



Background to the Water Framework Directive

River Basin Management Plans

Natural Resources Wales is the Competent Authority for implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in Wales. We have responsibility for drawing up the River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) - working in partnership with a wide range of public, private and voluntary organisations (including water companies, local authorities, eNGOs, business & industry).

Wales has three RBMPs – Western Wales is entirely within Wales, the Severn and Dee are cross-border. In each River Basin District we have a Liaison Panel made up representatives of the key sectors. This provides an open forum for co-deliverers to discuss and influence the development of the RBMPs and assist with implementation. Plans are produced and updated every six years. The first plans were approved by Welsh Ministers in December 2009.

Objectives

We aim to take a holistic approach to managing the water environment and ensure that we balance ecological, social and economic values in decision-making in order to:

- protect the water environment from deterioration
- achieve the wider objectives of other European Directives e.g. Habitats Directive, and the revised Bathing Water Directive
- Aim to achieve good overall status for surface and ground waters

The WFD establishes a target for all waters - Good Overall Status (e.g. insect, plant, fish life, chemistry) which is a measure of a healthy and robust catchment ecosystem. Where it cannot be achieved, we must provide a reason why.

Where society has significantly changed the shape, form and characteristics of the water environment they are designated as Heavily Modified Water Bodies. For example we have created reservoirs to store drinking water, reinforced and raised banks to protect property from flooding and dredged channels for navigation. The target to aim for in these is Good Ecological Potential. We assess these modifications and activities to see whether actions have been taken to reduce their impacts on the ecology.

The RBMPs set objectives for water bodies and summarises the measures which stakeholders will deliver to achieve these outcomes for the water environment. Actions range from tackling urban and rural diffuse pollution, habitat restoration and mitigation of physical modifications (such as removal of redundant weirs), metal mines remediation, water efficiency and tackling invasive non-native species.

Evidence base

The first RBMPs focussed on delivering improvements where opportunities were identified and an investigative programme to improve our understanding of where we are failing objectives, the reasons for failure, and solutions. This evidence is the basis for delivering actions and stakeholder engagement through the development of the updated RBMPs. We have worked with the Environment Agency to develop risk assessments for the main pressures such as acidification available on Water Watch Wales on Natural Resources Wales website.

With regard to economic evidence, the updated second cycle plans include **four** costed scenarios:

- **A** Long term aspiration. Achieve no deterioration, protected areas objectives and good overall status in all water bodies, except those where alternative objectives are appropriate.
- **B** Statutory objectives. Achieve no deterioration and protected areas objectives. That is target all water bodies linked to Natura 2000 sites to achieve good overall status.
- **C** Short term opportunities. Target improvements to good overall status by 2021 where Natural Resources Wales has a reasonable level of evidence that a short term outcome is achievable.
- **D** Possible outcomes. Target improvements to good overall status by 2021 in water bodies where there is a greater certainty of funding and delivery through existing mechanisms (i.e. water company, Coal Authority and Natural Resources Wales forestry programmes).

All these costs are being analysed at the Wales, River Basin and catchment level and examined by the broad sector upon which the costs will fall. The sectoral proportions of costs vary quite markedly between the scenarios even at the Wales level.

The scenarios show that protecting and improving our water environment is, in general, cost-beneficial and can deliver *significant* benefits. However, *how* and *what* interventions are prioritised will determine the strength of benefits returned from investment. In terms of using funds efficiently we should aim ideally for the most cost-beneficial programme of measures that is affordable. This means prioritising those measures with the highest Benefit-Cost Ratios (BCR) where practical. In reality, some of these measures may not currently have an effective delivery or funding mechanism.

Timeline & Engagement

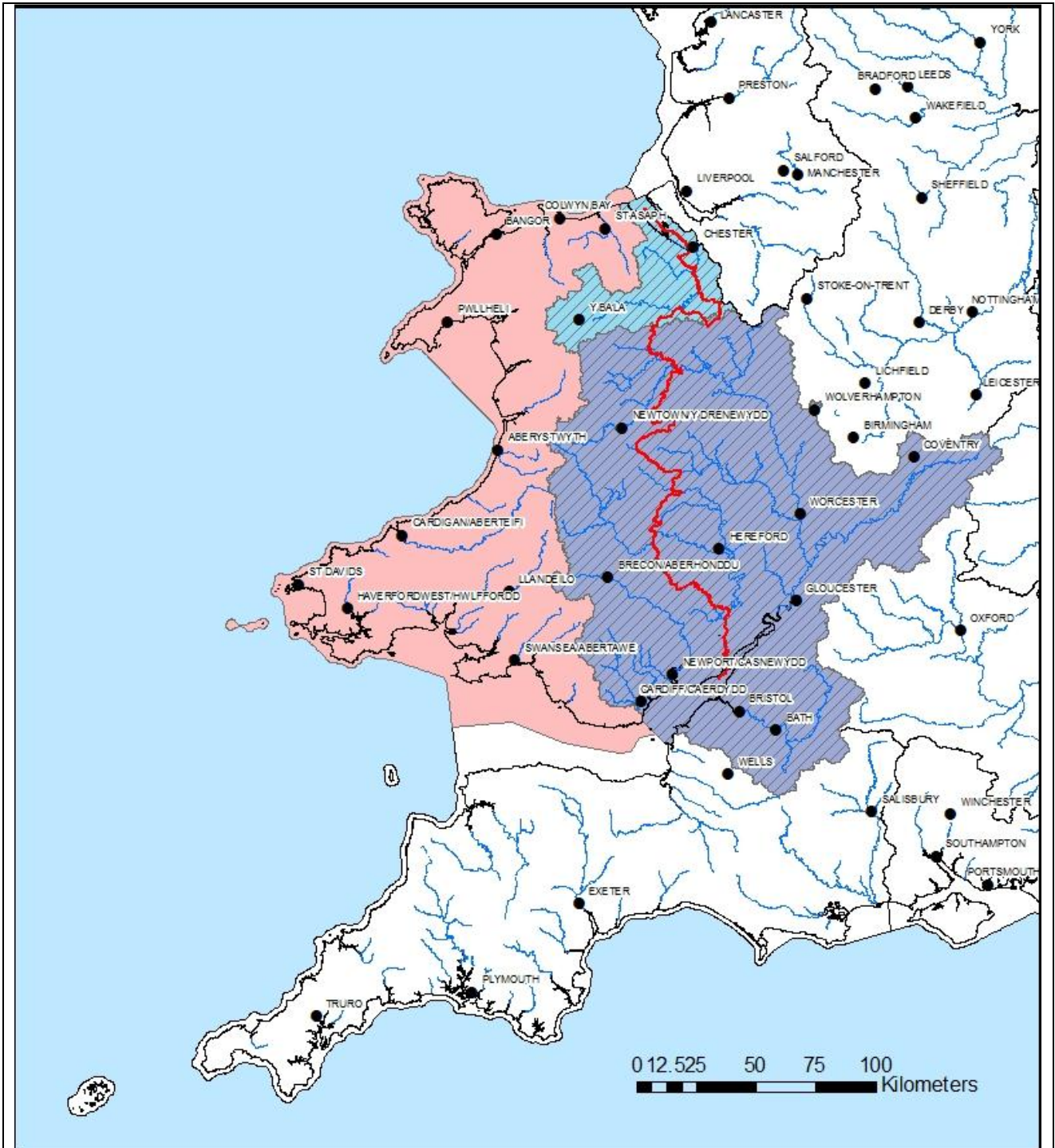
The EU Directive and Government Guidance outlines the principle steps for developing the RBMPs (see below).

Timetable for main river basin management products		
Delivery Date	Product	Consultation?
10 October 2014	Updated River Basin Management Plans	Yes – 6 months
September 2015	Second RBMPs published and submitted to Ministers	No
22 December 2015	Second RBMPs approved by Ministers and published	No

The ‘Working Together’ consultation focussed on asking “how do stakeholders want us to engage and work with them?” We made some changes to how we work based on feedback, ensuring we add more of a local focus to our engagement. As part of our ongoing engagement for the Challenges and Choices in 2014, 14 catchment workshops were held throughout Wales; two of which were hosted by voluntary organisations. The outputs from the workshops have helped to shape the updated River Basin Management Plans (uRBMPs) 2015-2021 and the supporting 14 Management Catchment Summaries.

The consultation for the uRBMPs begins on 10 October 2015 until 10 April 2015. This is supported by an engagement plan which includes details of planned events and meetings such as the National Access Forum and the Lakes Conference in Spring 2015. The updated RBMPs will be approved by the Welsh Minister and then published on 22 December 2015.

During this consultation we will continue to work with you to develop an effective programme of measures, and agree a realistic but ambitious set of priorities for the second cycle. Those priorities will be reflected in an updated river basin management plan presented to Welsh Government ministers in September 2015. Ministers will make a decision on affordability and overall ambition which will be published in the updated River Basin Management Plans in December 2015.



River Basin District - Wales

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| ● Cities and towns | Western Wales | Cross Border |
| — National border | | Dee |
| — Main rivers | | Severn |