



WWF *for a living planet*

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PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

Flood and Water Management Bill

Second Reading – 15 December 2009

SUMMARY

- WWF welcomes the introduction of the Flood and Water Management Bill into Parliament. Although this bill is slimmer than originally anticipated, it has retained some important provisions relating to climate change, sustainable development and wider environmental concerns.
- WWF also welcomes the new powers for the Environment Agency to undertake environmental works, the power for water companies to temporarily prohibit or restrict specific uses of water during water shortages, and the removal of the barriers to Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs) in new developments.
- However, WWF is concerned that the Bill does not go as far as is necessary to deliver the necessary step-change in water management as had been the original intention.
- WWF is particularly concerned that there are no links between this Bill and the EU Water Framework Directive, and seeks reassurance that this Bill will further, or at least not hinder, the UK's obligations under the Directive.
- In particular, WWF seeks reassurance that the Government is committed to introducing further measures to protect our water environment by increasing water efficiency and introducing a modern water management framework through implementation of the recommendations of the Cave and Walker Reviews as soon as possible.

Introduction

Both the recent floods and the 2007 floods illustrate how we are entering into a period of climate instability, in which floods and drought become more frequent occurrences that we must prepare for.

WWF welcomes the fact that the Government is bringing forward this necessary legislation as outlined in this Review. However we are also disappointed that there has not been sufficient opportunity to include more measures to bring about the necessary step-change in water management. These include necessary measures to implement the Cave (competition and innovation) and Walker (metering and charging) Reviews, time limiting abstraction licenses and further water efficiency measures. **WWF is encouraged by commitment to bringing forward further legislation later, but seeks reassurance that the momentum will be maintained beyond the life of this Bill.**

Page 1 of 1



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Working with natural processes and building resilience

WWF welcomes some of the changes to the draft bill, specifically the addition of references to climate change and the need to address wider environmental objectives in flood risk management. We are pleased that clause 3 also refers to the need to maintain or restore natural processes in managing flood risk and a general duty towards sustainable development. We also welcome the requirement to give water companies stronger powers to restrict non-essential uses of water in times of shortage.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs)

WWF welcomes Schedule 3 of the bill, which removes barriers to the widespread use of sustainable drainage systems, with a SUDs approval process for any new developments. WWF looks forward to the publication of the national standards for the use of SUDs and urge the Government to bring these forward as soon as possible. We would also urge the Government to consider use of SUDs in existing developments (retrofitting) as part of the proposed national standards.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD)

The Water Framework Directive recognises that the physical form of rivers and lakes can have a considerable impact on the ecological quality of our rivers. WWF believes that there is a lost opportunity in not tying the bill, and particularly the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management strategy, to the targets under the Water Framework Directive. Although further regulations are promised to place a duty on flood and coastal erosion risk management authorities to operate in a way that is consistent with WFD requirements, WWF seeks clarity on when these will be forthcoming.

Cave and Walker Reviews

WWF is disappointed that there is insufficient opportunity to include in this Bill recommendations from the Cave and Walker Reviews, published in April and December 2009 respectively. WWF believes that water companies must be given greater incentives to reduce the impact of their activities on the environment and to give consumers the incentives to reduce demand.

Although WWF recognises the need to prioritise the key areas within this Bill, there is considerably more that must be done to bring about the step-change in water management. WWF calls on the Government to commit to introducing further legislation at the earliest opportunity.

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