



## Water and Flood Defence

### Introduction

Water has profound aesthetic and cultural appeal as well as value as a resource for industry, agriculture and use in homes. Rivers, lakes and streams and the bathing waters along our coast play an important role in people's quality of life, and maintaining the good quality of water bodies is vital for supporting habitats and biodiversity. Water is also important for many recreation activities and helps attract tourism to all parts of Wales.

Flood and coastal erosion pose a threat to quality of life. When flooding occurs it frequently causes economic damage and general disruption as well as significant personal trauma. Flooding and erosion are natural phenomena that cannot be entirely prevented. In Wales it is estimated that more than 500,000 people live and work on floodplains, and approximately £8 billion of assets – including more than 150,000 residential properties – are at risk from flooding<sup>i</sup>.

### Current and proposed legislative competence of the Assembly

Under the *Government of Wales Act 2006*, the National Assembly for Wales can seek legislative competence through Acts of Parliament or Legislative Competence Orders (LCOs) to make a piece of law in the form of an 'Assembly Measure'. Measures can only be made in a specific policy area (or 'Matter') added to one of the 20 'Fields' (or broad subject areas) which are contained in Schedule 5 to the Act.

As 'Water and flood defence' is field 19 of Schedule 5 to the *Government of Wales Act 2006*, the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers in this area. Currently there are no Matters in this field.

### Forthcoming EU and UK primary legislation

- A Draft Marine Bill was published on 3 April 2008.
- The Floods Directive entered into force on 26 November 2007<sup>ii</sup>.
- The European Commission published its vision for an Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU on 10 October 2007.
- The European Commission has adopted a Groundwater Directive<sup>iii</sup>.
- In July 2006, the European Commission adopted a proposed Directive on chemical pollution of surface waters<sup>iv</sup>.
- A new Bathing Water Directive was adopted on 15 February 2006<sup>v</sup>.

### EU Policy

The EU has wide jurisdiction over matters regarding water. Principally, it legislates in aspects of bathing water quality, chemicals in water, drinking water, floods, groundwater, marine issues, urban wastewater, and river basin management (under the Water Framework Directive). Policies are geared towards improving water quality, reducing flood risk, and more efficient management of the water resource.

Information is available on the following policy strands at the European Commission website:

- Urban wastewater treatment<sup>vi</sup>
- Bathing water<sup>vii</sup>
- Drinking water<sup>viii</sup>

Updated information on the development, implementation, and review of water policies is available twice a year through the Water Information System for Europe newsletter<sup>ix</sup>.

The European Environment Agency also has a comprehensive site covering water issues, including European waters, water pollution, monitoring, water resources, and water management<sup>x</sup>.

## Key Welsh Government strategy documents and action plans

- The Environment Strategy for Wales<sup>xi</sup> and its accompanying Action Plan<sup>xii</sup> have three outcomes for water resources and two for flood and coastal erosion risk management.
- Starting to Live Differently<sup>xiii</sup> is the sustainable development scheme of the National Assembly for Wales. It is accompanied by a Sustainable Development Action Plan<sup>xiv</sup>.
- Technical Advice Note 15 covers development and flood risk.

## Useful Links

- The Welsh Assembly Government has a website covering water and flooding issues: <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/epg/waterflooding/?lang=en>
- The European Commission Directorate-General of the Environment's webpage on water can be found at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/index.html>
- The Consumer Council for Water Wales' website is at <http://www.ccwater.org.uk/server.php?show=nav.392>
- Dŵr Cymru is responsible for sewerage and water supply in much of Wales. Its website is <http://www.dwrcymru.com/>
- The two other water companies with responsibilities for parts of Wales are Severn Trent Water <http://www.stwater.co.uk/> and Dee Valley Water <http://www.deevalleygroup.com/DVW/DVW.htm>
- Environment Agency Wales has a website dedicated to flooding, including a regularly updated link to the flooding situation in Wales: [http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/regions/wales/139851/?lang=\\_e](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/regions/wales/139851/?lang=_e)
- The Drinking Water Inspectorate regulates public water supplies in Wales: <http://www.dwi.gov.uk>
- Ofwat is the economic regulator for the water and sewerage industry in Wales: <http://www.ofwat.gov.uk>

## Further information

A research paper is available on the Environment Strategy for Wales at:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-assembly-publications-economic.htm>

For further information on any aspect of water and flooding, please contact Gareth Clubb, Members' Research Service ([Gareth.Clubb@wales.qsi.gov.uk](mailto:Gareth.Clubb@wales.qsi.gov.uk)), 029 2089 8638

<sup>i</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [Water and Flooding](#)

<sup>ii</sup> European Commission, [Floods Directive: Timetable for implementation](#)

<sup>iii</sup> European Commission, [Directive 2006/118/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration](#), December 2006

<sup>iv</sup> European Commission, [Proposal for a Directive on Environmental Quality Standards in the field of Water Policy](#), July 2006

<sup>v</sup> European Parliament and Council, [Directive 2006/7/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 February 2006 concerning the management of bathing water quality and repealing Directive 76/160/EEC](#), February 2006

<sup>vi</sup> European Commission, [Urban Waste Water Treatment](#),

<sup>vii</sup> European Commission, [Bathing Water Quality](#),

<sup>viii</sup> European Commission, [Drinking Water Directive](#),

<sup>ix</sup> European Commission, [WISE Newsletter](#),

<sup>x</sup> European Environment Agency, [Water themes and data](#).

<sup>xi</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [Environment Strategy for Wales](#), May 2006

<sup>xii</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [Environment Strategy for Wales: First Action Plan](#), May 2006

<sup>xiii</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [Starting to Live Differently](#), March 2004

<sup>xiv</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [The Sustainable Development Action Plan: 2004-2007](#), November 2004