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Press Release

Embargoed until 00:01 hours on Wednesday, November 28th, 2007

Government “must try harder” on water

D-grade in end of year report

Government must try harder to tackle problems such as flooding, pollution and waste, with the coming year offering a real opportunity to change the way we value, manage and invest in water.

It is a year since the Blueprint for Water coalition – supported by more than six million people – handed Ministers a 10-step plan for improving the water environment for people and wildlife by 2015.

They have now issued an end of year scorecard to assess progress. It shows that welcome progress has been made on the introduction of water meters and on reducing the amount of water wasted in homes.

However, on a range of issues - from sewage and water pollution to the restoration of rivers and floodplains – the last 12 months have seen little or no progress.

Graham Wynne, chief executive of the RSPB, said: “The Blueprint was launched against a backdrop of serious drought in the south of England. A year on we are reviewing progress in the wake of the worst flooding in living memory.

“For decades successive Governments have failed to take the steps needed to make England and Wales more water-friendly and more secure against the extremes of floods and drought.

“This Government has a fantastic opportunity to change that.”





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The Blueprint for Water coalition will hand its scorecard to Environment Minister, Phil Woolas. Representatives of the Blueprint will also launch the report at an event hosted by Martin Salter MP in the House of Commons today (Wednesday, November 28).

Ellie Robinson, Assistant Director of Policy at the National Trust, said: "In 2008 a series of policy decisions and reviews offers a unique opportunity to make real and lasting changes to realise the vision we set out within the Blueprint for Water. We urge Government to seize this chance to secure a sustainable future for water."

-Ends-

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Notes to editors

1. Blueprint for Water 2007 report card: progress on ten steps to sustainable water

Waste less water	B Good work in many areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent progress on Code for Sustainable Homes • Excellent progress on making Building Regulations more water efficient • Little progress on retrofitting existing housing stock • Limited promotion and awareness
Keep rivers flowing and wetlands wet	C Progress has been patchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First steps made to tackle problem abstractions through Periodic Review of Water Prices and abstraction charging system • Little practical progress
Price water fairly	B Good work in many areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good progress on allowing compulsory metering in water-stressed areas

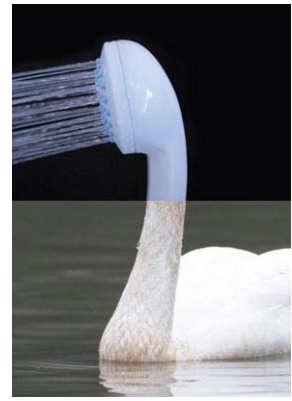
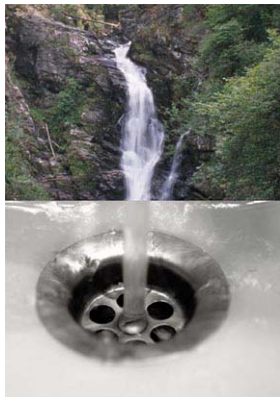


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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media reports of Government commitment to full metering by 2015 were welcome
Make polluters pay	E Urgent action needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No progress Series of derisory fines for serious pollution incidents Reduction in Environment Agency investigation effort
Stop pollutants contaminating our water	D Must try harder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long overdue consultation on tackling diffuse agricultural pollution published Concerns remain over political will to take action No progress on phasing out sheep dip
Keep sewage out of homes and rivers and off beaches	C Progress has been patchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministerial commitment to review automatic right of connection to public sewers is welcome progress Expensive work to tackle sewer flooding, but not enough to fix fundamental problems with much of our urban drainage infrastructure
Support water-friendly farming	D Must try harder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future of Catchment Sensitive Farming programme still not secure Extra pressure on water quality likely from loss of set-aside Government proposals for Nitrate Vulnerable Zones fall short of 100% designation
Clean up drainage from roads and buildings	D Must try harder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defra's Integrated Urban Drainage pilot projects have started Consultation on reform promised early next year



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No progress on removing barriers to widespread use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
Restore rivers from source to sea	E Urgent action needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little, if any, practical progress by Government Plans for SSSI river restoration on hold due to lack of funding No clear way forward for action required to meet Water Framework Directive objectives Most restoration projects carried out by local groups with support from Environment Agency and Natural England
Retain water on floodplains and wetlands	E Urgent action needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little if any progress, despite Government's "Making Space for Water" commitment to sustainable flood risk management

2. Defra Water Strategy

The Water Strategy will outline the Government's priorities for water both now and into the future. We look to the Water Strategy to provide the leadership and direction needed to deliver our vision for sustainable water, including securing water supplies, enhancing biodiversity, maximising social and economic benefits and improving our resilience to climate change.

3. EU Water Framework Directive: draft plans

The EU Water Framework Directive is the most important piece of water legislation ever passed in Europe. It requires all member states to restore the ecology of their rivers, lakes and wetlands by 2015, with each state's plans in place by 2009. Restoring our water environment will deliver enormous benefits for us and for nature, but to achieve it we need far-reaching measures covering water use, pollution, and water habitats. Several years in the making, the draft plans for England and Wales are due in 2008.



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4. 2009 Periodic Review of Water Prices (PR09): review begins

Plans for water industry investment are set every five years through negotiations between water companies and Ofwat, their economic regulator, with guidance from the Government. The next review, which begins in 2008, provides a crucial opportunity to:

- protect nationally and internationally important wetland sites by amending or revoking damaging abstraction licences and taking action on water quality;
- take forward large-scale water efficiency programmes; and
- tackle water quality problems at source through catchment management initiatives that offer many benefits for biodiversity and the environment.

5. Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): mid-term review

Agricultural pollution is one of the biggest challenges to the health of our water environment. The CAP mid-term review gives us an opportunity to give farmers positive incentives to prevent pollution and to restore degraded soils, rivers and wetlands. We will achieve sustainable water management only when public funding for agriculture is based on delivering these public benefits.

6. Blueprint for Water is a campaign of Wildlife and Countryside Link and is supported by the following 14 organisations:

Association of Rivers Trusts, Anglers' Conservation Association, Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Marine Conservation Society, The National Trust, Pond Conservation, Salmon & Trout Association, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Waterwise, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, The Wildlife Trusts, WWF-UK, and Zoological Society of London.

