



Blueprint for Water

Action in Partnership



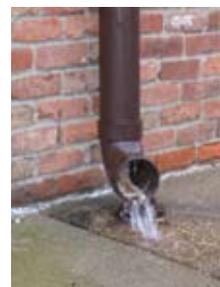
Ten steps to sustainable water by 2015 – progress so far

Water is our most precious natural resource. It is vital to people's health and happiness, vital for the environment and our wildlife, and vital to our economy. But this most precious asset is in crisis. That is why in 2006, we, a coalition of leading environmental organisations, launched the Blueprint for Water, setting out 10 steps to sustainable water.



Four years on, during the *International Year of Biodiversity*, our rivers, lakes and ponds remain our most threatened habitats; targets for restoration and creation of wetlands remain unmet; and River Basin Management Plans promise just 5% improvement by 2015.

The Prime Minister, David Cameron MP has committed to leading the 'greenest government ever'. The new Government has a chance to help restore the health of our water environment, with the forthcoming Natural Environment and Water White Papers offering an unparalleled opportunity to bring about positive change.



The Blueprint coalition's 9,000 staff, 6 million members and 128,000 volunteers are ready to play their part in helping deliver a vibrant water environment full of wildlife. However, there also remain fundamental barriers to sustainable water management that only Government can address. This report describes some of the work we and others are undertaking and our priorities for reform.

10 steps to sustainable water

Waste less water

Reduce water consumption by at least 20% through more efficient use in homes, buildings and businesses.

Keep our rivers flowing and wetlands wet

Reform abstraction licensing to reduce pressure on rivers, lakes and wetlands today and increase flexibility to adapt to future climate change.

Price water fairly

Make household water bills reflect the amount of water people use.

Make polluters pay

Make those who damage the water environment bear the costs through more effective law enforcement, tougher penalties and fairer charges.

Stop pollutants contaminating our water

Introduce targeted regulations to reduce harmful pollutants in water.

Keep sewage out of homes and rivers and off beaches

Reduce discharges of sewage into urban environments and ecologically sensitive areas.

Support water-friendly farming

Support and reward farmers who deliver healthy rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands, and provide a range of other benefits to society.

Slow, manage and clean drainage from roads and buildings

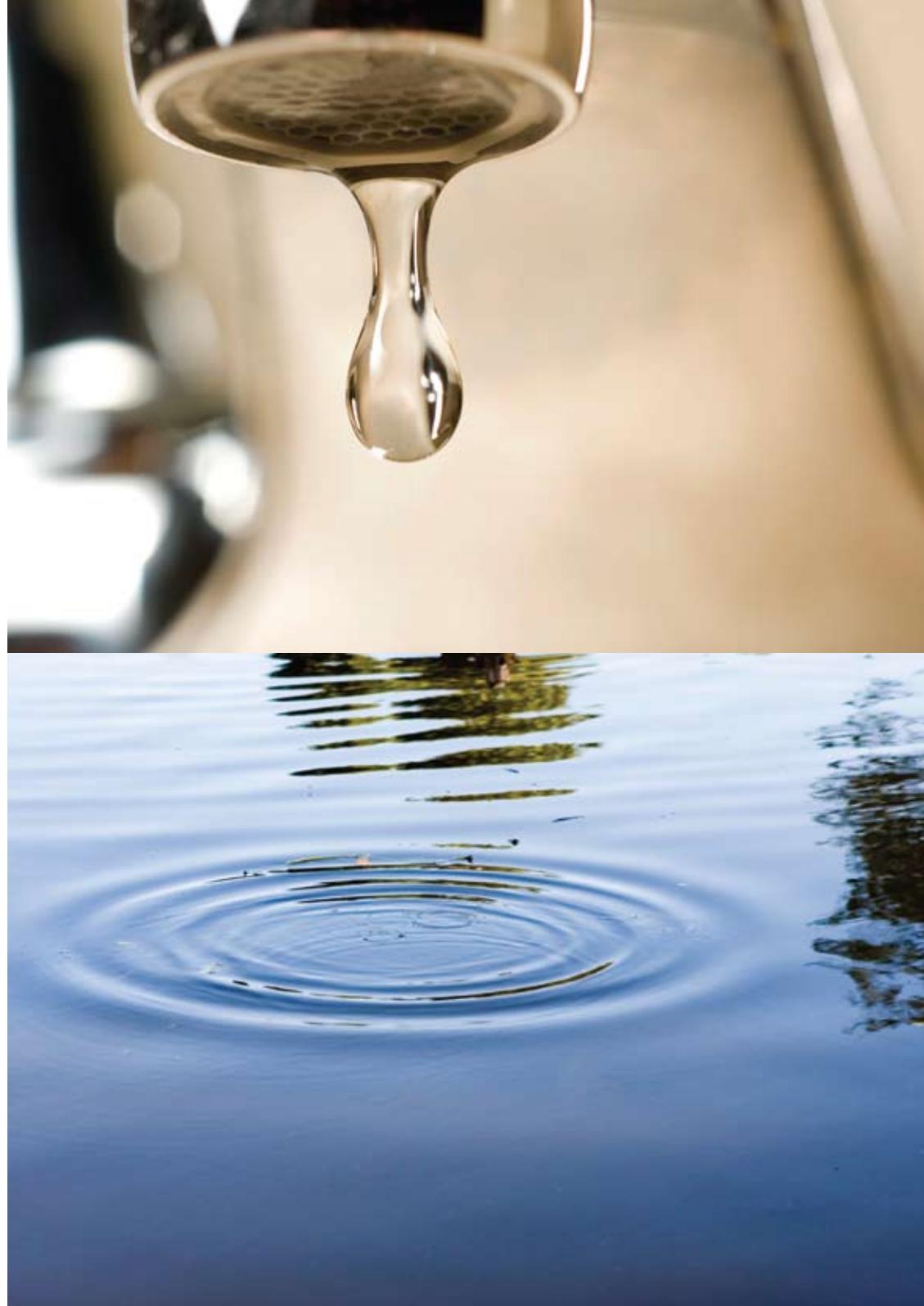
Create a modern urban drainage network that can mitigate surface water flooding and trap pollution.

Protect and restore catchments from source to sea

Protect and restore rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands in partnership with local communities.

Retain water on floodplains and wetlands

Restore large areas of wetland and floodplain to create and link vital wildlife habitats, improve water quality, protect soil carbon and reduce urban flooding.



Waste less water

For every three litres of water we use, one is wasted. Tackling this waste can help reduce our impact on wildlife as well as cut bills and carbon emissions. Although some good progress has been made since the Blueprint was first launched, water efficiency is far from mainstream and plans for fixing leakage have stagnated.

Reduce water consumption by at least 20% through more efficient use in homes, buildings and businesses.

- In 2011, the Water White Paper should set out plans to make all homes water-efficient, making the links with existing energy saving retrofitting programmes.
- By 2012, the Government should ensure investment required to improve water efficiency and reach sustainable levels of leakage is treated equally to resource development.
- By 2012, all new housing should be 'water-neutral' with developers offsetting demand through efficiencies elsewhere. Building in water-stressed areas should only be permitted if developers contribute to an overall reduction in demand through efficiency savings.
- By 2012, the Government should introduce water efficiency standards for products (including taps and showers) and require public sector procurement to specify highly water-efficient goods.

Blueprint members will work with the water industry, Government and businesses to develop a public water efficiency campaign that can communicate the value of water and drive changes in behaviour.



The *Tap into Savings* campaign is taking water efficiency messages to people's doorsteps, offering water, gas and electricity savings to 7,600 households through simple technological changes as well as helping individuals to take personal action. The project, which is a partnership led by Waterwise, is also establishing EcoTeams: small groups of neighbours working together to save water and energy and reduce waste at home.

Keep our rivers flowing and wetlands wet

One third of our rivers are damaged or at risk from licensed abstractions. Despite the considerable effort put into developing strategic abstraction plans and programmes by the Environment Agency, little action has been taken to amend or revoke licenses that threaten water and wetland habitats.

Reform abstraction licensing to reduce pressure on rivers, lakes and wetlands today and increase flexibility to adapt to future climate change.



- By 2012, the water needs of freshwater species and habitats should be re-assessed using best available science and information.
- By 2012, the water-stressed area designations should be updated to better reflect abstraction pressures, environmental sensitivity and climate change projections.
- By 2015, all abstraction licences should include flow-related restrictions and time limits to allow regular review in light of environmental sensitivity and climate change pressures.
- By 2015, the Government and its agencies must amend or revoke abstraction licences that present high risk of damage to the ecology of rivers, still waters and wetlands.

Blueprint members will work with Government and industry to identify rivers at risk from abstraction and the needs of freshwater habitats and species.



WWF's *Rivers on the Edge* report has highlighted the plight of English chalkstreams, unique ecosystems found only in south east England and northern France. The Mimram is a case in point, a nationally important chalk stream that the Environment Agency's Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme identified as being over-abstracted in 2005. Despite this weight of evidence, there is no clear timetable to amend or revoke damaging licences or reduce waste through water efficiency, metering or leakage reduction. Without swift reform, the future doesn't look bright for the Mimram.

Price water fairly

Only a third of households in England pay bills that reflect what they use. Although half will be metered by 2015 only a rapid and planned move to universal metering, with tariffs that discourage waste and protect vulnerable groups, will ensure this precious resource is properly valued.

Make household water bills reflect the amount of water people use.



- In 2011, the Government Water White Paper should include:
 - Proposals to achieve universal water metering by 2020.
 - Plans to link smart energy meters for every home with smart water meters.
- By 2015, all water customers in water-stressed areas should be metered.
- By 2015, metered tariff schemes that protect vulnerable customers, deter waste and reflect environmental impact should be implemented nationally.

Blueprint members will work with the water industry to encourage our members and supporters to opt for metered water.



WWF is working with Southern Water to help demonstrate the benefit of water meters in protecting rivers like the Hampshire Itchen to their customers. As well as installing half a million new meters Southern Water will provide home water audits to help customers reduce waste and give feedback through bills and real-time devices. The information gathered will help the company drive down leakage to 12% by 2015 while a new tariff, developed in consultation with customers, will ease the switchover to metering and protect vulnerable customers.

Make polluters pay

The polluter pays principle should be at the heart of water policy. However, enforcement of legislation is patchy and fines for pollution do not fully reflect damage caused. As a result, those who pollute continue to profit while the environment and those who depend on it suffer the consequences.

Make those who damage the water environment bear the costs through more effective law enforcement, tougher penalties and fairer charges.

- By 2012, the Government should remove the statutory limit on fines and require fines to take account of the damage caused.
- By 2012, Government and its agencies should improve effectiveness of enforcement of existing anti-pollution laws, including better cross-compliance checks targeted at environmental risk.
- By 2012, the crop protection and fertiliser industry should fund measures to reduce diffuse agricultural pollution and create new clean water habitats to mitigate ecological impacts.
- By 2014, the Government and its agencies should reform the charging schemes for water abstraction and waste discharge to fully reflect environmental costs and seasonal sensitivity.
- By 2014, the Government should create a *Catchment Restoration Fund* financed from fines, abstraction/discharge charges and public funds to support works to restore rivers and their catchments.

Blueprint members will work with our local groups to help monitor compliance with existing wildlife protection and anti-pollution laws.



In September 2007, 1600 litres of bleach was released from a sewage works into the River Wandle, south London. Over 5km of river were polluted and 2 tonnes of fish killed. Thames Water immediately admitted responsibility and following intervention by the Anglers Conservation Association (now Fish Legal), pledged £500,000 to compensate angling groups; help fish restocking; fund biodiversity and access improvements; and support the Wandle Trust, a local charity dedicated to protecting and enhancing the river. This unprecedented package from Thames Water contributed to a reduced fine in court.

Stop pollutants contaminating our water

Our waterways continue to be polluted by industry, agriculture and the urban environment. Treating the impact of pollution with energy-intensive technology rather than tackling the cause hits people's water bills and drives up carbon emissions. To date little has been done to mitigate pollution from land and threats from new chemicals continue to emerge.



Introduce targeted regulations to reduce harmful pollutants in water.

- By 2012, the chemical production and retail industries should fund independent risk assessments and monitoring strategies for substances of high concern.
- By 2012, the Government and its agencies should designate waters at high risk from diffuse pollution as candidate Water Protection Zones and regulate if voluntary action fails to meet required standards by 2015.
- By 2012, the Government should introduce comprehensive measures to control pesticide pollution including statutory safeguard zones and catchment based approvals for high risk pesticides.
- By 2015, the Government should ban phosphates in all domestic and commercial cleaning products.
- By 2015, the Government and its agencies should complete catchment scale monitoring and evaluation of sediment pollution risk and introduce effective measures to protect sensitive habitats and species.
- By 2015, the Government should introduce reduction targets for pesticides and endocrine-disrupting chemicals released into the aquatic environment.

Blueprint members will work with Government, industry and land managers to identify species and habitats at high pollution risk, the measures required to tackle problems and the policy and funding frameworks to ensure action is taken.



The Riverfly Partnership Angler's Monitoring Initiative (AMI) based at the Salmon and Trout Association, trains volunteer groups to monitor the water quality of their local rivers by looking for pollution sensitive invertebrates. The initiative is endorsed by Government agencies, allowing water quality to be checked more frequently and at a wider geographical scale than would otherwise be the case. This volunteer-driven monitoring scheme provides a valuable insight into the health of river ecosystems and has already led to the successful detection of pollution and prosecution of the culprits.

Keep sewage out of homes and rivers and off beaches

Climate change, population growth and urban expansion are pushing England's historic drainage systems to breaking point. In 2008/09 alone, there were over 14,000 events of untreated sewage being dumped directly into rivers and the sea. Although water companies promise significant investment, we need new sustainable approaches to improving sewer capacity and mitigating the impact of intermittent discharges.

Reduce discharges of sewage into urban environments and ecologically sensitive areas.



- By 2012, the Government should remove the automatic right to drain surface water to a public sewer by fully implementing the Flood and Water Management Act (2010).
- By 2012, manufacturers of domestic and industrial water appliances should introduce colour coding for foul and surface water pipes to avoid misconnections.
- By 2012, the Government and its agencies should identify those septic tanks that pose the greatest threat to the aquatic environment and, where owners do not rectify faults, take regulatory action.
- By 2014, Ofwat should increase economic incentives for meeting environmental quality objectives by using low-carbon solutions to sewer overloading, intermittent discharges and wastewater treatment.
- By 2015, the Government and its agencies should review operating conditions of all combined sewage outflows and ensure those most likely to cause damage are monitored and permits enforced.

Blueprint members will work with industry, Government, local authorities and others to identify problem discharges and cost-effective, low-carbon solutions to tackle them.



Involving people in the fight for clean seas and beaches is at the core of the Marine Conservation Society's work. Over half a million people use the MCS Good Beach Guide to find beaches that are free of sewage. Thousands of volunteers monitor and clear the litter on our beaches. Over just one weekend in 2009, 4,655 volunteers removed a massive 342,151 pieces of litter from 397 beaches. Over 18,000 of the items found came from sewers.

Support water-friendly farming

European agriculture policy has been hugely successful in delivering plentiful food but at considerable environmental cost. Many rivers and groundwaters are polluted with high levels of fertilisers and pesticides; damaging wildlife and driving up water bills. We know that given the right incentives farmers can produce good food and healthy water.

Reward farmers who deliver healthy rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands, and provide a range of other benefits to society.

- By 2011, Government should fully fund all primary objectives of the Environmental Stewardship Scheme, with better targeting to support wetland wildlife, deliver clean water and healthy soils and reduce run-off.
- By 2012, Defra should use current EU rules to shift 10% (£160m/year) of Single Farm Payment funding into schemes that protect wildlife and stop agricultural pollution from damaging rivers, lakes, ponds and coasts.
- By 2014, the farming industry should take responsibility for funding of advisory elements of Catchment Sensitive Farming and the Voluntary Initiative.
- By 2014, the Common Agricultural Policy should be reformed to encourage sustainable farming practices and reward farmers for the delivery of public benefits, including better water quality and more wildlife.

Blueprint members will work with farmers, water industry and others to support water-friendly farming.



South West Water are investing £10m over the next 5 years in *Upstream Thinking* a project that will restore the landscape's natural capacity for water storage and filtration, delivering cleaner water to treatment works and reservoirs. The scheme offers benefit to cost ratios of more than 65:1 by helping avoid costly longer-term water treatment and provides a range of benefits for wildlife, landscape and people. The project will be delivered in partnership with Westcountry Rivers Trust, local Wildlife Trusts and FWAG, harnessing their expertise in habitat management and community engagement.

Slow, manage and clean drainage from roads and buildings

The Flood and Water Management Act (2010) should unlock many of the barriers that have prevented the use of Sustainable Drainage systems (SuDs). However, questions remain about long-term funding while the enabling legislation and guidance have yet to be published.

Create a modern urban drainage network that can mitigate surface water flooding and trap pollution.

- By 2011, Defra should identify long-term funding streams for the adoption and maintenance of SuDs by local authorities.
- By 2012, Defra should ensure that National Standards for SuDs integrate and promote their potential wildlife and amenity benefits.
- By 2012, local authorities should promote the benefits and opportunities of retrofitting SuDs to householders and businesses.
- By 2014, local authorities, the Highways Agency and water companies should launch a major SuDs retrofitting programme in areas where surface run-off and sewer overflow is causing pollution and flooding.

Blueprint members will contribute to the development of the National Standards, and provide advice to homeowners, business, water companies and local authorities on how to maximise the wildlife benefits of SuDs.



The South Finger reedbed at the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust Slimbridge demonstrates the great advantages of using wetlands to reduce runoff and treat wastewater. It was retrofitted in 1995 to collect surface water from buildings and paths and treat wastewater from the waterbird collection. The pioneering design regulates the quality and quantity of the flow into the Severn estuary, provides fantastic wildlife habitat and offers visitors the chance to learn more about the role of wetlands in the water cycle. Civil society's wetland expertise will be vital in making the most of SuDs for people and wildlife.

Protect and restore catchments from source to sea

Our water and wetland landscape is critically damaged. We have redundant weirs and dams disrupting the movement of fish and other wildlife; rivers isolated from their floodplains by hard defences; ponds and wetlands wiped off the map by drainage and agricultural intensification; and uplands that have been over-grazed, burnt and drained, polluting sources of drinking water and increasing the risk of flash flooding.

Protect and restore rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands in partnership with local communities.



- By 2012, the Government and its agencies should encourage partnership in water management by adopting a local catchment scale approach to water quality, water resource and flood risk management.
- By 2012, the Government and its agencies should assess the cumulative effects of river engineering on wildlife and use powers to remove or mitigate the impact of redundant and poorly designed physical obstructions.
- By 2012, the Government should implement the Lawton Review's recommendation to establish ecological restoration zones where networks of clean water ponds and wetlands are created to provide high quality wildlife corridors.
- By 2015, water companies should set out plans to increase investment in multifunctional catchment management schemes that protect raw water quality and enhance biodiversity, landscape and amenity.
- By 2015, the Government and its agencies should establish measures to restore and protect ecologically significant ponds, headwaters, streams and wetlands in the next generation of River Basin Management Plans.

Blueprint members will work with Government, water companies, local authorities, landowners and local communities to deliver landscape scale conservation initiatives that provide long-term benefits for water, wildlife and people.



The *Million Ponds Project* is led by Pond Conservation and involves a broad partnership of Government, statutory agencies, NGOs and land managers working together to create around 5000 new clean water ponds in England and Wales between 2008-2012. The project is vital for freshwater wildlife because, despite their small size, ponds are fantastically diverse habitats, supporting more endangered species than rivers or lakes. However, with nearly half of all ponds lost since 1880, and 80% in poor condition, they are in a parlous state.

Retain water on floodplains and wetlands

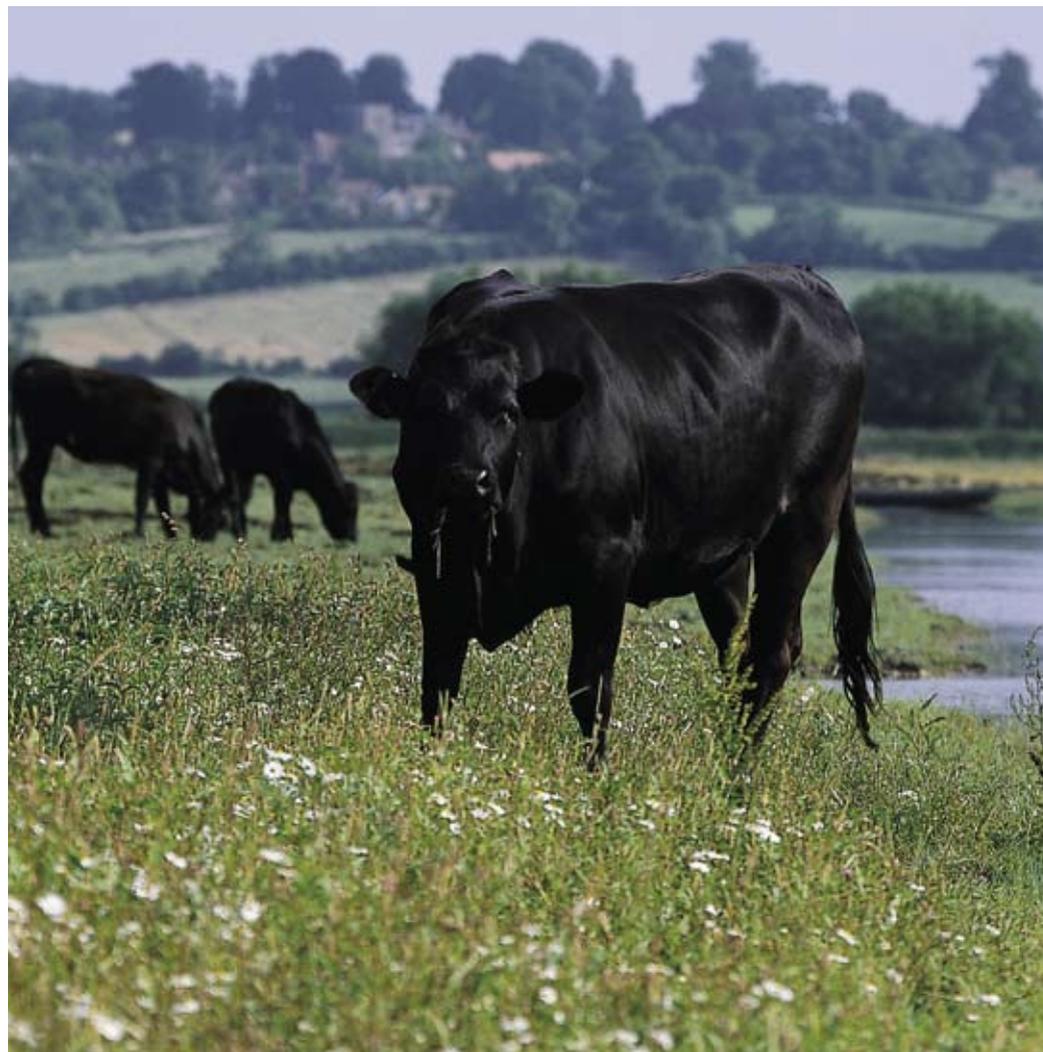
Wetlands are the engines of the water world – filtering water, sustaining flows, reducing floods, storing carbon and providing networks through the landscape for wildlife. Many habitats and species remain critically threatened while taxpayers' money is still being wasted on flood defence and land drainage works that damage wildlife and ecosystem services but deliver little public benefit.

Restore large areas of wetland and floodplain to create and link vital wildlife habitats, improve water quality, protect soil carbon and reduce urban flooding.



- By 2011, all Government spending on flood risk management works (capital and maintenance) should be prioritised on the basis of need and demonstrable benefit.
- By 2012, the Government should strengthen planning policy to safeguard floodplains and riparian land as part of its commitment to protect wildlife and promote wildlife corridors.
- By 2012, Defra should direct all Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management authorities to protect peat soils from damage caused by flood defence and land drainage works.
- By 2012, the Government and its agencies should implement Lawton Review's recommendation to support climate adaptation by making space for water and wildlife along river corridors.

Blueprint members will work with landowners and communities to protect, restore and expand wetlands that benefit wildlife, improve water quality, reduce urban flooding and protect soil carbon.



The Ray Valley Restoration Project is a landscape scale conservation partnership led by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) and the RSPB. Their shared vision is to see BBOWT's Upper Ray Meadows Nature Reserve linked with RSPB's nature reserve at Otmoor through a series of wetlands that are thriving with wildlife and delivering benefits for water quality and people. Farmers hold the key to success, so BBOWT and the RSPB are offering free specialist wildlife, water and grant advice to help integrate nature conservation with profitable production.

About the coalition

The Blueprint coalition's 9,000 staff, 6 million members and 128,000 volunteers are ready to play their part in delivering a sustainable water environment. But we need Government and others to help.



Blueprint for Water is a campaign of Wildlife and Countryside Link



For further information and contact details visit:

www.blueprintforwater.org.uk

You can also call 020 7820 8600 or email enquiry@wcl.org.uk

Photography

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