

EA-SOUTH  
WEST

Box 7



# Links

**An overview of the work of  
the Environment Agency in Devon**

Autumn/Winter 2003



**ENVIRONMENT  
AGENCY**



Dear Friend

During 2002, the Environment Agency in Devon compiled its local contribution to the Environment Agency's Corporate Strategy. This determines our priorities for improving the environment over the next five years.

We have the plans. We have reorganised to maximise our resources and we are now firmly focussed on delivering the environmental improvements that many people in Devon have wanted us to deliver through the Catchment Planning and Local Environment Agency Plan (LEAP) processes. This newsletter will keep you informed, highlight our successes and maintain the energy and enthusiasm needed to deliver the demanding targets for each environmental theme:

- An enhanced environment for wildlife
- Cleaner air for everyone
- Improved and protected inland and coastal waters
- Restored, protected land with healthier soils
- A 'greener' business world
- Limiting and adapting to climate change
- Reducing flood risk
- Wiser, sustainable use of natural resources

We cannot deliver all the outcomes that we seek on our own. We need to work in partnership with individuals and organisations to help us to help Devon's environment. Please let us know when we are doing badly and also when we are doing well! We also welcome comments on the newsletter itself, contact details can be found on the back page.

*G. R. Bateman*

Geoff Bateman  
Devon Area Manager

# cleaner air for everyone

We want to play our part in maintaining the current good air quality in Devon, and set a good example to other businesses. Staff at our Exminster Office do their bit by ensuring that the impact of our offices on the environment is minimal. As soon as it was confirmed in August 1997 that Devon Area staff would be moving to Exminster House just outside Exeter, an environmental audit was carried out. This enabled an environmental action plan to be produced. Within this action plan we identified a number of targets, including reducing our energy consumption by 2% from a 1999/2000 baseline and increasing the amount of renewable energy purchased by 6 million kWh by 2008.

So, what measures did we put in place?

- insulating pipework and roof area
- preventing waste of energy by fitting timers to electrical equipment
- changing from electric hand dryers to recycled paper towels
- purchasing electricity from renewable sources
- fitting thermostatic controls to all radiators
- fitting light/movement sensors in toilets
- reducing our final emission by reducing air conditioning to a minimum (there are now only two small units in the building serving the computer room and the main kitchen)

## Long-term vision:

People will enjoy cleaner and healthier air. The emission of pollutants into the atmosphere will decline greatly, below the level at which they can do significant harm.



## An enhanced environment **for wildlife**

### **Velator Wetland**

Velator Wetland is situated beside the Tarka Trail, that runs from Braunton to Barnstaple. The shallow lake which was formed by the construction of the flood alleviation scheme is being allowed to regenerate into a natural wetland area. Velator Wetland offered an opportunity to enhance public access in the form of the 'Art in the Travelling Landscape' project. The proposal is to provide a viewing point to enable users of the Tarka Trail to see the wildlife that use the wetland, without disturbing them. This project is working with the local community to alter their perception of the ownership and use of the site and the design for the viewing points is being finalised with the artist.

### **Exminster Marshes - tilting weirs**

We have completed work on the installation of three self-regulating tilting weirs at Exminster Marshes, as part of the Water Level Management Plan. The weirs were designed and installed by Environment Agency staff. This is a first for Devon and will improve management of water levels at this internationally important wildlife site, by ensuring that the water levels throughout the marshes remain stable. The regulated levels will also please local farmers and the RSPB. The weirs also have health and safety benefits for our maintenance team, who will no longer have to visit remote locations to remove boards during flood events.

### **Long-term vision:**

**Wildlife will thrive in urban and rural areas. Habitats will be improved and extended for the benefit of all species. Everyone will understand the importance of safeguarding biodiversity and protecting wildlife.**

# reducing flood risk



## Cockwood Marshes

Creation of village/school play area and wetland enhancement.

A proposal for a new village green play area in the floodplain at Cockwood provided an opportunity to secure both the recreational use of the floodplain and wildlife enhancement while retaining its important flood defence function.

Initially the Agency opposed the proposal to raise areas of the floodplain on the grounds that there would be a net loss of flood storage capacity in a sensitive 'tide lock' location. Subsequent negotiations resulted in the modification of the proposal to ensure that any raising of the play area would be minimised and that any loss of storage capacity would be compensated for by lowering other areas of the marshes.

### Long-term vision:

Flood warnings and sustainable defences will continue to reduce property damage and distress due to flooding. The role of wetlands will be recognised. Flood risks due to land use and climate change will be assessed and used to influence planning decisions.

## Be prepared for flooding Launch of 2003 campaign in South West

The Environment Agency launched its 'Act now – be prepared for flooding' 2003 campaign on the 14th October, with events around the South West. The campaign emphasizes the precautions that householders and businesses can take before a flood happens. The awareness campaign is backed by "Changing Rooms" stars Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen and Handy Andy who have made a promotional video to demonstrate simple and cost-effective ways for people to protect themselves.

During October the Devon Area Flood Warning Team visited a selection of local markets including Tiverton, Tavistock, Newton Abbot, Cullompton, Axminster, Totnes and Barnstaple, in order to spread the word about the extended Floodline service.

A supporting leaflet details the latest flood defence products to have gained a British Standards Institution Kitemark and outlines practical steps householders can take. It is available from Floodline on 0845 988 1188.



# Improved and protected inland and

## Angling participation

As part of the Environment Agency's Angling Participation Project two events were organised in Devon during July 2003 with the aim of encouraging participation in the sport, especially for the disabled and youngsters. The events were organised in conjunction with local angling clubs and the National Federation of Anglers using Exeter & District Angling Association club waters at Kia Ora Farm, Cullompton and Newton Abbot Fishing Association's Rackerhayes complex at Newton Abbot.

Both events were well attended, with around 130 one-to-one coaching sessions provided by qualified angling coaches. Other activities during the days included pond dipping, interactive computer games, a fishy quiz, prize draw, plus fly and carp fishing demonstrations. Many of those attending had never fished before and welcomed the opportunity to have a go at fishing without having to purchase expensive equipment. We intend to organise more of these events, together with other initiatives targeting junior, disabled and women anglers.

### Long-term vision:

Our rivers, lakes, estuaries, groundwater and coastal waters will be far cleaner. They will sustain diverse and healthy ecosystems and contribute to thriving and healthy communities by supporting recreational pursuits.



### Cornborough sewage treatment works

For many years Bideford and the surrounding area have been served by an inadequate sewerage system, which discharged screened and settled sewage from Bideford, Appledore, Westward Ho!, Northam, Instow, Yelland and Fremington into the River Torridge. The South West Water Ltd scheme for Cornborough collects the sewage from all these communities and, through a series of pumping stations, delivers the flow to a newly built and commissioned sewage works, where the effluent is treated then disinfected with ultraviolet light and is discharged to the sea through a 500m long outfall. Within three months of the scheme operating *E.coli* in the flesh of shellfish in the estuary fell from 2000 to 20 per 100g.

# coastal waters





# Restored, protected land with

## Axe and Char enhancement project

The valleys of the Rivers Axe and Char are renowned for their landscape value, as well as being one of the best grass growing areas in the country. The rivers and their tributaries are home to important and valued wildlife. That said, there is a need to address problems in the rivers that threaten plants, fish life and water quality. These threats include: elevated levels of phosphorous, sedimentation of the river bed, and increased soil and bankside erosion. The causes of these problems are

varied, and the Axe / Char Enhancement Project is a partnership initiative which aims to protect the local environment by delivering sustainable land use. The focus of this three year project is on delivering best farming practice for soil and water management. This is a £1 million project co-funded by the European Interreg programme linking with other land use projects in the South West, France and Ireland. Over the past few months the project has been trialling the use of a direct maize driller to see if this reduces the impact of maize growing on soil structure. Other work includes bankside fencing and spilling to encourage vegetation regeneration to protect riverbanks from soil erosion.





### River Torridge Project

In recent years there has been a continued deterioration in the water quality within the Upper Torridge catchment. This is due in part to changes in farming practice. The River Torridge is an important salmonid river as well as having the last few sites for Freshwater Pearl mussel in Devon. Changes in farming practice have increased siltation of the river gravels and increased diffuse pollution. The River Torridge Project will be focussing on improving the water quality within the Upper Torridge and its tributaries to reverse the decline in water quality and species biodiversity. An assessment has been carried out to define the problem areas and we will be working in partnership with local landowners and farmers, together with the Westcountry Rivers Trust to provide advice and information on best farming practices to reduce the effects of agriculture on water quality.

# healthy SOILS

#### Long-term vision:

Land and soil in both rural and urban areas will be exposed far less to pollutants. It will support a wide range of uses, including production of healthy, nutritious food and other crops, without damaging wildlife or human health. Contaminated and damaged land will be restored and protected.

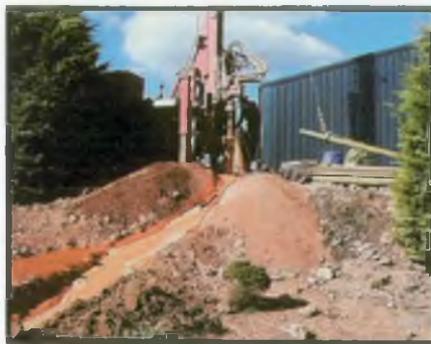
# Wiser sustainable use of natural resources

## Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS)

CAMS will enable us to manage water resources at a local level in consultation with interested parties and local communities. Part of the strategy will be to make information on water resources and licensing practice more widely available. The strategies will also enable us to balance the needs of abstractors, other water users and the environment both now and for the future.

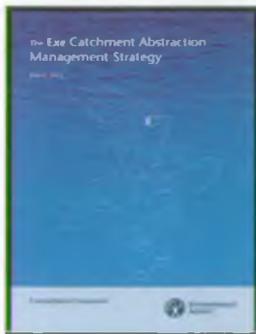
The Exe CAMS is the first to be produced in Devon. The Consultation Document was published in April 2003, supported by the issue of a 'Technical Document 1

(Consultation)'. The consultation, which ended on 30 September 2003, was widely publicised to ensure that all interested parties had an opportunity to comment. The next stage will be to



assess all the comments received and produce a Statement of Response document. The finalised strategy will be published in early 2004. Once published, abstraction licences will be determined or amended using the strategy.

Work has also started on the Otter, Sid, Axe and Lim CAMS. We will publish the consultation document in April 2004 for public comment. Further strategies will be produced for the Taw and North Devon Streams, the Avon Dart and Erme, the Teign and Torbay, and the Torridge and Hartland Streams.



### Long-term vision:

Environmental concerns will be at the heart of business thinking and operation. Industry and business will secure trust in the wider community by valuing the services that come from a rich and diverse natural environment. In the process, they will reap the benefits of sustainable business practices, improved competitiveness and value of shareholders.

# A greener business world

## A greener business world

We are currently working with South Hams District Council on a Green Tourism Business Scheme, providing technical advice and presentations on environmental management to businesses who attend the Green Business Club. This project provides an Environmental Accreditation Scheme which recognises businesses for their environmental achievements, and a visitor payback scheme called 'On the Right Tracks' whereby businesses give a penny from each product sold, e.g. an ice cream, to the payback scheme which then goes to enhance the unique network of green lanes in the district.

We are also a partner in the Envision project, a service provided to small to medium sized businesses in Objective Two areas of the

South West including Devon, Somerset and Bristol. The scheme provides cost saving environmental action for businesses, an environmental audit, and a dedicated business mentor. If you know of any businesses in Devon who would benefit from their services please contact the number at the back of this leaflet.



### Long-term vision:

Everyone will take responsibility for minimising the waste they produce. Waste will increasingly be seen as a potential resource. Intensive re-use and recycling of materials and efficient use of energy will become the norm. More products will be designed, marketed and licensed to minimise environmental costs. Water will be a valued resource, used wisely by everyone.

# climate change

## Limiting and adapting to

### Flood risk mapping of Exeter

We are in the process of producing a detailed flood risk map of Exeter. The mapping began last year and is progressing well. The initial study and the detailed ground surveying of the flood defences and surrounding area have been completed with the construction of the hydraulic model to follow shortly. This will accurately model the current defences for Exeter, showing which areas are at risk and may prompt improvements to the current defences. This will have a number of benefits enabling us to respond to planning applications, to inform the public on the level of flood risk in the area and to enable improvements to our flood warning service. This will be completed by March 2005.

### Lympstone flood protection

We are promoting a scheme at Lympstone to alleviate the risk of tidal flooding. At Lympstone when the tide is high, water floods between properties on the boundary of the estuary spilling into the lower lying properties that make up the hinterland. The solution is a series of tidal gates that will be closed at times of extreme high water. Though the risk of flooding is infrequent, this scheme is highly manpower intensive, and it would not be possible for us to operate it alone. We are, therefore, working in partnership with East Devon District Council and Lympstone Parish Council, to develop the scheme which will be operated by the Lympstone Harbour Authority.

### Long-term vision:

Society as a whole takes into account and prepares for the probable changes to our climate. Deep cuts are made in the emission of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide.

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY  
GENERAL ENQUIRY LINE

**0845 933 3111**

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY  
FLOODLINE

**0845 988 1188**

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY  
EMERGENCY HOTLINE

**0800 80 70 60**

If you would like further information about any of the items featured in this newsletter please contact our Customer Contact Department on telephone 01392 316181.



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