



# Blueprint for Water

2009: the time to act

# 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

Amend or revoke those water abstraction licences that damage rivers, lakes and wetlands

## Price water fairly

Make household water bills reflect the amount of water people use

## Make polluters pay

Ensure that those who damage the water environment bear the costs through more effective law enforcement and tougher penalties

## Stop pollutants contaminating our water

Introduce targeted regulations to reduce harmful pollutants in water

## Keep sewage out of homes and rivers and off beaches

Upgrade the sewage system to reduce discharges of sewage into urban environments and ecologically sensitive areas

## Support water-friendly farming

Help farmers to prevent pollution and restore degraded soils, rivers and wetlands through advice, training and payments

## Clean up drainage from roads and buildings

Construct modern drainage systems that prevent pollution entering rivers from buildings and roads

## Restore rivers from source to sea

Regenerate rivers, lakes and wetlands in partnership with local communities

## Retain water on floodplains and wetlands

Restore large areas of wetland and floodplain to create vital wildlife habitats, improve water quality and quantity, and reduce urban flooding

# The challenge for 2009

In November 2006, we, a coalition of leading environmental organisations, launched the *Blueprint for Water*.

We share a belief that water is our most precious natural resource: vital to people's health and well-being, vital to wildlife and vital to our economy. We also believe that our water environment is in crisis and under growing pressure from abstraction, pollution, excessive development and climate change.



But it does not have to be like this. The Blueprint sets out 10 steps to sustainable water management where we are less wasteful of our water; where we keep our rivers flowing clean and healthy and our wetlands wet; where the water we use is priced fairly and polluters pay; where our waste is properly treated and not washed straight into waterways.



Since the launch of the Blueprint, progress has been patchy. One of the highlights of 2008 was the publication of *Future Water*. We were delighted that this new strategy from Defra included many of our steps to sustainable water, but its timescales are too long.

The challenge for 2009 is to turn words into action. We, the Blueprint coalition, urge the Government to be bold and ambitious and take the opportunities set out in this report to implement the Blueprint for the benefit of both people and wildlife across the UK.

# The WFD: Missing a once-in-a-generation opportunity?

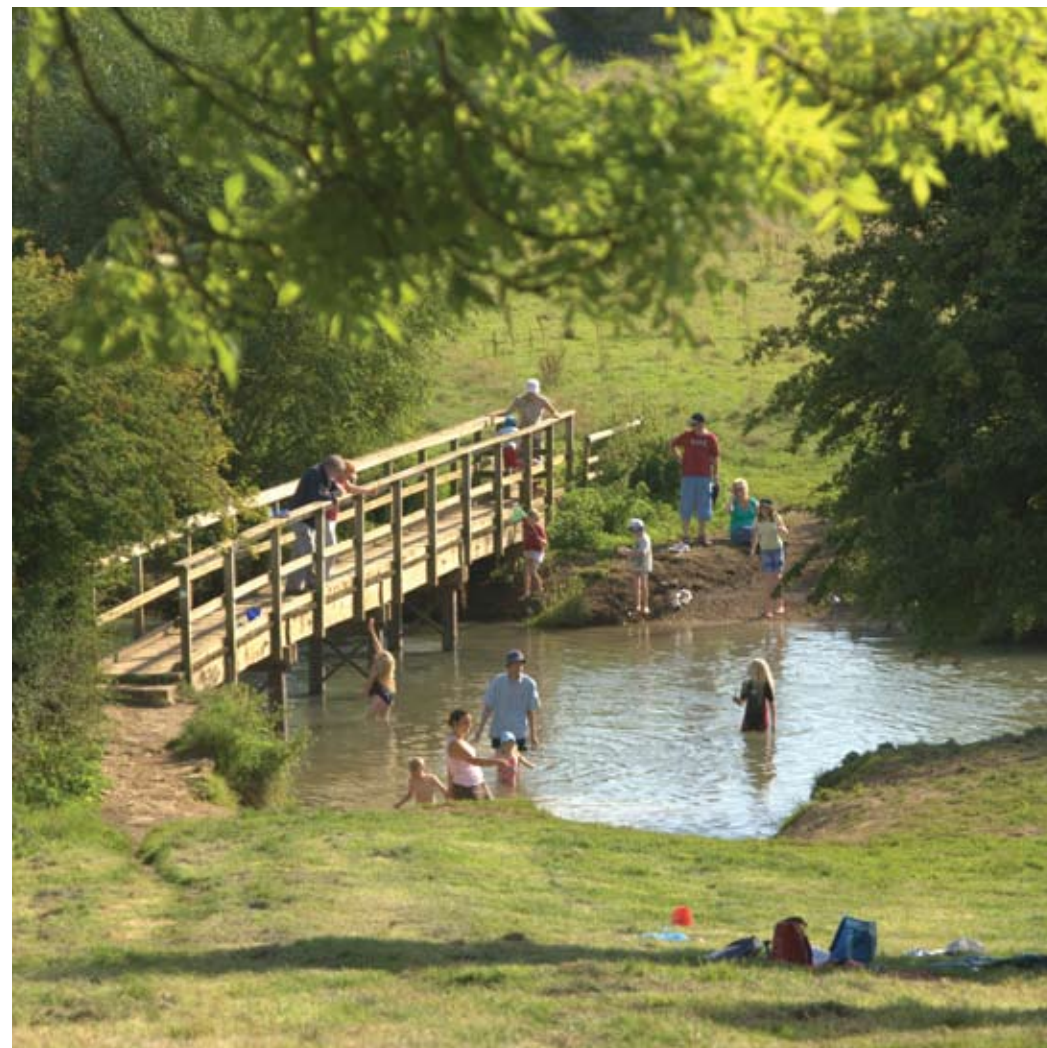
The Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires us to aim to achieve good ecological status in all our rivers, lakes and estuaries by 2015. This is our opportunity to reform water management for today and safeguard the health of our water in the future. So how are we doing?



Existing measures of water quality have shown real improvement since the 90s, mainly in response to investment by the water industry. But the WFD provides a new, more accurate picture of aquatic health and, with only 15% by length of our rivers achieving 'Good Status', we are confirmed in our belief that more needs to be done. Unfortunately, the draft River Basin Management Plans for the WFD propose an improvement of just over 4% by 2015.

Government Ministers will approve the final plans at the end of 2009. NGOs, water companies, farmers and others all have a part to play in making these plans achieve more, but we also need a strong lead from the Government and the Environment Agency. In particular, the Blueprint will be looking for:

- A very significant increase in the level of ambition for 'Good Status' in our river basin plans
- New Water Protection Zones as part of an effective, integrated package of advice, incentive and regulation that tackles diffuse pollution without compromising other agri-environment scheme objectives
- A Catchment Restoration Fund supporting a number of pilot restoration projects by 2012
- A ban on the use of phosphates in detergents, soaps and shampoos



**We need a strong lead from Government and the Environment Agency to raise the ambition of River Basin Management Plans**



# Draft Floods and Water Bill: meeting responsibilities to people and wildlife

Improving the way we manage flood risk can only be good for people and the environment. The Government has promised a draft Bill following Sir Michael Pitt's inquiry into the devastating summer floods of 2007. It is the ideal opportunity to put the 10 steps for sustainable water into practice and deliver a step change in the way we regulate, fund and implement water management in the UK.



If this legislation is to make a real difference it will need to:

- Place greater emphasis on working with nature to manage flood risk
- Give the Environment Agency new powers to restore rivers to manage floods, increase resilience and improve ecology
- Re-cast *Internal Drainage Boards* as *Flood Risk Management Boards* with a new emphasis on public and environmental benefit
- Remove existing limits to fines that can be imposed on polluters
- Introduce a statutory requirement to review deemed consents
- Place a time limit on all abstraction licences
- Remove barriers to the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)
- Introduce a Water Efficiency Commitment, placing an obligation on the water industry to incentivise water saving
- Introduce a duty on Ofwat to promote sustainable climate change mitigation and adaptation

**Delaying action is not an option if the Government wants to help those who are at risk of flooding and to meet its obligations for water and wildlife.**



**Our climate is changing;  
Government must act now  
to prepare for floods and  
droughts of the future.**

# Planning for a sustainable water industry

In 2008 water companies released their long-term water resource plans. They also launched draft business plans, which set out investment and projected water price rises between 2010 and 2015. It is vital that the Government and regulators use their powers to ensure the billions of pounds of investment outlined in these plans create a more sustainable industry that meets the needs of consumers and the environment.



## Water resource plans

The Government's *Future Water* strategy sets out a vision in which domestic water consumption falls significantly to match best practice in Europe (120-130 litres per person per day). While some water companies are planning to act to reduce demand, many have predicted big increases in use up to 2030. Meeting these projected increases would mean building expensive reservoirs and desalination plants, and resisting changes to abstraction that is proving so damaging to important rivers and wetlands. It is disappointing that few water companies plan to make the 'step-change' in water efficiency required to achieve any meaningful reduction of waste.

## Water company business plans

Draft water company business plans include over 70 schemes designed to protect and enhance water quality and the environment by working with land managers. This welcome approach to 'upstream management' will deliver multiple gains for the natural environment and water customers by reducing the need for expensive 'end of pipe' treatment of drinking water. This welcome change in emphasis reflects the Government's *Future Water* strategy. However, there is still a long way to go before we can be confident of seeing these schemes in action.



## The Blueprint Coalition:

- Urges water companies to be ambitious in promoting water efficiency and calls upon Ofwat to make it clear that such proposals will be treated favourably
- Challenges the Secretary of State to withhold approval of plans that will not deliver the Government's vision for reducing domestic water demand
- Asks the Secretary of State to continue his support for sustainable land management and environmental protection through the 2009 Periodic Review
- Calls upon Ofwat to recognise that catchment management can offer good value for customers and to approve funding for these schemes



# About the coalition

We, the Blueprint coalition, call on the Government to make 2009, the year to act for water and ensure a sustainable future for our most precious natural resource.



Blueprint for Water is a campaign of Wildlife and Countryside Link



For further information and contact details visit:

[www.blueprintforwater.org.uk](http://www.blueprintforwater.org.uk)

You can also call 020 7820 8600 or email [enquiry@wcl.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@wcl.org.uk)

Photography  
Jiri Rezac/WWF-UK: page 1, top and bottom; page 6.  
Andy Hay (rspb-images.com): page 2; page 5; page 9, bottom.  
Daniel Start [www.wildswimming.co.uk](http://www.wildswimming.co.uk): page 3.  
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