

Striking the Right Balance

Somerset Levels and Moors Water Level Management Strategy Review

Public Consultation

Background

The Somerset Levels and Moors form one of Britain's largest and best surviving wetlands. The area consists of 60,728 hectares (150,060 acres) of low-lying land which drains to the Severn Estuary.

This special landscape has internationally recognised conservation value and is an important agricultural area. Tourism, recreation and local industries all play a significant role.

The key element in this unique setting is water. Striking the right balance through water level management is critical if the range of interests from householders, farmers and road users to wintering birds and breeding waders, wet meadows and valuable archaeological remains are to be safeguarded.

For many years conflicts have arisen between various interests over the way the Levels and Moors should be managed. In particular there have been tensions between agricultural and conservation viewpoints, mainly over the management of water levels.

In 1991 an attempt was made to overcome these difficulties when a strategy for water level management and nature conservation was published. This has led to advances but differences still impede progress.

The Environment Agency has major flood defence, conservation and other responsibilities in the Levels and Moors. It is seeking to review and update the strategy, with other interested parties, in the light of experience and changed circumstances.

A central part of this review will be a period of extensive public consultation. This leaflet spells out the process.







Aims of the Review

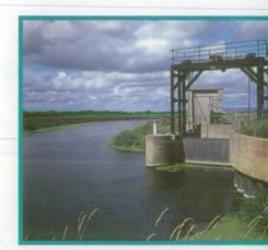
Given the importance of the Somerset Levels and Moors it is vital to develop a water level management strategy which strikes the right balance between the various interests involved.

To progress matters it is generally recognised that the review must produce more explicit and defined outcomes to avoid confusion and inaction. These include:

- Agreeing achievable targets, the actions required and by whom;
- Identifying what can be done to overcome constraints;
- Prioritising the areas in which to direct the agreed actions;
- Identifying sources of funding needed to achieve the agreed targets.

In exploring the way forward three key principles have been identified which must also be taken into full account. These are:

- The need to protect human life and the area's necessary infrastructure;
- The encouragement of sustainable agriculture;
- The promotion of the socio-economic well-being of the area.



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

DEVON AREA

Environment Agency Exminster House Miller Way Exminster EX6 8AS Tel: 01392 444 000

CORNWALL AREA

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

NORTH WESSEX AREA

Environment Agency Rivers House East Quay Bridgwater TA6 4YS Tel: 01278 457 333

Fax: 01278 452 985

SOUTH WESSEX AREA

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







NATIONAL LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICE

HEAD OFFICE

Rio House, Waterside Drive, Aztec West, Almondsbury, Bristol BS32 4UD

EA - SOUTH WEST

For 24-hour information and advice on flood warnings in England and Wales call;

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY F L O O D C A L L 0645 88 11 88

The 24-hour emergency hotline number for reporting all environmental incidents relating to air, land and water.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY EMERGENCY HOTLINE 0800 80 70 60





CALTURA 1 K. E. BASIN



Key Issues

A whole range of specific issues are expected to be considered as part of the review. These will include:

- Water shortages on the Levels and Moors in winter and summer;
- Water level targets in Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Sustainable land use in floodplains;
- Future water level management plans;
- Preservation of archaeological remains:

- Poor water quality in ditches;
- The withy industry;
- Effects of urban development;
- The maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity;
- Wetland restoration.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list and if you feel that there are other issues to be considered we will be pleased to hear from you.

Public Consultation Arrangements

Whatever your particular interest we want to hear from you with your views on the future of water level management on the Levels and Moors.

Here are some of the ways in which you can help the review:

■ Study the full consultation report and send us your comments. This is available free of charge from 'Strategy Review', The Environment Agency, North Wessex Area, Rivers House, East Quay, Bridgwater TA6 4YS, (Tel: 01278 457333). Comments should also be sent to this address.

Copies of the full report will also be available in public libraries.

Come to one of our exhibition roadshows and discuss the issues with our staff. These will be held at:

Glastonbury Town Hall:

10am-5pm, Mon. 9 February 1998

Langport Arms Hotel, Langport: 10am-5pm, Mon. 23 February 1998

 Attend one of our public meetings and debate your concerns.
 These will be held at:

Wedmore Village Hall:

7.30pm-9pm, Mon. 9 February 1998

Burrowbridge Coronation Hall:

7.30pm-9pm, Mon. 23 February 1998 The consultation period will run until Tuesday 5 May 1998.





The Somerset Levels and Moors



Key

- Catcott,
 Edington and
 Chilton Moors
- 2. Kings Sedgemoor
- 3. Langmead and Weston Level
- 4. Meare Heath
- Moorlynch
- 6. Northmoor
- 7. Shapwick Heath
- 8. Street Heath
- 9. Southlake Moor

- Tealham and Tadham Moors
- 11. Westhay Heath
- 12. Westhay Moor
- 13. West Moor
- 14. West Sedgemoor
- 15. Wet Moor
- 16. Curry and Hay Moors

