

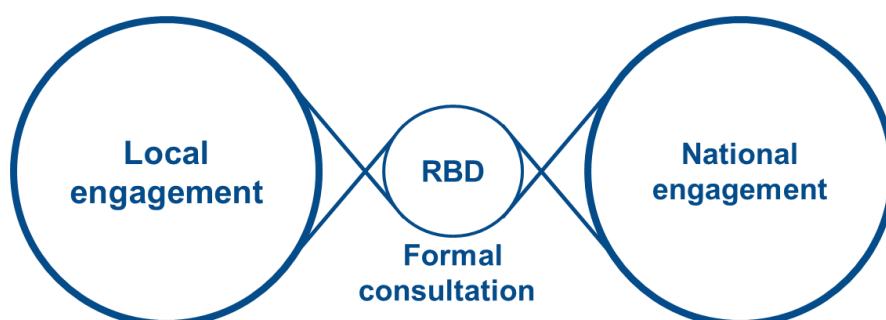
River Basin Management Planning cycle 3

We are continuing to work with colleagues from across the Environment Agency as well as partners to develop our approach and timetable for the review and update of river basin management plans in 2021.

Working Together

The first statutory consultation as part of 3rd cycle is Working Together, which will include the proposed timetable and work programme for updating the plans. We are aiming to get our proposed approach and scope for Working Together agreed by the end of March, with the intention of launching the 6-month consultation in June.

The diagram below illustrates our overall approach to consultation and engagement for 3rd cycle. The WFD and 2017 WFD Regulations fix the scale of planning at river basin districts. Experience has taught us that this scale is not the most useful for communicating with stakeholders. In order to balance this tension, we will meet our legal obligations to formally consult at the RBD-scale, but target the majority of our resources on meaningful engagement at the national and local levels. This means we can focus on having the big conversations with strategic partner organisations whilst building vital relationships at the local level with those who want to make a difference to the places they live and work.



Priorities for action in 3rd cycle

The Agency's Water, Land & Biodiversity Board has agreed that for 3rd cycle plans we should focus our efforts on:

Pressures caused by agriculture and rural land management

Pressures caused by the activities of water companies

Impacts caused by physical modifications

We believe concentrating on these areas will allow us to achieve the best outcome for the water environment whilst also addressing other priorities including chemicals, soils, protected habitats and species, abstraction and natural flood management.

This focus on several priority areas will not exclude efforts to tackle the other pressures on the water environment.

Annex 1. Background and evidence to support 3rd cycle priorities

Impacts from the physical modification on natural waters

- Physical modification is the main reason for water bodies not achieving their statutory objectives
- There is a gap in ownership and responsibility for the pressures and actions relating to morphology
- Channel re-naturalising offers wider flood risk, habitat and recreational benefits

Water company activity pressures

- The water industry provides a good opportunity for investment in the environment and the biggest potential gain
- There are major challenges relating to ageing infrastructure, growth and technology which mean deterioration is a significant risk
- Current changes in the industry provide new opportunities for innovation and collaboration

Agriculture and rural land use pressures

- Agriculture is the main sector causing water bodies not to achieve their statutory objectives
- Reducing diffuse pollution from agriculture is difficult with existing mechanisms and can take a long time
- Affordability pressures and other priorities in the sector

Proportion of waters designated as modified waters

35%  of rivers are designated artificial or heavily modified water bodies

84%  of lakes are designated artificial or heavily modified water bodies

65%  of estuaries and coastal waters are designated artificial or heavily modified water bodies

Proportion of waters impacted by water industry activity

46%  of rivers are impacted by water industry activity

42%  of lakes are impacted by water industry activity

13%  of estuaries and coastal waters are impacted by water industry activity

16%  of groundwater are impacted by water industry activity

Proportion of waters impacted by agriculture and rural land management activity

48%  of rivers are impacted by agriculture & rural land management activity

21%  of lakes are impacted by agriculture & rural land management activity

20%  of estuaries and coastal waters are impacted by agriculture & rural land management activity

36%  of groundwater are impacted by agriculture & rural land management activity