

## South East River Basin District

### Developing the Environment Programme - Medium Term Plan for 2016-2021

The purpose of this paper is to seek the views and ideas of the Liaison Panel on the six year Medium Term Plan to enable delivery of the WFD. The key considerations for the liaison panel are:

Comment on the extent in which the MTP has been developed, the process and the criteria used. Is it robust, reflect the priorities for the South East River Basin and maximise opportunities to leverage partner investment?

Explore and advise on how the MTP could be further improved in future, including mechanisms for the liaison panel to track, support and empower catchment partnership delivery.

The Environment Programme contains all of the EA projects delivering environmental benefits outside the FCRM Capital Programme.

Defra has made £10.86 million available during 2015 to 2016 to improve the water environment through the Catchment Partnership Action Fund (CPAF) and the Environment Agency's Environment Programme.

The proposed longer term, six year Medium Term Plan (MTP) will align with FCRM funding streams and provides the framework for multi functional / benefit projects that takes a 'Partnership by Default' approach. Environment Agency and Defra are currently discussing the funding potential for this six year period of investment in WFD projects for 2016-2021.

The Partnership by Default approach recognises that often partners can deliver projects more efficiently and effectively than the EA can by itself. In developing projects the EA will default to delivery through partners unless this is not possible due to complexity, lack of capable partner or working on EA owned assets. The approach also recognises that the EA funding envelope is shrinking and there is a need to build capability and capacity in catchment partners if to succeed.

To develop the MTP for 2016-2021 there is a need to understand where the priority water bodies are in order to build a plan of projects to achieve the objectives of the RBMP, help target investigations and identify other opportunities within each catchment.

#### Current position

The South East Environment Programme Team in consultation with internal EA staff and catchment partners are working on a water body prioritisation process based on an agreed set of criteria. The process uses national core WFD fund allocation criteria alongside other tiers of prioritisation that take into account local priorities. The questions the Partners will be asked to consider include:

- Should any of the proposed criteria (tier 2) for prioritising water bodies be removed?
- Should any additional methods of prioritising be used?
- Are there any other considerations or wider benefits that should be captured to prioritise water bodies?
- Are there any water bodies that should not be included on the list or ones for your catchment that you would like to be included?

We anticipate that the consultation with partners will result in a number of changes before we are able to finalise the list of priority water bodies in South East RBD, which will be used to help prioritise projects for the MTP.

This process will not exclude projects happening on water bodies that do not feature on the list; however it is expected that 80% of all projects will be on water bodies from the prioritised list. Revised and new projects may be added on an annual basis depending on the available evidence of environmental need.

The list below shows the criteria used for prioritisation:

**Tier 1 - Core WFD Priorities**

- Improve failing Protected Areas
- Reversing Deterioration or Preventing it where sufficient evidence of risk
- Getting to Good where cost beneficial to do so

**Tier 2 – Potential Area Priorities**

- WB contains Local Enterprise Partnership interest
- WB contains a project from the FCRM Medium Term Plan and other funding streams
- WB contains a failing SSSI
- WB contains a Priority rivers target for Habitat restoration
- WB contains stretches with least cover (from Keeping Rivers Cool mapping, scores 1-3)
- WB contains a Priority Place
- WB contains an active partnership who are undertaking work now or in the near future

**What Next?**

The South East RBLP is asked to:

1. Comment on the extent in which the MTP has been developed, the process and the criteria used. Is it robust, reflect the priorities for the South East River Basin and maximise opportunities to leverage partner investment?
2. Explore and advise on how the MTP could be further improved in future, including mechanisms for the liaison panel to track, support and empower catchment partnership delivery.