



www.blueprintforwater.org.uk

Press Release

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Would you swim in your local river?

More than half (52 per cent) the people questioned would not swim in their local river because they think it is too polluted. That was the shocking finding from a survey carried out for the Blueprint for Water [1], a coalition of leading conservation groups.

The survey, carried out by ComRes [2], also found 97 per cent of people in England recognise that rivers, ponds, streams and lakes are a vital part of the countryside and 94 per cent of people often visit a stream, river or lake to relax or for leisure, but three-quarters feel that the water environment is at risk.

Helen Meech, Senior External Affairs Officer at The National Trust, said: "2009 is a big year for water with the prospect of new legislation and the price review for the water industry. There is a real need for Government to act now and provide clear leadership on this issue that matters so much to so many people."

When asked, more than eight out of ten people agreed that the Government should be doing more to protect English lakes, streams, rivers and ponds, with pollution, over use of water, drought and climate change identified as some of the key threats.

Over the last two years the Blueprint for Water coalition has been urging the Government to take action to change the way we manage our water.

The coalition wants a country 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 are made to pay; where our waste is properly treated and not washed straight into waterways. In 2006, coalition members handed Ministers a 10-step plan for improving the water environment for people and wildlife by 2015.



The Blueprint for Water will publish their third document '2009 the time to act' to coincide with World Water Day tomorrow (22 March). This publication sets out water priorities for 2009 and states that although significant progress has been made in some areas of water policy, there has been little progress in others.

Rob Cunningham, Head of Water Policy at RSPB said: "For too long we've taken water for granted as a nation. The results of this poll clearly demonstrate that clean good quality water really does matter to people, and that urgent action is needed to protect this most precious natural resource."

The coalition is calling upon the Government to make the most of the new legislation on floods and water expected this spring, as well as key decisions on water company investment and implementation of the Water Framework Directive, to protect water for the benefit of both people and wildlife across the UK.

Jacob Tompkins, Director of Waterwise said: "The Government seized the initiative with its Future Water strategy last year. Now we need to deliver on its principles. We need to see water efficiency on a vast scale, with tens of thousands of homes retrofitted at a time and full metering so homes pay for the amount of water they actually use. These measures will also make less water go further, as we cope with the impacts of climate change."

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Notes to Editors

[1] – Blueprint for Water is a campaign of Wildlife and Countryside Link and is supported by the following 16 organisations:

Angling Trust
Association of Rivers Trusts
Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust
Campaign to Protect Rural England
Froglife
Institute of Fisheries Management
Marine Conservation Society
The National Trust
Pond Conservation



Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Salmon & Trout Association
Waterwise
Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
The Wildlife Trusts
WWF- UK
Zoological Society London

For more information please visit www.blueprintforwater.org.uk or www.wcl.org.uk

[2] – ComRes interviewed 1009 English adults by telephone between 6th and 8th February 2009. Data were weighted to be representative demographically of all English adults. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Full tables of the results are available at www.comres.co.uk.

Future Water is the The Government’s water strategy for England and was published in 2008. This strategy sets out the Government’s long-term vision for water and the framework for water management in England.

