centre concept in the Upper and Lower Thames areas from April 1991.

Fisheries:

- implementation of a programme of fish passes through the Thames Salmon Trust;
- continuation of the five year rolling programme of fish population surveys.

Recreation and Conservation:

- production of a recreation strategy for the River Thames;
- input to flood defence schemes and maintenance works to ensure full account taken of conservation needs.

Navigation:

- maintenance of a continuous service despite severe drought conditions in summer 1990.

Support Services:

- development of policies across all functions to handle the key areas of planning liaison and development control;
- continued significant progress to reduce dependence on Thames Water Utilities computing facilities;
- introduction of an enhancement programme to strengthen the role of Finance and other Support Services.

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. Thames Region employs a total of some 1,300 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 an NRA Board Member with responsibility for that Region.

Regional General Manager
Les Jones
Regional Board Member
John Norris
Regional Flood Defence Committee Chairman
Michael Davies

Regional Rivers Advisory Committee Chairman
Joan Wykes
Regional Fisheries Advisory Committee Chairman
Hugh Parry

Activities Requiring NRA Consent

Certain activities require the NRA's 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 water;
- 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 waters 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 (if applicable);
- interfere with a sea defence (if applicable).

Public Register Access

Members of the public may inspect data for the Region at The Regional Headquarters, between the hours of 9:30 am and 4:30 pm. The Register was made public on 31st July 1985 and information from that date is available. Enquiries can be made by telephone: (0734) 535000.

Where to Contact Us: Regional Headquarters

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Copies of the full Corporate Plan are available @ £12 per copy from:
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Cheques should be made payable to 'National Rivers Authority'.