

The image is a vertical composition. The top half shows a body of water with gentle ripples and some green grass blades protruding from the surface. The bottom half shows a close-up of dry, brownish soil with several deep, irregular cracks running across it, with sparse green grass growing in the crevices. The overall theme is water scarcity and the need for resilience.

# Blueprint for Water

2013: time to build in resilience

# Ten steps to sustainable water by 2015

## – progress since 2010

In November 2010, we, a coalition of leading environmental organisations, launched the 2010 Blueprint for Water, setting out the ten steps to sustainable water by 2015. The Blueprint called on all stakeholders to act urgently in order to give our water a future. Progress since 2010 has been mixed, but 2013 offers a unique opportunity – and test – for us to deliver on this agenda. This report assesses how Government and other key delivery bodies have fared against the targets we set in late 2010.

### Progress on the 10 steps

- C** Waste less water
- C** Keep our rivers flowing and wetlands wet
- C** Support water-friendly farming
- C** Protect and restore catchments from source to sea
- D** Price water fairly
- D** Make polluters pay
- D** Keep sewage out of homes and rivers and off beaches
- D** Clean up drainage from roads and buildings
- D** Retain water on floodplains and wetlands
- E** Stop pollutants contaminating our water

2012 was a year of extremes in water availability, with both drought and floods occurring within a short timeframe and almost simultaneously in some locations. Many of our aquatic habitats and species were hit hard, with some rivers dry to the bone, whilst elsewhere rare wader chicks drowned in their nests. The public were quite rightly confused; water wasn't behaving as it ought. One minute we were told we were in drought, the next overwhelmed by rain. The Blueprint for Water coalition threw its weight behind helping to understand and explain the complex situation and apply the solutions we had already developed.

Perhaps this year wasn't so unusual after all; simply a demonstration of volatility to come. Whilst our infrastructure did just about cope with drought, a third dry winter should certainly drive the Government to consider faster or more dramatic changes in policy than those currently on the cards. Will we grasp the nettle and learn from this volatility? We argue that, had the steps and targets highlighted within the 2010 Blueprint for Water been fully implemented, we would now be benefitting from secure ecosystems services, a far more resilient water sector, and a landscape in which our precious wildlife can safely ride out the drought and the floods, even if they come in quick succession.



The Water White Paper of December 2011 had the potential to deliver against many of our aspirations. We welcome much of what it contained and are actively participating in many of its initiatives, but – in part because many of the White Paper's recommendations are far from being implemented – still find our aspirations are at best patchily addressed. In producing this scorecard we often struggled to find evidence that matched the Government's ambition with reality on the ground. As a result, the scores we have awarded have fewer 'E' grades than our 2008 scorecard, but equally fewer 'B's. We urge the Government to prioritise grassroots resilience through championing individual behaviour change, and to set an ambitious legislative and policy framework which propels us all in the right direction whilst we still have time on our side.

Such action is the only way to ensure resilience and adaptation, not only for the environment, but for the economy and our society.

# 2012 report card: progress on 10 steps to sustainable water



## Waste less water

C

Progress has been patchy

- Lack of progress overall, despite ambition in the Water White Paper, *Water for Life*, and elsewhere
- Excellent progress on standards at an EU level for public sector procurement



## Keep rivers flowing and wetlands wet

C

Progress has been patchy

- The proposals set out in *Water for Life* are very welcome and we support Defra's work on long term abstraction reforms. This should be complemented by inclusion of a timetable in the 2013 Water Bill
- Alarming little progress on addressing current over-abstraction, with no clarity on how the *Water for Life* proposals will be implemented



## Price water fairly

D

Must try harder

- Critical lack of support for universal metering in *Water for Life*
- Some recent progress on definitions of water stress
- Only a few areas will achieve universal metering by 2015



## Make polluters pay

D

Must try harder

- The Catchment Restoration Fund has been established, but is not making polluters pay
- Lack of progress on fines and enforcement, and cross-compliance



## Stop pollutants contaminating our water

E

Urgent action needed

- Poor progress on reducing levels of pollutants, with voluntary action not yet shown to work at the scale required
- Poor progress on reducing pollution of water bodies from endocrine-disrupting chemicals and pesticides, which must be adequately dealt with in the water environment



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

D

Must try harder

- Continued, disappointing delay in the enactment of regulations for implementing Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- Little progress on colour coding to reduce misconnections
- Insufficient commitment to real time monitoring and reporting of all Combined Sewer Overflows



## Support water-friendly farming

C

Progress has been patchy

- Agri-environment targeting has improved, but there is still scope for better delivery of environmental outcomes
- Excellent progress on using modulation of CAP funds to protect wildlife and prevent pollution
- Defra must ensure joined-up thinking on farming and sustainable land management in its CAP negotiations



## Clean up drainage from roads and buildings

D

Must try harder

- Lack of progress on both National Standards and retrofitting for SuDS
- No roadmap for further action on SuDS
- No clear narrative around the wider environmental and social benefits of SuDS
- Patchy progress by Local Authorities on promoting and delivering SuDS

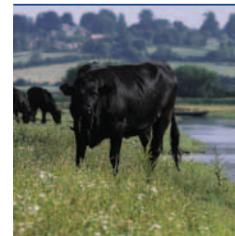


## Protect and restore catchments from source to sea

C

Progress has been patchy

- Good progress on the catchment-based approach and Nature Improvement Areas, which must contribute to a coherent ecological network
- Poor progress on assessing the cumulative effects of river engineering



## Retain water on floodplains and wetlands

D

Must try harder

- Progress on capital spending for flood risk management
- Controls preventing floodplain development less certain, despite a coalition commitment to prevent unnecessary development
- No progress on protecting vital peat soils, or on supporting climate adaptation along river corridors



# 2013: Opportunities for improvement

Government has a number of key opportunities to achieve the vision of the 2010 Blueprint for Water. We will continue to work with them to ensure the vision can be realised, to achieve water sustainability and resilience for both people and the environment.

### Water Bill

We welcome the commitment in the Water White Paper, *Water for Life*, to address: unsustainable abstraction; diffuse pollution via catchment management; and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). However, we remain very concerned by the long timescales for delivery and lack of ambition around actions to protect the wildlife and wetlands that are suffering now. We are also concerned with the absence of a vision for how these policy areas can benefit biodiversity ambitions as laid out in *Biodiversity 2020*.

We urge the Government to revise the 2013 Water Bill so that it lays the foundations for abstraction reform, and drive water efficiency and metering, without which sustainable and affordable water is not possible.

### 2014 Periodic Review of Water Pricing (PR14)

We have high hopes for the next round of Water Resources Management and Business Plans. A number of the barriers encountered in the 2009 periodic review have been swept away, and many of the water companies are developing and delivering exciting

projects which are raising expectations about what is possible. PR14 provides a chance to address some significant and uncertain challenges: climate change; changing water use; and population growth. The scale of work in these areas needs to be significantly scaled up. In helping to tackle these issues, the Blueprint coalition will work with Ofwat, water companies and Government to help deliver measures set out in the *Blueprint for PR14*. This comprehensive document, produced by the Blueprint coalition, is designed to help deliver sustainable water management, covering water use, water quality and abstraction.



### **Water Framework Directive (WFD)**

The WFD was supposed to signal the most radical reform of water management in Europe, putting wildlife at the heart of a process that secured the future health of this precious resource. Unfortunately, little has changed on the ground, a fact reflected in the low level of ambition in the current cycle of River Basin Management Planning (RBMP). We hope to see more action and delivery in the next cycle, and we are confident that we will if the right steps are taken.

In 2012, the Government announced its commitment to the delivery of the WFD through a Catchment Approach and the launch of 10 local plan pilots to bring together stakeholders from across catchments. The Blueprint coalition strongly supports this approach as a way of generating more action in the next round of RBMP. But to do this we will need:

- greater community engagement through the local catchment plans that drive RBMP;
- clear timetables whereby all water bodies can reach Good Ecological Status/ Good Ecological Potential (regardless of barriers), so costs and feasibility can be thoroughly tested;

- a more vigorous approach to tackling violations of baseline legislation from *all* sectors;
- progress on reducing levels of pollutants and delivering the “polluter pays” principle, particularly when voluntary action is not enough;
- Cycle two RBMPs that really deal with water issues from source to sea, including a strong link to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Effective implementation of the WFD should also inform new legislation, for example through applying lessons learnt to the implementation of the Marine Framework Strategy Directive.

### **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform**

The major challenge remains to align agricultural subsidies with the provision of environmental and public benefits, so farmers are incentivised to, for example, prevent pollution, improve soils and restore biodiversity. It is important that subsidies are at the very least maintained at their current level, in order to provide the essential ecosystem services they provide.



During 2013, the Blueprint coalition will again be describing the ambition we think Government and others should be working towards, to deliver a sustainable future for water and people.

**Please get in touch to find out how we can work together. The Blueprint secretariat can be contacted through Kate Hand, on 020 7820 8600, or at [kate@wcl.org.uk](mailto:kate@wcl.org.uk).**

# About the coalition

We, a coalition of leading environmental organisations, call on the Government to seize the opportunities 2013 presents to make real and lasting changes, and give our most precious natural resource a sustainable future.



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 – pages 2, 3 (2nd), 6; Sutton and East Surrey Water – page 3 (top); Anglian Water – page 3 (3rd); Matt Oldfield/Marine Conservation Society – page 4 (top); Martin Ross, South West Water – page 4 (2nd); Sally MacKenzie, WWT – page 4 (3rd); Kaleel Zibe (rspb-images.com) – page 4 (4th); Andy Hay (rspb-images.com) – page 4 (bottom); David Norton (rspb-images.com) – page 10 (bottom).

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