

Water Framework Directive

Daniel Instone

Presentation covers:

- Water framework directive – general
- Key links with agriculture

Water Directive background

- Large number of existing EU water directives
- Relatively prescriptive
- Costs and benefits little considered
- But have made large impact

Existing directives, e.g.

- Urban waste water treatment
- Freshwater fish
- Groundwater
- Dangerous substances
- Bathing water
- Shellfish waters
- Nitrates

Existing directives cntd

- Coverage and full implications not always clear
- Often changed during negotiations
- Variable effect of infractions
- Enforcement may vary across EU
- Impacts uneven

Existing directives cntd

- Can squeeze out other desirable action
- Not sufficiently based on outcomes
- Long lead times; but...
- May be creatures of their time

Water framework directive

- Agreed in 2000
- Transposed in 2003
- First round outcomes by 2015
- 2 daughters (groundwater, priority substances)

Key features of wfd include:

- Outcome based
- River basin management plans
- More choice of measures
- Existing standards as base
- Economics
- Repeals
- EU 'common implementation'

WFD Timetable

- First 'at risk' assessment 2004-05
- Monitoring 2006-08
- Environmental objectives ready for...
- River basin plans 2008-09
- Programmes of measures 2012
- Environmental outcomes 2015

Process challenges include...

- Risk assessment
- Data
- Setting environmental objectives for water bodies
- RBMP process
- Public participation
- Assessing measures
- Benchmarking across EU

Related policy areas include

- Biodiversity
- Economic development
- Leisure
- Agriculture
- Land use planning
- Flood management

Impacts from measures on..

- Agriculture (diffuse pollution)
- Urban (inc diffuse) pollution
- Hydromorphology (inc floods)
- Water industry
- Other (esp. water-dependent) industries

Current action includes...

- Risk assessment
- Consulting on river planning process
- Working out how to set environmental objectives and decision-making process towards measures
- Assessing hydromorphology implications
- Considering water price periodic review implications

What all this means...

- Much improved on older directive approach
- Very ambitious and challenging – in both objectives and process
- Very long term to assess effects of wfd will take

Implications for agriculture

- Agricultural impacts a key challenge
- Diffuse pollution less tackled generally
- Major reason for not meeting wfd objectives identified in current risk assessment
- Impacts from phosphates, nitrates, silt, microbiological pollution
- Water resource dimension too
- EU issue

Main wfd/ag workstrands

- EU focus
- Evidence-gathering
- Awareness and supportive work in catchments
- Consultation on new measures

EU focus

- Wfd and CAP EU drivers
- Most member states see major wfd challenges for agriculture
- UK successfully argued for EU wfd/ag strategic work
- Due to start shortly – will involve Commission and water and agricultural ministries
- Will have strong evidence-dimension

Supportive/awareness work

- Building up activity in priority catchments – working with stakeholders and other parts of Defra (**‘catchment-sensitive farming’**)
- Priorities based on wfd – and also on need to improve condition of SSSIs
- Aim to establish catchment officers/advisers
- Level of activity depends on resources available

New measures

- Consulted on approaches to packages of measures summer 2004
- Strong support for further action – with geographical targeting
- More division over choice of economic instruments/regulation – and on timing
- Government to consult further on measures

Timing

- A key issue is when new agriculture measures should be in place
- Strong arguments for early action to provide lead-times to meet wfd deadlines (RBMPs and env'tal objectives 2009, measures 'operational' 2012, outcomes met 2015)
- Has to be balanced by continuous improvement in evidence of where measures needed