

# Yorkshire Water Biodiversity Strategy

## Introduction

The Yorkshire Water Biodiversity Strategy outlines our commitment to managing the impacts of our business processes on biodiversity and conserving and enhancing biodiversity on our land.

As a provider of water supply and sewage services, Yorkshire Water plays a vital role in maintaining and improving the region's environment, particularly with respect to our uplands, wetlands and surface waters, our streams, rivers, estuarial and coastal waters. We interact with the natural world in all aspects of our business from the abstraction, treatment and supply of water, through to waste water collection, its treatment, and discharge. We're one of Yorkshire's largest landowners, much of it within designated areas such as National Parks and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and are responsible for the stewardship of habitats and species on our land.

Our commitment is highlighted in our [environmental policy](#), which states we will *"proactively conserve and enhance biodiversity, through efficient and effective practices and the implementation of our Biodiversity Action Plan"*. Our aspirations on biodiversity, where affordable and supported by our customers, look to proactively conserve and enhance the environment and to consider going beyond compliance when we believe the benefits clearly exceed the costs.

## Biodiversity Drivers for Yorkshire Water

Yorkshire Water's impact on biodiversity must comply with national and international biodiversity legislation where practicable. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) places a statutory duty on Yorkshire Water to have 'due regard to the conservation of biodiversity in all functions' and under section 3 of the Water Industry Act (1991), Yorkshire Water has a duty to "further the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and the conservation of flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest".

In addition, the Water Framework Directive (WFD) builds on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) process developed in 1995, and will require the company to achieve quality standards by 2012 based on the ecology as well as chemical water quality of our rivers, estuaries and coastal waters. DEFRA's own guidance confirms that the WFD could be the single largest environmental quality driver for the next 15 years, with cost estimates up to or exceeding £16 billion for the UK Water Industry. It is therefore essential that we understand and work in partnership with our stakeholders so that we can achieve these new standards, through sustainable investments which take account of our customers' willingness to pay.

We recognise that the WFD makes the biodiversity of our region, which can be defined simply as 'variety of life', of strategic importance to our business. Our independent Environmental Advisory Panel recognise that developing and implementing a biodiversity strategy and company BAP represents best practise and will assist YW in becoming clearly the leading water company in terms of environmental management.

Our aspirations on biodiversity are integrated within our Environmental Management System (EMS), which is certified to ISO 14001. We believe that by effectively managing biodiversity risks and opportunities we can maximise the biodiversity benefit as well as business value.

Whilst aspirational, our work in the area of biodiversity will also form a key part of our commitment to integrate the principles of sustainable development into our business.

## **Benefits**

**The benefits to Yorkshire Water and the region of implementing a biodiversity strategy are:**

- Enables YW to better identify, assess and manage biodiversity risks and opportunities.
- Contributes to national and regional biodiversity objectives and enhances the biodiversity of the Yorkshire region
- Helps Yorkshire Water to meet its corporate aims and vision '*to be clearly the best water company in the UK*'.
- Helps Yorkshire Water meet a number of regulatory and non-regulatory drivers, including elements of the WFD and the English Nature / YWS Memorandum of Understanding on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) recovery.
- Enhances YW's reputation and relationships and helps meet stakeholder expectations, by formalising and promoting the excellent work we currently undertake in this area.
- Provides advantages for commercial bids, as biodiversity performance is an increasingly important factor in determining success.

## **Strategic commitments**

We will contribute to national biodiversity objectives and seek to enhance the biodiversity of the Yorkshire region where the benefits clearly exceed the costs by:

- Supporting the UK Government's national strategy and regional biodiversity plans, whilst managing and taking action to implement biodiversity as an integral part of our business planning and operations.
- Implementing a formal biodiversity management process (i.e. a Company Biodiversity Action Plan), which is integrated into the company's EMS and other management systems.
- Using the environmental aspects identified through our EMS to prioritise our work in the area of biodiversity.

- Setting annual biodiversity goals to measure our progress and reporting on our biodiversity performance through our web-based [Biodiversity Action Plan](#).
- Consulting our independent Environmental Advisory Panel on biodiversity actions and progress
- Developing and implementing an environmental risk management tool to enable us to understand how our activities may impact on Yorkshire's biodiversity and identify measures to conserve or enhance it.
- Developing partnerships with stakeholder groups to assist the delivery of a diverse and sustainable ecology for the region
- Managing our landholdings to achieve our biodiversity goals, seeking to conserve and enhance biodiversity where possible.
- Managing our woodlands to achieve the standards contained within the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme and maintain Forestry Stewardship Council accreditation.
- Managing our supply chain and investment decisions to reduce the risks of indirect adverse impacts and to enhance biodiversity.
- Taking an active role in the Yorkshire and Humber Biodiversity Forum.
- Gaining awareness of the commitments of other BAPs, to ensure we maximise the use of available data and, where possible, share our biodiversity data and survey work.

This strategy will be periodically reviewed in light of new knowledge, changing legislation, public concerns and the views of our Environmental Advisory Panel.