

## Tackling the challenges for Scotland's water environment



This paper is a joint statement created as an outcome of the National Advisory Group in which the strategy to tackle the most challenging problems facing Scotland's water environment are discussed. This strategy paper has been produced to guide how we should work together to deliver the objectives of the river basin plans.

A recent assessment<sup>1</sup> of the actions or “measures” underway to deliver the first river basin management plans indicated that diffuse pollution and pressures on the physical condition of the water environment are the most significant challenges in terms of river basin planning delivery in the Scotland and Solway Tweed districts.

Collectively we must develop and implement mechanisms to mitigate these environmental harms.

Delivering the first river basin management plans has enabled us to set up and trial some new approaches to tackling pressures from land management. From our experiences to date it is clear that to achieve a step change in delivery we need to;

- **Continue to develop the catchment scale approaches**
- **Work in partnership**
- **Target resources and scale up key delivery mechanisms**

The catchment approach enables complementary solutions and projects to be designed, making best use of resources available and delivering multiple benefits. This work requires detailed co-ordination, only achievable by working in partnership with others. It is therefore essential to integrate our work efficiently with the planning timetables of other stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> Link to the reports on the progress of delivering the measures in the first cycle for the Scotland and the Solway Tweed districts [http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/river\\_basin\\_planning.aspx](http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning.aspx)

Responsible authorities must increase commitment and resource to the river basin planning process. Large scale partnership events, awareness raising campaigns and sector specific workshops have been identified as effective mechanisms to influence attaining increased resources to achieve delivery of objectives where necessary. Targeting combined resources from partner organisations will be required to achieve our prioritised objectives in the second cycle.

A step change is required to tackle the significant environmental impacts caused by land management that affect fisheries and protected areas such as bathing, shellfish and drinking waters. These harms also impact upon the capacity of our water environment to support development and adapt to climate change.

The challenge of meeting 2015 targets and ensuring we have a robust and shared plan to deliver sustainable water management through the second and third planning cycles must be taken seriously. This must be a shared goal for Scottish Government, SEPA, responsible authorities, voluntary environmental groups and sector representatives.

The National Advisory Group, NAG is made up of representatives from responsible authorities, national stakeholders and organisations working at a strategic level. The role of this group is to advise on and support the

- development of river basin planning in the Scotland river basin district (RBD);
- preparation, delivery and implementation of the river basin management plan for the Scotland RBD;
- identification of national priorities for environmental improvement and protection;
- need for national measures to deliver nationally agreed standards;
- co-ordination and integration of the River Basin Management Plan with other strategic plans and policies in order to better protect the water environment and promote its sustainable use.

Further information about this group can be found at;

[http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/river\\_basin\\_planning/national\\_advisory\\_group.aspx](http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning/national_advisory_group.aspx)

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