



Consultation on updating the river basin management plans: Planning overview annex summary

The river basin management planning overview annex supports the draft updated river basin management plans and catchment summaries. It provides the detail behind the decision making which has shaped the consultation documents.

Background

The European Water Framework Directive provides the main framework for managing the water environment throughout Europe. At its heart is an ecosystem approach that requires measures to be taken to encourage the sustainable use of water and to protect and improve inland surface waters, ground waters and coastal waters, with the aim of achieving good status. It recognises that interested groups need to work together to design and implement improvements, taking a holistic and integrated approach to managing the water environment.

Under the Water Framework Directive, a management plan must be developed for each river basin district. Natural Resources Wales, as competent authority for implementing the directive in Wales, first published these in December 2009. The river basin management plans (the plans) outlined the actions that would need to be taken so that more waters were at good status by 2015 and what needed to be investigated to test whether all waters could justifiably achieve this by 2027.

The plans and the objectives and measures contained within them must be reviewed and updated every six years; therefore updated plans for each river basin district in Wales are due to be published in December 2015.

Natural Resources Wales, working with others, started the process of updating the current plans in 2012. This consultation presents draft updates to the plans, the draft update to the plans is a main document for each river basin district that summarises the current state of the environment and the proposed revisions to the objectives and measures.

The data and information used to develop this consultation are the result of work undertaken before the end of May 2014. Additional data and information provided in response to this consultation and produced by ongoing river basin management processes will be used to produce the updated plans in 2015.

Supporting information

The following data for every water body in Wales is available on Water Watch Wales:

- 2013 status assessments
- Reasons for not achieving good status
- Proposed water body objectives
- Reasons for alternative status objectives

What the document covers

Managing the water environment (section 2) describes why water is such an important resource and summarises the policies, both European and domestic, which shape how the water environment in Wales is managed.

The Water Framework Directive (section 3) describes the aims and objectives of the directive including the application of exemptions. The river basin management planning process used in Wales is described including how Natural Resources Wales is working with others. This section also describes how the updated plans in 2015 will be developed following this consultation.

Defining and describing the water environment (section 4) describes how the water environment is divided up and characterised for the purposes of implementing the Water Framework Directive. It set out how the environment is monitored and the results of that monitoring used to assess and report on the status of the water environment. The latter part of the section describe the main challenges affecting management of the water environment in Wales, how future risks have been assessed and current causes of problems identified.

Identifying actions and outcomes (section 5) sets out the overall process used for determining environmental objectives, including water body status objectives and developing measures. It describes the role of economic appraisal and the objectives that are proposed within this consultation.

Summary of engagement (section 6) looks at the engagement work we have done including public access to information, consultations and a forward look