

Industry, manufacturing and other business

What action for water means for you

South East



Action for water

Everyone benefits from clean water, and a healthy water environment.

The end of 2009 marks the beginning of a new journey for the south east's water environment. The Environment Agency will publish the South East River Basin Management Plan, a long term programme of environmental improvements to make the south east a better place.

The environment of the south east is very special, and water quality has improved significantly in recent decades. However, it will take more time, effort and resources to deal with the pressures that still remain – as well as the future challenges of climate change and development.

Everyone can take action for water, to create an environment we are all proud of and can enjoy.



Kingfisher by Lukasz Lukasik

What are the challenges?

The south east's large population puts pressure on the environment through discharges from sewage works. Many urban and rural rivers have been modified for flood defence or navigation, often at the expense of ecological quality. Also, the way land is managed has given rise to a host of complex pollution issues in rural as well as urban areas.

There are also concerns over maintaining the water resources available for people and the environment.

The south-east is a water scarce region and we must reduce household and non-household consumption. We need to balance our needs with the resources we have by using less, providing new resources and preparing for the impacts of climate change.

The river basin management plan

The South East River Basin Management Plan is a statutory plan, required under the European Water Framework Directive. One of 11 plans in England and Wales It covers the South East River Basin District, which extends from the Thames estuary in the east and almost as far west as Salisbury, and taking in the four county councils of Kent, East and West Sussex and Hampshire.



The South East River Basin District

The plan introduces new ways of measuring the health of our waters based on the Water Framework Directive's tougher environmental standards. It describes the pressures on the whole water environment, it's status and our targets for 2015, and the action required.

We are aiming for a 4 per cent improvement in the number of waters at 'good status' by 2015. By 2021, we expect this to increase to 60%. By 2027, we will work to improve this further – and as close to 100% as possible.

A range of actions are set out in the plan. They will require everyone to be involved – water companies, farmers, environmental organisations, local authorities, industry, individuals, communities and others. We need your help.

Industry, manufacturing and other business has a major role to play

The South East is home to more than 300,000 businesses. Thriving marine and oil industries are critical economic activities, along with defence establishments, construction, and the commercial fisheries fleet. The activities of these businesses can directly or indirectly affect the water environment.

Most relevant actions in this plan are already underway or are part of the existing regulatory system. However, some actions are new, and will help reduce nutrients such as phosphate and will help meet tighter standards on ammonia and 40 other priority substances and pollutants in the river basin district. Where appropriate, industry will participate in pollution prevention campaigns and in investigations to establish the extent and source of pressures to define any further actions required for this and future plan cycles.

Relevant actions

Example actions

Comply with regulations such as Environmental Permitting, Environmental Damage and Groundwater, to limit environmental damage and help prevent land contamination, pollution and deterioration of waters.

- Nationally

Voluntary **pollution prevention and remediation** of existing land contamination, to bring land back into beneficial use and remove potential sources of groundwater contamination.

- Sites contributing to potential environmental quality standard failure

Run **pollution prevention advice and campaigns** to provide targeted advice and enforcement to reduce contaminants being released to groundwater from industrial estates, petrol stations and other sources.

- High risk areas such as safeguard zones

Where appropriate, subject to the Environment Agency carrying out a 12 week public consultation and making an appropriate case to the Secretary of State, designate a limited number of **Water Protection Zones**.

- Candidate pilot in Thanet. Initially around eight Zones in locations to be decided across England.

Promote **good practice to avoid pollution from construction sites**.

- Across the river basin district

Research into locations of non-agricultural pesticide problem areas and their solutions.

- Across the river basin district

Develop and implement a **demand management campaign** including targeting specific non-household sectors.

- Across the river basin district

Case Study: Protecting groundwater

Groundwater from the Chalk on the Isle of Thanet and in East Kent is used for drinking water, agriculture, industry and also flows to the springs that fill the streams and marshes. This groundwater is very vulnerable to contamination. It usually has only a thin layer of soil protecting it and the natural cracks in the Chalk allow pollution and other substances to pass through very quickly.

Tests on the groundwater have shown high levels, or rising concentrations, of several substances. The main substances impacting the groundwater in this area are nitrate, pesticides, solvents and hydrocarbons. Some impacts are widespread and others local.

Your drinking water is safe and there is no risk to human health as the water is regularly tested and treated by the water company.

However, substances from many sectors (industry, water company, transport, residential, mining, agriculture etc) are impacting the groundwater. Local evidence shows that changes made to the use of substances applied to the land can make a real difference to improving the quality of groundwater.



Once groundwater is contaminated it can take a long time, often decades, to clean up. Pollution prevention is better than cure. Together we can make a difference to the quality of the groundwater in the Isle of Thanet and in East Kent. We need to start now.

Working together with farmers, industry and local communities to find a solution, will safeguard our water supplies and protect the ecology in our watercourses for generations to come.

Contact us

The River Basin Liaison Panel steers this work in the South East River Basin District. You can contact your sector representative via the Environment Agency, or get in touch with us directly as shown below.

Website: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfd>

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