

# A Catchment Based Approach

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## Introduction

Land use activities can affect the quality of the water environment, the quantity of water available and the risk of flooding. Coordinated management of land and water at an appropriate scale is widely accepted as necessary to deliver balanced environmental, economic and social outcomes.

Limitations of the river basin district scale for recognising local level planning and action are increasingly acknowledged. The Natural Environment White Paper: *The Natural Choice* (June 2011), highlighted the economic and social benefits that can result from managing environmental activities at a catchment scale. The Water White Paper: *Water for Life* (December 2011), set out: the challenges of water availability; placed an emphasis on planning for resilience; and stressed the importance of catchment management. Together, *The Natural Choice* and *Water for Life* provide the strategic direction that informs a 'catchment based approach'.

A catchment based approach is about more effective stakeholder engagement to explore environmental problems at a catchment scale. It involves translating these problems using language people understand and connecting with issues they recognise. By considering a wider range of issues across a catchment and explaining the benefits of action, then more innovative and collaborative solutions can be explored. By identifying common goals that connect existing activity more effectively, then more economic and social benefits can be identified. By connecting local people with local problems, then more local ownership can lead to a commitment to take the right action, in the right place, at the right time.

In March 2011, Richard Benyon, Minister for the Environment and the chairs of the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Forestry Commission launched the start of the Catchment Based Approach programme. This explicitly recognises the need for the integrated management of land and water and clearly set out the Government's vision.

The Catchment Based Approach is currently in a 'pilot phase' until December 2012. It will inform the strategy and future implementation of a framework for catchment management across England. An independent evaluation of 25 catchment pilots across England has been commissioned. The evaluation is collating information provided by the pilot catchments; and gathering views from all involved about what is working well; and what could be done better. By April 2013 the lessons of this pilot programme will be published along with principles and a framework for the wider adoption of this approach in English catchments. This paper sets out our current thinking, which will be informed by evaluation of the catchment pilot programme and the outcomes of the *Working Together* consultations. A revised version of this paper will be issued in spring 2013.

## Widespread adoption of a catchment based approach

The Environment Agency is encouraging widespread adoption of a catchment based approach across England. We want to ensure that for every water body in every catchment, there is an opportunity for open engagement in a transparent process. We are working on the development of web-based information sharing to improve understanding of the:

- State of local water environments
- Causes of local water environment problems
- Actions needed to mitigate those problems

Our goal is to: share the information used to make decisions; highlight where decisions are made and; enable local level evidence to influence those decisions. We aim to develop the planning assumptions and establish a framework for implementing a catchment based approach by the end of March 2013. This will provide the foundation for widespread adoption of a catchment based approach across England from April 2013 onwards.

## **Catchment Planning**

Catchment planning is an opportunity for interested parties to bring in new evidence (including local views on which improvements and benefits matter the most), challenge planning assumptions and highlight local opportunities to collaborate and drive action.

The Environment Agency's intention is that development of the second cycle River Basin Management Plans (Annex 1) in England is assisted by a catchment based approach. We will set out catchment by catchment summaries. These will appear within each Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) consultation (June - December 2013). Each catchment summary will contain an appraisal of the problems and potential solutions given the primary uses and pressures on water in that catchment<sup>1</sup>.

The catchment summaries will include narratives that outline: our understanding of what the problems are; and the scale of action we consider necessary to reach good status/potential. The narratives will be consulted on, along with a range of planning assumptions, questions and supporting information in the SWMIs.

Our intention is that these catchment narratives will act as catalysts for catchment and local groups to engage in catchment planning.

## **Catchment plans**

Catchment plans should set out catchment priorities and identify where funding should be directed to deliver priority actions. Catchment plans may address a range of land, water and biodiversity outcomes. They are communication tools; the development of which gives the opportunity to build understanding and partnerships that can drive local action. They will be 'living', non-statutory documents.

The content of each catchment plan needs to be driven by its specific purposes. A wide range of groups and organisations may choose to lead the production of catchment plans. These will cover geographical areas and topics of interest to them. It is hoped that through this work a greater understanding of environmental issues and aligned commitment to action will emerge providing collaborative advantage.

This process of engagement can shape which actions detailed in catchment plans can be referenced in the relevant statutory second cycle River Basin Management Plan (ministerial approval December 2015, implementation January 2016 onwards).

## **Damian Crilly**

Catchment Management, Environment Agency  
November 2012

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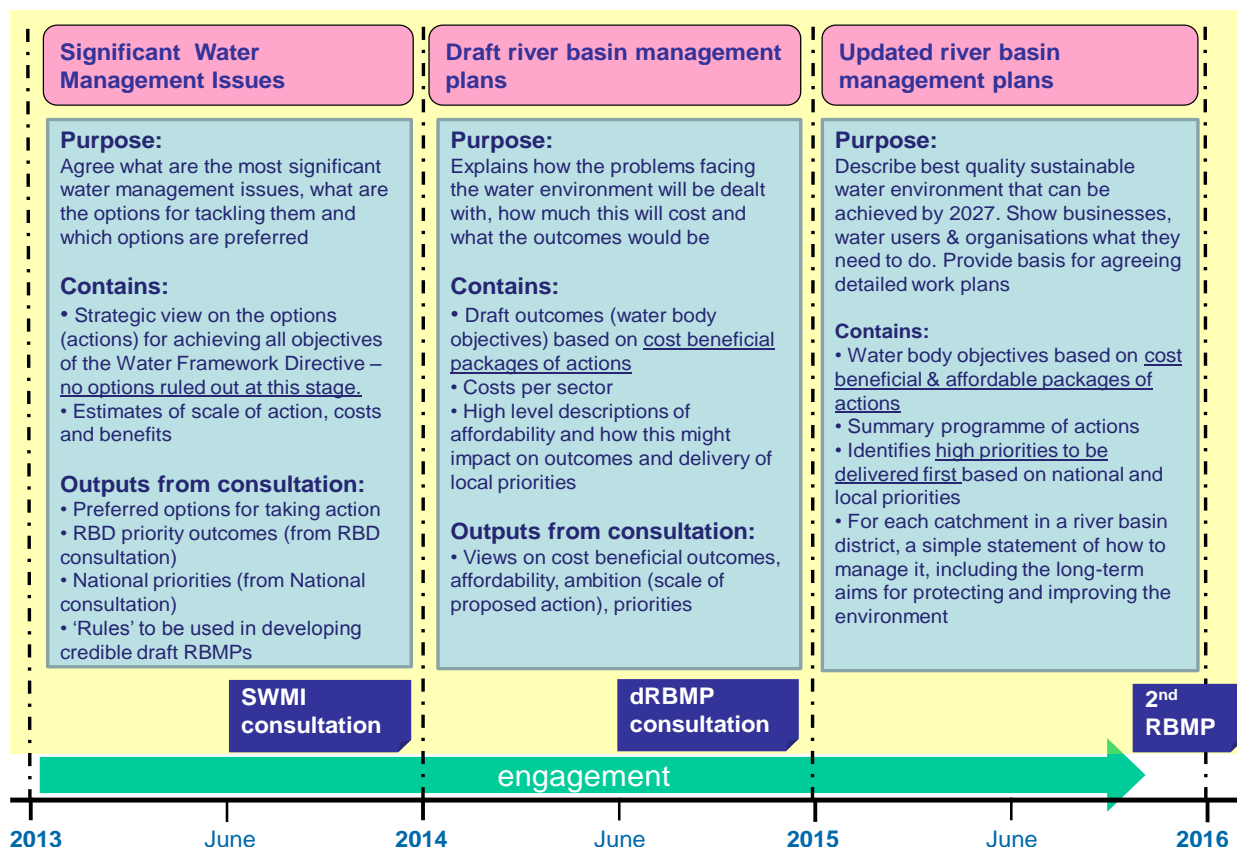
<sup>1</sup> Annex 3 shows the likely boundaries for each catchment; these boundaries will be finalised by March 2013

## Annex 1: Planning and developing second cycle River Basin Management Plans

The Water Framework Directive requires cycles of 'River Basin Management' planning and action to achieve 'good' status or potential<sup>2</sup> in all water bodies<sup>3</sup>. The development of River Basin Management Plans in the second cycle consists of the following stages:

- **Working Together** - 6 month consultations (Jun-Dec 2012)
- **Significant Water Management Issues** - 6 month consultations (Jun-Dec 2013)
- **Draft River Basin Management Plans** - 6 month consultations (Jun-Dec 2014)
- **River Basin Management Plans** - ministerial approval December 2015

The Environment Agency is responsible for producing River Basin Management Plans in each of the 11 River Basin Districts (Annex 2). The three main steps in the second cycle of river basin management cycle are set out in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Main steps in each the second cycle of river basin management

<sup>2</sup> The Water Framework Directive sets out a status classification system for surface waters that ranges from 'high', 'good', 'moderate', 'poor' or 'bad'. Status classification is measured against a range of biological, chemical and physical parameters. Groundwater status is either 'good' or 'bad'. The objective for heavily modified or artificial waters is good potential.

<sup>3</sup> There approximately 7,500 water bodies in England and Wales that include: ground waters; rivers; lakes; wetlands; coastal; estuarine and heavily modified and artificial waters.

The Environment Agency is working with stakeholders to promote consideration of the factors (Table 1) within the three main steps outlined above. This will allow us to propose realistic and worthwhile water body status objectives in each River Basin Management Plan. It will also allow resources to be targeted where they will deliver the most benefits and provide people a degree of certainty over the long-term quality of their local water environment.

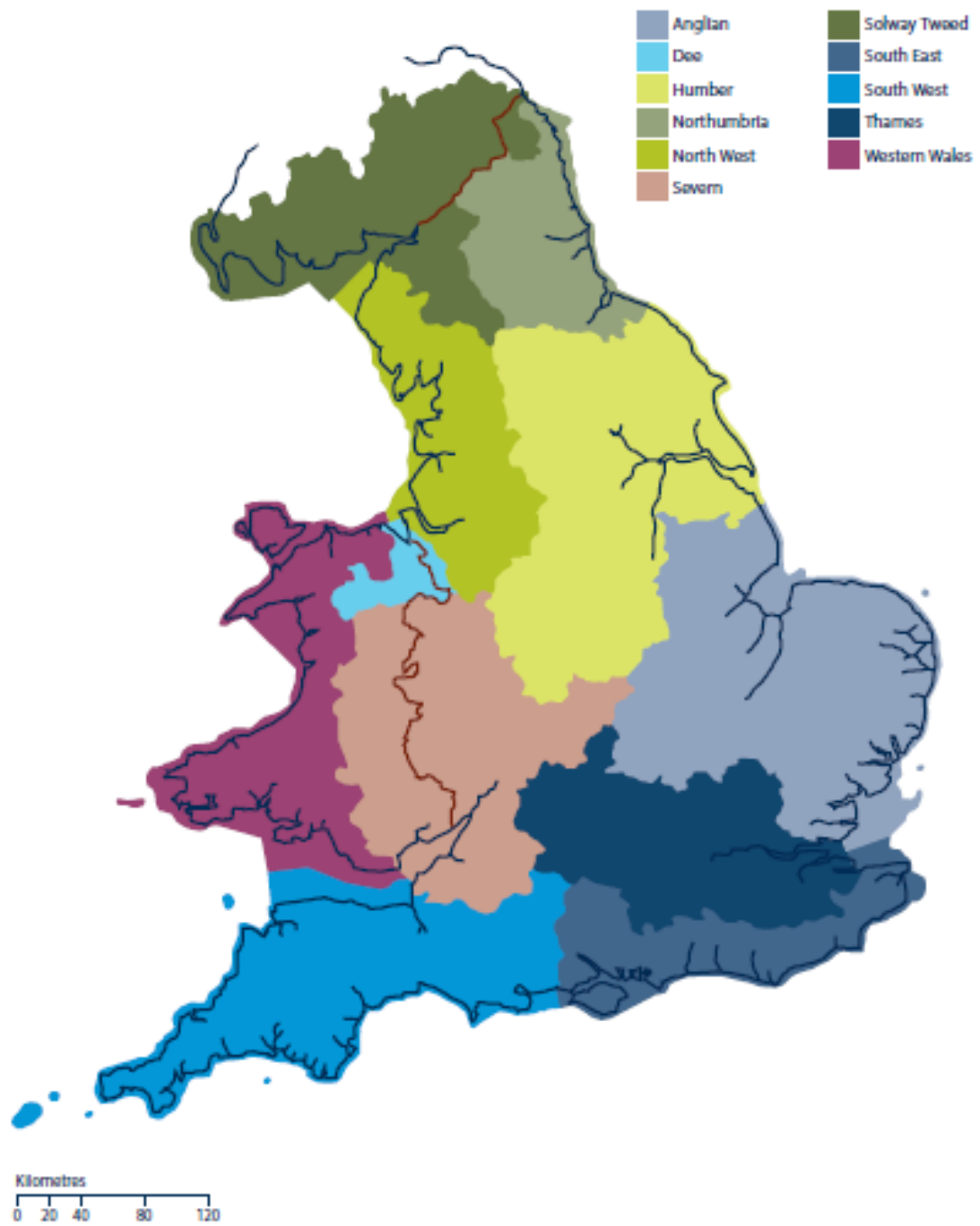
Technical Feasibility	Costs and Benefits	Affordability
<b>Significant Water Management issues – June 2013</b>		
For each of the management catchments, a description of the scale of action needed to achieve 100% good status (unconstrained by technical feasibility, costs or affordability)	Cost estimates at England, Wales and RBD scale of achieving 100%, and two lower level of long term ambition	A description of the factors to be considered when assessing sector affordability
<b>Draft River Basin Management Plans – June 2014</b>		
Packages of measures and water body objectives that are Technically Feasible, Cost Beneficial and takes into account Natural Conditions (measures and objectives unconstrained by affordability)		High level description of the scale of cost beneficial action that is likely to be affordable
<b>Cycle 2 River Basin Management Plans – September 2015</b>		
Packages of measures and water body objectives that are Technically Feasible, Cost Beneficial, and affordable, taking into account Natural Conditions		

**Table 1:** Factors to be considered in the three steps of river basin management planning

In certain circumstances where the costs of achieving good status are greater than the benefits we will be proposing less stringent objectives.

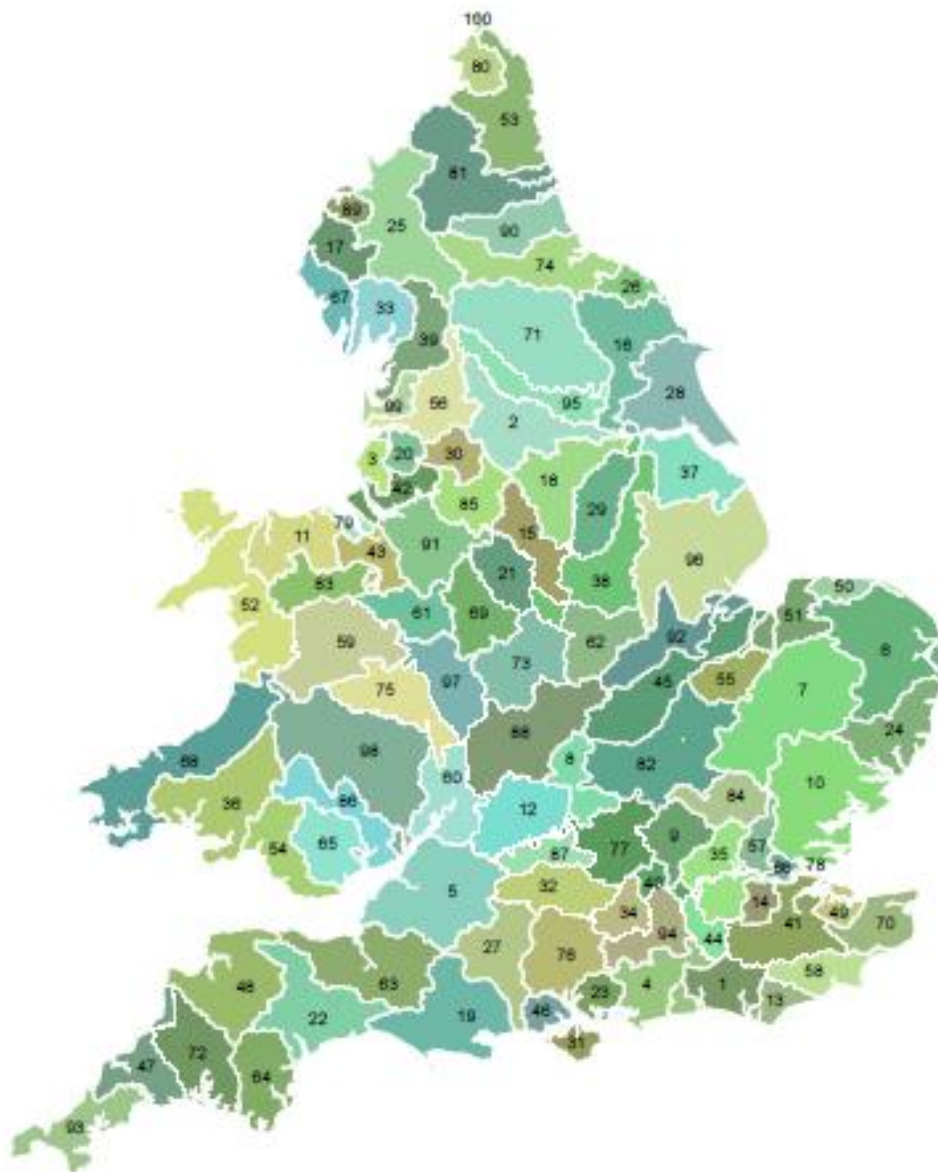
## Annex 2: River Basin Districts

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### Annex 3: Proposed draft Water Management Catchments

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0 25 50 100 Kilometres

Map produced 27/07/2011

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ID	CATCHMENT NAME	RIVER BASIN DISTRICT
1	Adur & Ouse	South East
2	Aire and Calder	Humber
3	Alt/Crossens	North West
4	Arun & Western Streams	South East
5	Bristol Avon & North Somerset Streams	Severn
6	Broadland Rivers	Anglian
7	Cam and Ely Ouse (including South Level)	Anglian
8	Cherwell	Thames
9	Colne	Thames
10	Combined Essex	Anglian
11	Conwy and Clwyd	Western Wales
12	Cotswolds	Thames
13	Cuckmere & Pevensy Levels	South East
14	Darent	Thames
15	Derbyshire Derwent	Humber
16	Derwent (Humber)	Humber
17	Derwent (NW)	North West
18	Don and Rother	Humber
19	Dorset	South West
20	Douglas	North West
21	Dove	Humber
22	East Devon	South West
23	East Hampshire	South East
24	East Suffolk	Anglian
25	Eden and Esk	Solway Tweed
26	Esk and Coast	Humber
27	Hampshire Avon	South West
28	Hull and East Riding	Humber
29	Idle & Torne	Humber
30	Inwell	North West
31	Isle of Wight	South East
32	Kennet and Pang	Thames
33	Kent/Leven	North West
34	Loddon	Thames
35	London	Thames
36	Loughor to Taf	Western Wales
37	Louth Grimsby and Ancholme	Humber
38	Lower Trent & Erewash	Humber
39	Lune	North West
40	Maidenhead to Sunbury	Thames
41	Medway	Thames
42	Mersey Estuary	North West
43	Middle Dee	Dee
44	Mole	Thames
45	Nene	Anglian
46	New Forest	South East
47	North Cornwall, Seaton, Looe and Fowey	South West
48	North Devon	South West
49	North Kent	Thames
50	North Norfolk	Anglian

ID	CATCHMENT NAME	RIVER BASIN DISTRICT
51	North West Norfolk	Anglian
52	North West Wales	Western Wales
53	Northumberland Rivers	Northumbria
54	Ogmore to Tawe	Western Wales
55	Old Bedford including the Middle Level	Anglian
56	Ribble	North West
57	Roding, Beam & Ingrebourne	Thames
58	Rother	South East
59	Severn Uplands	Severn
60	Severn Vale	Severn
61	Shropshire Middle Severn	Severn
62	Soar	Humber
63	South & West Somerset	South West
64	South Devon	South West
65	South East Valleys	Severn
66	South Essex	Thames
67	South West Lakes	North West
68	South West Wales	Western Wales
69	Staffordshire Trent Valley	Humber
70	Stour	South East
71	Swale, Ure, Nidd & Upper Ouse	Humber
72	Tamar	South West
73	Tame Anker and Mease	Humber
74	Tees	Northumbria
75	Teme	Severn
76	Test & Itchen	South East
77	Thame and South Chilterns	Thames
78	Thames (tidal)	Thames
79	Tidal Dee	Dee
80	Till	Solway Tweed
81	Tyne	Northumbria
82	Upper and Bedford Ouse	Anglian
83	Upper Dee	Dee
84	Upper Lee	Thames
85	Upper Mersey	North West
86	Usk	Severn
87	Vale of White Horse	Thames
88	Warwickshire Avon	Severn
89	Waver_Wampool	Solway Tweed
90	Wear	Northumbria
91	Weaver/Gowy	North West
92	Welland	Anglian
93	West Cornwall and the Fal	South West
94	Wey	Thames
95	Wharfe and Lower Ouse	Humber
96	Witham	Anglian
97	Worcestershire Middle Severn	Severn
98	Wye	Severn
99	Wyre	North West
100	TWEED	Solway Tweed