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Press Release

For immediate release

Environment gains from water company investment but question marks remain over long-term

The Blueprint for Water coalition welcomes today's (26th November) announcement on water pricing for 2010 to 2015 as a great contribution to protecting and restoring the quality of the water environment.

However we are concerned that the investment plans will not be sufficient to maintain infrastructure and tackle leakage or to cope with the significant challenges of water scarcity and climate change. Failing to invest now will ultimately place the environment at risk.

The announcement today gives the go ahead for hundreds of investment projects to now proceed in tackling the damage caused by pollution and abstraction to some of our most important freshwater and coastal wildlife sites. Action will be taken on iconic and important rivers and lakes like the Itchen and Windermere.

Mark Avery, director of conservation at the RSPB, said; "This programme of environmental investment is a great help to our beleaguered water environment, and one that will also bring many benefits to communities across England and Wales.

"However there is still work to be done and we would like to see more ambition when it comes to dealing with water scarcity and the threat of climate change."

Paul Knight, Chief Executive of the Salmon and Trout Association said: "Ofwat's strong support for tackling water quality problems at their source is particularly welcome and we look forward to working with water companies to make sure that they deliver all of their potential benefits to the environment".



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Jacob Tompkins, Managing Director of Waterwise said, “We very much welcome the support for large-scale water efficiency projects and an increase in metering, which will help not only the water industry but all of us to meet the challenges of climate change. However, we would still like to see a meter in every home by 2020, supported by measures to protect vulnerable groups.”

While some large-scale water efficiency projects and some increase in metering has been supported, we would like to see even greater efforts to curb water wastage. We are also concerned at reduced investment in leakage reduction, which we believe is neither in the best interests of the water environment, nor what customers want from their water companies. We believe that this failure to invest now will prove to be a serious mistake that risks storing up problems and costs for the future.

Although the coalition welcomes the increase in metering from 2010 to 2015 at this rate of progress it could be the last decades of the 21st century before metering becomes almost universal. We do not believe this is fast enough to satisfy the needs of the environment or the customer.

Ends

Contacts

Philip Burston, RSPB, m: 07764354012

Chris Philpot, Waterwise Press Office, t: 02079574615

Janina Gray, Salmon & Trout Association t: 020 7283 5838

Notes to Editors

[1] – Blueprint for Water is a campaign of Wildlife and Countryside Link and is supported by the following 8 organisations:

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

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



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