

# Draft River Basin Management Plans Produced

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The Water Framework Directive is the most substantial piece of EC water legislation to date and is designed to improve and integrate the way water bodies are managed throughout Europe.

The Water Framework Directive is implemented through river basin planning. River basin planning is an ongoing process that promotes sustainable water use while protecting and improving the water environment.

The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 identify the Department of the Environment as the authority with responsibility for co-ordinating the river basin planning process.

Northern Ireland shares three International River Basin Districts with the Republic of Ireland. Draft River Basin Management Plans have been produced for each River Basin District. These plans set out the actions required within each district to achieve agreed environmental objectives.

River basin planning as an ongoing process will have a role in contributing to the development and delivery of:

- Assessment of the pressures on the water environment;
- Analysis of the economic importance of water use;
- Design of monitoring programmes to assess impacts and monitor changes;
- Identification and delivery of measures to improve the environment; and
- The setting of environmental objectives.

The draft plans are subject to a strategic environmental assessment under the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. This will identify and assess the wider environmental impacts of plans and programmes

A habitats Directive Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive has also been carried out and will be finalised for the final Plan in December 2009.

The Department of the Environment already encourages the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems in all response to planning and permitted development applications. SuDS are promoted in the DOE Planning Service Policy Statement 15.

The wider use of sustainable drainage techniques has been recommended under the new draft River Basin Management Plans.

*Please note: The content of this article is for information purposes only and further advice should be sought from a professional advisor before any action is taken.*