

# Land, Conservation, Access and Recreation

This report summarises the work we have undertaken to manage the conservation of our natural and built environment to ensure we meet our responsibilities for Conservation, Access and Recreation (CAR).



## Southern Water area of operation



## Construction Management

We are committed to protecting the environment, especially where we manage wastewater. Our programme of investment helps us to protect and improve the quality of the environment in a region of England where housing development is expected to increase significantly. During the last year, we invested in excess of £500 million – more than in any other year in the company’s history – in a programme of improvements, most of which were driven by this environmental commitment. Individual projects can temporarily affect their local environment. This is why we carry out assessments to evaluate and reduce the environmental impacts of our projects.

Among these schemes was construction work at Northfleet Wastewater Treatment Works (WTW) in Kent. The capacity of the WTW needed to be increased due to the growing population. Earlier environmental survey reports on the site indicated the opportunity to establish a favourable habitat for species such as grass snakes, common lizards and slow worms to allow them to flourish. As a part of the enhancement activity, we undertook landscaping work to encourage rare species to breed. During this work, spoil available from the site works was extensively reused. Other recycled materials included stones, rubble, logs and compost, which were also used to enhance the habitat for



Carrying out environmental surveys in Kent

reptiles on the site. All design plans were completed in close consultation with Natural England and the Kent Wildlife Trust.

The reuse of spoil and other by-products of excavation have immense potential to save vital resources such as time, transportation and fuel. Southern Water’s contractors are looking at how to adopt Bulk Waste Exchange, which seeks to optimise the reuse of spoil and other construction material between schemes.

We also evaluated the environmental impact of a project to lay a new water main close to the River Arun to the west of Pulborough

in West Sussex. Several environmental surveys were undertaken to identify the potential impact our construction work might have on the existing ecosystem of the area. The surveys indicated the presence of a rare plant species in the vicinity. We also investigated the impact of the water main’s construction on adjoining habitats. The area surveyed is rich in flora and fauna. Notably, these include cut-grass and narrow-leaved water-dropwort (a small plant with white flowers). We identified activities to mitigate the impact of construction in line with the environmental survey recommendations, which included undertaking wetland habitat creation and restoration management, reintroducing grazing, improving river bank vegetation management and monitoring the newly created wetland habitats for three years.

Evidence of bats was discovered during maintenance work at our water pumping station at Robertsbridge in East Sussex. We commissioned a survey and the building was found to support a small number of long-eared bats while a large amount of bat activity was recorded near the building, with constant foraging of Pipistrelles and Myotis bats along the adjacent river. As a result of the survey, in consultation with Natural England, we developed and implemented a programme to repair the building with minimal impact on the bats.



## Archaeology

Archaeological excavations carried out at New Romney in Kent during the installation of a first-time sewerage system have provided a wealth of new information about this historic town, revealing the line of lost streets, the antiquity of present roads, old foundations and lost cemeteries. A significant number of finds have been recovered dating from the early 12th Century.



Archaeological excavations were carried out at New Romney in Kent



Clearing fallen wood to help with promotion of ideal habitats for the Fritillary butterflies

## Countryside Stewardship Schemes

A number of our sites are managed through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. The scheme helps us to manage our land sensitively for nature conservation and has included activities such as the management of trees and scrub at Sandown Water Meadows on the Isle of Wight. We have also continued to improve the grassland on our Yew Hill reservoir site in Hampshire, which supports a wide variety of butterflies.

Under the scheme, we have managed large areas of our Bowl Water Reservoir in Kent and have continued to carry out habitat improvements, including hedge laying, pond restoration and grassland management for grazing.

## Woodlands

We continue to support the ongoing management of our woodlands through schemes such as the Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme.

As part of our five-year programme of woodland management, we continued to monitor Oakwood Copse, an area of woodland next to our Otterbourne Water Supply Works, to ensure the ongoing management work is maintaining the woodland's natural environment.

We also continued to manage work on our woodlands at Lake Common and Knighton, both on the Isle of Wight. This work included the removal of scrub to protect the diverse plant species on site. We also cleared a number of ditches to help water-based plants and animals to flourish, particularly water voles.

At Powdermill Reservoir in East Sussex, environmental activities included coppicing sweet chestnut trees and removing high branches (brush) along ride edges to improve the habitat for the Pearl-Bordered Fritillary, an endangered butterfly.

Work at Darwell Reservoir in East Sussex included coppicing mixed species such as ash and hornbeam in an SSSI and installing temporary deer fencing around coppiced trees.

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Left: Southern Water's Testwood Lakes site in Hampshire was awarded first place in the community category for wetland sites in the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Business Bird Challenge

Below: Owls have been encouraged to make their homes at Southern Water sites



## Biodiversity and Species

The Environment Agency (EA), with support from Southern Water, launched an initiative to enhance the natural environment of Carisbrooke Pond on the Isle of Wight.

The pond, which is in line with Lukely Brook, sits within the heart of the community and offers an important amenity for the local area. The area around the pond also supports a significant population of bats and is designated a 'Site of Importance for Nature Conservation'. The EA will also work with us to improve the water quality by providing a mosaic of habitats within the pond to enhance biodiversity.

Part of this work will be to remove the artificial banks that are in disrepair and replace them with graduated natural marginal edges. Wetland plants will also be planted to support other animal species such as the dragonfly, amphibians and water voles.

We have teamed up with the Sussex Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency and South East Water to become a partner of the Sussex Otters and Rivers Partnership (SORP) to help protect otters and rivers in Sussex.

Volunteers from our company and the Hampshire Wildlife Trust have built a home for otters (holt) on the bank of the River Lymington in Hampshire.

Our Testwood Lakes site in Hampshire won first place in the community category for



The delicate Early Spider Orchid

wetland sites in the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Business Bird Challenge. The competition celebrates the sensitive management of industrial sites, reflected in the diversity and number of bird species using the area. More than 60 business sites took part in the latest challenge.

A very rare early spider orchid bloomed again for just a fortnight at one of our sites in Sussex. We took great care during its short stay to protect it from being damaged in the conservation area. We have taken strict

measures to ensure that the grassland habitat is managed to encourage the orchid to continue to bloom.

There are approximately 28 conservation sites across the Southern Water region where we have developed conservation management plans which are intended to help maintain biodiversity on our landholdings and provide wildlife refuges for a wide variety of plants and animals.

Bowl Water is a very special environment that is home to more than 3,000 different species. In order to conserve and enhance the wildlife interest of the site, part of the main water and surrounding land is designated a nature reserve. This area is left undisturbed as a refuge for birds and is managed in conjunction with the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

Bowl Water is well known for its large variety of wetland birds, but now is a potential home for the endangered barn owl. We teamed up with EDF Energy to install two barn owl boxes mounted on top of electricity poles donated by the energy company. The Southern Water EDF partnership has helped to boost the UK's barn owl population, which is estimated to number between 4,000-5,000 pairs.



## Access and recreation

Bewl Water continues to offer a wide range of recreational activities for our visitors to enjoy, including walks and rides, bike hire, canoeing, rowing, sailing, teambuilding, windsurfing and trout fishing.

Bewl Water also conducts cruises for visitors from April to mid-September, which are a major attraction.

On May 1, 2007, the responsibility for providing recreational facilities and public access to Bewl Water was transferred to Kent & Sussex Attractions, a company specialising in the leisure sector. The agreement with Kent & Sussex Attractions safeguards existing activities as well as access and environmental obligations.

Because of its strategic importance as a water supply site, Southern Water will retain ownership of Bewl Water reservoir.

Good access was given to visitors at Powdermill and Darwell reservoirs and woodland next to our Redgate Mill Wastewater Treatment Works near Crowborough in East Sussex by providing car park facilities, removing wind-blown trees around some rides, clearing fly-tipping and cutting vegetation across the footpath.

Above: Bewl Water Reservoir in Kent offers many leisure activities, including sailing

Below: Southern Water has teamed up with Sussex Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency and South East Water to become a partner of the Sussex Otters and Rivers Partnership (SORP) to help protect otters and rivers in Sussex



## Glossary

- **Cut-grass**  
Any of several grasses found mostly along marshes, ponds and streams and having leaves with very rough margins.
- **Scrub**  
Scrub can be described as scattered bushes dominated by locally native shrubs and young trees usually less than 5m tall.
- **Hedge laying**  
Hedge laying is a traditional method of hedge management and has been practised for hundreds of years. It involves cutting nearly all the way through the base of the stems and laying them over at an angle of about 35 degrees.
- **Wetlands**  
Wetlands are places where land and water meet.
- **Coppicing**  
Coppicing is a traditional form of woodland management now utilised for conservation and timber production. Coppicing involves the periodic cutting of trees using traditional felling techniques, stacking of timber and leaving brushwood to rot down. This prolongs the life of the trees and attracts a diverse flora and fauna.
- **SSSIs**  
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) include examples of the country's best wildlife sites.
- **Clear Felling**  
Clear Felling is the felling of whole woodland, or a part of the woodland, at one time.

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