

Essential Environment: Water policy

Latest developments and
implications for professionals

February 2026



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Acknowledgements

Authors: Joseph Lewis

Design: Bea Gilbert & Lucy Rowland

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The FWR is an independent community of professionals from across the water sector and related scientific specialisms. The community comes together for deliberative discussion to support the development of interdisciplinary solutions to water challenges.

The [FWR Community](#) provides guidance and strategic thought leadership for the IES's water activities and collaborates with the wider IES family on issues related to land, air and policy implementation.

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The Institution of Environmental Sciences (the IES) is at the forefront of uniting the environmental sciences around a shared goal: to work with speed, vision and expertise to solve the world's most pressing environmental challenges, together.

As the global professional membership body for environmental scientists, we support a diverse network of professionals all over the world – and at every stage of their education and careers – to connect, develop, progress and inspire.

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Introduction

Since the election of the new UK Government, environmental issues have seen significant policy developments, so there are plenty of opportunities to engage.

The IES and FWR have created this briefing paper as an introductory reference on environmental policy relating to water and linked issues, including water security and water quality.

We hope the paper will help IES and FWR members to stay up-to-date on relevant policy issues, supporting horizon scanning and identifying opportunities for our expert members to engage with decision makers and the public. We publish updates to this paper on an annual basis.

You may also be interested in our horizon scanning papers on [clean air policy](#) and [land and nature](#), which are available on the IES website.

Where to find out more

- If you want to stay up-to-date with the latest developments, make sure you are subscribed to [Essential Environment](#).
- For more information about the latest developments in water, find out more about the [Foundation for Water Research](#).
- For a perspective on how to implement policy that affects the water environment, see our [Environmental Policy Implementation Community](#).
- To find out more about professional membership or chartership, consider [joining the IES](#) and [the FWR](#).



“While the Water White Paper makes many promising commitments, its implementation will be an immense challenge. We need more details on what delivery will look like in practice.”

Horizon scanning & new policy developments

In the UK, the new Government has steadily announced updates to policy affecting water since the 2024 General Election.

The most substantive updates have come through the [Independent Water Commission](#), culminating in a final report and subsequently, the [Water White Paper](#).

Meanwhile, a range of other policy developments have shaped the horizon for water systems, particularly around planning processes.

Water (Special Measures) Act

In early 2025, the [Water \(Special Measures\) Act](#) was passed, enacting immediate reforms to water companies and addressing a handful of manifest commitments from the new Government.

The Act brought in measures to ensure independent monitoring of every outlet, block the payment of bonuses to executives of polluting companies, impose automatic fines, and potentially bring criminal charges against persistent law breakers.

These goals were supported by a range of provisions, primarily focused on increasing accountability and the potential for

sanctions on water companies. This included new requirements to publish near real-time data of discharges and annual pollution incident reduction plans.

The more substantive question of long-term transformation of the water sector was paused, pending an inquiry from the Independent Water Commission.

Water Commission

Running in parallel to the passing of the Water Act, an [Independent Water Commission](#) was established under the leadership of Sir Jon Cunliffe, with the goal of assessing the water sector regulatory system for England and Wales.

The Commission concluded in 2025 with the [publication of a final report](#), which was accompanied by an [interim report](#) earlier in the year.

From the outset, the Commission emphasised the importance of the water system to making meaningful and lasting change happen.

The final report of the Water Commission did not go quite as far but set out a broad list of recommendations for the

Government, many of which are reflected in the [Water White Paper](#).

Despite the breadth of the Water Commission's report, some gaps still remain. Naturally, some of the recommendations remain intangible, while others do not sufficiently address the need to transform water systems.

For more information about gaps in the current policy approach to water, see [chapter three on outstanding issues](#).

To learn more about the Water Commission and its findings, read our insights articles for [Essential Environment](#):

- [Essential Environment: A first look at the Water Commission](#)
- [Interim report: Our analysis on a systemic approach](#)
- [Water Commission Final Report: What next?](#)

You can also find out more about proposals in the [response to the Commission's call for evidence](#) from the IES and the FWR.

Water White Paper

Since the 2024 General Election, the Government has made reform of the water sector one of its priorities for the environment.

Following the [Water \(Special Measures\) Act](#) and the Independent Water Commission, the Government published a [White Paper on Water](#) in early 2026.

The White Paper sets out a wide range of proposals, which are intended to be

introduced through new legislation in 2026. Proposals include:

- **A long-term vision for water:** The paper commits to embed a long-term (25 year) strategic approach to water, including through reform to Strategic Policy Statements, new strategic guidance for regulatory and planning discretion, an updated (and more coherent) legislative framework, an improved model for water planning through two core consolidated planning frameworks, better joined-up regional water planning, and the prospect of new water targets.
- **The new combined regulator:** Under proposals, Ofwat will be abolished and replaced with a new regulator that takes water functions from Ofwat, the Drinking Water Inspectorate, the Environment Agency, and Natural England. The White Paper does not specify which functions will be transferred, which leaves some ambiguity where agencies currently have functions that interact with water systems less directly.
- **Supervisory regulation:** The new regulator will adopt a 'supervisory' approach (in line with the 'constrained discretion' recommendation of [the Corry Review](#)): more proactive, risk-based, company-specific, and focused on outcomes. This is expected to include new enforcement powers and the ability to act quickly against non-compliance, without needing to go to court. The Government has committed to addressing cultural barriers and developing decision making principles, a process to assess whether a water company can move to a new operating model, and various improvements to

tools for performance management, including through contingency Special Administration Regime plans and a Performance Improvement Regime for poorly performing water companies.

- **A shift towards consumers and public health:** The White Paper includes a broad commitment to partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care to embed public health as a key consideration. It also proposes a new Water Ombudsman, a drinking water quality advisory group, improved testing capability for drinking water, and a strengthened ‘customer measure of experience’.
- **Innovation and investment:** The plan commits to a blended funding approach to securing confidence for long-term investment from government, investors, the regulator, and the public. The White Paper proposes a 5/10/25 year planning approach to investment, linking the 5-year cycle of price reviews with the long-term strategic vision. This will be supported by regulation to reduce risk, increase flexibility, and secure more reliable returns through a rationalised and coherent incentive framework, emulating the Government’s approach in its **Carbon Budget (and Growth) Delivery Plan**. Specific measures include a new supplier of last resort mechanism, improved guidance for water resources planning, a consistent approach to regulation, and the expansion of Specified Infrastructure Projects Regulations to all types of water infrastructure.
- **A shift to preventing water pollution:** One of the most pressing issues for the

White Paper was to make meaningful commitments to improving water quality. It seeks to do so by shifting the focus of action towards ‘pre-pipe’ solutions (such as rainwater management, sustainable drainage systems, and tackling sewer misuse). The three largest sources of water pollution (agriculture, wastewater, and highway run-off) are all acknowledged in the plan, but actions are still at a level of generality, with full details expected in the forthcoming Transition Plan. The White Paper commits to ongoing partnership with the Department for Transport on road run-off, a single set of clear and strong standards for regulating agriculture, and solutions to challenges around private sewerage, but there are still questions about what those measures will mean in terms of practical implementation.

- **Water in the planning system:** The White Paper includes commitments around the role of water in planning, including a new plan-making system to join up water and development planning processes, a review of Permitted Development Rights for water companies in England, updated National Policy Statements for water resources and wastewater, a right to connect for water supply and to the sewerage system, and further action through the **Water Delivery Taskforce**.
- **Measures on infrastructure resilience:** A significant shift proposed in the White Paper is towards clearer infrastructure standards to improve asset maintenance, with embedded engineering expertise through a new Chief Engineer. This strategic shift will be backed by more

funding through the Price Control process and incentives for consumers and businesses to improve water efficiency, as well as an assessment of critical supply chains and regulatory changes around abstraction and impoundment.

- **Monitoring, mapping, and enforcement:** After the [Cunliffe Review](#) was published, the Government made a quick commitment to end ‘operator self-monitoring’. The White Paper provides details, including an ‘open monitoring’ approach for wastewater, improved data for Continuous Water Quality Monitoring, and a joint assessment to map infrastructure delivery needs and supply chain capability across the sector. Actions also include a set of forward-facing asset health metrics and asset mapping, with a view to supporting resilient infrastructure.
- **Commitment to a Transition Plan:** The White Paper promises a Transition Plan with a roadmap to guide the transition and assign responsibilities and deadlines. This plan does not yet exist and has been promised by the end of 2026, leaving many of the commitments in the White Paper subject to uncertainty until key delivery information emerges.

The White Paper makes many promising commitments, though it presents significant challenges for implementation and raises questions about how it will be delivered.

In early 2026, Wales also published a Green Paper on [Shaping the Future of Water Governance in Wales](#). The Welsh approach differs in a number of ways, including the proposed regulatory structure and the timeline for implementation, which is expected to be phased in Wales.

The current proposals from Wales are still open to consultation, so questions about the delivery of both papers will need to be answered in full by the joint Transition Plan. For now, the future of water systems in England and Wales remains uncertain.

Another area of uncertainty comes from what the new regulator looks like in practice. While Ofwat will be replaced in principle, in function these developments may leave a significant portion of Ofwat’s current structure intact within the new regulator.

This may lead to an asymmetric relationship with the Environment Agency (EA), particularly as some catchment-relevant roles, like flood risk management and addressing land contamination, will remain with the EA. Questions remain about the nature of the new regulator, its roles and powers, and the practical reality of its working relationship with government and the water companies.

By comparison, the Welsh proposals preserve an integrated remit within Natural Resources Wales, but propose a new economic regulator, rather than integrating those functions.

Despite current uncertainties, the proposals in the White Paper align with many of the priorities set out by the FWR and the IES at the time of the last General Election.

In our priority report, [‘Our Shared Mission for Sustainable Wellbeing’](#), we called for:

1. A long-term approach to water that acknowledges humans as part of the water system, prioritising strategic network solutions that work with nature
2. An end to the crisis for water quality that tackles all sources of pollution,

providing healthy rivers and bodies of water

3. Integration of the UK's approaches to water and climate change, providing water security and flood resilience
4. A modern approach to evidence through purpose-built standards and indicators for water, supported by clear guidance
5. Sustainable water resource management delivered at the catchment scale, with transparent, reasonable and actionable plans for implementation.

Most of those recommendations now appear to be on track, though the specifics will depend on how the White Paper is implemented through legislation and the forthcoming Transition Plan.

For more information on the White Paper and responses from experts at the time, read our [article for Essential Environment](#).

England's Environmental Improvement Plan

While the White Paper sets out most of the Government's approach to water policy, further measures are included in the English [Environmental Improvement Plan \(EIP\)](#).

In December 2025, the Government published [revisions to the EIP](#), providing new commitments and an overview of the current state of environmental policy and government plans over the coming years.

Most of the policy for water in the EIP is set out under its third goal 'Water', which largely consolidates existing policy. Key commitments include:

- Action through the [Water White Paper](#), including a handful of commitments which have now been confirmed. See the section above on the Water White Paper for more information.
- Work towards restoring 75% of water bodies to good ecological status, including addressing the impact of brake and tyre wear on highway run-off, a commitment to managing agricultural emissions via farming payments, and a catchment-based approach to water quality.
- A restatement of the water quality targets set under the [Environment Act](#), including reducing phosphorus loadings from treated wastewater, reducing total nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution from agriculture, and the delivery of mine water treatment schemes.
- Reiteration of the Government's commitment to the [Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan](#).
- Commitments to restore chalk streams, including through investment in the [Water Restoration Fund](#) and [Water Environment Improvement Fund](#), as well as direct contributions from water companies.
- Further objectives around water security, including meeting the [Environment Act targets](#) for reduced public water demand and reduced leakage, supported by efficiency labelling, planning policy, and improved water resources management plan delivery.
- Measures to address water abstraction, including in agriculture and through [Environmental Permitting Regulations](#).
- Further commitments around reducing

the health impacts of water pollution, both through ‘pre-pipe’ solutions to prevent pollution and through new research on human health risks.

- Measures to address climate change with implications for water resources, in line with existing commitments under the [Carbon Budget Delivery Plan](#) and [National Adaptation Programme](#).
- Many other commitments and policies with indirect implications for water, water quality, and water resources.

Find out more by reading the [revised Environmental Improvement Plan for England](#).

OEP report on environmental improvement

At the start of 2026, the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) published its latest [progress report on environmental improvement](#) in England.

The report assesses the period from April 2024 to March 2025, which makes it the first assessment of the new Government’s progress towards environmental improvement.

Naturally, it measures that progress against the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) [that existed at the time](#).

The overall assessment was that progress has been broadly positive, and better than in last year’s report, but the rate of progress is still insufficient, because the positive trend is not fast enough to keep targets on track.

The picture for water is less positive.

- **Past trends are mixed:** public water use is reducing and treated sewage pollution

is improving, but diffuse pollution risk from soil nutrients is increasing, as are the number of incidents from sewage pollution and other sources.

- **Progress within the period is also mixed:** progress has been made towards the sewage pollution targets, but less so towards agricultural pollution targets.
- **We are off track to meet targets:** While progress in some areas is positive, it is not happening quickly enough to meet legal targets. The OEP cites a lack of coherent delivery plans as a major problem.

Naturally, this assessment covers a period before the latest set of plans from the Government, including the revised EIP and the [Water White Paper](#).

Given the OEP’s concerns about delivery, this will be another area where the forthcoming Transition Plan may be essential.

For more information about the report, read our [analysis for Essential Environment](#).

Planning & infrastructure

One of the Government’s main areas of focus has been planning reform, which has had significant implications for the environment.

These changes have been primarily realised through the [Planning & Infrastructure Act](#), which is due to become law in early 2026.

The Act aims to speed up the planning process, particularly for new homes and the delivery of critical infrastructure. It contains five core parts:

1. Part 1 on infrastructure, which includes:

- a. Changes to Nationally-Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) to (i) ensure national policy statements are regularly updated, (ii) increase flexibility around consenting by allowing the Secretary of State to direct some projects out of the NSIP regime, (iii) amend the requirements for consultation reports to make them shorter and simpler, and (iv) further change judicial review and consultation processes to speed them up.
- b. Reforms to electricity network connections with a view to increasing and expediting grid connectivity.
- c. Updates to the Scottish process for consenting around electricity infrastructure, including mandatory pre-application requirements to engage statutory consultees earlier and increased charging powers for authorities to account for costs.
- d. A ‘cap and floor’ mechanism for long duration electricity storage, providing a minimum and maximum revenue for investor returns to encourage more investment in storage infrastructure.
- e. New consumer benefits for transmission projects near homes, as an increased incentive for communities.
- f. A longer commissioning period for offshore electricity transmission systems, to account for the increased complexity and time delays around projects.
- g. Reforms to several existing laws to facilitate energy generation, transport

connectivity, electric vehicle chargepoints, and other important infrastructure.

2. Part 2 on Planning, which includes:

- a. New powers to ‘sub-delegate’ the setting of planning fees to Local Planning Authorities to cover the costs of applications.
- b. Reform the planning committees with the goal of delegating some activities to planning officers to speed up the process of planning.
- c. The introduction of Spatial Development Strategies (SDS), based on London’s approach to planning, which will introduce a strategic level of spatial planning, with the goal that local plans will need to align with the relevant SDS.

3. Part 3 on Development and Nature Recovery, which includes:

- a. Significant reforms to the way that nature recovery and environmental protections interact with the planning process, with the goal of speeding up delivery.
- b. A new Nature Restoration Fund (NRF), which would allow developers to contribute towards the fund instead of undertaking assessments or carrying out interventions on site, as long as an Environmental Delivery Plan (EDP) has been produced by Natural England (or another relevant body) that sets out strategic actions that can be carried out through the fund. This shifts the focus of nature recovery and environmental protections

from mitigation and prevention to recovery after the fact.

- c. Commitments were made during the Act's passing that this would not lead to environmental regression, despite the advice of the [Office for Environmental Protection](#) (OEP).

4. Part 4 on Development Corporations, which includes:

- a. Powers for development corporations, aiming to facilitate the development of new towns.
- b. The basis of a framework for development corporations to unlock housing development in new places and in new ways.

To learn more about how Nutrient Neutrality rules are affected by the Act, [read the briefing](#) from the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology.

The [Planning & Infrastructure Act](#) has been controversial, especially when it comes to nature recovery. By deciding to allow developers the opportunity to circumvent on-site interventions, the Act effectively jumps over several steps in the mitigation hierarchy. This creates substantial risks of regression, particularly for the connectivity of nature and certain habitats and ecosystems.

At the end of 2025, the Government announced further proposals for planning, including [revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF).

These changes follow a previous [consultation on the NPPF](#) in 2024, which led to a series of updates to planning policy. You can find

out more about those changes by reading our [response to the consultation](#) and the [subsequent government commentary](#).

At the time, the Government indicated it would deploy private finance to support widespread reservoir construction, facilitated by new infrastructure development proposals.

These are long-term commitments, but the necessary actions for their delivery are underway.

The latest changes make further updates, including:

- Reform to planning processes, with the aim "to make the system clearer, more predictable, and faster to build 1.5 million new homes".
- A default approval for certain developments, including suitable homes built near rail links and upwards development in towns and cities.
- The introduction of a new 'medium site' category with more proportionate restrictions to promote these kinds of development.
- Measures to encourage high density housing and greater diversification of housing.
- Support for new builds to be more nature-friendly, including around the inclusion of swift bricks, albeit without any mandatory requirements, effectively making the policy unenforceable.
- Preferential treatment for developments with social or economic benefits to the local community.

- Changes to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), including an exemption for small sites and more details of how BNG will apply on brownfield land and NSIP projects.

Learn more about the latest announcements by reading [the Housing Secretary's statement](#) and the new [consultation on the NPPF](#).

Proposals in the NPPF consultation and the changes brought by the Planning Act represent significant risks for safeguarding water resources.

One of the major goals of these changes has been to speed up infrastructure delivery, so the removal of mandatory consultation and local input risks jeopardising devolved control of outcomes.

This may be particularly stark around highway run-off, which is not understood as widely as other pollution sources and often requires direct interventions on drainage to ensure adequate protections are in place.

You can find out more about the risks associated with the Government's new approach to planning by reading:

- The [OEP's letter on the risk of environmental regression](#)
- The [House of Commons Library's briefing on the Planning Bill](#)
- A [joint letter, signed by the IES](#), addressing the implications of exemptions to BNG on small sites

For more information about planning in Scotland, consult the [Fourth National Planning Framework](#), which deviates from the new approach being taken in England.

Despite the focus on planning reform and increasing the speed and certainty of planning processes, there are still large questions around [Environmental Impact Assessment](#) (EIA) that remain unanswered.

In 2023, the [Levelling-Up & Regeneration Act](#) (LURA) proposed a new regime: [Environmental Outcomes Reports](#) (EORs).

These proposals are intended to produce a faster, more effective system of assessing the effects of developments on the environment, from the perspective of specified outcomes and objectives.

The new Government has not fully revealed its plans for implementing EORs, beyond the broad commitment that this is still expected to take place.

It is likely that this would lead to a simpler and expedited process, focused on specific outcomes rather than holistic assessments.

Water quality is expected to be one of these outcomes, so for water, the transition to EORs is likely to have greater impact on the process of conducting assessments, rather than the subject matter of those assessments.

You can find out more by reading our 2025 [article on EORs in Essential Environment](#).

Sustainable drainage

Another critical area of uncertainty for water management has been the implementation of [Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act](#) to guarantee the delivery of mandatory Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) on new developments.

The Schedule has entered into force in Wales but does not yet apply in England.

In its [revised Environmental Improvement Plan for England](#), the Government restated its commitment to require standardised sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in all new developments with drainage impacts.

While this strongly suggests the implementation of Schedule 3 in England, the timeline for action remains ambiguous.

In the meantime, the Government has indicated that its preference is to pursue SuDS through improved guidance and measures to support delivery through planning policy, which may cause delays to Schedule 3's implementation.

The [Water White Paper](#)'s commitment to pre-pipe solutions would be met most effectively by implementing Schedule 3, yet it is not yet clear how quickly the Government will do so, leading to increased uncertainty around the role of water in planning.

Across the devolved nations

While these developments are ongoing in England, Northern Ireland published its long-awaited [Environmental Improvement Plan](#) (EIP) in 2024.

Northern Ireland's Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) was required to publish the plan under the [Environment Act 2021](#), but its publication was delayed due to the suspension of the Executive.

The plan is a strategic document setting out Northern Ireland's approach to the environment, so will play a key role in driving delivery of the Executive's commitments.

It draws together existing strategies and policies and grounds the actions it contains

in the context of sustainable development and natural capital.

DAERA's EIP also sets six Strategic Environmental Outcomes, which are the primary objectives of the plan.

One of these is 'Excellent Air, Water & Land Quality' and several of the others relate to water, such as 'Sustainable production & consumption on land and at sea', 'Thriving, Resilient & Connected Nature & Wildlife' and 'Net Zero GHG Emissions & Improved Climate Resilience & Adaptability'.

Many of the goals and policies are already set out in Northern Ireland's existing legislation, which also delivers the Executive's [Long-Term Water Strategy](#) (2015-2040) and [Nutrients Action Programme](#).

Commitments highlighted by the EIP include:

- Publishing the [Third River Basin Management Plan for Northern Ireland](#), which was released in 2025.
- Commission a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Nutrients Action Programme, which led to a [public consultation on the Report](#) in 2025.
- An objective to achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources including water & soils by 2031.
- A commitment to reach 100% of waterbodies at Good Ecological Status (surface water) & Good Chemical Status (groundwater) by 2027.
- Specific interventions to address water pollution from agriculture, including capital grant support through the Sustainable Catchment Programme; soil sampling, analysis, run off risk maps and

nutrient management training for farmers through the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme; and targets on Phosphorus and Nitrogen balance for agriculture.

- Further measures aimed at improving the quality and quantity of Marine and Coastal Water Resources, including the development of a Northern Ireland Marine Strategy to achieve Good Environmental Status in local seas and align with the UK Marine Strategy.

To find out more about Northern Ireland's environmental commitments, read the [Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland](#).

Since the start of 2024, Wales has been working to develop a framework for environmental governance through the [Environment \(Principles Governance and Biodiversity Targets\) \(Wales\) Bill](#).

Broadly, these changes will deliver a governance framework that contains many of the classical elements of environmental governance, including targets, principles for decision making, and a governance body.

While the final outcome of the process is yet to be determined, the broad details are set out in the [public notes on the Bill](#).

Wales is also considering changes to water governance following the Water Commission's review. The proposals are set out in a Green Paper, '[Shaping the Future of Water Governance in Wales](#)', which is currently open for consultation.

For more information, see chapter two on [existing policy and governance context](#).

International developments

In 2025, the European Commission adopted a new [Water Resilience Strategy for Europe](#). The Strategy intends to support Member States to manage water more efficiently by better implementing existing EU water legislation and delivering additional actions.

The Strategy covers three objectives:

1. Restoring and protecting the water cycle
2. Building a water-smart economy (including improving water efficiency and modernising water infrastructure)
3. Ensuring access to clean and affordable water for all

These objectives are linked to more than 50 actions for the EU (to be delivered either by the EU itself or through Member States), across five action areas:

1. Governance and implementation
2. Public and private investments and infrastructure
3. Accelerating digitalisation and AI
4. Boosting research and innovation
5. Security and preparedness

While the Water Resilience Strategy only applies within the European Union, it is likely that these actions will have impacts and co-benefits across borders.

Additionally, there are specific actions, such as around drought management, where approaches taken by the EU could be adopted elsewhere as case studies for more modern approaches.

A systems approach to water

The FWR Community is the home for experts who believe that water solutions should be holistic and multifunctional.

Become part of a system that supports effective change:

- **Sign-up** to the FWR mailing list
- **Join** the Institution of Environmental Sciences



Policy and governance context

While policy and regulation for water are subject to ongoing changes, many existing policies are still important.

This section signposts key environmental policy developments over the past decade, particularly relating to environmental governance changes following the UK's exit from the European Union.

For information on England's revised EIP, and how it governs the approach taken to environmental policy, see the relevant section of [chapter one on recent policy developments](#).

Environmental principles

The [Environmental Principles Policy Statement](#) (EPPS) took effect in 2023, requiring government Ministers to have due regard to a set of environmental principles when making decisions.

The role of the principles is to ensure that environmental considerations are factored into cross-governmental decision making, so that decisions by one department or Minister consider the broader environmental context and do not unnecessarily produce negative effects on the environment.

There are five environmental principles:

- The Integration Principle
- The Prevention Principle
- The Rectification at Source Principle
- The Polluter Pays Principle
- The Precautionary Principle

Ministers are expected to iteratively apply the principles throughout policy development, from the outset through any subsequent stages, subject to a degree of proportionality.

This process should identify potential positive or negative environmental effects with the goal that the principles should inform the design of policy.

Following the application of the principles, the EPPS suggests that Ministers could act by amending or reframing a policy, ensure the future application of the principles by embedding one or more of them in policy, or delay the delivery of a policy to gather more implementation before acting.

Wales has proposed its own approach to applying the same environmental principles, which is set out in the [Environment](#)

(Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill.

For more information about [the EPPS and its application](#), read the IES's 2023 primer on environmental governance: '[Progressing or regressing: The future of environmental science under new UK governance](#)'.

Environmental targets

In 2022, the Government published a framework of long-term legally-binding environmental targets for England, as required under the [Environment Act 2021](#).

Several of the targets have implications for water, including those which directly address water quality.

The revised EIP for England also sets out a suite of interim targets to support progress towards the long-term targets, and to support the plan's wider goals.

The long-term targets for water are:

- **Abandoned metal mines:** Halve the length of rivers polluted by harmful metals from abandoned metal mines by 2038, against a baseline of 1,491 km.
- **Agriculture pollution:** Reduce total nitrogen, total phosphorus and sediment pollution from agriculture into the water environment by at least 40% by 2038, compared to a 2018 baseline.
- **Wastewater pollution:** Reduce phosphorus loadings from treated wastewater by 80% by 2038 against a 2020 baseline.
- **Water use:** Reduce the use of public water supply in England per head of

population by 20% by 2038 from a 2019 to 2020 baseline.

- **Marine Protected Areas:** Ensure that at least 70% of protected features in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are in favourable condition by the end of 2042, with the remainder in recovering condition.

Interim targets for water include:

- **Mine water treatment:** Construct 8 mine water treatment schemes and 20 diffuse interventions commitments to control inputs of target substances to rivers, and complete 55 catchment studies by December 2030.
- **Agriculture pollution:** Reduce total nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution from agriculture to the water environment by at least 12% by December 2030 compared to a 2018 baseline.
- **Sensitive agriculture pollution:** Reduce total nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution from agriculture to the water environment by at least 18% in catchments containing protected sites in unfavourable condition due to nutrient pollution by December 2030.
- **Wastewater pollution:** Reduce phosphorus loadings from treated wastewater by 55% by December 2030 against a 2020 baseline.
- **Water use:** Reduce the use of public water supply in England per head of population from a 2019 to 2020 baseline by 9% by 31 March 2027 -reduce the use of public water supply in England per head of population from a 2019 to 2020 baseline by 14% by 31 March 2032.

- **Leakage:** Reduce leakage by 20% from a 2017 to 2018 baseline by 31 March 2027, then reduce leakage from a 2017 to 2018 baseline by 30% by 31 March 2032.
- **Marine Protected Areas:** At least 49% of Marine Protected Area (MPA) protected features are in favourable condition and at least 46% in recovering condition, by December 2030.

Several of the other targets also present the possibility of risks or co-benefits for water quality. These include:

- Targets to address waste and resource use, which may have consequences for waste water and its effects on watercourses;
- Targets to address biodiversity, which may have effects on freshwater ecosystems and the quality of use of water resources.

Importantly, these targets act in conjunction with existing targets and limit levels enshrined in UK legislation, as well as equivalent targets outside of England.

In the [Water White Paper](#), the Government commits to setting additional targets for water. The details of these targets are not yet available, so it is unclear the extent to which they will drive action.

In particular, it is not yet clear if the Government will use powers under the [Environment Act](#) to set further legally-binding targets, or if these new targets will be non-binding objectives. The extent to which new targets will have an impact on outcomes will depend on accountability for their delivery, as well as the level of their ambition.

The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP)

The OEP is an Arms-Length Body responsible for protecting and improving the environment in England and Northern Ireland, which it achieves by holding to account public authorities and the Government.

It was created by the Environment Act 2021 as part of the environmental governance arrangements which emerged from the UK's exit from the European Union (EU).

Covering a range of functions, the OEP is responsible for scrutiny and advice to the Government, monitoring and reporting on environmental plans and law, and investigations and enforcement in cases where public bodies fail to comply with environmental law.

Despite this array of functions, the OEP is not a direct successor organisation to the roles played by the European Commission during the UK's membership of the EU, with limited functions by comparison.

Where environmental laws are implemented, primarily by Defra and delivery agencies, the OEP has a role to ensure compliance with environmental law by government and public bodies, as well as the capacity to investigate suspected serious breaches and take action where needed.

The enforcement role of the OEP is focused on public bodies and regulation of private entities remains the responsibility of the Environment Agency (or other relevant bodies, such as Ofwat).

For more information about the OEP and how its role differs to that of the European

Commission, read the IES's 2023 primer on environmental governance: '[Progressing or regressing: The future of environmental science under new UK governance](#)'.

You can also find out more about the OEP's comments on environmental policy by reading recent articles from [Essential Environment](#):

- [OEP progress report: The hunt for environmental improvement](#)
- [Ghosted by government? Responses to the OEP reports](#)
- [Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland 2024](#)

Governance in the devolved administrations

The devolved administrations of the UK operate under similar yet different systems of governance.

Some elements of the [Environmental Principles Policy Statement](#) apply outside England, though the majority of environmental decisions are devolved to the relevant administrations.

Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have equivalent duties to consider environmental principles in their governance regime following the UK's exit from the EU.

Equivalent organisations to the [Office for Environmental Protection](#) in the devolved administrations have subtly different remits and approaches.

Water in Scotland

Compared to England and the other devolved administrations, Scotland has a more well-established approach to water.

In Scotland, [Environmental Standards Scotland](#) (ESS) plays the same role as the OEP, though the [Scottish Environmental Protection Agency](#) (SEPA) serves as Scotland's primary environmental regulator and functions alongside ESS in Scotland's environmental governance landscape.

Many of Scotland's water commitments are covered by existing strategies and plans, which include:

- Scotland's [Hydro Nation Strategy](#), which sets out high level commitments to managing water resources. The Strategy is under review and may be subject to revision after the Scottish Parliamentary elections in 2026.
- [River basin management plans](#), which play the same role as their equivalents in England and are set by SEPA every six years.
- [Flood risk management strategies](#), which are responsible for setting out actions to address flood risk on an area-by-area basis.
- Scotland's Policy Statement on [supporting aquaculture growth and protecting Scotland's environment](#).
- And a [wide range of policies and legislation](#) relating to Scotland's water environment and water resources.

Water in Wales

In Wales, governance functions are primarily fulfilled by the [Interim Environmental Protection Assessor for Wales](#) (IEPAW).

At the start of 2024, the Welsh Government consulted on [new environmental governance rules](#).

The proposals set out how environmental principles would be embedded in Welsh law, how environmental targets and biodiversity restoration duties would be introduced, and proposals for a new governance body, the Office for Environmental Governance Wales, which will replace the IEPAW and expand upon its powers and duties.

These proposals will be realised through the [Environment \(Principles Governance and Biodiversity Targets\) \(Wales\) Bill](#). You can find out more information on the Bill in [chapter one on recent policy developments](#).

Water in Wales is currently addressed through the [2015 Water Strategy for Wales](#). The Strategy covers high-level actions across six themes:

1. Water for nature, people and business
2. Improving planning and management of water services
3. Delivering excellent services to customers
4. Protecting and improving drinking water quality
5. 21st century drainage and sewerage systems
6. Supporting delivery (including through a dedicated Action Plan)

Further developments around the management of water systems in Wales are expected in 2026.

The Independent Water Commission made a number of recommendations which are relevant to Wales.

The response of the Welsh Government is came in the form of a Green Paper: '[Shaping the Future of Water Governance in Wales](#)', which will be followed by a joint Transition Plan with England by the end of 2026.

For more information, read the relevant section of [chapter one on emerging policy developments](#).

Water in Northern Ireland

After two years of suspension, the Northern Ireland Assembly resumed sitting in early 2024. This period of suspension led to a number of delays in progressing policy action around water.

Most of Northern Ireland's approach to policy for the water environment is handled through its [implementation of the Water Framework Directive](#), the work of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's [Water Management Unit](#), and the proposed [Nutrients Action Programme for 2026-2029](#).

The policy approach to water in Northern Ireland is also addressed in the [Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland](#) (EIP), which was published in 2024.

For more information about Northern Ireland's EIP, see [chapter one on recent policy developments](#).

Integrated Water Plan

In 2023, DEFRA published its [Plan for Water](#) (also called the Integrated Water Plan), which set out the Government's strategic approach to delivering "clean and plentiful water – a healthy water environment, and a sustainable supply of water for people, businesses, and nature".

This Plan was produced by the previous Government and should not be viewed as a reflection of the current Government's approach. It has effectively been superceded by the [Water White Paper](#), which represents the new Government's approach to water.

For the time being, the Integrated Water Plan still represents the existing state of policy, so it may be relevant as a point of comparison, particularly with reference to the forthcoming Water Transition Plan.

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

In December 2022, the [fifteenth Conference of the Parties](#) (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was held in Montreal, culminating in the publication of the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#).

The Framework sets out post-2020 targets to address biodiversity loss.

The original targets, set in 2010 in Aichi, were due to be met in 2020 but were universally unmet.

The new Framework has been considered to be 'a Paris Agreement for nature' but will require a significant degree of implementation to deliver on its ambition for nature.

The Framework contains four long-term goals, as well as 23 targets. The goals provide a vision for biodiversity and global action with a view to 2050, whereas most of the targets focus on the seven years until 2030. The global goals address:

1. The integrity, connectivity, and resilience of ecosystems, as well as the threat of human-induced extinction of species;
2. The sustainable use and management of nature and its contributions to people;
3. The fair and equitable utilisation of genetic resources for monetary and non-monetary benefits; and
4. Implementation of the Framework, including funding, capacity, technical and scientific cooperation, and access to technology.

The targets address how the global community must achieve those goals, including a crucial commitment that at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water, and coastal & marine areas will be effectively conserved and managed by 2030 (known as the [30x30 initiative](#)).

COP15 was followed in late 2024 by [COP16](#), which was intended to progress negotiations on the delivery of the Kunming-Montreal Framework and further action on biodiversity.

Progress was made on a number of issues, including the creation of the [Cali Fund](#), a mechanism under which profits from genetic resources can be levied towards conservation.

Further progress was made including agreements to [link up biodiversity action with action on climate change and health](#), as well as procedures to describe ecologically significant marine areas.

Ultimately, a consensus could not be reached during the summit on key implementation issues such as funding for nature, leaving a significant degree of uncertainty around the future of global action on biodiversity.

These questions will be at the centre of the upcoming COP17 summit on biodiversity.

Find out more in our [briefing on COP16](#).



Outstanding issues

While policy developments are ongoing, there are several key areas of concern for water, which may be the subject of further interventions in the future.

Particularly with a view to the forthcoming Transition Plan for England and Wales, these gaps will need to be focus areas if the Plan is going to be an effective tool of policy implementation.

Regardless, these issues remain relevant from a horizon scanning perspective, as they are some of the most pressing topics relating to policy around water.

Water quality

Water quality is an issue that has captured significant public and media attention.

The Environmental Audit Committee's [report on water quality in rivers](#) has been particularly influential, and flashpoint events such as the pollution of the River Wye have also raised awareness.

The [Water White Paper](#) presents some measures intended to address this, though there are a wide array of interlinked issues, some of which are not sufficiently addressed, requiring further action.

Three of the largest sources of pollution to UK watercourses are wastewater pollution (including from sewage and storm overflows), agricultural run-off, and highway run-off.

The first has been the primary focus of intervention and public debate. There are significant interventions in the Water White Paper, which may make substantial progress towards addressing these challenges.

Despite positive progress, the [latest OEP report](#) shows that change is not happening quickly enough. The success of the Water White Paper's measures will depend on the Transition Plan, which is urgently needed to accelerate the pace of change.

Further interventions could support the measures in the White Paper, such as the extension of the [Urban Pollution Management](#) approach to work towards a more comprehensive river water quality management process.

Agriculture has seen some policy focus, particularly through [Environmental Land Management Schemes](#) and the long-term target on agricultural run-off. The later section on agriculture sets out the current state of these policies in greater detail.

Highway run-off may be an area where future policy intervention is required to achieve the Government's objectives around water quality.

While it is mentioned in the Water White Paper, commitments are currently ambiguous and linked to high-level cooperation, rather than specific policy interventions. Similarly, the [Environmental Improvement Plan for England](#) does not address run-off.

One implication of the latest proposals could be that highway run-off will become the responsibility of regional water quality planners.

This would raise questions about implementation, including around resourcing and how to ensure a coherent approach between regions and the national strategic approach taken by the new regulator.

Regardless, highway run-off should be an area of focus for policy measures going forwards.

A lack of historic policy focus on the impact of highway run-off for the water environment has made it difficult to fully assess the extent of those contributions.

These evidence gaps cannot be a barrier to future action, so further action could be supported by more consistent monitoring of highway outfalls and of signature pollutants from run-off in the water environment.

Highway run-off also presents significant opportunities for co-benefits, particularly for biodiversity, as highways are a key strategic asset in land use planning.

Emerging concerns

Novel contaminants are receiving increasing interest, with potential consequences for policy approaches to water quality as well as a wider set of environmental outcomes.

In particular, [per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances](#) (PFAS) are emerging as a key focus on action on chemical substances.

While the contaminants themselves are no longer 'emerging', policy responses remain highly emergent and uncertain.

The vast differences between contaminants in the 'PFAS family' and the limited historic regulatory oversight means that this area of policy is underdeveloped compared to other areas of water quality policy, with a pressing need for regulation to catch up with scientific understanding.

It was expected that a UK Chemicals Strategy would help to fill this gap, though the Government has now retracted its commitment to a standalone strategy.

Instead, the [Environmental Improvement Plan for England](#) (EIP) announced a new PFAS Plan. Details of the plan have not yet been fully outlined, but the EIP says that it would "set out a range of regulatory and non-regulatory interventions, measures and initiatives with specific actions and delivery milestones."

The goals of the [PFAS plan](#) would be to:

- Raise understanding and awareness of PFAS in the environment
- Identify and address releases of harmful PFAS

- Protect people and the environment from harm relating to PFAS exposure

Without full details of what the PFAS plan will include, it is not yet possible to determine its effectiveness, but this is a critical step towards addressing the **risks associated with PFAS**. The plan is due to be released in 2026.

One risk emerging from this approach is that it disconnects PFAS from other forms of pollution, taking a step away from the systemic approach called for by the **Cunliffe Review**.

Water quality professionals must play a key role in scrutinising the PFAS Plan once it is released, to ensure that it will effectively address both these novel contaminants and their connection to wider issues of water quality.

Beyond PFAS, there are several other contaminants of concern that have been neglected by policy. The shift from a Chemicals Strategy towards a PFAS Plan could be particularly challenging for these pollutants.

Risk areas include microplastics, toxic metals, and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs), particularly in the context of challenges for the enforcement of **environmental quality standards** (EQS).

Microplastics raise a number of concerns that may require further policy interventions, particularly as a focus on funding for research has led to a shift away from funding for treatment schemes.

In many instances, effective treatment solutions are already available, but the public profile of particular pollutants has

delayed interventions where failure is seen to carry a particularly high premium.

There are also emerging approaches which could serve as solutions to challenges for water quality, such as wastewater-based epidemiology, which could play a future role in both assessing water quality and resolving issues for monitoring and evaluation in the context of policy and regulation, and sponge cities, which could significantly improve urban resilience.

Agriculture

Agriculture is a crucial system for addressing water quality, particularly in the context of agricultural run-off to watercourses.

Several unsustainable farming practices make significant contributions to pollution, so addressing the context of agriculture is one of several ongoing priorities for achieving cleaner water.

Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) are a key means of driving environmental outcomes from agriculture in England following the UK's exit from the European Union.

Set out under the **Agriculture Act**, ELMS are intended to provide payments to farmers for nature-friendly farming and other public goods achieved through agricultural land.

The **Sustainable Farming Incentive** (SFI) is the primary mechanism for payments, alongside other schemes which include countryside stewardship and landscape recovery.

Since ELMS were originally proposed, the implementation of the policy has struggled,

driven by inconsistent policy approaches, uncertainty around long-term funding and which activities will be rewarded, and poor communication between the Government and farmers.

The **SFI** was temporarily closed to applications between 2024 and 2025 as a result of limited funding, but has since reopened. There is still uncertainty about the extent to which the Government will continue to fund these schemes.

Clarity will hopefully be provided by the **Government's Farming Roadmap**, which is currently being produced and is expected to be published in 2026. The roadmap is intended to outline a shared vision between government and farmers, addressing delivery challenges around funding in the process.

Ultimately, there are still significant questions about ELMS and the SFI, as well as how nature-friendly farming will be supported in the future.

The revised **Environmental Improvement Plan for England** (EIP) also reiterates the Government's commitment to addressing water pollution from agriculture. In addition to ELMS, it highlights:

- A new programme aimed at boosting delivery and monitoring of agricultural water quality targets.
- New funding for grants, both directly to farmers and to encourage innovation and technology that supports solutions to pollution from farming.
- Efforts to improve compliance, through guidance, training, and funding for enforcement.

- Plans for more effective and coherent regulation around agricultural water pollution, supported by further guidance on **Farming Rules for Water**.

You can learn more about Environmental Land Management Schemes in our 2025 article for Essential Environment on **ELMS and English farming**.

Water security and resilience

The **IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report** (and the report of its **second working group** on impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability) demonstrate the significance of long-term planning to address water security and to embed resilience into design-making.

As climate adaptation efforts are increasingly mainstreamed in planning and policy, a significant co-benefit could be better water security and catchment-level plans to address risks associated with scarcity and poor water quality.

The implementation of mandatory **Sustainable Drainage Systems** will be a key action to deliver improved resilience in practice.

Resilience to flooding continues to be focused on risk management. To that end, the **National Risk Register 2023** and **third National Adaptation Programme** play a key role in managing the risks associated with water security and flooding in the UK.

The Risk Register recognises coastal, fluvial and surface water flooding as significant risks. At a more granular level, **Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management** (FCERM) remains a key avenue for engagement with the risks associated with the interactions between water and infrastructure.

Beyond managing risk, there is a need for greater integration between resilience and other outcomes, particularly climate mitigation and water quality.

The [Water White Paper](#) does not sufficiently align the system towards designed for integrated solutions, such as missing opportunities to fully integrate nature-based solutions, circular economy principles, and works upgrades into the [Sewer Overflows Programme](#).

There has also been a shift in the process of transforming local infrastructure towards providing services and engaging stakeholders at different levels, which may present further opportunities for a joined-up approach.

On the sectoral level, Ofwat has set water companies a [target to reduce leakage](#) by 16% by 2025, with a further commitment by water companies to deliver a 50% reduction in leakage from 2017/18 levels by 2050.

Water companies have also committed to reducing per capita consumption to 110 litres by 2050, supported by the requirement to produce [Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans](#) and the work of the [Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development \(RAPID\)](#).

Climate change also presents multiple co-benefits in the context of water systems, such as increased utilisation of soil water storage in agriculture by promoting more sustainable agricultural practices which also benefit nature and provide carbon storage.

Data, monitoring, and modelling

In the context of the complex issues facing water systems, particularly around water quality, the importance of effective monitoring and evaluation for policy cannot be understated.

Currently, there are several risks and opportunities facing the use of data for water policy.

The most significant developments for water data and monitoring are linked to the new [Water White Paper](#). For more information, see the [relevant section of chapter one](#).

Positive progress has also been made in terms of evidence sharing with the public. Following the [Water \(Special Measures\) Act](#), the [Sewer Overflow Map](#) has been an effective tool for communicating information to the public in real time.

In light of this positive progress, further opportunities have presented themselves. In 2025, the FWR wrote an open letter [calling for greater transparency on water resources](#) information for the public, including an interactive map for real-time water resources data.

To ensure crucial information is both available and publicly-accessible, these approaches will be especially critical going forwards.

Beyond communicating information to the public, gaps also remain in the evidence landscape itself.

As the UK inherited many of the indicators currently used in policy from the European

Union through the **Water Framework Directive** (WFD) and **River Ecosystem Classification Regulations**, there are points of incompatibility between the intention of the indicators and the current state of water quality in the UK.

The focus in the WFD classification system on largely pristine conditions is not as immediately useful to the UK's degraded water environments as it would be in other contexts.

Solutions could include a greater focus on broader assemblages of invertebrates, genomic modelling, or approaches based on actual pathogenic risk.

Regardless of which approaches are used, a more purpose-driven approach to indicators and monitoring will be necessary to ensure effective transformation of water systems.

Environmental scientists will need to play a key role in supporting the development of standards and approaches, as well as scrutinising the decisions made by policy makers about how data is collected and used.

One of the most important gaps between the approach outlined in the Water White Paper and an ideal approach to evidence is the relatively limited extent to which the water system as a whole is addressed.

Imperial College London's **Water Systems Integrated Modelling framework** (WSIMOD) supports a more complete understanding of water systems, with the potential to promote more evidence-informed approaches to policy for water.

Economics of water

In 2024, the Global Commission on the Economics of Water published its report: **'The Economics of Water: Valuing the water cycle as a global common good'**.

It sought to increase understanding of the financial value of water in a similar way to the **Stern Review** for climate and the **Dasgupta Review** for nature.

The report had only a limited impact on policy making for water. Despite this, there are still opportunities for engagement as water systems become better understood in the context of the multiple benefits they can provide for people, the economy, and the planet.

There are opportunities to embed more economic thinking in the approach to water taken by policy. Economic analysis can support decision-making as an additional tool, particularly when considering infrastructure development and the potential for cost recovery through water services.

Despite these opportunities, a purely economical approach to the value of water systems could present risks and unintended consequences or siloed approaches to water.

Such an approach may be a valuable tool but should only be part of a wider 'whole system' approach to water and the environment.

Interdisciplinary issues

Policy making tends to be singularly focused: seeking to address a particular problem or altering the current approach to dealing with an issue.

It often struggles to address issues from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Environmental experts can fill that gap, offering policy advice that is informed by multiple disciplines and specialisms.

Across the IES family, there are many opportunities for collaboration that have implications for how we engage with policy.

Find out more about each of the **IES Communities** and their current activities on the relevant pages of the IES website:

- Climate Action Community
- Community for Environmental Disciplines in Higher Education (CEDHE)
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Community
- Environmental Policy Implementation Community (EPIC)
- Foundation for Water Research (FWR)
- Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM)
- Land Condition Community
- Marine and Coastal Science Community

Our annual **Dialogue Between Disciplines** conference will return in 2026. It is the best

opportunity to connect with experts across environmental disciplines.

The IES is also **partnering with the ACCESS network** throughout 2026 to promote better links between environmental science and the social sciences.

Further information

Influencing policy decisions

Our IES member briefing note: '[Influencing the UK Parliament](#)' provides an overview of how environmental professionals can influence Parliament and legislation.

For best practice on engaging with policy, see our [collection of case studies](#).

The IES also runs training to help professionals learn about policy, how it affects them, and how they can influence policy. Training workshops are available for [sign-ups on the IES website](#).

In the UK, many issues of environmental policy are devolved.

If you live in Scotland, you can [contact your Member of Scottish Parliament](#) or learn more about [influencing Scottish legislation](#).

If you live in Wales, you can [contact your Member of Senedd Cymru](#) or learn more about the [business of the Senedd](#).

If you live in Northern Ireland, you can [contact your local Member of the Legislative Assembly](#) or learn more about the [Assembly's work](#).

Find out more

Learn more about existing legislation & policy on this topic:

- [Environmental Improvement Plan for England 2025](#)
- [Water Commission: Final & Interim Report](#)
- [White Paper: A new vision for Water](#)

Read other briefings from the IES:

- [Essential Environment: Land and nature](#)
- [Essential Environment: Clean air](#)
- [COP30: Climate change](#)
- [Introduction to environmental policy briefing series](#)
- [Priorities for the UK Government, 2024-2029](#)

Is there a policy-related topic which you would like to see covered by the IES or FWR?

Get in touch with Joseph Lewis (joseph@the-ies.org) to let us know your thoughts on potential topics for future briefings, or with your suggestions for other content.

“There is no single, simple change, no matter how radical, that will reset the water sector ... this sector requires fundamental reform.”

Sir Jon Cunliffe,
Foreword to the Water Commission’s Final Report



**The Institution
of Environmental
Sciences**

Institution of Environmental Sciences
Floor 3, 130-132 Tooley Street
London, SE1 2TU

+44 (0)20 3862 7484

info@the-ies.org
www.the-ies.org

Registered charity no. 277611