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BLACKWATER RIVER CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

FINAL PLAN

SUMMARY LEAFLET



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NRA

National Rivers Authority
Thames Region

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CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The integrated management of river catchments is at the heart of the NRA's work. Catchment Management Plans (CMP) provide a means of setting priorities for the NRA and others to ameliorate environmental problems and to conserve and enhance the water environment - both now and in the future. The plans will by their very nature, involve us in close contact with local communities and statutory organisations who share our concern and interest in the water environment. However, it should be realised that the actions stated in the Final Plan are aspirations. All the participating organisations have limited resources and powers and some actions may not be executed within the allotted timescale.

The CMP for the Blackwater River is the first to be published in Thames Region (South East Area). In due course CMPs will be produced for all the other catchments.

Should you have any comments, queries or require a copy of the complete Blackwater River Catchment Management Plan - Final Plan (at £10 per copy) please contact;

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'Understanding how rivers, lakes and groundwaters behave is fundamental to our job. However, we must also consider the way the uses of the water and the activities potentially harmful to it, interact and are managed. Abstracting water, disposing of effluent, participating in water-based recreation and road construction are some examples.'



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BLACKWATER RIVER CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Blackwater River CMP - Final Plan considers the current status and uses of the catchment and sets out a plan for cross-functional actions to address the issues highlighted during the consultation stage. The proposed actions represent a firm commitment to embark upon securing the comprehensive protection and enhancement of the natural water environment.

The National Rivers Authority's vision for the Blackwater catchment comprises the following: -

- *Reverse the decline of the water environment and seek to restore the river corridor to a more natural state in which it will become a valued asset for the whole of the community;*
- *Secure protection and enhancement of the water environment through its own actions, in partnership with others and, increasingly, through the process of land use planning, implement the principles of sustainable development;*
- *Facilitate activities by various water users in appropriate locations and balance them so as to avoid conflict, through strong links and involvement with local communities.*

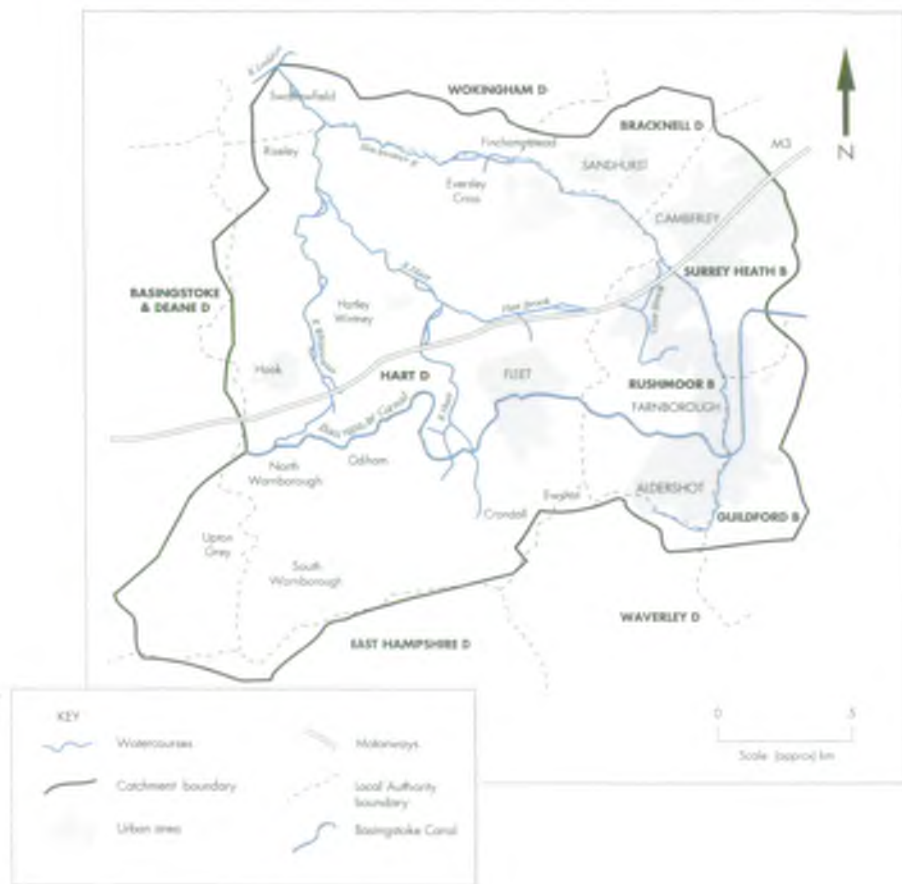


The catchment, totals 356 square kilometres and, is one of great contrast. On the western side the Rivers Whitewater and Hart drain a largely open area (apart from the towns of Fleet, Hartley Wintney and Hook), whilst on the eastern side the Blackwater River and Cove Brook drain a heavily urbanised area comprising the towns of Aldershot, Camberley, Farnborough, Sandhurst and Yateley. Pressure for further development is likely to continue not least because of the existence of good road and rail communication with Central London.

The aim is not only to maintain the existing values of the water environment of the Blackwater but also to provide improvements to flood defences and degraded habitats, to create open green spaces, and to improve public access (where appropriate). To achieve this aim the NRA will work in partnership with Local Authorities and other key participants. The Final Plan provides an important focus for this partnership approach.

CATCHMENT ISSUES AND ACTIONS

A fundamental part of the CMP Final Plan is the "Action Plan". This lists the issues identified during the consultation period, and proposes actions which need to be undertaken. In addition the NRA will continue to carry out 'routine' activities to safeguard the catchment's existing values.



1. THE CATCHMENT

Catchment-wide actions to be taken during the next five years include:

- *Produce a management plan for the control of the quantity and quality of surface water run-off from roads and urban areas.*
- *Promote the Groundwater Protection Policy to Local Planning Authorities*
- *Carry out surveys to improve information on flood risk and its impact on development.*

2. BLACKWATER RIVER

The upper sections of the Blackwater River form an essential ecological corridor through the extensive urban development comprising the towns of Aldershot, Camberley, Farnborough, and Sandhurst. Actions to be taken during the next five years include:

- *Implement sympathetic river works and mitigation proposals to minimise adverse impact of the Blackwater Valley Road on the river corridor.*
- *Implement Pollution Prevention Initiative to reduce the number of oil pollution incidents.*
- *Identify opportunities to protect and promote appropriate recreational uses including extension of the Blackwater Valley Footpath.*

3. RIVER HART

The River Hart and Fleet Brook drain primarily undeveloped areas of the catchment. Issues identified include degraded habitats and also poor population of fish in the upper reaches of the River Hart. Actions to be taken during the next five years include:

- *Carry out river corridor habitat survey, prepare strategy and undertake habitat enhancement works.*
- *Undertake fishery surveys.*



4. RIVER WHITEWATER

The River Whitewater is a high quality river. From its source to its confluence with the Blackwater River it is an EC designated salmonid fishery. Actions to be taken during the next five years include:

- *Prepare strategy for enhancing degraded habitats.*
- *Carry out water quality studies to investigate the cause of the apparent low level of dissolved oxygen.*

5. BASINGSTOKE CANAL

The Basingstoke Canal, which has been restored and reopened, now supports a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The canal is important ecologically and the Greywell Tunnel is an internationally important habitat for bats. Matters to be addressed over the next five years include:

- *Investigate the impact on water quality of silt carried into the canal by surface water run-off.*
- *Safeguard Greywell Tunnel as an important habitat for bats.*
- *Continue fisheries survey programme.*



6. FLEET POND

In 1951 Fleet Pond, which is the largest freshwater lake in Hampshire, was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The continued long term deterioration in the ecological value of the pond, due in part to the influx of sediment from the feeder stream, is an issue that will be addressed. Actions to be taken during the next five years include:

- *Evaluate Ministry of Defence silt traps.*
- *Investigate further options to prevent silt pollution.*
- *Finalise Draft Management Plan.*
- *Prepare Fishery Management Strategy.*

7. THE RELATIONSHIP WITH LAND USE PLANNING

New development, including roads, can have a significant impact on all aspects of the water environment. In some cases such impact may be seriously detrimental and in others it may provide opportunities for enhancement. This is an issue which has implications for the 'actions' proposed in the Catchment Management Plan and therefore, the NRA will:

- *Contribute to Structure Plans and Local Plans, including promoting appropriate policies for inclusion within local Planning Authority Development Plans.*
- *Continue the routine activities of its Catchment Planning Section such as responding effectively to planning applications and development proposals, ensuring for example, that habitat enhancement opportunities are achieved wherever practicable.*

8. COMMUNICATIONS

The entire catchment management planning process has enhanced the level of communication between the NRA and interested parties in the Blackwater catchment. The NRA is committed to continuing this. The achievement of actions stated in the plan will be monitored and it is proposed that an annual Blackwater catchment forum be organised between the interested parties.



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