

Consultation on Improving our Management of Water in the Environment

March 2019 – A response from Blueprint for Water

Blueprint for Water is a unique coalition of environmental, water efficiency, fisheries and recreational organisations, part of the wider environmental NGO coalition, Wildlife and Countryside Link. Blueprint members come together to form a powerful joint voice across a range of water based issues.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation and to the once in a generation opportunity the Environment Bill provides. As such, we would like to take this opportunity to make proposals which will further improve the management of water for our environment. In addition to the issues you are consulting on and the questions asked, Blueprint for Water coalition would like to address the following points as suggestions for the Environment Bill:

- A water based objective on the face of the bill which specifies water resources as well as water quality (including biological quality) to ensure that both are considered equally. An objective should include an end date without which it is difficult to ensure delivery and a requirement for 5 yearly milestones to be set. There should also be a requirement to ensure no deterioration to guarantee continued action towards healthy, functioning, biodiverse ecosystems. This should cover all water bodies, and not just those listed by the UK as Water Framework Directive water bodies, which omits significant numbers of smaller but nevertheless valuable sites.
- The Environment Bill should not just be looking to address current issues but to take a long term view at how things can be improved and meet long term and future challenges. We propose an extra aspect to the objective that land and water management should lead to the restoration and enhancement of natural processes and ecosystem functioning of all water dependent habitats and deliver wider environmental solutions.
- A duty on public bodies to consider and give preference to solutions that deliver multiple benefits before other approaches; catchment solutions, holistic, integrated solutions.
- Agricultural diffuse pollution is one of the major issues affecting our freshwater habitats and must be reduced in order for us to achieve ambitious improvement in water quality. We recommend the Environment bill makes explicit links to the need for land management to deliver environmental improvement and tackle the environmental issues arising from current land management systems. We have an opportunity within the agricultural policy area to deliver long term change in the system, but this has yet to be taken. Defra must:
 - Raise the baseline to reduce the overall diffuse pollution coming from basic land management practice
 - Ensure independent advice and an increase in best practice
 - Incentivise measures and mechanisms to reduce the impact of land management on our most vulnerable freshwater habitats
 - Consider the environment and its needs as an equal partner when regarding abstraction. The environment is a user in its own right and policy must reflect this.

Impacts of measures

Long-term planning of water in our environment

Water Resources Management Plans

Q2. Do you agree that the Secretary of State should be able to direct companies to plan on a regional and inter-regional basis? Please provide reasons.

Yes, Blueprint supports this proposal.

It is evident from our work reviewing the draft water resource management plans in 2018 that there was a general failure to effectively collaborate between water companies. This led to solutions being proposed that were not optimum at a regional and national scale and to plans from neighbouring companies that simply didn't fit together. Despite some good work through initiatives such as Water Resources East the process and the thinking was too constrained by company boundaries and interests. These failures need to be urgently addressed. With that in mind we were pleased to see Defra and the regulators writing to the companies setting out expectations for greater regional collaboration, and by the commitment from Water Resources South East to the production of a single regional WRMP covering the area supplied by its 6 member companies. We are also encouraged by the emerging National Framework being led by the Environment Agency. Additionally, it is important to note the progress made with respect to the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) Abstraction Working Group that engages a wide range of sectoral interests (including water industry).

Regional and inter-regional planning is important both for a more resilient water supply and a more resilient environment. We support a direct requirement in legislation for water companies to create regional plans involving all stakeholders, rather than giving the Secretary of State the power to issue this requirement. This offers much more security to ensuring the delivery of this important proposal. A power on the Secretary of State could then be given to set out the scope and geographies of such regional plans to enable necessary flexibility. Furthermore, if regional planning is to become a mandatory part of the water resources planning process, then regional bodies must be properly established and regulated.

We are aware that government is also developing a National Policy Statement (NPS) to allow nationally significant water resources infrastructure projects (NSIPs) to be progressed through the Development Consent Order (DCO) route. The NPS relies on the WRMP process to identify NSIP options and makes reference to the need for regional and national planning. This reinforces the need for the proposed powers. We are also concerned that the NPS is likely to be adopted before national and regional plans are in place, and want confirmation from Defra that no water resources NSIPs will be taken through the DCO route until such national and regional plans are agreed and in place.

With this in mind it is important that the national perspective and across sector needs are accounted for within plans. As such we propose that requirements around regional water resource management plans include the following:

- To monitor how the WRMPs are delivering against the 25 Year Environment Plan.
- For water company WRMPs to publish how they have taken account of regional and national planning.
- To ensure regional plans have regard for other relevant statutory plans such as River Basin Management Plans, Flood Risk Management Plans and - in time - the Natural Capital Plans/Integrated Area Plans being proposed by Defra.
- For regional plans to publish the multiple benefits of the plans including across other sectors and the environment.

- To follow strategic direction and guidance from a comprehensive, up to date, national framework.

Q3. Do you agree that the Secretary of State should be able to direct water companies to take account of other abstractors' needs? Please provide reasons.

Yes, Blueprint supports this proposal.

Water companies are not the only users of the water environment and should factor wider needs into their decision making. This will help water companies and others better understand the overall challenge and the specific challenges of different sectors but also in terms of working together to develop solutions that can provide benefits across sectors, including the environment.

However, we would not want to see water companies, or new regional water bodies essentially established by water companies, being wholly responsible for balancing the needs of abstractors across a particular region. The government should prescribe how and with who regional water bodies should consult in developing their plans, and on the structure and make-up of their boards, to ensure all sectors are properly represented and involved in decision-making. Ultimately, the government should be accountable for ensuring water resources solutions respond to the needs of different stakeholders and deliver the best overall value for society.

We want to see the National Framework setting out a programme of research work to better understand the future water needs of the environment, especially as a result of the changing climate. This should be incorporated within the Regional Groups who should consider a number of environmental needs scenarios in their modelling and analysis. Without work to understand the future water needs of the environment and to factor them into our forward planning there is a very real risk of abortive expenditure or poor decision making.

Q4. Do you agree that the water resources management planning process should be recognised in legislation as a measure to deliver environmental objectives? Please provide reasons.

Yes, Blueprint supports this proposal and proposes it could be a valuable tool in helping deliver the aims of the 25 Year Environment Plan. The current process through WINEP has become adversarial and is primarily focussed on addressing past or existing environmental problems and not on ensuring our environment and the way we manage the water resources it depends on is fit for the future. We need a shift in mind-set and the proposals for linking the WRMP process with the delivery of wider environmental goals and objectives is welcomed.

We do think that Defra should consider strengthening the weak NERC 2006 "have regard" biodiversity duty on public bodies in England, including the water companies. We would like to see a stronger biodiversity duty on water companies (and all public bodies) in England to "maintain, restore and enhance biodiversity" and believe this would help in delivering the aims of the 25 Year Environment Plan. Wales and Scotland already have a duty on public bodies (including water companies) to maintain and enhance/further biodiversity and to report on it every three years.

Q5. Do you agree with our proposals to improve the legislation governing Water Resources Management Plans? Please provide reasons

Yes, in the absence of detail we cautiously support the proposed changes which we believe could simplify the process and make it more transparent to stakeholders. We welcome giving the Secretary of State powers to specify additional stakeholders with whom companies should develop

their plans in consultation. We do want to see the current requirement for companies to provide a statement of response retained.

Q6. Do you have any further suggestions about how we could improve the primary legislation that governs water resources management planning? These could be either administrative improvements, such as how confidential information is dealt with, or to achieve better water resources outcomes. Please provide reasons for your suggestions.

Yes, we propose the following:

- Defra considers strengthening the weak NERC 2006 “have regard” biodiversity duty on water companies in England. We would like to see a stronger biodiversity duty on water companies (and all public bodies) in England to “maintain, restore and enhance biodiversity” and believe this would help in delivering the aims of the 25 Year Environment Plan. Wales and Scotland already have a duty on public bodies (including water companies) to maintain and enhance/further biodiversity and to report on it every three years. This could be every 5 years in England to fit with the existing planning cycle. AND/OR:
- Strengthening the duties (per section 2 (2A) of the Water Industry Act 1991) on the Secretary of State and Ofwat with regards to the “resilience objective”. The duty is deficient as it causes Government and Ofwat to focus too much on the economic aspects of abstraction and fails to recognise the need to protect the ecological resilience of the aquatic environment – the environment’s inherent ‘need for water’. The duty should be amended so that Ofwat must secure the ‘need for water’ of the environment, thereby restoring aquatic ecosystems as required by the Water Framework Directive, akin to section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 - the biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty.
- Water resource options appraisals should materially consider the value of water left in the environment, using natural capital accounting to ensure that environmental costs and benefits are fully factored into decision making rather than being considered somewhat separately through project- and plan-level Environmental Assessments.
- Defra should remove the universal metering restriction to water stressed areas so that it is an option available to all water companies. Currently this is resulting in one neighbouring water company rolling out universal metering whilst another is unable to. Universal metering would enable those companies to 'free up' water that is currently wasted, as a positive contribution to regional water resources solutions. If Defra want to encourage cross water company partnerships then water must be considered a national resource with the same rules across the country.
- The process must become more transparent. In particular, the final version of the Water Resource Management Plan submitted after consultation on the Draft Plan should be made public. The final submission version can vary significantly from the draft and yet it is not made public and there is no opportunity to comment.
- All major projects, whether the provision of infrastructure or the introduction of measures such as metering and differential pricing, should have a detailed programme in the plan (possibly in an Appendix to facilitate frequent updating) to enable progress to be monitored. Those detailed programmes should be updated at least every year and, in some cases, more frequently. Those updates should be made public and the annual review should be published. The Secretary of State should use their existing powers to intervene if projects are not proceeding according to the original programme.

Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans

Q7. Do you agree that Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans should be made statutory and produced every five years? Please provide reasons.

Yes, Blueprint support mandatory drainage and waste water management plans and recognise this as a current gap which needs to be filled.

The risks associated with inadequate sewerage systems affect our environment today and in the future. With the challenges to the drainage and wastewater system we face due to future housing growth and climate change there is an urgent need to formalise and standardise how we plan properly for the future. Without long term strategic planning and investment there will inevitably be further environmental degradation and damage through increased reliance on sewer overflows and pressure on the sewerage system. When the system isn't resilient it is the environment or customers who are impacted through flooding and pollution.

Q8. Who should a water company consult with, and obtain information from in developing their Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans and at what stage in the development of their plans?

Early engagement with the environmental regulators is important, in order to understand the level of impact and the opportunities, not only to address problems but also actively enhance the environment.

Given the emphasis that the Framework for Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans places upon a collaborative approach, it is key that environmental NGO's including Catchment (CaBA) partnerships are engaged at an early stage and throughout to ensure the potential for realising, for example, catchment wide Green Infrastructure/ SuDS solutions.

DWMPs will need to be developed taking account of/in collaboration with other local plans for water management, including River Basin Management Plans. The primary purpose of the DWMP is to manage the water company's infrastructure and risks, but they will have an important role to play within the wider picture. Lead Local Flood Authorities will be a key consultee, as they will need to undertake separate Surface Water Management Plans to fulfil their duties under Flood and Water Management Act (2010).

Q9. What, if any, are the lessons we could use from the water resources management planning process in making Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans statutory?

The WRMP process has resulted in the development of some sophisticated approaches to modelling future growth and climate scenarios and their impacts on water availability. Innovative visualisation tools have also been developed to help stakeholders understand the problems and comment on potential solutions and trade-offs. Similar tools could be developed for DWMPs.

Most water companies have made use of stakeholder groups to help in developing and testing their emerging water resource management plans. These have had mixed success but there will be lessons that can be carried across. The limited collaboration with regards to the planning of drainage and wastewater provisions is noted as a current weakness and as is becoming more prominent in the WRMP process. Catchment Partnerships may provide a valuable route to improved partnership working at a catchment scale.

Q10. Is the current non-statutory Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan framework clear and complete, and are there any changes/lessons learnt which we should take on board in making the process statutory?

Blueprint were pleased to have been involved in the development of the framework. Although not perfect it is a clear and practical process. A number of gaps were identified which will need to be filled. It would be beneficial for an independent review the framework after the first plans have been produced to understand strengths and weaknesses and make appropriate changes. There is an assumption towards a natural capital assessment and we support a review of the assessment to ensure that it is adequate.

It is important that in making the process statutory there is a strong requirement on water companies to ensure the delivery of multiple benefits and to protect and enhance the environment.

Q11. Should there be government or regulator oversight in the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan process and review of plans? What level and type of oversight should this be? Please provide reasons.

Yes, without oversight or review there is no reality check or follow up against delivery.

Ofwat could consider encouraging companies to adopt Performance Commitments and Operational Delivery Incentives related to aspects of DWMPs in order to drive ambition and delivery.

Modernising and strengthening our regulatory systems

Water abstraction

Q12. Do you agree that the Environment Agency should be able to vary or revoke any licence that is causing unsustainable abstraction without paying compensation? Please provide reasons.

Yes, Blueprint supports this proposal.

Sustainable abstraction is fundamental to the health of our environment, wildlife and provision of ecosystem services. The system must leave enough water for the environment. It is not acceptable to leave the environment with "what's left" after all other users have had their take.

The requirement to pay compensation is limiting progress in addressing currently unsustainable abstraction in around 100 surface water bodies with around 1500 licences affected. This is a problem that is only going to get worse into the future with added pressures from climate change and population growth.

It is not fair that those abstractors with licences issued over 50 years ago under an outdated regime, should be given greater rights than those who have been issued with time-limited licences more recently. Moreover, neither taxpayers nor other abstractors should be paying to compensate for the environmental damage caused by licences which were established decades ago and are no longer appropriate given current water demands and environmental needs.

Q13. Do you agree with our proposal to link unsustainable abstraction to various environmental duties as set out in this consultation? If not, how would you determine what constitutes unsustainable abstraction and why?

Yes, we agree with broadening out the definition of serious damage so that it more closely aligns with the requirements of wider environmental legislation and the aims and deliver of the 25 Year Environment Plan.

We agree that the changes should allow consideration of both those licences that are currently causing or potentially could cause unsustainable abstraction so that impacts are avoided in the first place. We agree that both direct impacts of individual licences and in-combination/cumulative

impacts of groups of licences acting together should be considered. We do recognise that both the above may be technically challenging to demonstrate, in particular cumulative impacts and the level of future risks.

It is important that the Environment Agency is adequately resourced to properly undertake the technical work to underpin these decisions in a timely manner and that they engage with abstractors in affected water bodies to a) scope out their analysis b) to share, explain and refine it and c) to work with abstractors to find solutions as envisaged in the Abstraction Plan. Likewise it is critical that Natural England are adequately resourced to undertake the monitoring of nature conservation sites needed to be able to inform the above assessments.

We agree with the proposals to relate unsustainable abstraction to meeting the objectives of the Water Framework Directive; the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017; the Conservation of Wetlands of International Importance ("Ramsar" sites); sites designated as SSSI under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and with the NERC Act 2006. It is important that the proposals are broader than Water Framework Directive requirements to make sure that sustainable abstraction is delivered in areas which may not be covered under WFD but are nevertheless valuable and vulnerable habitats.

It is important that the abstraction system deals with future risk as well as current issues. It must be able to plan for climate change and how climate impacts flows and the needs of the environment as well as other users. As such a proportionate, risk based approach is needed which avoids deterioration. Government has worked hard to address current unsustainable abstraction, however, we need to make sure that this hard work continues to deliver sustainable abstraction into the future. As such it is important that risks are identified and acted upon before damage is observed.

Q14. Should the Environment Agency be able to vary under used licences in the case of unsustainable abstraction to remove the underused portion, with suitable safeguards to protect necessary headroom? Please provide reasons, including possible safeguards you consider appropriate.

Yes, these powers are necessary to remove the risk that the paper water or headroom is taken up and the environment damaged. We do not believe there should be any safeguards to protect headroom if use of that headroom would potentially impact the environment.

Whatever cut-off date is applied, or whatever data is used to identify underused licences, Defra must be careful not to incentivise over-use by abstractors seeking to avoid variations in their under-used licences. The danger of causing an artificial spike in actual abstraction must be recognised by Defra and avoided.

Q15. Should the Environment Agency also be able to vary under used licences where there is unmet need for additional water in the catchment, to remove the underused portion, with suitable safeguards to protect necessary headroom? Please provide reasons, including possible safeguards you consider appropriate.

Yes, it is not reasonable for abstractors to hold onto unused water on their licences in the long term as it is water that could be used by others. However, from an environmental perspective this is water that is not currently being removed from the environment and freeing it up to others to use may result in environmental impacts now or in the future. The Environment Agency will need to carefully assess this risk before making any recovered water available to others.

Many licence holders will see this licence headroom water as a financial asset to either use; to be compensated for or to trade with others. The latter may be particularly relevant at the moment with government and the EA increasingly looking to encourage trading between abstractors.

The proposed safeguards on headroom should be analogous to those being used in the new authorisations process. For example, a 10 year assessment window for considering usage patterns and needs. Likewise future needs based on unconsented plans should not be factored in.

Q16. Should the Environment Agency be able to change any under used licence once necessary headroom is taken into account, irrespective of proportion of under use? If not, what proportion of under use is appropriate?

The main benefit would be to provide equity across all abstractors. However, there is a risk that abstractors actually increase water use and reduce efficiency to retain headroom on their licences if they felt that any unused portion could be clawed back without compensation.

Q17. What do you consider is the appropriate length of time for a licence to be under used before the Environment Agency could use this power? Please provide reasons.

We would suggest 10 years which is the period being used to assess the volumetric requirements for new authorisations.

Q18. Do you think anything more is needed in primary legislation to deliver the aims of the abstraction plan? Please provide reasons.

We think there should be a legal basis for the setting of environmental limits on abstraction at a sub-catchment level, informed by environmental flow indicators (EFIs) along with best available evidence. This would then inform environmental limits for all abstraction licences which would be required to contain a 'hands-off' flow condition and/or a set of tiered abstraction limits depending on river flow levels, with abstraction quantities reducing as flows approach the 'hands-off' flow. Such a system would link flow in rivers to licence conditions and drive the process of variation or revocation of existing licences to maintain and restore good ecological status in all water bodies.

Land drainage: Internal Drainage Board charging methodology

Q19. Do you agree that the Land Drainage Act 1991 should be amended to enable a new charging methodology to determine special levies? Please provide reasons.

Yes, but it needs to be realistic and related to the genuine impact on those who directly benefit from the work of the IDB (e.g. in the Lyth previous areas of benefit have been controversial and proposed a wider beneficiary area and therefore proposed proportion of Special Levy than is true) a defined agreement on what this area is would help.

Q20. Do you agree that the Land Drainage Act 1991 should be amended to enable a new charging methodology to determine drainage rates? Please provide reasons.

Please see response to Q19

Q22. With regards to both these methodologies what could the impact of provisions (a) and (b) be and are there any issues that government should take into account before making the regulations?

There is a potential issue around who is regarded as a "local beneficiary" of land drainage/IDB activities. The process by which wider "local beneficiaries" will a) be identified and the nature of the

benefit demonstrated to them; b) have a say in the decision to develop a new or expanded IDB; c) be represented fairly in the governance of the new or expanded IDB.

The proposed approach for the apportionment of costs to fund the IDB is confusing with little explanation or detail provided in the consultation. Defra should publish some real worked examples of how the proposed changes in funding will work before any change is made.

There is the potential for IDBs to work with local communities to improve flood risk by holding water on agricultural land temporarily. However, the majority of IDBs were developed to facilitate land drainage for the benefit of agricultural land owners and tenants served by the IDB by draining or pumping water off agricultural land during wet periods or flood events. In some instances these activities may well increase flood risk to downstream areas which could be regarded as a disbenefit, not a benefit, to local communities. We would like Defra to confirm how communities/“local beneficiaries” affected in this negative way will be protected and will be able to seek recourse in such circumstances.

This would also be a good opportunity to better ensure that IDBs deliver on a range of environmental and social benefits and towards the goals laid out in the 25 Year Environment Plan. In particular, the current role of IDBs has been around the draining of land and there are examples where water is being channelled off land to avoid flooding in winter but then land managers having to abstract and irrigate in summer due to a lack of available water. We propose that IDBs should have greater oversight into managing water to avoid such situations.

There is concern, however, that land may be valued on the maximum productivity due to the artificial drainage conditions in place. This should be reviewed regularly as climate and conditions change. Defra should ensure that IDBs take account of wider benefits, not just those in relation to land drainage and agriculture.

Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management: Raising local funds

Q24. Do you agree that there is a need for new or modified powers or mechanisms to raise additional local funding to manage local flood and coastal erosion risk management risks? Please provide reasons.

Funding should be more easily available for small communities to access. At present, smaller communities are not always able to access funds via the FCERM funding calculator due to the low numbers of properties/people at risk. We understand the rationale for this and the need for schemes to be able to demonstrate adequate cost-benefit. However, as Natural Flood Management (NFM) becomes better understood and more widely applied there is considerable scope for such communities to work with landowners and managers to address flood and erosion risks at relatively small scales. Whilst NFM may be relatively cheap to deploy and we may envisage land managers to be supported to deliver such interventions via the new Environmental Land Management scheme, there is often a need to carry out initial scoping or modelling work. By enabling local communities to access both funds and expertise it will be possible to allow these bottom-up NFM projects to develop and hence allow communities to address their own risks where larger schemes are not viable.

Q25. Do you have any views on how best additional local funding can be raised fairly to better manage these risks and which existing public body is best placed to take on this function?

Yes – The current approach to determining whether a scheme can process and how much partnership funding might be needed using the Environment Agency partnership calculator is

opaque to wider stakeholders, businesses and local communities. A simpler way of indicating to non-specialists how much partnership funding is needed to provide varying levels of service is needed potentially using GIS and look-up tables.

We also would like to see natural capital benefits more explicitly included in the calculator. This would help identify beneficiaries and potentially help draw in funding.

Q26. Do you support legislating to enable the Somerset Rivers Authority to be formalised (as a flood Risk Management Authority with precepting powers)?

Whilst we do not object in principle to the enabling legislation to allow the Somerset Rivers Authority as a flood risk management authority to be formalised we have a number of broader concerns/points we would like to make.

- We note Q 25 of this consultation concerning raising more local funding for FCERM but the best means of achieving this has not yet been decided on nationally. We question why confirming a specific Rivers Authority is being considered in advance of the results of the consultation.
- The flood risk management (FRM) institutional landscape is already complex in lowland counties with managed wetlands and the addition of a further FRM authority may result in further complexity where there are active Internal Drainage Boards, Lead Local Flood Authorities and EA. We believe that overarching strategies for the management of flood risk that can guide public investment whether national or local are necessary and that local delivery (and raising local income) should fit within this framework.
- The 25 Year Plan promotes an integrated catchment management approach. We support integrated water management approaches from upper catchment to floodplain to deliver both flood risk management and water quality improvements; but both have to be considered together and targeted appropriately. Rivers Authorities, as in Somerset, are responsible for FRM and not water quality issues. EA has responsibility for both, therefore we believe that it makes most sense for them to oversee the water management of an area.
- A specific Rivers Authority such as in Somerset does not have responsibility for Coastal Erosion Risk, whereas the EA does; which further fragments responsibilities among different agencies.
- In areas of very high environmental designations the duties of FCERM bodies are rightly considerable. The function of a Rivers Authority must include a clear duty to protect and enhance the natural environment set alongside its FCERM role.
- The governance of a Rivers Authority must adequately represent all those who have a legitimate interest in its work, including those who pay for it, and it should be clear how it will answer to the environmental regulators.
- There should be a requirement to publish and consult on a medium and long-term strategic plan to sit above the proposed annual work programmes, enabling proper scrutiny of the Rivers Authority work programme and general approach. This would also improve coordination between Risk Management Authorities and demonstrate how the environment will be enhanced through the work of the Rivers Authority. This should include a full cost benefit analysis of options appraisals including environmental and social cost-benefits.

Modernising the process for modifying water company licence conditions

Q27. Do you agree with the case for modernising the way in which Ofwat modifies licence conditions? Please provide reasons.

Yes – a more streamlined approach in line with that used in other regulated utilities seems sensible.

The right of veto that water companies currently have on licence changes proposed by OFWAT has, to a degree, hampered the efforts made by OFWAT to modernise the economic regulation of the water companies. As water companies have increasingly become subject to international ownership, it has become increasingly difficult for OFWAT to require changes to licences.

If the way licence conditions are to be modified by OFWAT can be changed, we propose that water company licences should then be modified to include greater emphasis on sustainability/resilience. This would require water companies to restore and ensure the environmental resilience of aquatic ecosystems.

Q30. Do you agree with the proposal to modernise Ofwat's information gathering powers? Please provide reasons.

Yes – the ability to quickly gather information pertinent to the duties of the regulator is essential in it being able to properly perform its functions.

Q31. Do you agree with the proposal to modernise the way in which documents can be served, to include email? Please provide reasons, including any groups of people or type of documents for which email is not appropriate.

Yes – companies and other relevant stakeholders should be able to opt in to be able to be served documents by email. However, they should also be given the option not to opt-in.

This response is supported by the following organisations:

A Rocha UK

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

Angling Trust

British Canoeing

Institute of Fisheries Management

Marine Conservation Society

National Trust

Rewilding Britain

Rivers Trust

RSPB

Salmon & Trout Conservation

Waterwise

The Wildlife Trusts

WWF-UK

Wildfowl & Wetland Trust