

Water Framework Directive - Pilot Characterisation Reporting Environment Agency

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) is the most substantial piece of European water legislation to date. It requires all inland and coastal waters to reach 'good status' by 2015. It will do this by establishing a river basin district structure within which demanding environmental objectives will be set, including ecological targets for surface waters.

A key deadline specified within the Directive is 2004, when the first iteration of 'characterisation' is to be reported to the European Commission. This includes an assessment of the human impacts on river basin districts and an economic analysis of water use, in addition to the establishment of a register of protected areas (these include, for example, areas that require protection in relation to their use as drinking water supplies and areas of conservation interest).

Article 5 of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires Member States to submit river basin characterisation summary reports for each river basin district. The Environment Agency (the Agency) is required to submit reports for the 10 river basin districts in England and Wales and, for this purpose, the Agency and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) are developing details of the reporting process.

Entec was awarded a contract by the Environment Agency to pilot the River Basin Characterisation reporting using data available for the River Ribble catchment. The aim of this pilot study was to provide information to further develop the reporting, to test its feasibility and to gain an appreciation of the resource requirements needed to complete it. In producing the reporting elements, Entec contacted key Agency technical staff for relevant information and data. This exercise provided the Agency with a useful insight in the resources that would be required for producing subsequent reports as well as identifying existing data gaps.

