

## Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee

### EPC(2) 12-06(p9)

<b>Date:</b>	28 September 2006
<b>Venue:</b>	Committee room 2, Senedd
<b>Title:</b>	Environment Strategy Action Plan – outcomes and funding; management of designated sites

#### FOR INFORMATION

### 1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The Environment Agency is the leading public body for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales, with responsibilities for protecting the natural resources of soil, air and water. Our activities include: Flood Risk Management, Water Resources and Water Quality, Fisheries, Conservation, Air Quality, Waste, Recreation and Navigation. We have a statutory duty to undertake our activities in an integrated way so as to contribute to sustainable development. The Welsh Assembly Government has provided us with specific guidance on how we should make this contribution. We are proactive in working with a range of private, public and voluntary bodies to protect and improve the environment.

Our own five year strategy for delivering environmental outcomes on an England and Wales basis is set out in the Environment Agency's Corporate Strategy 'Creating a Better Place'. Within Wales this is translated into 'Creating a Better Wales' (CaBW), which takes full account of Assembly strategies and priorities, as well as the views of other partners. This provides an outcome-based framework for our annual business plans within which we set out our annual priorities and targets. These priorities are agreed with the Minister on an annual basis through our Remit Letter.

CaBW highlights specific areas where the Environment Agency will help achieve the outcomes of the Environment Strategy, including:

- Working with the Wales Spatial Plan area groups to ensure the strategy is fully considered in local plans;
- Biodiversity;
- Health benefits resulting from a reduction in air pollution;
- Water resource management and waste reduction;
- Limiting the extent of climate change and adaptation to its effects; and
- Managing and reducing flood risk.

The Assembly provides 62% of the Agency's funds through its Grant-in-Aid though a substantial proportion of this is linked to the Flood Risk Management Capital programme.

## **2. THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY**

We will be a major contributor to delivering the Environment Strategy for Wales, and have played a full part in its development. We contributed actively to the consultation process and offered suggestions for better joined up working with other key organisations such as the Forestry Commission and the Countryside Council for Wales. Through close co-operation with Assembly Officials and our partner organisations we maintained a very close and supportive role in the development of the Strategy.

The Strategy Development Team was housed within the Agency's Strategic Unit in Cardiff and contained staff from the Agency, Countryside Council for Wales, RSPB and WAG. This allowed us to assist and support the team on a day to day basis. We contributed to the Strategy through membership of the Steering panel, through participating in WAG led workshops and through detailed consultation comments. We also ran internal workshops to capture the wide-ranging environmental experience of our operational staff and from our Policy and Process teams.

## **3. DELIVERING OUR RESPONSIBILITIES**

The action plan further defines responsibilities; some of the actions designated to us are our full responsibility, others require a partnership approach and a number require our support in varying ways. From the 62 actions in the plan, the Environment Agency has been assigned a lead role for 5 actions (see Annex A). In a further 16 actions we are identified as a key partner. The Strategy is at an early stage of its development, and further work is needed to define exactly what is to be delivered over its twenty-year lifetime. We will continue to work closely with the Welsh Assembly Government to review our role in the delivery of the Action Plan. However, in the short term, we are clear about what we are charged with delivering, and these are identified within CaBW.

Our role in delivering the outcomes of the Strategy varies; we have clear leadership roles (such as in the management and reduction of flood risk), strong partnership roles (e.g. in outcomes related to biodiversity) and areas where we can offer support to others. The attached table (Annex B) shows the full list of outcomes in which we are involved.

We are generally happy with our overall involvement in the Strategy, and have already established links with our partners who will be jointly delivering a number of the outcomes and actions. We are confident in our corporate and business planning procedures, and have systems in place to ensure that we track and deliver our responsibilities. We intend to take a full part in the annual reviews of the Action Plan and will ensure that our reporting to Welsh Assembly Government is clearly linked to the milestones identified in the Plan.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Environment Agency Wales is keen to play an active role in delivering this Strategy and we have ensured it is central to our own 5 year strategies. We are confident in our ability to deliver our commitments in the Strategy through either acting as a lead organisation or through focused partnerships.

Given the twenty-year timescale of the Strategy, it will be necessary to keep the actions under review to ensure they still deliver the agreed set of outcomes and that the actions remain correctly assigned to the right organisation. It is important that there is regular review and monitoring of the delivery of the actions, as by its nature the plan requires all parties to work together as identified in the Making the Connections framework. This way any difficulties in delivery can be quickly identified and remedial measures put in place.

25 September 2006

**ANNEX A**  
**Environment Strategy Actions where the Environment Agency is the Lead Organisation**

Action		Outcomes it supports	Who is responsible? Milestones	Work to date/ Issues/Challenges
12	We will take forward a public awareness programme to ensure that those who are at risk of flooding are aware of the risk, its consequences and the action they need to take to address it.	5, 6, 8, 25, 31-32	<p>By 2007 - Review and refine existing programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: WAG (EnvP&amp;Q) / EAW</li> <li>• Partners: Local authorities</li> </ul> <p>By 2008 - Implement revised programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: EAW</li> <li>• Partners: Local authorities</li> </ul>	<p>Progress</p> <p>Our next flood awareness campaign starts in October and follows our successful campaign last year. We will focus on ensuring people are flood aware and are prepared to take action. We will also seek to increase the numbers of people included on our Floodline Warnings Direct service.</p> <p><b>Issues and challenges</b></p> <p>We have plans in place to reduce the impacts of flooding but the uncertainty of climate change may present us with rapidly increasing challenges within the next 10-15 years (should the “worst case scenario” arise).</p> <p>We estimate that providing an effective flood warnings service to the worst affected properties at risk (in the order of 50,000) would cost over £15m over 7 years.</p>

14	<p>We will implement programmes of flood and coastal erosion risk management activities, to include those measures identified in action 13, to address increasing risk, these programme will be subject to regular review. All existing plans and programmes of flood and coast erosion risk activities in Wales will be reviewed and revised in the light of the measures identified in action 13.</p>	8, 25, 31-32	<p>By 2008 - Review of existing Programmes  • Lead: WAG, EAW</p> <p>Ongoing from 2009 – Incorporate appropriate measures into all new programmes  • Lead: WAG, EAW, Local authorities</p> <p>Ongoing from 2008 - Implement new and revised programmes  • Lead: EA, Local authorities, IDBs  • Partners: WAG, CCW, National Flood Forum, voluntary groups, Flood Defence Committee</p>	<p><b>Progress</b>  We are developing an asset management system across the England and Wales Agency to help manage the flood defence assets we maintain or operate. Effective multi-agency partnerships to deliver an integrated Flood Risk Management Service will be essential for future service delivery requirements</p> <p><b>Issues and Challenges</b>  Climate change will be a major challenge. We estimate that major capital schemes of the order of £250m will be required over the next 10-15 years, with other defence asset repairs and maintenance at around £10m increasing to £20m in 10 years time.</p>

24	<p>We will strengthen water resource planning in Wales by requiring Environment Agency Wales to undertake a complete revision of its Water Resources Strategy for Wales. We will also require Water Companies to prepare water resource plans in line with new statutory requirements. These plans and strategies should take account of the latest information and advice on climate change and housing growth, leakage performance, metering, water consumption, and implementation of efficiency plans.</p>	1, 3, 8, 13	<p>By Nov 2007- Draft statutory water company Water Resource plans have been submitted to Ministers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: water companies</li> <li>• Partners: EAW, Ofwat, WAG (EnvP&amp;Q)</li> </ul> <p>By end 08 - Complete review, and have revised Water Resources Strategy in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: EAW</li> <li>• Partners: Water Companies, Ofwat, WAG (EnvP&amp;Q), CCW</li> </ul>	<p><b>Progress</b> The Environment Agency and Ofwat are currently preparing guidelines for water companies to prepare their draft Statutory water resource management plans. Water companies will be consulted on these guidelines in early December 2006 with the final guidelines published mid February 2007.</p> <p>The Environment Agency will begin work on the review of the water resources strategy in October 2006. Consultation will run from January to June 2007, with detailed work on the components of the strategy running from June 2007 to December 2008.</p> <p><b>Issues and challenges</b> The timetable for implementation of the new Water Resource regulations has been moved by Defra from October 2006 to March 2007. We are awaiting confirmation from Defra and WAG if this will change the timetable for pre-consultation and submission of draft and final plans by water companies.</p>
26	<p>We will seek to manage increased access to the countryside effectively and develop best practice</p>	29	<p>By Mar 08 - Have in place and commence implementation of new strategic plan for</p>	<p><b>Progress</b> We are actively leading on the production of the Strategy for Water-related Sport and Recreation in partnership with colleagues in</p>

	through supporting pilot projects on sustainable public recreation which can be replicated elsewhere.		<p>recreational access to water in Wales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: EAW</li> <li>• Partners: water-based recreation representative bodies including fishing and canoeists, National Access Forum, CCW</li> </ul>	<p>WAG, CCW, SCW, FC as required by the Environment Strategy and Remit Letter</p> <p>We have established the Project to do this.</p> <p>The following timetable is in place to ensure delivery of the action by March 2007.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(ii) Developed and implemented the communication plan with Steering Group Members (by Oct 06)</li> <li>(iii) Stakeholder consultation administration (by Oct 06)</li> <li>(iv) Undertaken stakeholder consultation - externally and internally (by Dec 06)</li> <li>(v) Identify best practice pilot projects (by Dec 06).</li> </ul> <p>Post March 2007 the following will be delivered :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(ii) Exec Summary (by Oct 07)</li> <li>(iii) Launch (by Oct 07)</li> </ul>
61	We will ensure each Spatial Plan Area Group addresses the issues in the Environment Strategy in their local area and reports on progress.	3 - 4	<p>By May 2006 - Write to each Area Group inviting them to consider the Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: WAG (EnvP&amp;Q)</li> </ul> <p>By Sept 2006 - The Assembly Government's</p>	<p><b>Progress</b></p> <p>We are represented on all Spatial Plan groups and are working with CCW to ensure we jointly ensure the needs of the environment are considered during the spatial planning process.</p> <p>The Spatial Plan Area Groups are already considering the key environmental issues for</p>

			<p>statutory environmental advisers to have given a steer to each area group on priorities for action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: CCW and EAW</li> <li>• Partners: WAG (EnvP&amp;Q) and (SPU)</li> </ul> <p>By Nov 2006 - Each Spatial Plan Area Group to have considered the Strategy, agreed the priority issues in their area and how they will be tackled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: Spatial Plan Area Groups</li> <li>• Partners: WAG (EnvP&amp;Q) and (SPU)</li> </ul>	<p>their areas. The Environment Agency and other environmental bodies have provided advice on these issues.</p> <p>Workshops to discuss priorities and opportunities are to be arranged for each Spatial Plan Area in the Autumn, to inform discussion at the Ministerial meetings in November 2006.</p> <p><b>Issues and challenges</b> We need to ensure that the needs of the environment are considered alongside the need for economic development.</p>
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## ANNEX B

### List of Outcomes from the Environment Strategy where the Environment Agency has an input

NUMBER	OUTCOMES WHERE THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY HAVE A LEAD OR SIGNIFICANT PARTNERSHIP ROLE
2	Wales demonstrates the contribution that a small developed nation can make to global sustainable development and environmental improvement
3	Environmental considerations are integrated in all policies, programmes and service delivery and that high quality and consistent environmental evidence is available to inform the decision making processes
4	The roles and responsibilities of organisations are understood, leading to better integration for the delivery of environmental protection and enhancement
5	Appropriate education about our environmental impacts is in place and good quality information is available at the point where people make decisions
6	Individuals understand and are enabled to take responsibility for their environmental impact, changes in behaviour are apparent that help reduce negative environmental impacts
7	Greenhouse gas emissions are minimised, consistent with Wales contributing fully to meeting UK-wide targets and in line with more specific Wales targets that are under development
8	Wales has improved resilience to the impacts of climate change. A clear flexible programme of measures is in place to enable Wales to respond and adapt to climate change
9	The amount of waste that is generated in Wales is minimised
10	Reduce, reuse and recycle is universally accepted in government, business, industry and home life
11	Appropriate waste management facilities are in place to minimise the amount of waste going to landfill
12	Businesses produce well designed products that require less resources in their production, use and end of life, that create minimal waste and are easily reused or recycled
13	Water resources are managed sustainably meeting the needs of society without causing damage to the environment
14	Water is used more efficiently across all sectors
16	Soil is managed to safeguard its ability to support plants and animals, store carbon and provide other important ecosystem services
19	The loss of biodiversity has been halted and we can see a definite recovery in the number, range and genetic diversity of species, including those species that need very specific conditions to survive
20	The wider environment is more favourable to biodiversity through appropriate management, reduced habitat fragmentation and increased extent and interconnectivity of habitats
21	Sites of international, Welsh and local importance are in favourable condition to support the species and habitats for which they have been identified
22	Our seas are clean and support healthy ecosystems that are biologically diverse, productive and managed sustainably
28	Environmental nuisances such as litter, graffiti, dog fouling, fly-posting, noise pollution and light pollution are minimised
29	There is sustainable, widespread and equitable access to the countryside and coast, which recognises the need for a balance between tranquil areas and areas supporting larger numbers of people and a range of activities. Damaging access will be discouraged
31	Appropriate measures are in place to manage the risk of flooding from rivers and the sea and help adapt to climate change impacts
32	Everyone who lives in a flood risk area understands the flood risk they are subject to, the consequences of that risk and how to live with that risk
33	A reduction in air pollution leads to increased life expectancy and ecological protection

OUTCOMES WHERE THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY HAVE A LEAD OR SIGNIFICANT PARTNERSHIP ROLE (Continued)	
34	The extent of contaminated land is better understood and actions are being taken to remediate contaminated land for beneficial use where appropriate
35	The quality of our groundwater, rivers, lakes and coastal waters is maintained and enhanced
36	Diffuse pollution is better understood and action is being taken to reduce and manage diffuse pollution
37	The risks posed by exposure to chemicals is minimised with emphasis on protecting vulnerable members of society
39	Radioactive discharges in Wales and doses to the public will be minimised. Discharges to the marine environment will be minimised to the extent that additional concentrations in the marine environment above historic levels are close to zero.
OUTCOMES WITH A SUPPORTING ROLE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY	
1	The Assembly Government provides clear leadership on environmental issues through its policies, programmes and the way that it conducts its business
17	The extraction of minerals and aggregates minimises the impact on the environment and local communities
18	The use of alternative materials, secondary and recycled aggregates is maximised where possible in the construction industry
25	New buildings in Wales meet high environmental quality standards and the environmental quality standards of existing building stock is improving
27	There is easy, equitable access to ample high quality green space
30	The number of people choosing to walk or cycle as a means of transport is increasing
OUTCOMES WITH NO ROLE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY	
15	The high quality of our drinking water is maintained
23	The quality and diversity of the natural and historic character of our landscape and seascape is maintained and enhanced
24	The built environment is high quality and vibrant, reflecting local distinctiveness and supporting strong communities, which are actively engaged in the management of their local environment
26	The historic building stock and character is maintained to a high standard
38	Those at risk from radon are aware of the risk that they face and what they can do to minimise that risk