

Public consultation

What is this consultation about?

Water is essential to all our lives and livelihoods. It is a shared resource that we need to manage together so that everyone's interests are taken into account. A process called river basin planning will help us carry out this management effectively. *River Basin Planning: Working Together* is a document that will help you understand how river basin planning could work in the Thames River Basin District and how and when you can get involved. We are consulting on *Working Together* between December 2006 and June 2007.

Where does *Working Together* come from?

Working Together is a necessary step towards a River Basin Management Plan, and is a requirement of the Water Framework Directive. The Directive is a new piece of European legislation that establishes new and better ways of protecting and improving the water environment through river basin planning. This includes:

- reducing pollution, preventing deterioration and improving the condition of the water environment including wetlands. We must aim for a water environment that is in at least 'good status' by 2015;
- promoting the sustainable use of water;
- helping reduce the effects of floods and droughts;
- ensuring that interested people are involved in managing the water environment.

Working Together has been put together by the Environment Agency, working with the Thames River Basin District Liaison Panel. The Liaison Panel represents the main sectors involved in river basin planning.

What is the Thames River Basin District?

The Thames River Basin District (see map) covers an area of 16,133 square kilometres and encompasses the River Thames and its tributaries from its source in Gloucestershire through London to the North Sea. The district includes the rural areas of Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and parts of Kent and Essex, as well as heavily urbanised areas, such as Reading, Slough, Luton, London and the Medway towns.



The non-tidal Thames is around 235 km long and passes through 44 picturesque locks. This famous river is home to important wildlife habitats. Mute swans, herons and kingfishers can be spotted, and the river hosts a number of important

herb-rich meadows found in the floodplains. There are important freshwater fisheries such as the River Kennet, parts of which are designated as sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs). It is vital that we work together to balance these different needs and uses of the water in the area to create a healthier river basin district.

What do you want to know?

We would welcome your thoughts on *Working Together*, and in particular:

- Have we identified the best opportunities for people to get involved through existing groups and networks?
- Have we suggested the best methods of communication?
- Have we identified the main organisations with an interest in the water environment in the Thames Region?

How can I give you my views, and what is the deadline?

We would like your comments on our *Working Together* document for the Thames River Basic District. Please use the link below to view the document and to send us your comments via our web-based consultation system.

<http://wfdconsultation.environment-agency.gov.uk/site/questions.asp?CID=20>

The web-based system is quick and easy to use and has the advantage of allowing you to view other people's responses and to copy your responses to other River Basin Districts if you wish. It greatly helps us to monitor, collate and report the responses efficiently. Therefore we encourage you to use it.

However, if you are unable to access the Internet and respond online, then please contact Lydia Wyeth for a paper copy. Responses can also be submitted via email or post to the address listed below. If required, we can translate this document or make it available in a suitable format for blind or partially-sighted readers.

It would help us to receive your comments by the end of March 2007. We can then discuss any issues you may have with our proposals. However, the consultation runs until 22 June 2007, and we will of course, take account of all comments received within the six-month period.

Contact

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