



Blueprint for a Sustainable Water White Paper

Water is our most precious natural resource. It is vital to people’s health and happiness, vital for the environment and wildlife and vital to our economy. But this most precious asset is in crisis – only a quarter of rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands support healthy thriving ecosystems.ⁱ

The recent Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) promotes an integrated approach to managing the natural environment and highlights our critical dependency on freshwater ecosystems. The Water White Paper, which will be published later this year, is the Government’s opportunity to set out the actions needed to restore the health of our water environment and to deliver the commitments and approach set out in the NEWP.

Key tests for the Water White Paper

Waste less water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Set firm, clear guidance for Ofwat regarding the need to waste less water (as identified in the Ofwat reviewⁱⁱ); introduce measures to reduce water consumption by at least 20%. ➤ Set out plans to make every home water efficient; enable and encourage water companies to deliver water efficiency through the Green Deal and other energy saving retrofit programmes.
Keep our rivers flowing and wetlands wet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Commit to funding solutions for reducing water company over-abstraction by water via the periodic review process, and setting out a clear direction for Ofwat and the Environment Agency.ⁱⁱⁱ ➤ Implement the commitments to a clear process and timeline to reform the abstraction regime so that all licences reflect environmental limits.^{iv}
Price water fairly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Commit to implementing the Walker Review recommendation to introduce meters in 80% of all households by 2020.^v Allow all companies to introduce compulsory metering where there is a social or environmental benefit in doing so. ➤ Require water companies to develop, agree and implement metered tariffs that protect vulnerable customers, deter waste and reflect the environmental impact of water use.
Protect and restore catchments from source to sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Set out requirements for water companies to focus investment on improving water quality by tackling the source of problems, working with farmers and land owners, unless there are exceptional circumstances. ➤ Commit to tackling urban and rural diffuse pollution through advice and incentives that are underpinned by effective implementation of existing regulation, and commit to a clear timetable for introducing further regulation if existing measures do not meet defined objectives.
Slow, manage & clean drainage from roads & buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Set out the framework for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) retrofit, to create a modern urban drainage network that can reduce surface water flooding and trap pollution. ➤ Set out the timetable for the introduction of National Standards for SUDS as required by the Flood and Water Management Act (2010), ensuring that all measures integrate and promote wildlife and amenity benefits.

About the Blueprint for Water Campaign

The Blueprint for Water is a coalition of 14 leading environmental organisations, and a campaign of Wildlife and Countryside Link.^{vi} We will use these key tests to judge the success of the Water White Paper and measure the progress the Prime Minister is making in creating the 'greenest Government ever.'

This briefing is supported by the following 11 organisations:

- Amphibian and Reptile Conservation
- Angling Trust
- Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust
- National Trust
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Salmon & Trout Association
- The Rivers Trust
- The Wildlife Trusts
- Waterwise
- Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
- WWF-UK

Wildlife and Countryside Link September 2011

ⁱ 27% surface water bodies England - Good or better ecological status, River Basin Management Plans classification results, 2010.

ⁱⁱ Review of Ofwat and consumer representation in the water sector, by David Gray for Defra, 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱ This should include a commitment to fund solutions to allow reductions in water company abstraction at the 170 sites outstanding from the Environment Agency's 'Restoring Sustainable Abstraction' programme.

^{iv} Defra. Statement of Position, March 2011.

^v Independent Review of Household Metering and Charging, by Anna Walker for Defra, 2009.

^{vi} The Blueprint for Water is a campaign of Wildlife and Countryside Link (<http://www.wcl.org.uk/default.asp>), and has set out the 10 steps to sustainable water: http://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/2010/Blueprint_for_Water_2010.pdf.