

The top half of the image shows a vast, dry, and cracked earth surface, likely due to severe drought. The cracks are deep and irregular, creating a pattern of polygons across the entire area.

Blueprint for Water

The bottom half of the image shows an aerial view of a river or lake that has overflowed its banks, flooding surrounding areas. A road runs along the edge of the floodwater, with several cars visible. Power transmission towers stand in the water, and small green islands of land are scattered throughout the brown, muddy floodwaters.

2008: a year of opportunity

Going under?

Who could forget 2007's graphic photographs of towns and cities submerged, people desperately trying to salvage possessions from the wreckage of their homes and queuing for water?



Billed as the worst in modern British history, recent floods left over a third of a million people without drinking water; nearly 50,000 without power; thousands homeless; and caused more than £2 billion worth of damage. They demonstrated that our flood defences are not a complete solution, and, as much of the flooding came from drains rather than rivers, it's clear that our existing urban drainage systems can't cope with high volumes of water.



The Government has pledged an extra £200 million for flood defence work over the next three years. A significant proportion should be spent on sustainable solutions for flooding. Every piece of land, whether in town or in the country, can play its part in absorbing and storing water, reducing the risks of catastrophic flooding such as we experienced in 2007.



The floods of 2007 highlight the urgent need to adapt now for a future where climate change will bring more extreme weather events.

10 steps to sustainable water

In November 2006, we, a coalition of leading environmental organisations, launched the Blueprint for Water, setting out 10 steps to sustainable water by 2015. The Blueprint called on the Government to act immediately to give our water a future. Progress in 2007 has been mixed, but 2008 offers a unique opportunity – and test – for us all to deliver this agenda.

2007 has been a difficult year for water management, with catastrophic summer floods following so quickly after the serious droughts of 2006. While this has generated a lot of debate in the press and a chorus of worried voices, there has been little action to tackle the problems of water pollution, catchment restoration and flood management, as you will see in our report card on the next page.

Now, more than ever, is the time to act. In 2008, an unprecedented series of policy decisions and reviews offers a window of opportunity to transform the way in which we value, manage and invest in water. We urge the Government to use these initiatives to make real and lasting changes, and give our most precious natural resource a sustainable future.

2007 report card: progress on 10 steps to sustainable water

SUBJECT	GRADE	COMMENT
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 ■ 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

SUBJECT	GRADE	COMMENT
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 ■ 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



2008: putting the 10 steps into practice

In 2008 the Government will be making a number of key decisions that represent a one-off opportunity to realise the vision we set out in the Blueprint for Water. We urge them to seize this chance to secure a sustainable future for water.

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.

Tackle water quality problems at source

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.

Revoke or amend damaging abstraction licences

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.

Give farmers incentives to manage water sustainably

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.



Make space for water in our towns and countryside

About the coalition

We, a coalition of leading environmental organisations, call on the Government to seize the opportunities 2008 presents to make real and lasting changes, and give our most precious natural resource a sustainable future.



Campaign to Protect
Rural England



The Invertebrate
Conservation Trust



Pond Conservation
For Life in Fresh Waters

Blueprint for Water is a campaign of Wildlife and Countryside Link

Wildlife and
Countryside



For further information and contact details visit:

www.blueprintforwater.org.uk

You can also call 020 7820 8600 or email enquiry@wcl.org.uk

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