

## Environment Agency

### Environment Programme Update

#### Port of Plymouth Marine Liaison Committee

9<sup>th</sup> March 2023

#### **Environmental Improvement Plan**

The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023 for England is the government's first revision of the 25 Year Environment Plan. It builds on the 25YEP vision with a new plan setting out how we will work with landowners, communities and businesses to deliver each of our goals for improving the environment, matched with interim targets to measure progress. Taking these actions will help us restore nature, reduce environmental pollution, and increase the prosperity of our country.



#### **State of the Environment: Coastal and Marine report launched at Coastal Futures conference**



The Coast and Marine report, produced by the Chief Scientist's Group, has found evidence that long term, human activities have degraded coastal and marine ecosystems. This, in turn, impacts human health, prosperity and wellbeing. Our Chair, Alan Lovell, launched the report in a key note speech at the conference on Thursday 26 January. The report also draws attention to the many consequences of climate change, with 85% of England's salt marshes – which store the carbon equivalent of nearly 40 million people's annual domestic emissions - estimated to have been lost since the 1800s. Meanwhile over 100,000 people are estimated to be at risk from significant

coastal flooding – a figure likely to increase by 300% this century, even if global warming is kept to 2 degrees. The full report can be accessed [here](#).

#### **Bathing Waters Season 2022**

Over 96% of bathing waters in England have passed water quality standards following testing at over 400 designated. The results, released on 30 November, show that for the 2022 bathing season, 92.8% of beaches and inland waters gained an 'Excellent' or 'Good' rating while 4% achieved the minimum 'Sufficient' rating. Bathing waters are monitored for sources of pollution known to be a risk to bathers' health, with up to 20 samples taken from each site during the bathing season. Each sample is tested for bacteria, specifically E coli and intestinal enterococci.



Our Bathing Waters of Kingsand, Cawsand, Plymouth Hoe West, Plymouth Hoe East, Bovisand, Wembury are all at excellent status - more detailed information can be found on our [Swimfo](#) website.

#### **River Basin Management Plans Published**

[River basin management plans](#) (RBMPs) set the legally binding locally specific environmental objectives that underpin water regulation (such as permitting) and planning activities. They provide a stable planning base for economic development. This includes investment programmes such as the:

- Water Industry National Environment Improvement Programme (WINEP)
- strategic water resources solutions being developed by the Regulators Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID)
- government's new environmental land management schemes and England Trees Action Plan

The plans are the foundation for delivering the government's 25 Year Environment Plan 'clean and plentiful water' goal. In preparation for the publication of the Environmental Improvement Plan, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Natural England and the Environment Agency have been assessing the use of new interventions to further improve the water environment. The Environmental Improvement Plan will build on and incorporate:

- current river basin planning work
- the legally binding environment targets for the Environment Act 2021
- the recommendations made by the Environmental Audit Committee

## **Environment Land Management Scheme LMS**

Further information on the growth and rollout of the [environmental land management schemes](#) has now been published and includes the full range of actions, payment rates and when they'll be available. The schemes and grants have been made much more straightforward, flexible and workable.



## **National Drought Group Meeting February 2023**

Following the driest summer in nearly 30 years, experts are warning that another hot dry spell could see drought conditions return in 2023, despite winter rainfall replenishing most water levels. As of the beginning of February, total reservoir capacity across the country is at 88 percent. This compares with 49 percent at the end of September 2022, when reservoirs were at their lowest following the drought through summer. Only two of the Environment Agency's areas - East Anglia and Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly - now remain in "drought" status. There has been a dry start to the month – with low rainfall across England since the end of January – meaning 63% of rivers are currently below normal levels for this time of year. As ever, it is important that we all continue to use water carefully to protect not just our water resources; but our precious environment and the wildlife that depends on it.



## **Snow Observers Needed**

We don't often experience significant snow in the Tamar Management Catchment. The last time was in 2018 during Storm Emma. We have introduced snow melt forecasting models across the country, which will help us better predict any flood impacts as a result of melting snow. To support this service, we need to grow our national network of snow observers to take snow depth measurements in order for the Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC) and local forecasting teams to check, validate and update these snow models based on observations on the ground. Taking snow observations is a quick and easy task involving only walking a few steps outside your front door each morning when there is snow on the ground; taking some snow depth measurements; and then sending this information via email. For anyone interested in getting involved please contact [snow@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:snow@environment-agency.gov.uk)



*Pic Courtesy Plymouth Herald*

## **Tamar Catchment Partnership**

The Tamar Catchment Partnership held its Autumn meeting on line where we heard from Matt Holden, Tamar Beaver Management Group on the past, present and future of beavers on the Tamar, and how the partnership could get involved beaver management. We also had a presentation from South West Water on the Roadford Pumped Storage Project and refreshed the partnership project pipeline. For more information about our next meeting please contact [anna@wrt.org.uk](mailto:anna@wrt.org.uk)



## **Environment Programme work**

Although our overall Environment Programme has seen a 55% reduction in Water Environment Investment Funding, we have prioritised funding to continue the following work:

**Tory Brook and Long Brook Improvements** – we have previously reported that we have undertaken an assessment of these water bodies that both have their confluence with the Plym Estuary. We are now preparing the next stages of the project to improve their overall climate resilience.

**Cawsands** – we are working with Cornwall AONB and a small number of landowners to scope out potential interventions in the headwaters of the water body to improve the overall water environment

and reduce some of the pollution that enters the Plymouth Sound. The approach will use our Natural Flood Management Studio assessment tool to help assess potential options.

**Yealm Working Group** – is a new group that has its first meeting in February 2023, comprising Environment Agency, Devon Wildlife Trust, Natural England, South Devon AONB, Westcountry Rivers Trust and Yealm Management Group with a view to coordinate programmes of work being undertaken in the Yealm Catchment.

**State of Sound** – we are working with the National Marine Park and other TECF partners to identify key performance indicators and a baseline state that all partners can work from to identify environmental, social and economic drivers for Plymouth Sound, enabling a natural capital approach to inform a programme of partnership works to protect and enhance the marine protected area.

**Tamara Landscape Partnership** – we are working in partnership with Tamar Valley AONB to identify and implement interventions to improve water quality on the Lockett Stream, focusing on pressures from land management and wastewater from abandoned metal mines.

**Derril Water Options Appraisal** – this work will assess the geomorphological impacts and identify viable options for the long-term recovery of this water body which currently classified as being at Bad Ecological Status. The project has progressed well and we are collecting final in stream sediment samples and preparing the final report which will be completed by March 2023.

**Fisheries Habitat Improvements** – this is the final year of a 3-year programme in partnership with Westcountry River Trusts that has enhanced 8km of habitat in the Rivers Deer, Claw and Carey.

**Fish Barrier Programme** - Our Environment Programme facilitates quarterly workshops with Westcountry Rivers Trust to identify, prioritise and assess action required for informal, formal and debris dam fish barriers; the output is used to bid for funding to address those barriers that present issues.

**Upper Tamar Working Group** – coordinates several established programmes to target those water bodies in the Upper Tamar that are at poor ecological status. The work has been strengthened with the new Agriculture Regulatory Team and increased Environment Management resources to target non compliances in the agricultural, water industry and domestic private sewage systems.

**River Inny Fish Habitat Improvements** – is a single year project that will help improve the resilience of the fish habitat on the Lower River Inny.

**River Kensey Fish Habitat Improvements** - is also single year project that will help improve the resilience of the fish habitat on the Lower River Kensey.

**Upper Tavy Fish Assessment** – there are a number of pressures on water resources in the Upper Tavy and this work aims to assess empirical evidence and use low-cost Environmental DNA (eDNA) to identify key fish habitat indicators.

**Upper Tavy Working Group** – is a new group established in July comprising partners including Devon Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Tamar Valley AONB and Westcountry Rivers Trust to coordinate programmes of work being undertaken in the Tavy Catchment.

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**Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly**

**Environment Agency**

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